



## **Education: Jared Polis**

***By Amy Bounds***

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Jared Polis is well known as the Boulder entrepreneur who chaired the state Board of Education, founded charter schools and helped pass the Boulder Valley School District's recent tax increase.

But he's also made quieter contributions.

His foundation gives mini-grants to outstanding teachers and donates computers. He's a trustee at a private Boulder school called Watershed, where he's provided scholarships to students. At the "I Have a Dream Foundation" of Boulder County, he's given both time and money.

"I've always felt that education is the most important issue," Polis said.

The 31-year-old's contributions have earned him a Pacesetter award in education.

"He has demonstrated in so many different ways a commitment to education," said nominator and Boulder Valley school board President Helayne Jones. "He doesn't shy away from tough issues. He's willing to take controversial positions. But he always comes from a place of truly caring about kids."

In his six years on the state Board of Education, he pushed for more money for public education, for increasing student access to higher education and for quality early education. He also was a strong supporter of charter schools.

After his term ended, he began focusing most of his time as the volunteer superintendent of the three-campus New America School. He founded the charter school to give intensive English instruction to immigrants ages 16 to 21 and is planning to expand to a fourth campus in the fall.

Along with the New America School, he co-founded a Denver charter school for homeless students.

"It's really all about providing opportunities for people who don't have them and enhancing our overall education system for all kids," he said.

Charter schools, traditional public schools, private schools — he said he's a "big fan of all schools that work."

Through the Jared Polis Foundation, founded in 2000, he has donated 3,000 computers a year to schools and youth centers across Colorado.

Some of those computers went to labs at the Boulder County I Have a Dream Foundation's three low-income housing sites and to students in the program without computers at home. Altogether, the I Have a Dream Foundation has received more than 120 donated computers.

In 2005, Polis also made a personal multi-year financial commitment to I Have A Dream and has sponsored its annual luncheon.

"Jared contributes to his community because he truly cares about people," said Lori Canova, I Have a Dream's chief executive officer.

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