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**ASPEN COMMUNITY SCHOOL MOVES CLOSER TO CAMPAIGN GOAL WITH
GIFT FROM THE WALTON FAMILY FOUNDATION**
*Donation Propels Public Charter School Past the Halfway Mark
on BEST Challenge Grant Goal*

(Woody Creek, CO) March 19, 2013 — The Aspen Community School has moved closer to an \$11.6 million goal for the “I Believe We Can” capital campaign with a \$1 million gift from the Walton Family Foundation.

The gift brings the Aspen Community School (ACS) campaign total raised to \$2.6 million. The donation will be matched almost dollar-for-dollar by the State of Colorado, which has granted ACS a \$4.2 million BEST challenge grant (Building Excellent Schools Today), if the school can raise \$4.9 million by May 1. The challenge grant is part of ACS’ overall campaign goal of \$11.6 million to be raised by 2014.

“The Walton Family Foundation is a leader in supporting the national charter school movement and their generous gift is a powerful statement in recognition of the excellence at Aspen Community School,” said Skye Skinner, executive director. “This gift elevates our campaign beyond our immediate school community and will, we hope, inspire others to get involved.”

To meet this ambitious challenge, the grassroots school will continue to reach out to a broad swath of the community — from philanthropists to traditional campaign communities (school families, alumni, neighbors) to people who may not yet be involved with the school but who are passionate about public education making a difference in the United States.

“The heart of ACS has always been community,” said Skinner, “and that has never been more true. This is a ‘people’s campaign’ if ever there was one. We need everyone to get involved, to the best of their ability, to stand up for outstanding public education. ACS enriches educational choice in our valley and improves the quality of life for all residents.”

The school is currently hosting the “I Believe in Art” online auction to leverage its award-winning arts program to raise funds for the campaign. The auction, which features 90+ original and unique artworks by celebrated contemporary artists, is on through March 22 at www.IBelieveACS.org. Shortly thereafter, ACS will begin a “Bring Home the BEST” crowdfunding initiative. Both efforts, which offer giving levels for all types of donors, are meant to appeal to a diverse array of prospective participants who understand that no gift is too small or too large.

While ACS is one of Colorado’s highest-performing schools (in both arts and academics), it operates in one of the state’s lowest-performing facilities. In fact, 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.

When Sam and Helen Walton launched their modest retail business in 1962, one of their goals was to increase opportunity and improve the lives of others along the way. This guiding principle has played a pivotal role in the phenomenal growth of their small enterprise into a global retail leader. This principle also drives the philanthropic mission of the Walton Family Foundation.

Today the foundation is more focused than ever on sustaining the Walton's timeless small-town values and deep commitment to making life better for individuals and communities alike. By working with grantees and collaborating with other philanthropic organizations, the foundation is dedicated to making a positive difference in three focus areas:

- K-12 education reform
- Freshwater and marine conservation
- Quality of life initiatives in our home region

During 2012, the foundation invested \$432 million in domestic and international projects that addressed significant social and environmental issues, and sought to create exciting new opportunities. The foundation continues to implement and expand grant making to fund a positive difference in many diverse communities – and in the lives of the people who call them home. For more information, visit www.waltonfamilyfoundation.org.

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