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**Photos available upon request**

**Mile High United Way connects businesses  
and schools to create pathways to success for young Coloradans**

DENVER, CO – May 12, 2015 – Mile High United Way led the GradNation Workforce Summit on May 7, one of 100 that will be held around the country through 2016. The Summits are co-sponsored by America's Promise Alliance as part of its large and growing movement of dedicated individuals, organizations and communities working together to raise the national high school graduation rate to 90 percent by 2020, with no school graduating fewer than 80 percent of its students on time. More than 100 people attended the event held at the Mile High United Way Morgridge Center for Community Change, representing six Metro Denver school districts and 60 local businesses, many who pledged to engage high school students in new ways in the coming school year.

Mile High United Way lives at the intersection of the public, private and philanthropic communities and through their Youth Success Initiative, they are working year-round to ensure that all youth graduate high school prepared for work or college, making them the ideal organization to lead the GradNation Community Summit in Denver.

"We know that Colorado's future relies on the future we can build for young people, said Christine Benero, President and CEO of Mile High United Way, "We are beginning to change the conversation about what success looks like for youth: we aspire to make college available to every young person who wants that, but there are 4-year colleges and 2-year colleges, apprenticeships and certificate programs. This Summit was about all of those pathways to success, and the potential of our business, education, legislative and nonprofit communities to build them."

The Summit opening panel addressed several questions related to challenges and opportunities the business community sees in relation to the jobs pipeline. Panelists included: **Jandell Allen-Davis**, MD, Vice President of Government and External Relations, Kaiser Permanente; **Kelly Brough**, President of the Greater Denver Chamber of Commerce; **Lisa Donovan**, Chief People Officer, Sage Hospitality; **Mark Everett**, Senior Group Director, Target Corporation; **Noel Ginsburg**, Founder, Chairman & CEO, Intertech Plastics; **Gloria Schoch**, Community Commerce and Partnerships Management, MillerCoors, and **Christine Benero**, President and CEO of Mile High United Way.

**Fiona Arnold**, executive director of the Colorado office of Economic Development and International Trade, addressed the crowd to talk about the Hickenlooper administration's focus on workforce development. "The State of Colorado is working on creating crossovers between industry, education and government in order to develop more jobs. The GradNation summit is the perfect conversation to be having as a strategy that can help fuel the middle-skills jobs pipeline," said Arnold.

The **2014 Building a GradNation Report** found that for the first time, our national graduation rate is 80 percent, and the nation is on track to meet the goal of 90 percent national graduation rate by the class of 2020.

"The progress we are seeing toward the national goal of raising graduation rates is based on communities coming together to support and insist on better outcomes for young people," said John Gomperts, president and CEO, America's Promise Alliance. "Summits like the event in Denver are rallying points for communities. America's Promise is delighted to support this effort and work with the leaders in Denver and communities across the country to help advance this campaign."

Research has shown that youth who have access to more of the essential academic, health and life resources – caring adults, safe places, a healthy start, effective education and opportunities to help others – are more likely to

succeed academically and socially. Summit attendees discussed how Metro Denver can better align programs supporting youth around these areas. Mile High United Way is committed to continuing this conversation, and being the connector between the business and education communities to stimulate this action.

The premier sponsor of the national GradNation Community Summits initiative is AT&T, whose support is part of the company's \$350 million commitment to graduate more students from high school ready for college and career. Other national sponsors include Southwest Airlines and GE Foundation. Locally, sponsors included Intertech Plastics, Inc. and ALPS.

### **About Mile High United Way**

Mile High United Way unites people, ideas and resources to advance the common good. We focus in the areas of school readiness, ensuring kids are entering school ready to read and succeed; youth success, helping youth graduate from high school prepared for college or work; and adult self-sufficiency, giving individuals and families the resources they need to be economically stable.

### **About America's Promise Alliance**

Founded in 1997 at the Presidents' Summit for America's Future, **America's Promise** leads an alliance of organizations, communities and individuals dedicated to fulfilling the presidential declaration signed on that day calling upon the nation to keep five crucial promises to every young person in America: the presence of caring adults in their lives; safe surroundings to live, learn and grow; healthy starts and healthy childhoods; an effective education that builds marketable skills; and opportunities to serve others. As its signature effort, the GradNation campaign, launched in 2010, mobilizes Americans to increase the on-time high school graduation rate to 90% by 2020 and prepare young people for postsecondary enrollment and the 21<sup>st</sup> century workforce. For more information, visit [AmericasPromise.org](http://AmericasPromise.org).

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