

September 2008

Dear (NAME),

This August the Donnell-Kay Foundation was pleased to be a co-sponsor of the *Ed Challenge for Change* event, which took place on the Sunday before the Democratic National Convention. A similar event was held in St. Paul during the Republican National Convention. This bipartisan event in Denver featured meaningful debate about education reform by some of the country's top political and school leaders, including Mayors Adrian Fenty (D.C.) and Cory Booker (Newark), and superintendents Joel Klien (NYC), Michelle Rhee (D.C.), Don Shalvey (Aspire Schools) and Michael Bennet (DPS). Kudos go to the Piton Foundation for its superb orchestration of this event!

Donnell-Kay is also continuing a commitment to bring new high-quality schools to the urban centers across Colorado's front-range. We are helping to resource a collaborative that will support and incubate new public schools and increase the supply of exceptional school leaders to run them. In the coming months you will certainly hear about the new organization, called "Get Smart Schools." It is dedicated to dramatically increasing the number of high quality, autonomous schools serving low-income students. Schools that are part of the Get Smart Schools network will be committed to effectively closing the achievement gap and adhering to the highest student achievement quality standards. By strategically addressing key barriers to new school creation, we intended to foster an environment that will attract leading educational entrepreneurs from around the nation and stimulate a strong collaboration of exceptional new schools. Amy Slothower, formerly of the Denver Venture School, is leading this organization as its Executive Director.

A related project of ours is Envision Schools Colorado, a new non-profit charter management organization that will oversee the operations of multiple schools in the metro area. It is modeled after the successful Envision Schools network in California. The first school will open in Denver in the fall of 2009 and the second will open in the fall of 2010. Through a rigorous college prep program with a strong emphasis on the Arts & Technology, Envision schools will serve a diverse student population and target students who will be the first in their families to attend college, with the goal that all students are admitted to and graduate from college. Ultimately, Envision is planning to open six schools in Colorado over the next several years, and the Denver Public Schools Board has already approved the first two.

We are thrilled to announce that Yee-Ann Cho has been hired as the Chief Executive Officer of Envision Schools Colorado. Formerly a Senior Program Officer with the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, Cho brings to Denver a national reputation as an expert in successful school reform.

One of Donnell-Kay's new focus areas is on school nutrition. In partnership with The Colorado Health Foundation and others, we are involved in a number of projects and events around food service in schools to ensure that students are receiving the best nutrition to facilitate their learning. Stay tuned for more information about those new initiatives.

On September 19, we will kick off our new Hot Lunch series for the 2008-09 school year. Our first speaker is Joe Williams, the Executive Director of Democrats for Education Reform. His presentation is entitled "Sleeper Reformers: Why Democrats (of all people) will be the ones who bring fundamental change to public education." To sign up for the September presentation or view the speakers for the rest of the year, please visit www.dkfoundation.org/speaker.asp.

We are continuing to fund and support the Statewide Dropout Initiative - a coalition working to address our state's dropout problem. The Colorado Children's Campaign will be taking the lead on that critical initiative and is working to coordinate its efforts with other key stakeholder groups, including the Governor's P-20 Council. We are optimistic that together we can make some meaningful reductions in the number of dropouts. Additionally, our Hot Lunch speakers in November will be Bob Balfanz and Martha Maclver from Johns Hopkins University. Bob and Martha have helped guide the efforts of the dropouts coalition, and their research will provide insight for all of us on what can be done to address the problem here in Colorado.

Our grant support this year has included \$50,000 to Envision Schools Colorado, \$43,000 to the Colorado Legacy Foundation to support the Colorado Department of Education's "Best Practices Guides," \$30,000 to the Colorado Children's Campaign and \$50,000 to John's Hopkins University for the dropout work, and \$60,000 to support Teach For America's work in Denver Public Schools.

Matt Samelson, who led the charge on the green schools and severance tax projects, has left Donnell-Kay to pursue a law degree. We wish him all the best in his new role as a student at the University of Colorado at Boulder! Our work on supporting green building of schools and encouraging renewable energy development by schools and districts will continue.

We are pleased to announce that Reyna Perez-Oquendo has joined our staff as of September 2nd. For the past year Reyna has been a Fellow with the El Pomar Foundation in Colorado Springs, working on grants, managing summer interns, directing the San Luis Valley Regional Partnership, and working with the El Pomar Youth in Community Service program to develop and implement curricula on philanthropy, leadership and effective grant making for high school students. We're excited to have Reyna join us!

Thank you for your commitment to education issues. With fall just around the corner, we are excited for all that this new school year and legislative session will bring. Please send us your thoughts on new projects and issue areas that we as a foundation might tackle.

Cheers,

Tony Lewis