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**Lafayette Youth Explore Post-Secondary Access through Summer Leadership Program
*Project Unveiling and Celebration Scheduled for July 2***

LAFAYETTE – On Thursday, July 2, nearly 60 Lafayette middle and high school students will discuss their involvement in the Lafayette Peer Empowerment Project (LPEP), which is a positive youth development program sponsored by the City of Lafayette and administered by the University of Colorado Boulder. The event, which serves as the culmination to the four-week pilot, will be held at Centaurus High School (10300 South Boulder Road) from 12:30-2:00 p.m.

Incorporating poster presentations, personal narratives, and performance pieces, students, representing Angevine Middle School and Centaurus High School will discuss existing barriers to K-12 academic success and post-secondary access, as well as share a list of recommendations to improve upon existing practices and the situations in which local youth find themselves.

Discussing the program, Maria Robles, a rising Centaurus senior and program facilitator shared, “The Lafayette Peer Empowerment Project brings together young leaders to create a better future for themselves and their community. Rather than rely on experts to find solutions to problems affecting youth, we are creating space for local students to share their own experiences and ideas. They, in turn, are being recognized for their expertise and capacity to serve as change agents.”

To support their efforts, LPEP participants have explored college and careers via field trips to CU Boulder, Front Range Community College, and the Denver Capitol; professional development trainings covering the related topics of teen mental health, substance abuse, and immigration; and meetings with local stakeholders, including Lafayette Police Chief Rick Bashor, Lafayette Mayor Pro Tem Gustavo Reyna, and several non-profit representatives. In addition, participants have developed their narratives or personal testimonies, interviewed their peers and families, and engaged in collective, self-reflective inquiry.

Participants, the majority of whom are low-income and the first in their families to consider post-secondary education, were nominated for the program by their teachers. They are supported by a team of Centaurus seniors and CU Boulder undergraduates, who serve as near-peer mentors and program facilitators.

The Lafayette Peer Empowerment Project is part of a larger City of Lafayette initiative focused on crime prevention and positive youth development. The program was developed by University of Colorado Boulder faculty with support from Angevine Middle School and Centaurus High School teachers and administrators. It combines best practices in Public Achievement, which CU Boulder administers in several Boulder County schools, and participatory action research. Subsequent programming will be established during the 2015-2016 academic year and pending outcomes from the summer program.

Mayor Pro Tem Gustavo Reyna shared, “The City of Lafayette understands the importance of closing the achievement and opportunity gap in our community. By investing in proven and effective empowerment programs we build a strong, motivated and skillful set of young leaders that will help our city continue to evolve into a vibrant, creative and inclusive community.”

Housed in CU Engage, CU Boulder's center for community-based learning and research, the University of Colorado's Public Achievement program seeks to promote student retention and access to post-secondary education through civic engagement programming. More than 100 CU Boulder undergraduates and 350 K-12 students participate in the program each year.