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Alternatives for Youth Receives 2008 NOVA Award in Education

LONGMONT, Colorado – September 10, 2008 – On September 8, 2008 as a part of the Community Foundation Serving Boulder County’s annual Community Stars Event, Alternatives for Youth received the 2008 NOVA Award in Education. The NOVA Awards honor innovation in programming or operational excellence within Boulder County non-profit organizations and looks for organizations demonstrating entrepreneurial spirit, distinctive resourcefulness, unique approaches to service, and sustainable vision that has resulted in increased or improved services.

Following the theme of the 2008 Community Stars Event, Planting the Seed, Alternatives for Youth variety of work with youth plants the seed for youth to succeed in school and life. Deborah Roberts, Alternatives for Youth’s Executive Director, said, “We are thrilled to be recognized for our work in innovative educational programs for at-risk youth. Planting seeds and helping them grow in the youth we work with is what we’re all about.”

In 2007 and 2008, Alternatives for Youth’s programs achieved the following as a part of their entrepreneurial, resourceful and unique approaches to services, which contributed to winning the NOVA Award:

- Our Celebrando la Familia program’s Girls Group, composed of fourteen at-risk sixth and seventh grade girls, participated in the Bust Big Tobacco program this school year, a middle school tobacco media and advocacy education program. This fall, Girls Group will begin using the Girls Circle curriculum, a strengths-based, skill building approach that creates a safe space for girls to address risky behaviors, build on protective factors, and improve relationships in a format that interests and engages girls.
- Celebrando la Familia’s Folklorico Dance Group expanded their dance repertoire, learning two additional, traditional Mexican dances, participated in local community celebrations, and will be a part of the Longmont Symphony Orchestra’s La Fiesta Mexicana on Saturday, May 10.
- Celebrando la Familia’s Summer Program, which offers 80 at-risk elementary through high school youth a recreational and academic program as well as leadership, life skills and pre-employment skill training to approximately 18 teen assistants, expanded by one day in summer 2008 to offer two days of academic assistance, two days of recreational activities and one day of training for teen assistants.
- Celebrando la Familia’s Program Director, Mary Vigil, helped to found the St. Vrain Valley Parent Committee Taskforce in spring 2008. This new taskforce made up of staff members from Alternatives for Youth, the Colorado Statewide Parent Coalition, St. Vrain Valley School District, El Comité, Intercambio de Comunidades, Boulder County Heath, and Boulder County Action Program, provides a calendar of monthly parent meetings.

- Our conflict resolution and anger management program, NorthStar, continued holding classes at two middle schools for students at-risk of suspension or expulsion as well as evening classes for middle school students and their parents. NorthStar is a significant part of St. Vrain Valley School District's efforts to decrease suspensions and expulsions, especially among Hispanic youth.
- Our school for expelled youth of the St. Vrain Valley School District, Clearview Educational Center, expanded the high school program by two hours for a full five hour school day and will expand the school day to six hours for all students beginning in January 2009. In addition, math classes, individual counseling and a service learning component held at Joder Arabian Ranch were added in the 2007-2008 school year. Class time, experiential education and transition services will be expanded beginning this fall and in January 2009.
- This summer, all Clearview Educational Center will implemented an expeditionary component for the summer school session. Students attended a three week summer school to keep students engaged in education during the summer break and to help students earn additional credits. Returning students will participate in a variety of outdoor and experiential education, which began with a day trip to Rocky Mountain National Park in September 2008 and will also include a ropes course trip and weekend camping trip.

Alternatives for Youth, Inc.'s mission is to promote academic persistence and success of youth by instilling values that lead to positive choices and positive community impact and by encouraging social, cultural, and self development. Since 1978, Alternatives for Youth has been providing services to youth and their families in the Longmont community. Last year, over 700 youth and their families received services through Alternatives for Youth, including after-school homework clubs, parenting education, an alternative school for expelled youth, positive recreational activities, youth leadership opportunities, academic enrichment activities, and service learning activities.

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