



## The Community Foundation BOULDER COUNTY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Gretchen Minekime

303-442-0436 x107

[Gretchen@commfound.org](mailto:Gretchen@commfound.org)

### **Community Foundation awards largest-ever unrestricted grant**

#### **\$90,000.00 in funding to help local nonprofit tackle Boulder County's achievement gap**

Boulder (May 22, 2009) - A first-of-its-kind program aimed at narrowing the achievement gap in Boulder County has received the largest grant ever from The Community Foundation's unrestricted fund, The Community Trust.

This month the Foundation's Board of Trustees unanimously voted to support Providers Advancing School Outcomes with a grant of \$90,000.00. The funding will prevent the program from shuttering when its current federal grant runs out June 30. It will allow PASO to continue operating through at least the end of this year, and may position the program to qualify for a sustainable source of state funding that will allow it to expand across Colorado.

"Early education is the best thing that can happen," said Alberto, a Longmont landscaper whose little girl has benefited under the care of a PASO-trained provider. "It's the soul of a child's education."

Founded three years ago in Boulder County by the Colorado Statewide Parent Coalition, PASO's goal is to promote school readiness and reduce the achievement gap between the county's well-prepared and unprepared children living in poverty, before they enter kindergarten. The nonprofit currently does this by providing professional development to Latino Family Friend & Neighbor providers to enhance language and literacy development for Latino children in poverty, birth through five years of age.

Alberto and his wife Sonia, who works at a Longmont McDonalds, know they are among the lucky parents who stumbled into contact with the fledgling PASO program. Most parents in similar situations to them are falling through the cracks. When that happens, their kids fall through the cracks also, and the

achievement gap widens.

Last year, only 31 percent of the BVSD 10th graders who qualified for the free lunch program scored proficient or advanced on their CSAP reading scores. Compare that to the 77 percent of their peers who did not qualify for free or reduced lunch but who made the grade.

Experts see a direct link between Boulder County's widening achievement gap and the lack of a comprehensive system that makes sure all kids, ages birth to 5, show up to school ready to learn.

Current public spending on school readiness amounts to \$276 per Boulder County child under age 6. Compare that to the \$6,500 per pupil annually spent in BVSD, and you can see there is no comprehensive childcare and early education system in Boulder County. It's the kind of system experts say is needed to turn Boulder County's achievement gap around.

Next year, PASO's directors aim to expand the program to include providers of childcare for white children in poverty. They also plan to replicate the program in other Colorado counties.

The grant from The Community Foundation was made possible by individual gifts from more than 800 Boulder County donors, who gave more than \$800,000.00 to The Community Trust last fall. The successful start to this fundraising effort put The Community Foundation on track to meet its four-year goal of raising \$4 million for the unrestricted grant-making fund.

The Community Foundation is committed to using \$1 out of every \$4 raised to help amplify efforts already underway to close the achievement gap by improving school readiness.

The other \$3 out of every \$4 raised will go towards a goal of doubling the overall financial support to Boulder County nonprofits from The Community Trust, now and forever. Thanks to the community's great early support, we were able to nearly do that in January, by awarding \$320,000 to Boulder County nonprofits, up from \$175,000 the year before.

In total, The Community Foundation granted \$4.7 million to nonprofit organizations in 2008.

## **Purpose of The Community Foundation**

The Community Foundation exists to improve the quality of life in Boulder County, now and forever, and to build a culture of giving. The Foundation is the place where giving is informed and inspired to have the greatest impact on the vision of a better Boulder County. We are committed to intimately understanding needs and connecting to the nonprofits that address those needs. Purpose and passion are the inspiration for everything we do. Together, Boulder County residents and The Community Foundation can make a meaningful impact on our fellow residents' quality of life today and in the future. To learn more, please visit [www.commfound.org](http://www.commfound.org) or call 303-442-0436.

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