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Colorado Youth Corps Association Honors Ken Salazar, Legislators and Corpsmembers

Awards Ceremony Celebrates a Commitment to Colorado and Work Experience for Youth

Feb. 3, 2014, DENVER, Colo. – The Colorado Youth Corps Association (CYCA) honored its 2013 Champions and Corpsmembers of the Year this morning at the annual Youth Corps Awards Ceremony, held at the Colorado State Capitol. Former Secretary of the Interior and U.S. Senator Ken Salazar was the keynote speaker and named the 2013 Champion for Youth. CYCA also honored two legislators, State Representatives Don Coram and Mike McLachlan, and 10 corpsmembers representing all corners of the state. The event was followed by a celebratory brunch at the Warwick Hotel.

CYCA selected Salazar as the 2013 Champion for Youth for his ongoing promotion of youth engagement in the outdoors – in Colorado and throughout the nation. Most recently, as secretary of the Interior, Salazar championed the formation of the 21st Century Conservation Service Corps as part of the America’s Great Outdoors Initiative, the goal of which is to engage 100,000 young people and veterans in stewardship of public lands. While director of the Colorado Department of Natural Resources (DNR), Salazar created the Great Outdoors Colorado (GOCO) constitutional amendment, and served as the first chairman of the GOCO board of directors. GOCO invests a portion of Colorado Lottery proceeds to help preserve and enhance the state’s parks, trails, wildlife, rivers and open spaces, and currently funds 400 young people in youth corps annually. Salazar also founded the Youth in Natural Resources program under the DNR.

CYCA named Rep. Coram (House District 58) and Rep. McLachlan (House District 59) as Legislators of the Year. They were honored for co-sponsoring SB 269 (Wildfire Risk Reduction Grant Program) and for including youth conservation corps in the bill as encouraged partners. As a result of SB 269, 65 young adults will gain job training and work experience from the first round of funding alone. These young people will collectively earn \$80,000 in AmeriCorps education awards for college or trade school, giving many a chance for higher education that was previously out of reach. Local communities will gain 54 weeks (17,000 hours) of youth corps labor and hundreds of acres of land will be buffered from wildfires.

Young people representing 10 youth corps were also recognized for their outstanding contributions to corps in 2013. Erika Steenburg, a 2013 Corpsmember of the Year from Southwest Conservation Corps-Los Valles and a lifelong San Luis Valley resident, was the event’s youth speaker. Colorado State Deputy Attorney General Bernie Buescher was the event’s emcee.

“It is such a privilege to honor Mr. Salazar, Representative Coram and Representative McLachlan for their ongoing commitment to engaging young people in stewardship of our state’s natural

resources,” said Jennifer Freeman, CYCA executive director. “These champions and partners understand that young adults have the power to effect positive change for our environment and communities while working toward solutions to the critical land, water and energy issues facing our state.”

The vocal support and engagement of these individuals have helped thousands of young people gain jobs, job training, life skills, college scholarships, and high school and college credits.

The young people involved in youth corps contribute significantly to making Colorado a better place to live and play. “The outstanding work of the corpsmembers is a testament to the commitment of today’s young people to serve our state while preparing for their own futures,” Freeman added. “In many cases, these corpsmembers have overcome personal barriers and have successfully capitalized on support from their youth corps to further their education, learn to work hard, and look toward bright career opportunities. We will continue to invest in our young people so that they may continue to invest in the state of Colorado.”

The 10 youth who were honored as 2013 Corpsmembers of the Year are:

- Kelsey Bowers, Mile High Youth Corps
- Auston Craig, Southwest Conservation Corps-Four Corners
- Ty Duncan, Weld County Youth Conservation Corps
- Grant Janka, Steamboat Springs Community Youth Corps
- Jacob Mohrlang, Western Colorado Conservation Corps
- Isabel Padilla, Rocky Mountain Youth Corps
- Anika Pietenpol, Larimer County Conservation Corps
- Hope Radford, Mile High Youth Corps-Colorado Springs
- Erika Steenburg, Southwest Conservation Corps-Los Valles
- Katherine “Katie” Wakefield, Boulder County Youth Corps

About Colorado Youth Corps Association

The Colorado Youth Corps Association (CYCA) is a statewide coalition of ten accredited youth conservation corps that engage and train youth, young adults, and military veterans on land, water and energy conservation projects. Youth corps is a proven strategy for engaging young people in service to their communities and stewardship of their environment while cultivating valuable skills to meet the challenges of the 21st century. Learn more at www.CYCA.org.

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