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**Spring/
Summer '10**



Uplift

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About Colorado Uplift

Colorado Uplift is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization in Denver, Colorado, dedicated to building long-term, life-changing relationships with urban youth.

Established in 1982, Colorado Uplift utilizes full- and part-time teacher/mentors to provide four interdependent program areas to at-risk kids:

- In School
- After School
- Adventure
- Post Secondary

Comments, questions or article submissions may be sent to the Colorado Uplift office.

On the cover

Former Colorado Avalanche player Wojtek Wolski poses with Uplift student JaQuay at an in-line skating event.

Letter from the President

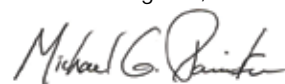
Dear Friends:

In 2009, Colorado Uplift served 3,615 students in 19 Denver Public Schools, helping students achieve success. For 2010, we will continue to focus on five significant program goals:

- **High-school graduation**, which is a key factor in future job procurement. Currently, Uplift has a 90% graduation rate for students in the program 3 or more years (out of 8 possible.) This is compared to Denver Public Schools (DPS) posted graduation rate of 52%.
- **Post-secondary enrollment for eligible students**, because more education leads to better opportunities. Colorado Uplift had 86% of its seniors apply for college or trade school, and 82% of those applicants contacted in the fall of 2009 were enrolled!
- **Behavior change**, indicated by students learning our 13 character qualities and life skills. Uplift students demonstrate growth in their ability to "future map," in key success skills, and development of personal values. Some great results from a new study on Uplift kids are discussed more on page 9.
- **Student leadership**, including students serving others and giving back to the community. The Advanced Leadership Training Course to Tijuana will take place in the Spring of 2010 to build houses for impoverished families. Our thanks to Board Member Steve James for his leadership on this project.
- **Personal and generational firsts**, including being the first in their family to graduate from high school or go to college; or being the first in their family to avoid substance abuse or becoming a teen parent. Many Uplift students face significant obstacles in school and at home, and, oftentimes, lack the support to make good, solid choices. Measuring these "firsts" is one way to track a student's growth and exploration into new horizons.

Thank you for partnering with us to help young people be the most they can be, regardless of the obstacles they face. All of us at Colorado Uplift are committed to the success of each and every student!

Warmest regards,



Michael G. Painter
 President and CEO

THANK YOU FOR PARTNERING WITH US TO HELP YOUNG PEOPLE BE THE MOST THEY CAN BE, REGARDLESS OF THE OBSTACLES THEY FACE.

Michael G. Painter



Feature Article: Risk Factor

One of the greatest risk factors facing inner-city kids is that of absentee parents, single parents and fatherlessness. The support role parents play in the lives of their children is crucial to their upbringing and success in life.

Parenting Parameters

According to the US Department of Health and Human Services, the majority of youth across the country still live with both parents (<http://www.childstats.gov/americaschildren/famsoc1.asp>), but less so over the years. For instance:

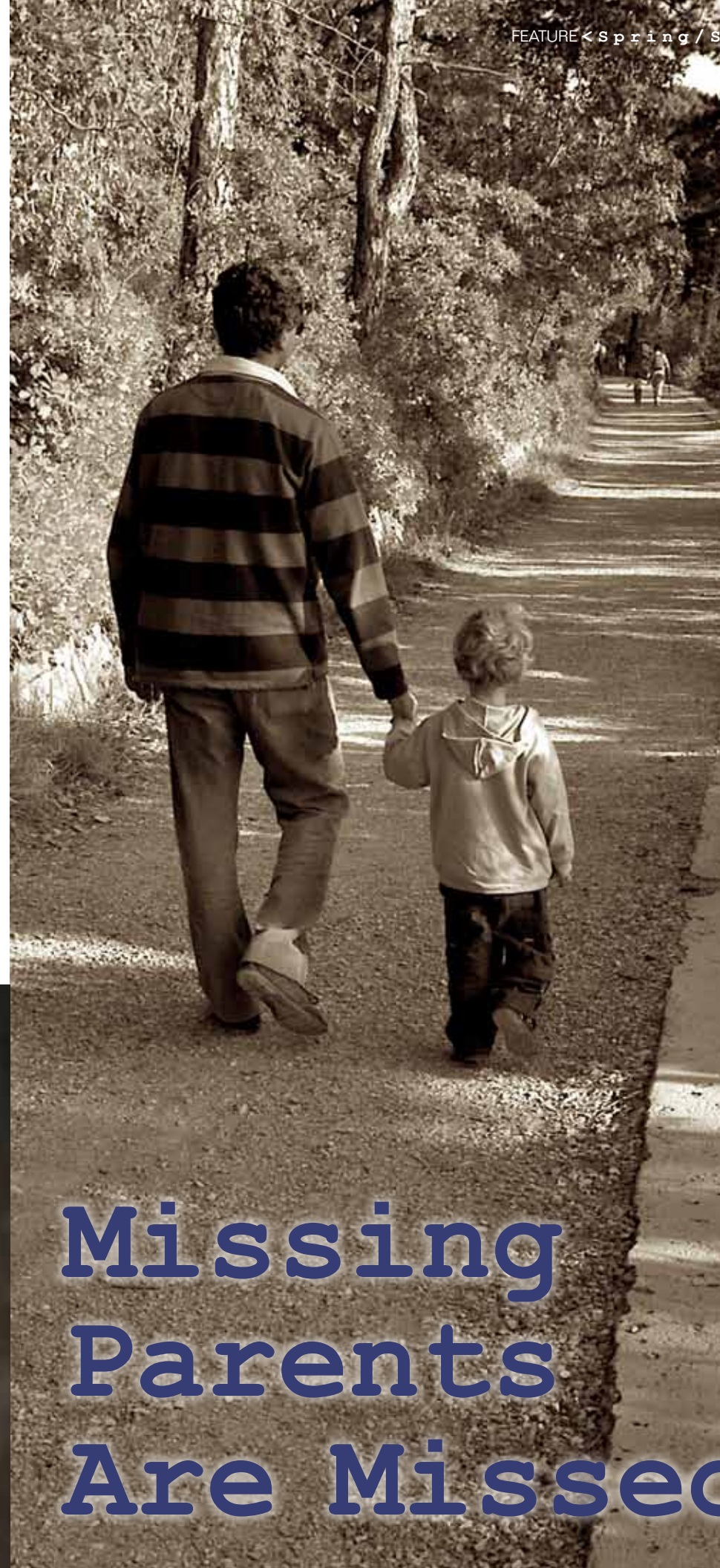
- In 2008, 67 percent of children ages 0 – 17 lived with two married parents, down from 77 percent in 1980.
- In 2008, 75 percent of White, non-Hispanic, 64 percent of Hispanic, and 35 percent of Black children lived with two married parents.
- The proportion of Hispanic children living with two married parents decreased from 75 percent in 1980 to 64 percent in 2008.

Effects on Youth

"I've never known my father," said Audis, Uplift alum. "I've never even seen a picture of him." In a speech on fatherhood (June 2008), President Barak Obama – the product of a single-parent household himself – said, "We know the statistics — that children who grow up without a father are five times more likely to live in poverty and commit crime; nine times more likely to drop out of schools and 20 times more likely to end up in prison. They are more likely to have behavioral problems, or run away from home or become teenage parents themselves. And the foundations of our community are weaker because of it." (<http://www.politico.com/news/stories/0608/11094.html>).

How Uplift Helps

Colorado Uplift teacher/mentors provide that one, adult, caring relationship kids need to succeed in life (Elliott, D., Editor, Surgeon General's Report on Crime and Violence/Senior Scientific Researcher, University of Colorado, 1998). "He's basically dad to me," said Corey, Uplift alum from East High about his Uplift mentor. "I've never known my father, so Uplift is giving me good role models and teaching me how to be a man," shared David, a high school student from North.



Missing Parents Are Missed

In School

Teaching character, leadership and life skills for success.

In select Denver Public Schools, elementary through middle school students take the UpLift elective class once per week. High school students attend this elective class five days per week.

Schools Shift Strategies

"AS LONG AS WE HAVE STAFF AND AVAILABLE FUNDS, WE WILL ALWAYS BE ABLE TO IMPACT KIDS."

Former COO Jim Baller



In November 2009, Denver Public Schools announced their plans to reform low-performing schools in the system, both charters and traditional schools. Two of the traditional schools undergoing major change—Greenlee K-8 and Lake Middle School—are served by Colorado UpLift.

Major DPS Moves

Changes at Lake for the 2010-2011 school year would include sharing a campus with West Denver Prep (WDP) #3 charter school. WDP would serve 7th and 8th graders, while Lake would serve 6th grade only.

Greenlee's turnaround is different. Greenlee would enroll kids from K through 5th grade and send the 6th, 7th and 8th graders to neighboring middle schools (such as Manny Martinez Charter School or Dora Moore). Valdez Elementary similarly is slated to lose its middle school grades.

These change strategies are partly aimed at bringing the charter school success formulas to existing schools. For instance, West Denver Prep has had a track record of succeeding with inner-city students who have not performed well at more traditional schools. However, parents have mixed reactions; some are in favor, while others raise concerns these strategies will not necessarily be an improvement and tend to disrupt communities.

UpLift's Response

The question for Colorado UpLift is impact—will these structural changes affect the program's influence on its 3,600-strong caseload of urban youth?

Former COO Jim Baller commented, "As long as we have staff and available funds, we will always be able to impact kids."

As an organization, Colorado UpLift has long followed the shifting changes in the school system and adjusted its service to maintain its "pipeline" model, following students from grade-to-grade for long-term success. Colorado UpLift will track the students from Greenlee, Valdez and Lake that feed into their respective high schools, West and North, and open new schools as needed to maintain the long-term relationships with kids.

Many non-profits go about their mission with a "me against the world" type of thinking, often operating in a vacuum and recreating services that already exist in the community. The benefits of collaboration not only leverage resources, but ultimately benefit those being served.

It Takes a Village

After-school programs especially benefit from collaborative efforts. A 2007 survey of diverse elementary and middle-school students from low-income families (which reflects the UpLift community) found most students participate in multiple programs instead of just one (*Charting the Benefits of High-Quality After-School Program Experiences*, Reisner et al, March 2007, policystudies.com). Sports, recreation centers, school programs, academic offerings and religious activities were all part of the after-school life of urban youth.

The study recommended programs work together to meet the complex needs of students rather than competing for their time or suppressing the student's desire to participate in a variety of activities. Collaboration also would help share information on a student's well-being and work together to promote success on all levels.

Effective after-school programs are crucial as well, potentially saving \$1.87 to \$5.29 for every \$1 spent because participants commit fewer crimes. (*Washington State Institute for Public Policy*, 2001). As stated in an *Afterschool Alliance Issue Brief No. 22* (March 2005), **"Time to find a passion or a skill, better self-esteem, teamwork skills, confidence, a greater sense of curiosity, a lifelong love of learning—these things are priceless."**

Avoiding the Bubble

Colorado UpLift partners with many excellent programs in Denver to help extend its quality and reach to each student in its After School program area. In January, 85 UpLift youth participated in a Hockey Without Borders event with the Colorado Avalanche. The Denver Scholarship Fund is UpLift's major partner in helping students with their college aspirations. The Boy Scouts of America have also provided resources and facilities to reach UpLift's youth. Other partnerships include the Boys and Girls Club, Denver Arts and Recreation, ArtReach, Kroenke Sports Enterprises, the Snowboard Outreach Society and many others that help UpLift effectively reach kids.

After School

Mentoring for life change.

Staff members spend up to 80% of UpLift time mentoring students outside of the classroom through after-school activities and events.



Stronger Together

THE BENEFITS OF COLLABORATION NOT ONLY LEVERAGE RESOURCES, BUT ULTIMATELY BENEFIT THOSE BEING SERVED.

Post Secondary

Personal advancement through higher education.

Students are taught the value of college, instructed in the admissions process and given UpLift information necessary to pursue their dreams.

Seniors in Colorado UpLift are often the first in their families to apply, attend or graduate from college or a post-secondary institution, like a trade school.

Though Colorado UpLift is here to guide these students through the process, parental involvement still remains a strong factor in whether a student will pursue further education after high school.

College Challenges

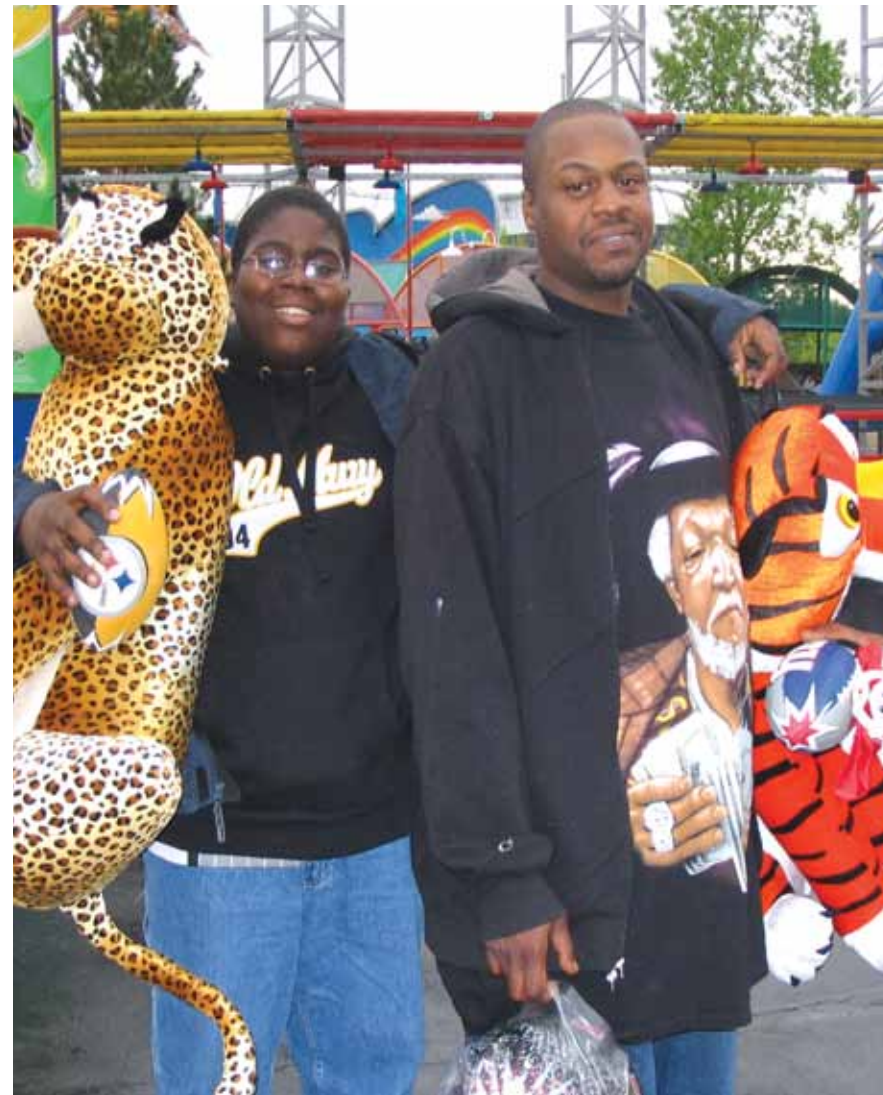
In comparison to students whose parent(s) attended college, first-generation students experience greater challenges to college access (Choy, Horn, Nunez & Chen, 2000; Education Resources Institute and the Institute for Higher Education Policy, 1997).

Reaching Out

Recognizing the importance of parents, Colorado UpLift is putting extra effort into events and activities where parents of urban students can take part in the post-secondary process, such as:

- **Promoting events** at UpLift high schools and colleges that parents can attend. For instance, UpLift helped promote a Parent Day at UNC with the Denver Scholarship Fund's Future Center for students at West High School on January 28.
- **Helping host a college family event** at each UpLift high school through the Future Center (DSF)
- **Hosting a large end of school year event** in which graduating seniors are recognized, scholarships and college entrances are celebrated and parents are honored.

The goal is to get parents involved in their children's future, knowing they have support and resources from Colorado UpLift to make a student's post-secondary dreams a reality.



UpLift Promotes Parents

THE GOAL IS TO GET PARENTS INVOLVED IN THEIR CHILDREN'S FUTURE, KNOWING THEY HAVE SUPPORT AND RESOURCES FROM COLORADO UPLIFT TO MAKE A STUDENT'S POST-SECONDARY DREAMS A REALITY.

Everyone experiences failure in some form or fashion, but learning how to deal with failure is a whole different story. Learning to overcome failure is often termed "resilience," and it's a crucial skill UpLift is teaching students through the Adventure program component.

If at First You Don't Succeed...

Adventure activities allow students safety in trying things for the first time that might be scary and outside their comfort zones, such as:

- Going to the mountains for the first time
- Climbing a 14,000-foot peak
- Hiking
- Rock climbing
- Rafting
- Backpacking
- Sledding
- Ice skating
- Tubing
- Camping
- Fishing

Urban kids who participate in these activities might "fail" in some way, such as falling while trying to snowboard, losing a basketball game or trying to catch a fish to no avail. Learning to get back up and try again teaches students not to give up when things get hard, and shows they CAN overcome a hardship with perseverance and encouragement from their UpLift teacher/mentors.

Transferable Skills

This "try again" mentality takes hold of a student and transfers into other areas, such as re-taking a test, facing a hard-to-relate-to parent or applying for jobs after getting rejected. Research shows resilience building can often lead to improved academic achievement. (McLemore, A Review of the Literature: Resiliency and Academic Performance, www.scholarcentric.com).

Programs that help promote resilience in students have been shown to actually help prevent high school dropouts, one of UpLift's major goals.

Failure Is Not an Option

Adventure Growth through challenge.

UpLift students participate in year-round, outdoor activities that develop leadership and teamwork.



"EVERYONE DESERVES A CHANCE."

Jim Lightner

Board Spotlight: Jim Lightner

JIM LIGHTNER, A DIRECTOR OF COLORADO UPLIFT'S DEVELOPMENT BOARD, HAS BEEN INVOLVED WITH COLORADO UPLIFT SINCE 2004.



Feature Article:

Jim Lightner, a member of Colorado UpLift's Development Board, has been involved with Colorado UpLift since 2004. A member of the oil and gas industry, his leadership and passion for the program has helped UpLift grow and succeed over the years.

Jim was introduced to Colorado UpLift by Dick Lewis and Jim Wallace, two of his well-known and respected industry colleagues. He came out on a site visit with his wife, Kathy, and together they were able to visit with the staff and see the students in action.

Program Reflections

"I was impressed how the program served the public schools," Jim shared. "I attended public schools, and know they don't have as much latitude in reaching students as private schools."

Additionally, Jim was drawn to the fact UpLift was providing life-long, committed support. "Everyone deserves a chance," Jim said. "Most of us were given a chance at success—we were expected to succeed and were even watched over in the process. These students have big hearts, and having the UpLift program connect with them and provide them the chance they need is really what tugs at me."

He also appreciates UpLift's "feedback loop," in which the UpLift high school students go back and teach the younger students in the program. "The students see each other on the street corner and know they have to be accountable, to do what they say they value in class."

Program Investment

As far as helping spread the word about UpLift, Jim considers the program a great investment. "At \$1,200 or so per student, it's one of the most cost-effective ways to reach kids," he explained. "If you can impact any kid, it's a step in the right direction, but with a 90% graduation rate, it's better for society as a whole."

His strategy now is to invite his contacts to come on a site visit, the very thing that got him involved. "The site visits are so important, helping people get out and meet the staff and students. Every time I attend one and listen to the staff and the kids, it's powerful."

Feature Article:

Positive behavior change is one of the outcomes that Colorado UpLift uses to measure the effectiveness of the program. Though not an easy task, UpLift realized one indicator would be to see how well the kids in the program were *really* learning the 13 character qualities and life skills taught in class.

Survey Says

To measure this, UpLift worked with Dr. Didi Fahey, Director of Research and Collaborative Program Development, Boy Scouts of America, Denver Area Council. Dr. Fahey designed a series of instruments or surveys for all students in the UpLift program, which were administered throughout the 2008 - 2009 school year.

Though a variety of findings were revealed, two major outcomes were both interesting and encouraging:

1. UpLift students attend school 43% more than the average student nationwide.

This increase may indicate:

- Students are coming to school more because they look forward to participating in the UpLift class, or
- The UpLift staff—through relational support and emphasis on academics—are teaching students to take school more seriously.

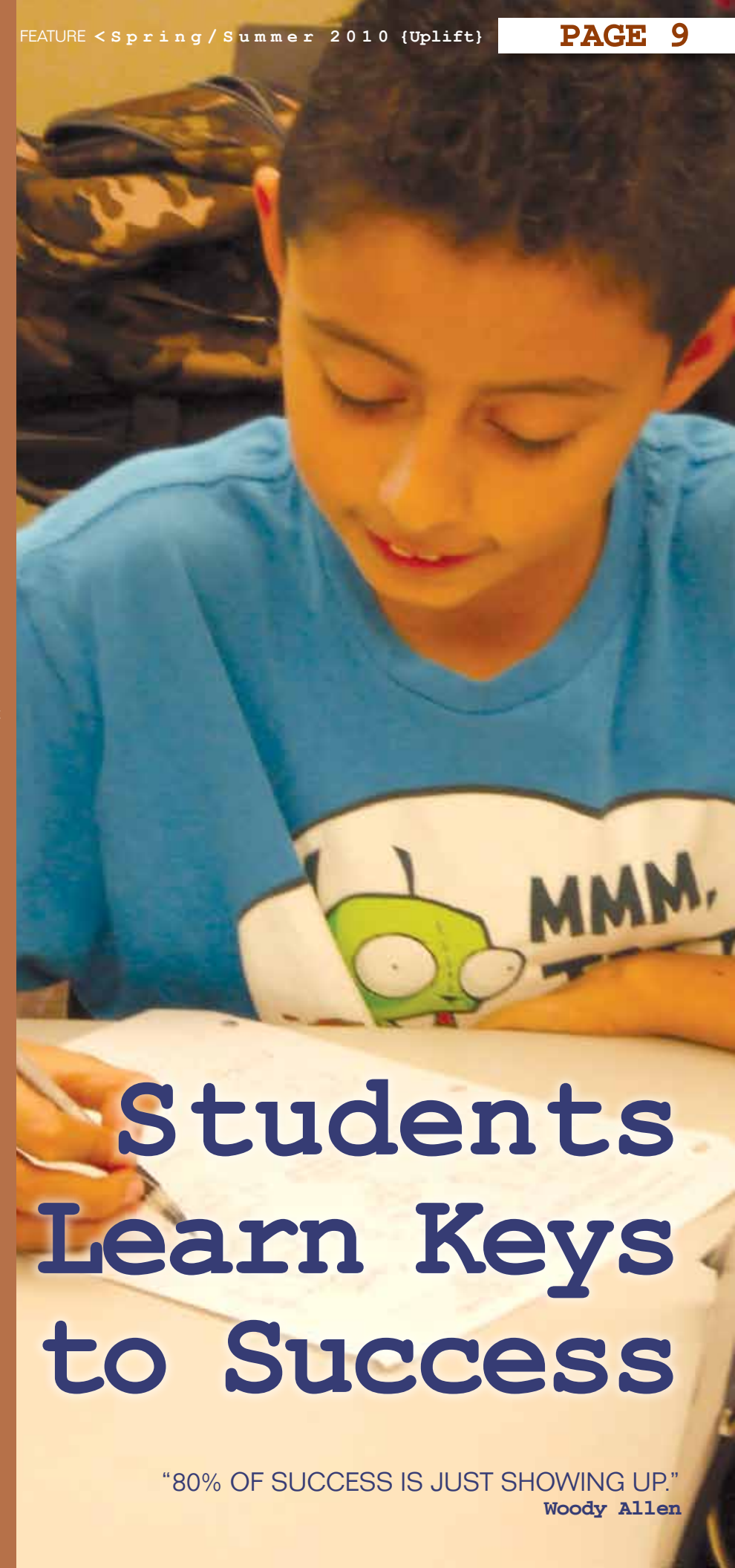
Either way, as filmmaker Woody Allen has said, "80% of success is just showing up."

2. UpLift students show significant growth in particular character qualities and life skills, specifically *work ethic, leadership, communication* and *problem-solving*.

According to Dr. Fahey, these four skills have been characterized as attributes displayed by people who have become successful in life.

Goal-Driven Outcomes

Though encouraged by these results, they also are helping guide new goals and objectives. For one, UpLift wants to make sure students are learning all the character qualities and life skills are being internalized. Specifically, Dr. Fahey recommended more time devoted to the *career-mindedness* quality, helping students map out a future career path and future career goals.



Students Learn Keys to Success

"80% OF SUCCESS IS JUST SHOWING UP."

Woody Allen

Making Spirits Bright

"WE APPRECIATE EVERYONE WHO GAVE SO GENEROUSLY TO OUR STUDENTS THIS YEAR,"
Naomi Lin

Feature Article:

If ever there were a year for Scrooges, 2009 seemed a likely candidate: unemployment rose to over 10%, over 120 banks closed and nearly 23% of U.S. homeowners owed more on their homes than what they were worth.

Despite the economic downturn, Colorado UpLift students experienced an abundance of community outreach for the 2009 holidays, putting an extra smile on many young faces for the season.

Providing Cheer

As an example:

- **Seagate**, an IT company with an office in Longmont, donated gifts to 20 students from North High for the second year in a row at a **Holiday Hearts** event for UpLift families.
- Members of **CHRA - the Colorado Human Resources Association** - purchased \$10 stockings at a holiday event and donated them to two charities, including UpLift.
- The **Colorado UpLift Guild** piloted a Holiday Store, where members gathered new items during the year and "sold" them to UpLift middle-schoolers for play money in a store-like fashion. This project was on top of their annual bonus provision for UpLift teacher/mentors.
- Board members **Sean and Jennifer Myers** allowed guests at a holiday function to bring gifts designated for UpLift youth.
- **Dan Caruso**, another Board member, continued to provide coats and winter items to students in need.
- **Steve and Renee James** hosted a dinner for Advanced Leadership students (around 90!).
- Staff-led projects included an Adopt a Family outreach (benefiting four needy families) and several parties for kids in high schools.
- Gift cards and gifts were given to 3rd and 4th graders at Colfax and students from East High School.

Giving Back

"We appreciate everyone who gave so generously to our students this year," said staff member Naomi Lin. "Many students were able to get a heartfelt lesson on giving, which is one of the UpLift constructs we teach. Our goal is to help them give to others in return."



UpLift Students Win Awards

Feature Article: MMCYA

The Metropolitan Mayors and Commissioners Youth Award (MMCYA) is a nine-county area recognition program in Colorado for teens between the ages of 13 to 19 who have overcome adversity and achieved remarkable goals. The program is tiered and honors nominees both at the county and metro-wide levels.

Over the last decade, around 44% of the Denver County winners have been UpLift students nominated by their teacher/mentor, and this year (2010) is no different. **Of the 22 award recipients, 16 came from Colorado UpLift!**

The students were recognized at a reception at the City and County building on February 22. Each student received a one-year scholarship to the Community College of Denver (CCD).

Congratulations to winning students and their staff nominators!

Student	High School	Staff Nominator
Adolfo Cabral	West	Nate Easley II
Jasmine Carabajal	North	Monique Jaramillo
Alejandro Caraveo Jr.	West	Everett Trujillo
Alexas Chavez	West	Sirena Rodriguez
Gabriela Chumi	North	Naomi Lin
Manuel Colmenero	Lincoln	David Ubaldo
Samantha Corpus	Lincoln	Laura Hillgartner
Lakewell Gordon	West	Jessica Lucero
Ruby Hernandez	North	Naomi Lin
Elizabeth Lopez	West	Sirena Rodriguez
Victor Mariscal	North	Monique Jaramillo
Yafet Mengesha	Denver School of Science and Technology	Gregory "Kwame" Rodgers
Luke Mondragon	North	Monique Jaramillo
Cecilia Ramirez	Lincoln	Laura Hillgartner
Candise Romero	Lincoln	David Ubaldo
Kuraan Smyer-Jones	George Washington	Lemule Pulley





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So What's Up With UpLift?

**We'd like to share a few "fun facts"
about recent happenings with Colorado UpLift!**

Did you know...

- ... one staff member, Nate, has created a recording studio for UpLift kids at West High School? One of the songs they created was chosen by the school administration to play during home basketball games!
- ... high school students in our Advanced Leadership Class are creating community improvement projects? The students research a cause they are passionate about (such as animal rights or homelessness) and organize a service project for the entire class.
- ... Colorado UpLift started a pilot program for 2nd and 3rd graders? Called "MiniLift," the first Spring class consisted of 75 UpLift freshmen reading books to approximately 130 eager 2nd and 3rd graders.
- five UpLift students were recognized by the Optimist Club for community involvement and overall attitude? Optimist Clubs around the world are dedicated to "Bringing Out the Best in Kids," and UpLift students fit the bill perfectly.

Want to hear more UpLifting news?

**Email us at info@ColoradoUpLift.org to join our email newsgroup
or become our fan on Facebook under Colorado UpLift.**

