

## **The Wayne Carle Award Recipients for 2009**

### **Pat D. Rojo Kennedy**

Pat D. Rojo Kennedy began her career in Jeffco as a classroom aide. She worked to acquire a teaching degree and flourished as an elementary teacher at Bear Creek, Kendallvue and Stein Elementary Schools. While at Stein Elementary, Pat wrote and received a grant to create a class that would teach English acquisition skills to the Spanish speaking community that attended the school. Hundreds of families from the neighborhood participated in this program making the site at Stein too small for the project. Dr. Wayne Carle helped Pat acquire the library at the old Villa Italia site for the classes. In time Pat's classes which merged with the "Learning Source" organization to continue this work and expand the classes to include teaching and parenting skills with a sensitivity to cultural understanding, citizenship acquisition and classes on becoming more educated in voting and electoral choices. Pat received the "Good News Award" in 2006 and retired from Jeffco after 20 years of exceptional service.

### **Shermita West**

Shermita West came to Jeffco in 1969 during the national Civil Rights unrest. She wanted to live in the community and asked a Caucasian friend to put a deposit on an apartment in Lakewood for her. When Shermita showed up to move in the leasing agent hesitated in allowing Shermita access to the predominantly white neighborhood. After some intense negotiations with the leasing agent and landlord, Shermita was able to move into her apartment and integrate that small Lakewood community. These negotiation skills served Shermita well as she went on to become the President of the JCEA. Shermita retired after 30 years of service and continues her work at the Jeffco Action Center where she served 6 years on their board providing support for over 300 homeless in Jeffco and the Colorado History Museum where she teaches about the integrity of the Plains Indians. Shermita hold true to her belief that all people deserve the same opportunities regardless of their economic situation or the color of their skin.

### **Jason Firestone**

Jason Firestone is Kaw Nation and first generation Mexican American. He came to Colorado from Dallas, Texas and grew up in the Leadville and Buena Vista area. After attending Adams State College where he majored in Speech and Theatre, Jason worked as a community liaison for Indian Education in Jeffco. In 2008 he became the Coordinator of Indian Education housed at Brady Exploration School and currently works to support the needs of over 1000 Native students who attend Jeffco schools. Jason spearheads the academic tutoring, classroom support, and credit recover programs needed by Jeffco's Native students and is integral to the community outreach his four member team provides. Jason serves on The Board for Service Providers of the Indian Community, The Title Seven Native Board, The Native Alliance, The Native American Prevention of Obesity Board and The Teachers of Color Summit Committee at CU Boulder. Jason is dedicated to his duty to his people and lives by the principles his culture embraces.

### **Mile High United Way**

For more than 120-years, Mile High United Way has successfully tapped into the power of collective generosity to provide creative, long-term solutions for the most pressing needs in

the Denver metro area. At Mile High United Way the focus is on helping people, ALL people, of all ages and in all stages of their lives through three interconnected initiatives: School Readiness, Youth Success and Adult Self-Sufficiency. Mile High United Way puts 100% of all financial contributions to work to provide direct services for those in need via partner agencies as well as through support resources like expertise, manpower and research that address the serious issues facing our community. Mile High United Way partnered with Jeffco and the Jefferson Foundation to bring the Lights On After School Program to the students in the district. Today, nearly 1200 students take advantage of quality after school programs in safe, nurturing environments at 20 Jeffco schools.

### **Aimee Pickar**

Born in Pottstown, Pennsylvania, Aimee moved to Boulder, Colorado in 1994 and began teaching in Jeffco in 1995. For the past 12 years at Swanson Elementary, Aimee has focused her efforts on spreading the word that only through the appreciation of diversity can a deeper understanding of art truly occur. Her brainchild, The Equity and Excellence Art Exhibit, has been in place for the past nine years. Aimee has also worked with the Jeffco Visual Arts Multicultural Writing Team, the “Sight Unseen” Core New Arts Space & Mile High Ceramics Blind Wheel Throwing Project for blind artists and the Empty Bowls Project for the Arvada Area. Aimee has received the Jeffco Value Award for Teamwork in 2002, The Colorado Distinguished Teacher Award in 2004, the Jeffco Council on Diversity Award in 2005 and the Jeffco Key Communicators Network Celebration of Excellence Award in 2006. Twice a year Aimee travels to the small fishing village of San Augustinillo, Oaxaca, Mexico to teach art and English literacy using art because she believes in the message and power of art for all children.

### **Phyllis Bubeck**

Phyllis came to Jeffco in 1991 from Indiana as Special Education Teacher. Her experience in SIED spanned from Indiana to Canada to the Dominican Republic. This experience built her focus on the cultural connections students use to make meaning and enriched the services she provided at Fitzmorris Elementary School. In 1995 she became an Art Teacher making her way to her current school, Wayne Carle Middle School. Phyllis has worked as a Gifted and Talented Liaison on the writing team for twice exceptional students, the Multicultural Visual Arts Writing Team, the CAP Documents for Middle School Visual Arts writing team and the CAP Visual Arts vertical teams. She has participated in the Empty Bowls Project for five years and has received the Value Award for Integrity from Wayne Carle Middle School. Phyllis has collaborated with Aimee Pickar on the organization, production and display of the Equity and Diversity Art Exhibit held in the Jeffco Education Center for the past eight years.

### **Be the Change Group**

The “Be the Change Group” at Arvada High School works on keeping the spirit of acceptance, tolerance and understanding integral to the schools annual *Challenge Day* experience alive. The group works to challenge the school to exhibit positive behaviors around sharing and accepting those who are different from you. The students identified, “acts of kindness,” “acceptance,” “helping other students,” and “compassion” as the positive behaviors for this school year and worked to establish these actions and manners school wide. The activities the group implemented to raise this awareness and improve the school climate were a complete success.

The “Be the Change Group” continues to work to improve acceptance and tolerance in the interactions of the cultures at Arvada High School.

### **Peace Jam Group**

The Peace Jam Group at Arvada West High School has their eye on global concerns and works to raise money and heighten awareness on World Issues. In Arvada West social studies classes the group presented power points on the atrocities in Darfur and brought to light how the impact of hate going unchecked can result in genocide. Their Peace-A-Palooza events have raised money to help children who have lost their parents to AIDS in Africa, for the Invisible Children and for the Rocky Mountain Food Bank to stop hunger in Colorado. The students have also worked to raise awareness of the Child Soldiers in Uganda and to end hate and racism. This year the group set up a large tarp on a wall at the school that said “Ending Racism & Hate in the World Begins with Us...How We Treat Each Other. I pledge to treat every person in our school with respect and dignity, no matter how different they are from me.” The students then printed their hands on the tarp and signed their names across their hand prints. These events raised over \$2,500.00. The “Peace Jam Group” continues their work to end racism and hate in their community and beyond.