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CHARTER SCHOOL CHAMPION WINS STATEWIDE LEADERSHIP AWARD
Skye Skinner Recognized with Colorado's Highest Charter School Honor

Woody Creek, CO (February 21, 2014) -- Compass is thrilled to announce that Skye Skinner has been recognized with Colorado's highest honor for a charter school administrator: the 2014 Charter School Leadership Award presented by the Colorado League of Charter Schools. As Executive Director of Compass, Skinner oversees a private preschool and two public charter schools in the Roaring Fork Valley: the Aspen Community School (ACS), located in Woody Creek, and the Carbondale Community School (CCS). She was selected from a pool of nine statewide nominees and received an unprecedented 12 separate nominations in which her diverse leadership skills were alternately characterized as a charter school "champion," "pit bull," "optimist," and "diplomat." The annual Leadership Award, which recognizes a leader who "demonstrates significant influence in developing or maintaining a charter school, improving school accountability and performance, or driving other aspects of school excellence," was presented on Thursday, February 20 at the League's annual conference in Denver.

"Skye represents what leadership should be about in our children's schools," said Dr. John Maloy, Superintendent of the Aspen School District. "She is extremely passionate in the work she performs and continues to put children first as was evident by her repeated effort to earn a BEST grant so that ACS could realize its hopes and dreams for its students, staff, and school community. It was my pleasure to nominate and support her for the League of Charter Schools Leadership Award."

"We are so excited to present Skye Skinner with the 2014 Charter School Leadership Award," said Nora E. Flood, President of the Colorado League of Charter Schools. "Skye's dedication to the Aspen and Carbondale Community Schools is inspiring and we congratulate her on this much-deserved honor."

Skinner, who has been at the helm of the organization for ten years, first joined Compass after seeking "educational excellence and a focus on the whole child" for her then four-year-old daughter in 1995, about the same time ACS was applying for its original charter contract. Starting out as an Executive Assistant, Skinner discovered what she calls "a wealth of opportunity and a community beyond her greatest imaginations." She embodied the school's ethos of lifelong learning when she moved up the ranks, first to Administrative Director, then to Interim Executive Director, and in 2004 to a permanent post as the organization's leader.

Among the many accomplishments during her tenure are:

- Participating in the conversion of ACS from a private learning center to a public charter school
- Collaborating on the start-up of a sister charter school (CCS)
- Overseeing and gaining county approval for the ACS Master Planning process
- Securing a \$4.1 million matching grant from the State of Colorado's BEST program
- Galvanizing 650+ community donors to raise the historic \$4.9 million match in eight months

The rebuilding of a new campus for ACS' aging log facilities, which is funded in part by the BEST grant, remains chief among Skinner's goals. The school's "I Believe" campus campaign is 70% complete and continues to actively seek donations for the final \$4 million push to the finish line. More information is available at: www.iBelieveACS.org and 970.923.4646.

In the one dozen nominations she received for the award, Skinner was frequently cited for her work on the BEST grant. The herculean effort, which took four years and an appeal to the State Board of Education, resulted in a successful achievement of the grant on May 1, 2013. Scott Newell, Interim Director of Colorado's Division of Capital Construction (BEST Grant Program), said:

"Skye should be commended for her relentless dedication to finding a solution for her school's dire facility needs, her countless hours preparing documentation and gathering necessary information, her unmatched efforts to raise capital for the funding a project of this size and her amazing personality, which is evidenced by the strong partnerships she has with the State, Administration at each of her schools, the authorizers of each of her districts, and all that come in contact with her. The number of hats Skye has worn of the past several years is astounding."

Compass is a non-profit educational organization dedicated to creating and supporting progressive, experiential learning environments. The organization's mission is to foster lifelong learning and to empower individuals to take responsibility for themselves, their learning and their community.

The Colorado League of Charter Schools is a non-profit, membership organization dedicated to supporting the charter schools in the state. The organizations' vision is *for all Colorado students to have access to high-quality, publicly-funded school options.* More at www.coloradoleague.org.

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