

**Durango Chamber of Commerce Announces Aaron Fernandes,
Founder of Open Sky Wilderness Therapy, as Entrepreneur of the Year for 2009**

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Durango's Chamber of Commerce Annual Awards Event presented Aaron Fernandes, founder and co-owner of Open Sky Wilderness Therapy, its prestigious Entrepreneur of the Year award this January. Fernandes was acknowledged for his entrepreneurial achievements at the Chamber ceremony held at Fort Lewis College.

When Fernandes started Open Sky, he challenged the industry's typical business model by integrating a holistic vision with the best practices in the wilderness therapy industry. He and the six co-founders created a model that combines contemporary therapeutic approaches, naturopathic medicine with organic whole-foods nutrition and a regular meditation and yoga practice.

This innovative plan allowed for the company to grow quickly, build relationships with parents, students and professionals in the related field. Starting with seven full-time employees, Open Sky now employs more than 50. In just three short years, Open Sky has served more than 250 families who are from across the country and from around the world. ☐

☐ "This is a business that is producing relationships. Our goal is to heal relationships for families--adolescents, and young adults and there are an enormous amount of people who have logged in hundreds of hours to make this a reality," explains Fernandes. "I'm very excited and honored to receive this award. It reinforces that what we do is meaningful and that all the hard work is worth something in this community and to its leaders.

During a time when the economy is dismal at best, Fernandes and Open Sky lead the way, providing jobs and continuing to contribute to community vitality. With endless energy, passion and enthusiasm to change the lives of each student and help families with his program, Fernandes is motivated and the driving force behind Open Sky.

"Whether you're at the carwash or in a meeting room, Aaron's passion is contagious," says Jack Llewellyn, Executive Director of the Durango Chamber of Commerce. "He portrays the very definition of an entrepreneur. He's willing to take a risk, to pull together resources and he has been very successful." ☐ ☐

Open Sky Wilderness Therapy Mission: Open Sky assists adolescents and young adults in discovering their true nature as capable, worthy, and honorable people. We do this by integrating the best of contemporary clinical modalities, naturopathic medicine, and wilderness therapy. This holistic model leads our students on a healing journey to wholeness. For more information, please visit www.openskywilderness.com