



EAGLE EYES

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News From Winter/Spring 2012 Trimester

JEFF LIDDLE NAMED HEAD OF SCHOOL

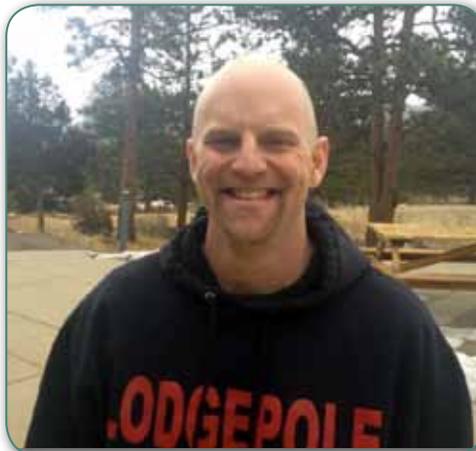
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American Honda Education Corporation is pleased to announce the appointment of Mr. Jeff B. Liddle as Head of School at Eagle Rock School and Professional Development Center, in Estes Park, Colorado, effective September 2012. Jeff will succeed Robert Burkhardt, who is retiring at the end of August after almost twenty years of exemplary service.

Eagle Rock School and Professional Development Center, established in 1993, is an initiative of American Honda Education Corporation (www.eaglerockschool.org), which envisioned, developed and fully supports this unique educational institution.

Jeff has been a faculty member at Eagle Rock since September 2000. His first assignment was managing the school's Wilderness Program. Under his leadership, Eagle Rock's signature twenty-five day introductory outdoor experience for new students became a national model. For the past seven years Jeff has been Eagle Rock's Director of Curriculum. During this time he led a process to revamp graduation requirements and curriculum standards, resulting in a significantly increased graduation rate. Additionally, Jeff initiated Eagle Rock's highly successful internship program with Rocky Mountain National Park, also a national model.

Jeff brings deep and relevant experience to his new position as Head of School. He served as a Board member and Director of Accreditation of the Association for Experiential Education and is a regular reviewer for the Journal of Experiential Education; he was Director of Operations for Wilderness Inquiry, a national leader offering integrated wilderness experiences in the U.S. and abroad; he was Executive Director of the Wilderness Education Association; he is a nationally recognized expert in experience-based



education, adventure programming and wilderness risk management.

Jeff earned his undergraduate degree at Slippery Rock University (PA) and his Master's Degree at the State University of New York, Cortland.

Jeff and his wife Nannette are the parents of teenagers Max and Ben.

An ardent Steelers and Penguins fan and a proud member of Lodgepole House at Eagle Rock, Jeff is an ice hockey player

and a crossfit instructor; he plays blues harmonica in the Eagle Rock jazz improvisation ensemble. Most importantly he holds the vision, compassion and commitment that will enable Eagle Rock to continue to develop and flourish in pursuit of its mission as we move into the next generation of our existence.

Sincerely,

Gary R. Kessler

President, American Honda Education Corporation

SVP, HR, Administration & Corporate Affairs

American Honda Motor Co., Inc.

Save the Date!
Eagle Rock's Twentieth Anniversary
Celebration
Saturday, June 22nd, 2013
Mark your calendar. Details to follow.



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Eagle Rock School
and Professional
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ALUMNI PROFILE – WHERE IS HE NOW?

by Seth Wyncott, Public Allies Fellow in Professional Development

Vidal Carrillo, ER-46 (Fall, 2008)
Graduated ER-55 (Fall, 2011)
Geography: Rocky Mountain National Park,
Estes Park, CO

At Eagle Rock School, a particular capstone waits in expectation, hovering as a final project for all graduates approaching the finish line. This culmination of a career is known as the Legacy Project. Its intention: that each graduate of Eagle Rock leave a fragment of themselves, to last in perpetuity, far beyond their actual presence on campus. Most projects are physical: an outdoor pull-up bar, a mural, a mosaic outside the woodshop, but there are some additional legacies that materialize outside of physical construction. These legacies are character sketches that abide in our memories, epitomized by students who all Eagle Rockers look on with deep fondness and respect. Vidal Carrillo is one of these students. Though his departure is quite recent, his local presence in Estes Park makes it easy to check in. And who wouldn't want to check in with Vidal? I took the chance to sit down with him recently to talk about his transition from Eagle Rock, his current posture towards challenge, and his newfound love for work in Rocky Mountain National Park (RMNP).



After starting as an intern, while still a student at Eagle Rock, Vidal's work ethic was noticed and pursued. Near the end of his final trimester at Eagle Rock, he was offered to join the Park Service as a full-time employee of RMNP. With a call to the workforce keeping him stationary, this young man from Los Angeles has now joined the ranks of the Estes Park community. I asked him if he ever expected to stay in Estes Park. His answer was a matter-of-fact "No." I smiled at his response, and let him continue. "I couldn't even have imagined working for the government. I didn't even know what the Park Service was until I started working for Eagle Rock." Not even Colorado was in the early picture, but as he exclaims, "Life's great right now. I can't complain."

Work provides routine, though not your average day job tasks, while the heightened prospect of summer brings new training opportunities. "Right now I'm working with Mary, and she's the bear biologist," Vidal explains. "I was entering data on a spreadsheet and I'll be writing a summary for 2010, 2009, 2008 and so on. They haven't been keeping up with this project so I'm kind of there to help out with it. Right now, for the past two weeks, I've just kind of been going into the office, sitting

➤ See "Alumni" – Cont. on Pg. 3

👉 *“Alumni” – Cont. from Pg. 2*

at a desk and doing computer work. I find myself smiling, it makes me feel like a scientist, analyzing data and writing a report. That’s kind of been a typical day.” As hot weather approaches, the work will shift to a focus on the coming fire season, a constant mark of the Western United States. In the midst of training for the Park Service fuels crew, Vidal is thrilled about the prospect of this intense service, yet another fulfillment of a lifelong dream. “I’m going to be in a student position,” he says, “but this has been a life goal for me. Since a little kid, I’ve always wanted to work with fire but didn’t always think it would happen. But now it is. That’s one life goal to check off. I’m pretty excited. Now I’ve just gotta be a cop, a doctor, and the president.” He is completely serious. I believe him.

Vidal has never been one to shy away from challenge. Not long ago the fear of facing different ethnic groups was a legitimate impediment. Growing up amid racial tension left a mark that was hard to erase. “Honestly, where I’m from people are classified. I was taught that white people are superior and kind of the enemy.” With such early-developed opinions, the diverse population of Eagle Rock was an initial challenge. “At first I wasn’t as open as I could’ve been, coming in my first trimester. I was kind of scared to be around the town and to be around the people.” He admits that some things did enforce that belief but in time Vidal learned to rise above. “There are definitely people like that, but they’re not all like that. For the most part, they’re all kind, generous, good people.

Now I can have a conversation with a total stranger and not be afraid.” No longer afraid of having courageous conversations across ethnic lines, challenge takes a new form.

For a young man with a deep appreciation for family, life can be tough on your own. Vidal admits being introverted. “That was kind of the big challenge for me. Even my supervisor made it a goal of mine to branch out and be more social with my neighbors so I could have that support system.” Being alone isn’t easy. “I have a lot of thoughts about it; mixed feelings,” he continues. “Nothing is exact for me. I consider a lot of things. Being on my own was definitely a big shock at first. I was in LA with strong family support. I would never have any privacy. One of the values was family, and family was always around.” A move to Eagle Rock brought the same situation: a tight-knit community. “Now I’m by myself all the time. One hundred percent responsible and my actions will have pretty severe consequences. If I’m not being proactive, there are things that can fall apart.” Yet Vidal has not succumbed to this pressure yet. Instead he turns it to his advantage with structure and routine. What kind of routine? I ask him. With a heartfelt excitement, he explains. “For example, I’m following a routine that meets all my needs and also my expectations. I have to be fit to work on the fire crew, so I have to take some time out of the day to workout (a big stress reliever for me). I definitely have to be decisive and a lot more responsible.”

Overall, our Eagle Rock friend at the park is in a good place. “I love the responsibility, I love being

challenged. I definitely enjoy being on my own, I love providing for myself, I love being in charge, and in full control of my life.” His goals continue to line up. There are the everyday goals, such as continuous learning: “For me it’s all about learning. A reason why I am always happy is because I love to learn. I think in every situation someone is in, there’s always something to learn. There’s still something that can be learned and something that you can grow on. Every day I reflect and I’m improving as a person which I love doing. I’m just happy doing this. Everything seems more real now. Eagle Rock prepared me for this kind of lifestyle.” And then there are his upcoming achievements, “A few years ago, buying a motorcycle and traveling across America by myself was a goal,” he explains. Now that seems realistic.” For him the possibilities are endless. And those earlier mentioned goals, the ones about becoming a doctor and the president of the United States, those are just as real. Vidal expects some people to doubt, but his is the language of unstoppable passion. Though the word legacy is not explicitly mentioned, its presence is real. In a single moment he confesses to me, “I know it might be a little too idealistic and I might be behaving too optimistic, but I’m never going to be stuck in a place where I’m not challenged or learning. I always love fire, but if there comes a day where I’m not being challenged, I’m not afraid to move to something else.”

Listen to Vidal’s recent StoryCorps interview at <http://tinyurl.com/VidalCarrillo>

CLASS CULMINATES WITH COMMUNITY CAREER FAIR

by Seth Wyncott, Public Allies Fellow in Professional Development

Musings on career choices always begin at an early age. A doctor, a fireman, a teacher, a movie star, an astronaut: these, a few standard options often found in the childhood years. As soon as we can identify a surface level distinction that parent and career are tied together, that somehow these tall caretakers often move along in the outside world getting paid for vocation, our dreams change shape, if only just a little. And with the question, 'What would you like to be someday?' There is an answer. We all become a little more aware.

Our fast moving world supplies its own pressure. Enter the early teen years and hear the need for specialization in hard skills, such as the demand for expertise in the STEM field (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics). And let's not forget the soft skills: communication, leadership, empathy, and listening. None of these are disparate; one can have causal implications for the next. The buildup of instruction surrounding this latter group of competencies engenders its own high degree of importance—an issue beyond hype speaking to the need for ethics and intrinsic motivation in the workforce. The question is: what's a young girl or boy to do? We cannot nor should not forget the simple pleasantries of childhood—scraped knees and all—the basic creative impulse of leisure. Yet there is a safe place to begin this transitory conversation of goals and careers and earlier this year the students of Eagle Rock School (ERS) took their turn at creating such a space for their younger peers.

In February, students from an ERS class called *The Hero's Journey*



sat down to work with Director of Professional Development, Michael Soguero; Registrar, Anastacia Galloway; Life After Eagle Rock Coordinator, Denise Lord; and Public Allies Fellow in Life After Eagle Rock, Zack Montez. Their purpose: to examine career options and skills while also preparing a series of instructional seminars for a group of 8th grade boys from Estes Park. As Eagle Rock believes that sharing intellectual and emotional experience is a prime opportunity for learning, sharing, and growth, an experience with the Estes Park community would provide yet another outlet for impact, while also engaging younger community members in the steps towards an alluring dream job.

I caught up with student, Michael Hermes before the big day; before the *The Hero's Journey* evolved into its final form: a career fair.

Curious to discover what drove Michael to this class in the first place, he gladly elaborated. "Understanding the issues that adolescent boys may have and finding ways to address those issues," he explains, speaking

from his own experience in middle school as well as his experience as a learner. Without prompting, he highlights his own pre-high-school experience. He exclaims with an open-mouthed smile, "That was me."

Approaching the issues of middle school with the benefit of having been there before would provide an edge, though admittedly, one generation of 8th graders can be very different from the one prior. In order to check expectations and gather details, *Hero's Journey* has been in and out of Estes Park Middle School and Michael had nothing but good to say about such real world experience. "It was interesting we were doing something in the community. Most times the power standards [in the ERS classroom] are about finding a solution, but not always implementing. In this situation we get to address the crisis among adolescent boys in the school. We are doing something productive to help people." As he describes it, this is 'beyond a scenario.' It's a real world application.

➤ See "Community Career Day" –
Cont. on Pg. 5

“Community Career Day” – Cont. from Pg. 4

The personal incentive is also powerful. “I have a brother who just went into the sixth grade,” Michael explains. “And as I was trying to select my classes, he flashed through my head. I thought maybe taking this class and understanding this issues going on, I might be able to take that home and help him. I could help him see that every person is useful and one is better from the other.”

As the career fair took structure around ERS classroom work and visits to Estes Park Middle School, two seminars took further shape with sub-topics on issues such as anger management and goal setting; two prominent issues of middle school life and for the working world as a whole. Each seminar would be co-taught by Eagle Rock students, bringing the additional challenge of group work and collaboration. Michael’s opinion on teamwork is matter-of-fact: teamwork is a necessity. “It provides the challenge of working with someone you don’t really know, but it provides you with an opportunity to get to know someone new. You need to be able to have these skills,” Michael says. “If you work at a job you’re not exactly going to like everybody but you need to learn to work with others in a professional way while also understanding the differences between them.” As the date of the fair quickly approached, a degree of tension was felt by all. “Some of them might go by and not get anything out of it,” Michael says. “[But] I’m really hopeful for it.”

After all that preparation, how did the event turn out? Great, in the eyes of its middle school population! As I moved among the middle school students after seminars let out, smiles and energy sounded about the halls of the Estes Park YMCA, the venue for the afternoon. At lunch I caught up with a few of these students and all had learning to share.

Bradley, age 14, attended a seminar on goals and passion and spoke of behavior goals, explaining how a person can “change behavior and personality” internally and externally. Thanks to newfound perspective on S.M.A.R.T. goals (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, Timely), his goal of flying a space shuttle could become more realistic by “setting a time commitment.”

Cannon, age 14, spoke of body language and the posture of attention. He told me “how to make sure you’re listening,” and that the “faces you make when paying attention” are just as important as “eye contact and not looking around.”

Jorge, age 13, simply learned “not to freak out, but to walk away or avoid a difficult situation entirely.”

It seemed that no matter how young, each student had learned at least one powerful lesson. And though part of the excitement is most likely due to a departure from the atypical middle school classroom, it’s inspiring to hear these stories. You never know when a lesson or an anecdote will resurface. From my seat on the floor next to Liam, a 14-year-old Estes Park resident, I heard a love for small towns, history, and music. There was a note of confidence in his voice, a developing readiness for the next step. And from my seat on the floor I caught a glimpse of Michael, wandering at my peripheral, a smile of relief on his face. Another passes

The line between youth and adulthood blurs a little more every year. The world is flat, Thomas Friedman argues. Information travels at light-speed and all of us are implicated. Yet in the middle of such frenetic pacing, the Eagle Rock crew is hard at work. Another day in the life complete, for an Eagle Rock student.

Susan D’Amico
Administrative Assistant

Mark Dougherty
Sous Chef

Denise Dunn
Business Administration
Specialist

Cynthia Elkins
Arts

Beth Ellis
Learning Resources
and Information

Anastacia Galloway
Registrar

John Guffey
Service Learning

Berta Guillen
Society and Cultures

Josh Henderson
Head Cook

Karen Ikegami
Mathematics

Janet Johnson
Science

Issac Leslie
Music and Performance

Jeff Liddle
Director of Curriculum

Denise Lord
Life After Eagle Rock

Susan Luna
Director of Operations

Dan Madsen
Technology

TBA
Literacy & Literature

Mark Palmer
Public Allies

L’Tanya Perkins
Admissions Associate

Tim Phelps
Chef Instructor

Scott Rashid
Second Chef

Kirstin Sizemore
Human Performance

Philbert Smith
Director of Students

Michael Soguero
Director of
Professional Development

Terry Tierney
Assistant Facilities

Jesse Tovar
Health and Wellness
Counselor

EAGLE ROCK GRADUATE FEATURED IN OUTSIDE MAGAZINE - THE LONG HAUL

by Dave Seminara

Portions being reprinted with permission from the March 27, 2012 edition of OUTSIDE ONLINE

Matt Rutherford has fought off drunken fishermen, lost his favorite books, and sailed 24,000 miles alone in his attempt to become the first man to circumnavigate the Americas solo. After nine months at sea, he's still not sure who will be around to greet him when he docks.

Last June, Matt Rutherford set out to become the first person ever to circumnavigate North and South America by sailboat, non-stop and solo. Expeditions of this scale often require major corporate backing and take years to plan, but Rutherford, who was raised in Ohio and is a veteran of a trans-Atlantic sailing expedition and a bicycle trek across Southeast Asia, collected money and organized the voyage largely by himself. (He is also fundraising for CRAB, an organization that provides sailing opportunities for the disabled.) Rutherford lived on his boat for 11 months as he prepared to sail, enduring a Maryland winter without heat and eating Ramen noodles to save money. On June 13, 2011, he set sail from Annapolis. Nine months, two broken GPS units, one confrontation with drunken fishermen, and more than 24,000 miles later, he is north of Puerto Rico, on a track to make landfall in mid-April.

Why are you doing this?

I had wanted to do the Northwest Passage for five or six years. It's been a long-term goal. When I sailed single-handed from Annapolis to Europe, Africa, and



the Caribbean, and then back, I kept talking about doing the Northwest Passage and people kind of laughed at me. Some of the legends of sailing have done these long, single-handed trips out on the oceans, so I decided to do a non-stop, solo, circumnavigation of the Americas, which has never been done before.

How do you pack for a year at sea?

I brought a year's supply of Shelf Reliance freeze-dried food and I have a manual water maker that I pump to make water. I had to fill every empty spot of the boat with cans of food, 750 pounds worth, in order to get it all on board. If I'm lucky, I catch a fish. I lost about 30 pounds in the Arctic but I gained most of that back in the Pacific.

What's a typical day at sea like for you?

I wake up at first light. I pump the water maker for about a half-hour to make coffee. If the weather is nice, I try to work on the boat. Things are always breaking. Some days I don't do much.

How does your boat compare to boats that other sailors have used for these types of voyages?

For such a long trip, usually the boat would be worth between \$200,000 and \$600,000. The last circumnavigation of the Americas was done in a boat worth close to

a million, and it wasn't non-stop or single-handed. This boat, the St. Brendan, is worth between \$10,000 and \$12,000.

A story about you in the Washington Post said that everything on your boat was broken, rotted through, or **water-logged. Is that right?** The Arctic fog destroyed many, many things. The ocean is rough on everything.

You wrote on your blog that all your books were ruined. How are you passing the time?

My Kindle broke, too, but I have about 10 books on my iPod touch. I've read most of them a few times. I'm still working on *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, which is around 18 volumes long, like 2,000 pages. It's a slow read.

Do you ever feel like you're going crazy?

I'm not sure if I was sane when I left.

What's been the low point of the trip so far?

Getting knocked down in the Bering Sea was rough. The boat was damned-near upside down. But there haven't really been too many low points. I miss having real conversations, where you can look at the person you're talking to. Or being able to lie down and get a real night's sleep. I'm always waking up during the night to check for freighters and check my course. I never truly sleep.

✍️ "Outside" – Cont. on Pg. 12

FOUR MORE GRADUATES TAKE FLIGHT

by Seth Wyncott, Public Allies Fellow in Professional Development

Noah Blankenship was born and raised in Tulsa, Oklahoma, a part of the country on the edge of the Great Plains but far from the idealized rocky crags that Noah dreamed of. As he describes it, life in Tulsa was, "OK, pretty boring. I was always in love with the mountains." Unbeknownst to his early years, Noah would make an eventual journey to the Colorado Rockies, perhaps through a mixture of fate and choice.

Noah expresses deep love for his "huge family" of three brothers and four sisters, yet he is not reluctant to share how such familial life provided its own challenges and growing pains. He admits, "always having reference: someone I could learn from," while at the same time meeting a fair amount of pressure head-on, the kind only siblings can provide. 'Oh, you're a Blankenship,' school peers would say. 'You're Emily's brother,' others would exclaim. With the combined pressure of family life and school, Noah fell into a "pretty bad outlet. I got into kind of a junky stage. Luckily in school I had some teachers who were very close friends of my family." These friends wanted to help Noah succeed even when he was failing. It was one of these persistent teachers that recommended that Noah check out Eagle Rock. Ready for a change, and facing the prospect of wilderness and "doing something gutsy," Noah leapt in, ready to face the next challenges, the kind that only Eagle Rock provides.

For Noah, being away from family was a major adjustment. "Everything was family-oriented for me," Noah says. Speaking of challenges, "living with people of different backgrounds was the main one. I think I was just scared of showing people my weaknesses." Realizing that he wasn't alone in this battle was the turning point for Noah. "I'm here on my own," he told himself, "and all these guys are too." Major lessons continued to unfold, but this gradual epiphany has



taken Noah on a weaving journey, which has now brought him to the cusp of high school graduation. So what's next for Noah, in addition to an obvious conscious effort? "Seeable change," he says. "I want to get my EMT. I want to do something in the medical field mainly because I want to be involved in people's lives."

A denizen of Los Angeles, **Alberto Chavez-Hernandez**, AKA "Beto," has a big presence on campus. Through quiet

ways and with quiet means he roams with gentle confidence and a quick wit, his welcome sense of humor always in tow. With the benefit of much personal growth, Beto seems to have found himself, though like most Eagle Rock students, not through any easy course of travel. "I grew up in Richmond, California, with three other brothers," Beto explains. "It was an interesting childhood. I saw a lot of things that some kids should never see, but some can't evade this." He spent most of his growing years with his mother, and though he was "good in school for the heck of it," the thought of future plans rarely entered his mind, if at all. "I didn't care, that I was isolated and I didn't want anything in life."

With the intention of combating her son's indifference, Beto's mother began taking him to see a psychologist named Jesse Tovar, and as Beto began to visit Jesse regularly, change began to form. Jesse eventually made a move to Eagle Rock School, but the seed was planted and Beto, ready to try something new, would follow soon after. Facing the prospect of failure in Richmond, Beto made his move onto the next challenge: communal life at Eagle Rock.

With his brother already at Eagle Rock, Beto had some sense of familiarity but the family life of Aspen house was just beginning. "Slowly, I started meeting everybody from Aspen. Lalo was there, he was one

➤ See "Graduates" – Cont. on Pg. 8

☞ *“Graduates” – Cont. from Pg. 7*

of the first people who brought me in. Devin came down and gave me a hug. From there I went to the house and started getting ready, unpacking, and I felt very welcome.”

Like many Eagle Rockers, Beto readily admits his past growing pains. “Accepting white folks,” slips right off his tongue. “It’s hard to really live with folks you’ve had a bad history with, while at the same time learning that you have to change and fix this problem—that it’s the only way to have a better future. Inside me I wanted to change, it’s just that experiences I had always kept me from getting where I wanted to be.” Cultural diversity had kicked in early. The typical challenges of communal living would bite at his heels, but as Beto prepares to face his graduation Presentation of Learning, we all know that his Eagle Rock story has a happy ending.

Those who know Beto well, understand his love for cinema, and it is only natural that his future goals would involve such a medium. Filmmaking is in the books. He plans to, “get an internship with Silver Pictures” in hopes of becoming a producer/director. A continuous learner, his plan is to learn as much as he can from that internship. As he states it: “If I’m on set, [my job is to] observe the director creating all his type of art and learn that craft so when I do get up there I’ll have an idea of what I’ll need to do and how I should do it. When I do get the internship, hopefully I’ll meet Christopher Nolan, one of my favorite directors. And I do want to spend one day working with him, just to see how he does it. That would be a cool experience for me.” Eagle Rock students dream big and

Beto continues the tradition. As he says: “If you have a dream, strive to get to that dream, to obtain it. The best part of that—I guess you could call an adventure—are those challenges that will give you a sense of pleasure at the end.”

Devin McKiernan has lived all over Colorado, most recently switching between Colorado Springs and Black Forest. Unfortunately this movement has not been by his choice alone. “My parents were never really set on one home,” he says, “and when they finally found the home they wanted to stay in, they divorced.” As is the tale with all students at Eagle Rock, Devin was finding public high school a bothersome matter. Success for him was elusive. “I was kicked out of the entire school district where I was living,” he shares openly. Soon after his mom found out about Eagle Rock. ‘Devin, just go to the school and make a prospective visit,’ his mom told him. The other alternative: the Army. After a prospective visit, Devin fell in love with the school, even though the prospect arose from dissonance. And now at the edge of graduation, he reflects on finding life again in school: “If I were good in school I probably would have graduated by now but I wouldn’t have been experiencing personal growth and what I’m learning now. I probably wouldn’t be going to college if it weren’t for Eagle Rock.”

Most Eagle Rock students will explain that life here among the mountains is demanding, and Devin is no different. There are still days he doesn’t want to be here. “Who wants to be away from home?” he asks. The initial adjustment was especially tough. For him, those first steps were eye opening. “Getting over the façade I was in and realizing what the school could do for me gave

me so much motivation to better myself.” Other challenges would continue beyond the first year, even until the very end, but with each trimester self-knowledge increased. Learning that his dependency on relationships could be crippling was one such aspect of self-knowledge. “I don’t like being alone,” Devin says. “If I’m in a relationship I focused better. But I used to let my emotions take complete control of me and now I’m realizing how beneficial it is that I’m out of the relationship with all the work I have to do.” His advice for current students facing such challenge: “Keep yourself busy. I know doing a bunch of work halfway through your career at Eagle Rock doesn’t seem necessary or beneficial, but in the end it’ll make you less stressed. Also, don’t get drawn in by people who easily influence you. You can’t hide anything here. It all comes out at some point so the best thing to do is not do it.”

Though just a few days away from walking the graduation stage and accepting his diploma, Devin admits that he would love to stay an extra trimester, but he knows it’s time to move on. Often found on the basketball court at Eagle Rock, Devin plans to take this passion to the next level. “My plan is to go to a community college in Wyoming to study physical science, kind of like Jeff Liddle does, and play basketball there to save some money. From there transfer to a university to play basketball there too.”

Eagle Rock has a certain ability to draw on vulnerability from its community of 80-or-so youth. Lalo’s tale is no different. **Eduardo Velasco**, “Lalo,” to those who know him, has charted a course from Linwood, California to Paramount, to the mountains of Estes Park, Colorado. “Growing up,” he

☞ See *“Graduates” – Cont. on Pg. 10*

REFLECTIONS ON THE VALUE OF NEW STUDENT WILDERNESS ORIENTATION

by Steve Sommer, Public Allies Teaching Fellow in Outdoor Education

Beginning with the first students arriving at Eagle Rock School in 1993, the commencement of a student's career has been marked by a signature twenty-three day wilderness orientation course. During this time, new students leave behind the relative comforts of a new campus and venture to the backcountry to hike, climb, offer service, reflect, and learn to work with each other. In the early days this was an "all hands on deck" effort. Nearly every instructional staff acted as field instructors, leaving behind a skeleton crew to maintain campus. Since then our outdoor and wilderness orientation program has developed into a foundational component of a student's tenure at ERS.

The course provides a common vocabulary, shared experience, and rite of passage familiar to all ERS community members. As such importance in a student's early career is drawn from the wilderness orientation, it is worth some consideration how the lessons from the field carry over into life here at "The Rock." For often it is the unspoken, untaught and otherwise personally experienced lessons that translate most vividly.

In the field, we greet each day with morning exercise, community gathering, completion of group tasks, and set about with the necessary logistics for survival and ambition in a said course area. We discuss the values of the 8+5=10 framework, establish daily themes, and experiment with various tools in communication. There is also the teaching of necessary technical skills for navigation, self-preservation, camp craft, and safe travel. In some sense, our experience is paralleled to the daily flow of veteran students back on campus, while in many regards our journey is unique. Our daily mantra is, "As I become an Eagle Rock student I have the desire to succeed and am prepared to make changes in my life."

There is some formal instruction, a la traditional academics, particularly in the first week of course. Field staff begrudgingly accept the

role of a, "This is what you need to know, let me tell you" teaching style as we triage the basics. Essential skills, expectations, physical and emotional safety, vocabulary, and resources are discussed. And then, the praxis begins as field instructors reduce their airtime, downsize their presence, and allow students to claim ownership of their experience. With a basic set of skills and resources students are free to drive their own learning.

However, it is not the things explicitly taught in the field that inform a new student's enduring understandings, it is the ideas, practices, and techniques that she comes to recognize in herself which prove most powerful. In some sense, the experience speaks for itself. Yet this does not come without some costs, and without some guidance. One must first burn the refried beans before one can appreciate a proper backcountry burrito, just as one must spend a cold, wet, rainy night before she can fully understand the importance of a properly built shelter. It is occasionally important to get lost, in order to better understand how to find yourself; even if this involves hiking an extra five miles off trail.

The idea of the natural consequence reigns supreme in the backcountry. Without the aide and distraction of modern conveniences, one is afforded the opportunity to recognize his own



➤ See "Reflections" – Cont. on Pg. 10

📖 "Reflections" – Cont. from Pg. 9

agency, capability, and affect on the world. In fact, he is forced to do so. Travelling in a crew of no more than ten peers assists in recognizing personal responsibility, impact on others, and role in a community. And if the individual does not come to these understandings, the small group of peers will likely remind him. There are few places to hide in the backcountry; from oneself or from others.

It is important to deliberately interpret this kind of new, vulnerable, and challenging experience. A wilderness orientation course is designed explicitly to challenge a student's comfort zone, give her tools to overcome this challenge, and provide reflective space to understand how to transfer these skills into a more routine life, namely at Eagle Rock School. We do not expect students to perform perfectly, but do expect that they reflect upon and learn from their experience. It is

our intent to provide a safe place to make mistakes, give room for reflection, and allow students to design their own learning.

With increased responsibility comes increased freedom. The ERS wilderness orientation course is designed to teach a toolbox of technical, reflective, and communicative equipment and provide a real life, hands on, non-contrived venue in which to put these skills to practice. As at Eagle Rock, those that choose to declare their freedom by taking responsibility for their actions, initiative with their learning, and an interest in their community are met with a safe space to experiment, reflect, and grow. It is our hope that through the common experience of the wilderness course and the emblazon peak experiences students uniquely feel, we introduce incoming classes to the ERS community with the intention, understanding, and solidarity requisite to making Eagle Rock School the strongest learning environment it can be.

📖 "Graduates" – Cont. from Pg. 8

says, "I never went to school. I always looked out for my family no matter what. That came first. I would rather stay at home and help my mom than go to school." The times Lalo was in attendance at school, trouble found him; whereas education was already on the line, involvement in gang culture took yet another toll on his life. At the age of sixteen, Lalo was facing a life sentence. Long story short, "I was facing life. But I got out." Lalo was given his second chance, and with second chances being what Eagle Rock is about, Lalo took his first steps in life once again. Lalo was born again.

Wrought with its own challenges, life at Eagle Rock would certainly provide its own poignant battles with self. "Living in the environment" was a huge change, Lalo expresses. "All this was new

to me, especially my first couple trimesters. I came in, open-minded, with the mindset that I wanted to change, but I didn't know what to expect. All this: living with other people, giving presentations, living in a new environment. Now I look back, that was part of my personal growth, the way I learned." With the benefit of hindsight, he now urges all students to see the numerous opportunities for continuous change that Eagle Rock provides. Even kitchen patrol (KP) for example: "that could help you out a lot." Lalo is ready for the next step. With one final presentation separating him from a high school diploma, his future plans are ready in their queue.

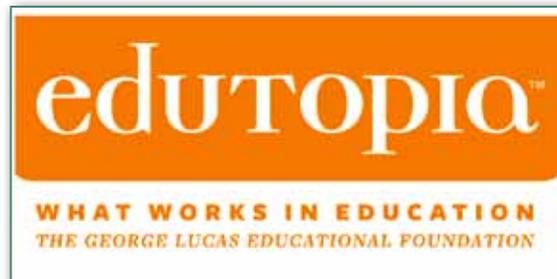
"Go home, enjoy time with my family, spend time with my son, and help out my family. The short-term goal: raise some money for me and my son and go back to LA. Hopefully by next year, I'm going

to start community college. Right now, I need to go home and fix a couple things. Those are my short-term. But I got big plans. I would love to get into the movie business, be the cameraman. Hopefully I can be a private photographer for a team. I also want to get into offering and helping youth, what brought me into this place. I'll go visit different prisons, different jails, offering them a second chance. I want to get involved in that type of work; giving back to people." Lalo shakes his head from side to side as he shares these goals. "I can't believe it man. I can't believe I made it this far.... Graduation is one of the best things that happened to me so far, besides being given a second chance. It's like a dream come true. Appreciate everything around you."

CREATIVE DISSIDENTS: STOP SHORTCHANGING TALENTED KIDS WHO CHALLENGE US

by Mark Phillips

Portions being reprinted with permission from the January 16, 2012 edition of Edutopia



A few years ago I spent time at Eagle Rock School, a wonderful school in Colorado for so-called “at-risk” kids from all over the country. I noticed that many of the best students were highly creative kids with extraordinary leadership, presentation and communication skills. Exploring further, I discovered that many of these same students had been in and out of two or three high schools prior to coming to Eagle Rock; in some cases voluntarily, in some cases not.

Talking with the students, I became aware that each one of them could be described as creative dissidents, kids with high intellectual and/or creative abilities who were difficult for teachers to handle. The trouble they caused was not criminal but disruptive. This usually took one of two forms. One was active, such as sabotaging a class with wise-ass comments, or talking back continually to the teacher. Some, however, did it through relatively passive means, via sullen non-participation or other forms of quiet defiance. Not infrequently these students were also a challenge to their parents.

These were not kids who needed a psychologist. Most of them were articulate, self-aware and positively provocative in their thoughts and feelings about our society. If they lacked anything before Eagle Rock it was: a) a supportive environment that engaged, encouraged and rewarded their spirits and their minds; b) teachers and administrators who didn't react defensively to their confrontational behaviors; and c) the skills to effectively assert themselves. In schools that they found discouraging, they didn't know how to respond in an effective way to improve their situation.

Inviting the Outsiders In

Our schools are reasonably good at identifying intellectually gifted kids but still fall far short in understanding, reaching and strengthening creative kids who are defiant or unreachable. Importantly, in failing these kids we greatly

shortchange ourselves as a society. Many of these students are leaders at Eagle Rock, with the potential to play a similar role as adults. In their former environments, they were often lost and angry.

There is usually an award for those who comply. High achieving, studious kids usually conform to the norms of the school and get rewarded. Our social leaders also usually do well, even when their academic work isn't quite up to par. Some creative kids don't do well in classes that they find boring and often hate rote learning, but their disengagement may not be coupled with defiance.

But we generally do poorly with kids who talk back or sullenly withdraw. I've lost count of how many times I've heard a teacher say, “He's really bright, but he's such a pain in the ass.” And teachers and parents

who play strong authority roles have particular problems with these kids.

Yet recent research shows us that teens who talk back and argue, if properly mentored, will emerge stronger than more compliant teens and better able to resist succumbing to peer pressure.

At Eagle Rock and similar schools, the answer is in teaching these kids to effectively channel their frustration with the world (or at least “their” world) into effective ways of changing it. And it's also tough love, an environment that is high on support but sets very strict limits. Most importantly, there is patience and genuine compassion for students even when they are angry or withdrawn.

Attitude Adjustment on Both Sides

Much of this has to do with how we as educators respond to defiant students. Can we get past our own defensiveness and reach these kids? Years ago a wise senior colleague told me that when a kid is sullen, angry and pushing you away, that's often the

➦ See “Creative Dissidents” – Cont. on Pg. 12

📖 "Creative Dissidents" – Cont. on Pg. 11

time they most need your arm around their shoulder, when they most need your compassion. That's quite a challenge and calls for real strength on the part of the teacher or administrator.

There are helpful hints about how to best reach these students in a number of books. Richard Curwin, Allen Mendler, and Brian Mendler's, *Discipline with Dignity, 3rd Edition: New Challenges, New Solutions*, LouAnne Johnson's *Teaching Outside the Box*, and *Reclaiming Youth at Risk: Our Hope for the Future*, Revised Edition, by Brendtro, Brokenleg, and Van Bockern, can all be helpful.

I think the key variable is not methodology, but rather teacher attitude and the ability to genuinely care about these students. Here I'm reminded of a

passage from Rainer Maria Rilke's *Letters to a Young Poet*, in which he wrote: "How should we be able to forget those ancient myths that are the beginnings of all peoples, the myths about dragons that at the last moment turn into princesses; perhaps all the dragons of our lives are princesses who are only waiting to see us once beautiful and brave."

Most of the students I interviewed would laugh to hear themselves described as princesses, but almost all would acknowledge that they'd been dragons. And contrary to the way many teachers and administrators react, these dragons need to be cared for and tamed, not avoided or slain. The cost is too great and the potential payoff too rich to not reach out to and engage these students.

📖 "Outside" – Cont. from Pg. 6

In February, you wrote on your blog: "I try not to think much about land. I wish land didn't exist, as if that would make all my negative thoughts go away."

This is my niche. Life is easier at sea. Your problems become very basic and are based on survival, not drama. I am starting to look forward to land but land is also where the problems live.

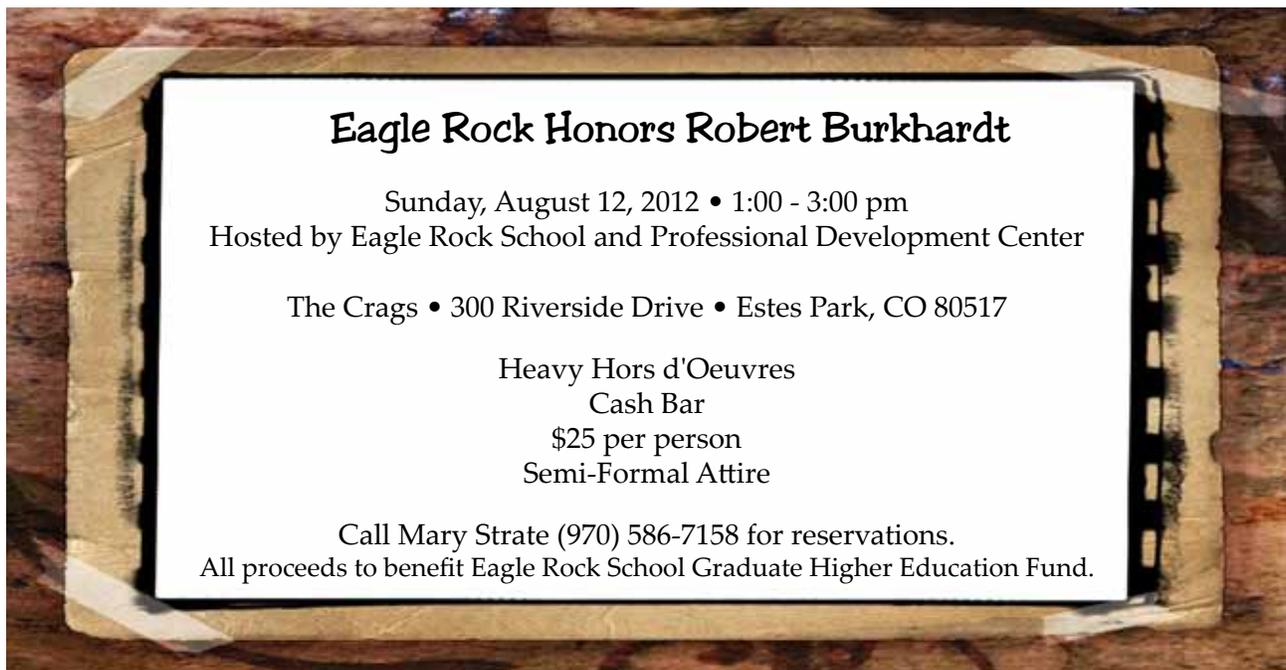
You mentioned that you don't have a girlfriend and that your family situation is complicated. Do you know who will be there in Annapolis to greet you?

I don't know. My contact with people back home is minimal, calls on the satellite phone are expensive, and I'm in a bad situation with power. Maybe my dad will

show up, but he lives in Arizona, so I don't know. I'll be fine as long as one person shows up with a six-pack of Guinness. After being alone so long, the idea of seeing a lot of people is intimidating.

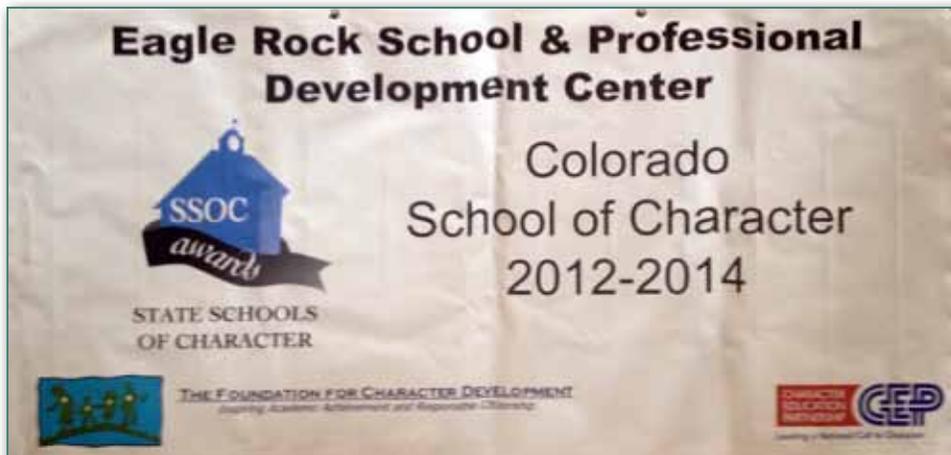
So what will life be like for you when you return home?

I'll be broke. When I get back I plan to make a few deliveries—I'll bring some boats up from the Caribbean. Then hopefully I'll have enough money to live on my boat, on anchor, which is free, and try to live off the savings I get from the deliveries to have two to three months to write a book. I've been traveling, one trip after another, for 10 years now. I'm not sure what the future holds. I try not to think about it.



EAGLE ROCK NAMED 2012 NATIONAL SCHOOL OF CHARACTER FINALIST

Portions being reprinted with permission from the March 22, 2012 edition of the Estes Park News



The Character Education Partnership (CEP) has named 22 public schools, three private schools, one charter school, and two school districts as National Finalists in the 2012 National Schools of Character (NSOC) program.

"These schools are using character education to shape cultures that encourage high student achievement, mutual respect, and integrity among students, staff, and faculty," said CEP President Mark Hyatt. "The results show that character education really works to transform schools into learning communities for all stakeholders."

Schools that apply for NSOC recognition benefit from self-assessment as well as the expert feedback they receive at no cost. Once they reach a standard of excellence, a process that may take several years, they are recognized as Schools of Character and asked to help other schools transform their school cultures. Describing the program as a path to school improvement through high-quality character education, CEP has

offered the NSOC program to K-12 schools and districts in the U.S. since 1998.

"We are excited to have the opportunity to share the stories of 28 more school communities doing the right thing for kids," said Lara Maupin, NSOC Director. "These are schools where parents get choked up telling visitors what the school means to them."

The 28 National Finalists were selected from an applicant pool of 126 schools and districts across the United States based on the quality of their written applications. In March and April they will undergo an intensive screening process that will include site visits and analysis of the impact of their character-related efforts on academics, student behavior, and school culture.

The Finalists include 17 elementary schools, four middle schools, two alternative high schools, three mixed-grade schools, one K-12 public school district, and one national charter school district. They represent 15 states and Puerto Rico, with Missouri having

the highest number at six. Over half of the Finalists have student populations where one-quarter or more qualify for free or reduced lunch.

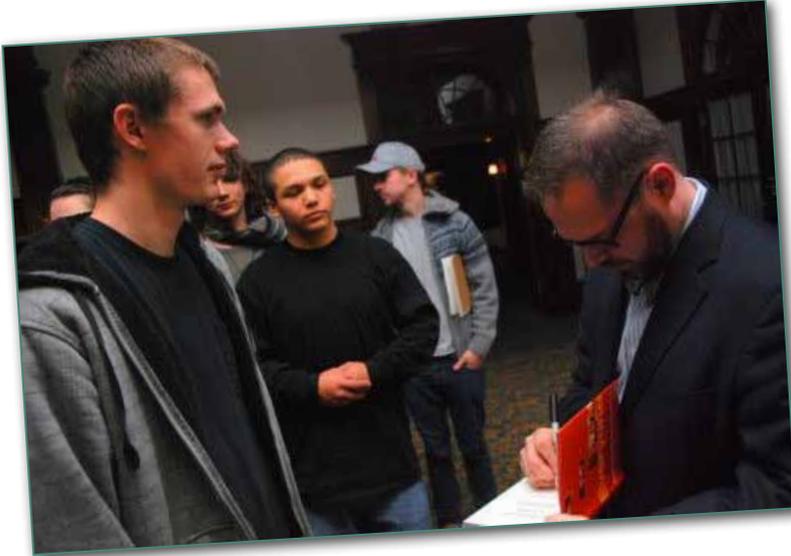
The 2012 National Schools of Character will be announced in early May. CEP will honor these schools and districts at the 19th National Forum on Character Education, to be held November 1-3, 2012 in Washington, DC. Visit www.character.org to learn more about the NSOC program and the 2012 National Finalists.

Alex Kotlowitz writes in his 1999 New York Times Sunday Magazine piece about Eagle Rock School and Professional Development Center, "We school people are really gifted and talented at finding reasons why the good things happening at another school can't possibly happen at my school," said Roland S. Barth, the founder of the Principal's Center at the Graduate School of Education at Harvard and a visitor to Eagle Rock. "There's a lot of conversation now about character, about values, about teaching respect. It's often rhetorical. I don't think many schools are as intentional at developing community and really being clear about what the values are of that community as is Eagle Rock. "It would be only fair to point out that its components – smallness, teaching values, experiential learning, service requirements, presentations of learning " are not new. Rather it is the chassis that Eagle Rock has welded with each of these parts that presents such a startling new design."

EVERYONE LEADS

by Stephanie Baker, Public Allies Teaching Fellow in Service Learning

Portions being reprinted with permission from the
April 3, 2012 edition of Ally Snapshots blog



graduated from Ivy League schools or who have long resume of accomplishments. The Public Allies program breaks this notion by investing in people who are committed to making a change in their community, regardless of background and so-called “prestige.”

It is hard for many students at Eagle Rock to envision themselves as leaders, because similar to what Paul said, many people do not look at the teenager with a difficult background and think of a future leader. However, at Eagle Rock, we do just that. We focus on building individual integrity, citizenship, ethics, leadership for justice, artistic expression, spirit, and physical health within each student. Paul’s message, that everyone can lead, fit right in with the philosophy of Eagle Rock School.

I interviewed two students, Morgan Dolak and Steven Leger, about their thoughts and reactions to Paul’s talk. Their responses are below.

On March 20th at the historic Stanley Hotel, Eagle Rock School staff and students had the privilege to hear the CEO of Public Allies, Paul Schmitz, talk about his new book *Everyone Leads: Building Leadership from the Community Up*. This book encapsulates the Public Allies view of leadership: that everyone, despite education, race, or other distinctions, has the capacity to become leaders of their community. As Paul told the Eagle Rock community in his talk: leadership is an action that everyone can take. What stuck out most in his speech were the stories of former Public Allies fellows and their transformation into leaders. One former Milwaukee Ally, Peter Hoeffel, went from working in a deli shop to discovering a passion for people with disabilities, and then went on to lead the Milwaukee chapter of the National Alliance on Mental Health. Another former fellow, Bizunesh Talbot-Scott, applied to Public Allies when she was an 18-year-old single mom with a two year-old. She worked at the Youth Leadership Academy in Milwaukee and later got a law degree from the University of Michigan, and later worked for the Obama Administration. As quoted in the book, she states, “I was a smart girl who had no idea of my potential before Public Allies.”

When telling Peter’s story, Paul said to the students, “no one looked at the guy in a deli shop and thought of a leader.” This was really important for our students to hear. In our society, the leadership paradigm is based on the notion that we need heroes and saviors that

Morgan Dolak

Paul shared that when he was younger, many people looked at him and they did not see a leader. Have you always seen yourself as a leader?

Morgan: Not before Eagle Rock, I didn’t know being leader was so important before Eagle Rock... it was the first time I had ever been introduced to being a leader...

What made you change your mind besides being introduced to it; did someone change your mind?

Morgan: I think when I met Jon Anderson [a teacher at Eagle Rock] and I took his class called: “Be a Leader.” I thought this was awesome, I don’t really have any set leadership opportunities in the community, but I can make my own. He said if you’re going to try and lead you need to be confident in yourself, which is something I wasn’t...I’m still building my self-confidence in order to be a more effective leader, him and Jesse [another Eagle Rock teacher] really encourage me and help me...

Steven Leger

Did you know what Public Allies was before Paul spoke about it?

➤ See “Everyone Leads” – Cont. on Pg. 15

"Everyone Leads" – Cont. from Pg. 14

Steven: I had heard about it, but I never thought about what it could mean to me.

What is your understanding of it now?

Steven: The name makes a lot of sense...but I think it went a little deeper for me when I started thinking about how people start engaging in the community from all over the world...I can't say I have a total in-depth understanding of how Public Allies works. But I definitely have enough of understanding to be interested in doing something like that...

What do you think of his concept everyone can lead?

Steven: I started reading the book ... and its all these different stories about how people from small towns that start of working in a retail shops and then do monumental things in their communities, it's such a great idea...

Is this a new leadership concept to you?

Steven: Definitely

How had you thought about leadership before that?

Steven: When I thought everyone leads I thought about the saying "too many chiefs and not enough Indians..." so when everyone is leading it can be a mess, but he [Paul] really broke it down...he said there are never too many leaders, even if everyone is leading and that made sense to me...

Do you see this type of leadership as something you will try at Eagle Rock?

Steven: Yea. My dad has told me that I am a leader, and I really like this idea, and I never really thought about how I lead people. And I never really considered that leading by example works better than leading by dictatorship...

Dear Friend:

It's time again for the Estes Park Duck Race, and we hope you will make a choice to support the Eagle Rock Graduate Fund by purchasing one or more tickets. This annual fund-raiser generates money to support past and future Eagle Rock graduates in their pursuit of higher education.

Every year in Estes Park the local Rotary Club sponsors the Duck Race. On Saturday, May 5, more than 5000 rubber duckies will float down the Big Thompson River. The first 500 ducks win nifty prizes, including a MacBook Pro laptop, an iPad, a 46" TV and a digital camera. Local organizations sell Duck Race tickets for \$20 apiece; the more tickets we sell, the more money we raise for our Graduate Fund. Please help us!

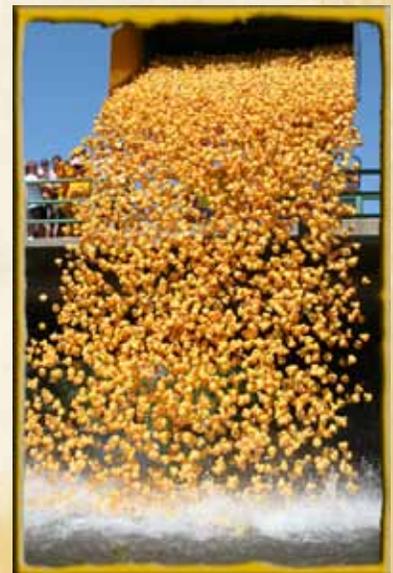
We established the Eagle Rock Graduate Fund in 1997. Through the generosity of many individuals over the past fifteen years we have awarded more than \$650,000. Every graduate of Eagle Rock is currently eligible for up to \$14,000 towards the costs of undergraduate and post-graduate education. As we grow The Fund, that amount will increase.

Here's how you can help: Please buy as many tickets as you can afford (checks made out to ESTES PARK DUCK RACE)—MULTIPLES OF \$20); ask your family and friends to participate as well. Send checks to: Eagle Rock, 2750 Notaiah Road, Estes Park, CO 80517, we'll send you your tickets, and you can start figuring where to put the MacBook.

Thank you in advance for supporting Eagle Rock and our graduates.

Sincerely,

Robert Burkhardt
Head of School



EAGLE ROCK PARTNERS WITH BERKLEE COLLEGE OF MUSIC

by Ike Leslie, Instructional Specialist in Music

Last year Eagle Rock became Berklee College of Music's newest partner high school. The Music Department is now a member site of the Berklee City Music Network, a nonprofit dedicated to delivering underserved youth a quality, contemporary music education. With their thirty-plus partner sites around the country, the network aims to deliver the musical proficiency and financial resources needed for students to succeed at a prestigious institution like Berklee College of Music. The network brings these resources to students who would not otherwise have the opportunity to attend Berklee.

The core of the partnership is Berklee's PULSE music method. PULSE stands for "Pre-University Learning System Experience." It is an online curriculum in music theory, musicianship skills, and ear training. It is completely individualized. Each student has her or his own online account. It is flexible for any instrument and can be scaled for beginning and advanced musicians. Students at Eagle Rock may use PULSE on their own or in classes like "Voices In Your Head" (music theory, ear training, and voice technique) and "Blue Notes" (Blues improvisation and theory).

The Berklee City Music Network offers up to two students from each partner site scholarships to attend the Berklee Five Week Summer Program in Boston every year. In February 2012, four Eagle Rock students auditioned for the scholarships in Denver. We are proud to announce that Taber Lathrop and Nija'ah Pierce earned scholarships and will be studying at Berklee for five weeks this summer.

Eagle Rock students who attend the summer program and who use the PULSE curriculum are eligible to compete for full-tuition, four-year scholarships to attend Berklee College of Music after graduating from Eagle Rock.

Besides access to PULSE and scholarships, the relationships we have built with Berklee faculty have



been

invaluable. This past Explore Week, Berklee faculty served as guest instructors for the Eagle Rock Choir and Improv Ensemble. Annette Philip and Mark Kohler took a week off from their normal college teaching schedule and immersed Eagle Rock students in university-level instruction.

In addition to the Berklee City Music Network, Eagle Rock has a new partnership with Berklee Music, Berklee College's online extension school. All current and former Eagle Rock students and staff may take Berklee classes online at a 20% discount. Berklee Music offers courses and certificates in Music Production, Song Writing, Arranging, Music Theory, Music Business, Guitar, Bass, Keyboard, Drums, and Voice. Eagle Rock graduates may use their Eagle Rock Graduate Fund scholarship to pay for these classes.

Perhaps most exciting about Eagle Rock's partnership with Berklee are the reactions of the eight Berklee faculty who have visited Eagle Rock over the last two years. At the end of Explore Week, a cohort of Eagle Rock students in tears said goodbye to Annette and Mark as they climbed into the shuttle to the airport. Inspired by the Eagle Rock community, Annette and Mark have already decided that they will be back. Eagle Rock's journey with Berklee has only just begun.