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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **OUTDOOR LAB SCHOOLS TO STAY OPEN FOR 2011-12 SCHOOL YEAR**

Jeffco Public Schools' sixth-graders will get another chance to experience a week at Mt. Evans and Windy Peak Outdoor Lab schools, thanks to a successful fundraising campaign. More than \$625,000 has been raised to keep the historic schools open for the next school year.

“The donations, large and small, show how much our community cares about keeping this experience alive for Jeffco students,” said Kathy Weiss, president of the Outdoor Lab Foundation. “An anonymous donor has contributed \$99,500 and we’ve had schools, PTAs, businesses and community members raise hundreds of dollars as well. It’s been an incredible outpouring of support for this program.”

The Outdoor Lab program, which has been providing environmental education since 1961, was suspended for the 2011-12 school year as a result of district budget reductions. However, the community had a deadline of June 15 to raise \$600,000 to keep the schools open for the coming year. Approximately half of the \$625,000 raised came from fundraising efforts; the remaining money is in the form of matching funds from the district. As a result of conservative spending on the part of district departments during the 2010-11 budget year, Jeffco had \$1.2 million in surplus funds. Members of the Board of Education directed that \$450,000 of that money be put toward the Outdoor Lab schools in matching funds.

Outdoor Lab fees for the 2011-12 school year will increase from \$199 per student to \$300; that additional money will help support the program.

“We are obviously thrilled that our efforts to save Outdoor Lab are successful, but we have to continue to raise money to make the program self-sustaining, including finding community and business partners who will help us with our fundraising,” said Weiss. “We are so grateful to every child, PTA, business and community member who donated to these incredible schools.”