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**ASPEN COMMUNITY SCHOOL BOOSTS CAPITAL CAMPAIGN
WITH \$250,000 GIFT FROM JOHN DENVER ASPENGLow FUND**
Donation Launches Phase II Fundraising and Celebrates Shared Love of Music

(Woody Creek, CO) April 22, 2014 — The Aspen Community School, currently in its final phase of fundraising for a new campus, has moved closer to its capital campaign goal with a two-part gift of \$250,000 from the John Denver Aspenglow Fund. The donation was made in the memory of Aspen's adopted son, local singer-songwriter, John Denver, and will provide crucial funding for the school's new music learning center, which will be named the "John Denver Music and Performing Arts Hall."

The gift kicks off Phase II of the Aspen Community School's (ACS) "I Believe" campaign to raise a final \$4M that will cover aspects of the campus construction that are ineligible for state funding, such as the BEST grant which the K-8 public charter school secured last year in an historic effort.

"The Aspenglow Fund represents the spirit of John Denver and this valley, and their commitment to our school and music program recognizes the vital importance of the performing arts in public education," said Skye Skinner, executive director. "We are honored to receive this gift, which elevates our campaign beyond our immediate school community and will, we hope, inspire others to get involved."

"As a champion of children's education, music and the environment, John Denver loved what the Aspen Community School has brought to this valley, and — through the global citizens it graduates — to the world," said Karmen Dopplaff, one of the fund's three volunteer advisors. "The guitar is how John made friends and so it's fitting that we support this innovative school's musical heritage and uniquely robust guitar program."

Attesting to his past support for ACS, in 1992, John Denver presented the school with the "Class Act" Environmental Award and grant, sponsored by Amway and Newsweek.

More recently, ACS made history on May, 1, 2013 when it succeeded in meeting a \$4.2M state challenge grant for new facilities, known as BEST funding, which along with \$4.9M in community giving, brought the campaign total up to \$9.1M. The school, which had just eight months to meet the challenge, raised the highest match in BEST history without a bond or financing.

Instead, the grassroots campaign met this ambitious goal by "turning traditional fundraising on its head," said Skinner. Unlike most capital campaigns which kick off with a few large donations,

ACS launched its fundraising in 2012 with a “people’s campaign” that garnered unprecedented support: attracting more than 650 contributors, including the school’s first million-dollar donation alongside 421 gifts of \$250 or less. The Aspenglow Fund gave \$153,000 toward the challenge grant in the first phase of fundraising, and this month made a second donation to elevate the fund’s total campaign contribution to \$250,000.

“Phase I showed us how much the community is a part of our school, and we are a part of the community,” said Skinner. “Together we rallied to get to the home stretch and we are now seeking philanthropic partners to help us cross the finish line.”

The successful effort brought the school to within 70% of its total goal, green lighting the project. However, the BEST grant, which invests in new construction of school facilities, does not cover the full scope of the school’s campus. ACS continues to actively solicit capital. Fundraising efforts are concurrent while the school finalizes construction documents, obtains permits and prepares for a groundbreaking ceremony on June 3.

The \$4M in Phase II funding will allow for the full realization of the campus, including elements such as:

- Music and performing arts hall
- Pedestrian-centric campus
- Green spaces for playing fields, outdoor classrooms, sledding hill and school commons
- Four employee housing units
- LEED Gold-targetted sustainability upgrades

Conversely, if the school does not meet its campaign goals, these valuable assets will be left on the cutting room floor.

While ACS is one of Colorado’s highest-performing schools, it operates in one of the state’s lowest-performing facilities. In fact, in the most recent School Facilities Index the school facility ranked near the *bottom 1%* of all of Colorado’s 1,689 public schools. The State of Colorado recognized this when they awarded ACS the BEST grant in August 2012.

A public charter school of the Aspen School District, Aspen Community School offers equal and tuition-free access to the school’s low student/teacher ratio, award-winning curriculum, integrated arts program and small school environment in Woody Creek, CO. More information is available www.IBelieveACS.org and 970-923-4080.

The John Denver Aspenglow Fund is a donor advised fund administered by the Aspen Community Foundation. The fund, which has dispersed \$2 million in gifts since its founding in 2013, provides community support in areas for which the late singer-songwriter was an advocate, including children’s education, the environment, hunger elimination and music. More information is available from Valerie Carlin at 970-925-9300.

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