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## **Unsung “Jewels of the Community” to be honored at DAYS event**

**February 5, 2010, Denver CO** ~ This March, Denver Area Youth Services (DAYS) will honor three women who have changed and improved the lives of literally hundreds of children involved in Denver’s child welfare system.

DAYS’s second annual **Jewels of the Community** awards will be handed out at the agency’s Oscar-themed “A Hollywood Affair” fundraiser, 5:30 p.m. on Thursday, March 4 at **Dazzle Supper Club** (930 Lincoln St., Denver). Individual tickets are just \$45, and champagne-service table sponsorships are still available. **KUVO’s Carlos Lando** will emcee, and live entertainment will be provided by **Purnell Steen and Le Jazz Machine**.

The 2010 Jewels of the Community honorees are **Kathy Banning, Kama Linscome** and **Jearline “Jeri” Bass**.

**Kathy Banning** was a Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) for two children placed in foster care through a DAYS program. While she knew advocacy was an important part of creating a successful future for the children, she was struck by the sadness of children spending Christmas without their own families. Knowing she could not solve the problem but could alleviate it, she began organizing her co-workers and friends to collect, wrap and distribute dozens of Christmas presents for children in DAYS’s foster care programs.

“No one asked Kathy to do this,” said **Bob Tiernan, DAYS’s Executive Director**. “She saw a need and responded.”

Her efforts have expanded to include all the children involved in DAYS programs, and she has roped in ABATE of Colorado, a motorcycle safety group to which Kathy belongs. The group gathers annually at a Golden restaurant to raise money and collect gifts for the children in all of DAYS’s programs.

“Her generosity and compassion humble those of us who do this work daily,” Tiernan said.

Another jewel being honored for her work with Denver children is **Kama Linscome**, who oversees the Colorado Department of Education’s Eligible Facilities Unit. Her work and advocacy for quality education for youth placed in facility schools has helped DAYS turn its Bryant Street Academy program into one of Denver’s most successful Day Treatment schools.

Kama’s unit is charged with monitoring and tracking all education programs in Colorado’s treatment and child placement facilities. She ensures that children accessing the system are enrolled in a timely manner and have the support they need to be successful.

The Bryant Street Academy’s current education program has been operating since 2008 and serves adolescents aged 16 to 21. The program provides evidence-based education and assistance with transition, life skills and social-emotional development. More than 150 students have completed a GED or successfully returned to public school because of the program. Kama was instrumental in helping DAYS build the program and she remains one of its biggest advocates.

“For me, a job is only satisfying if I have opportunities to continue learning and opportunities to contribute to the success of students,” she said. “Working with Eligible Facility Schools does both.”

The third jewel to be recognized at the March 4 event is **Jearline “Jeri” Bass**. Jeri has been a foster parent working with DAYS for more than a decade.

“Jeri was an exceptional foster parent,” Tiernan said. “But she distinguished herself when she adopted brothers in 2007.”

The story is one all too common in Colorado’s child welfare system. Jeri had provided a nurturing foster home for two boys for several years while their story played out in the court system. After an adoption effort fell through, child welfare staff raised the idea of separating the boys from each other to increase the likelihood that they would be adopted individually.

Jeri would have none of it. She stepped in and adopted the boys into her own family.

“Jeri gave these boys a home, included them in her extended family, and surrounded them with caring members of the community,” said Tiernan. “She gave them the opportunity to remain together and grow up as brothers. She has given everything to try to counterbalance what these boys did not receive earlier in life: love, discipline, joy, patience and an unwavering commitment to always be there for them.”

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### ***About Denver Area Youth Services***

**Denver Area Youth Services (DAYS)** is a 501c3 nonprofit community-based organization founded in 1982. DAYS’s mission *to promote and provide a continuum of human services for all children, youth and families* is still the focus of the organization 28 years later. Currently DAYS offers three foster care programs, an education/school program for adolescents, family services and prevention, alternatives to incarceration and transitional services for juveniles on parole. DAYS is supervised by a community-based Board of Directors and is funded by grants and donations.

For more information, please visit [www.denveryouth.org](http://www.denveryouth.org).