

## **HRC Annual Dinner Speech – February 22, 2003**

**By Michael Mosca**

**The Colorado Human Rights Campaign is a movement driven by our shared passion to make Colorado a better place for ourselves and our families. And at the heart of our movement are the brave individuals who do the good – and important work of opening minds and changing hearts. The Paul Hunter Award was created to recognize these special individuals who amaze and inspire us with the courage and commitment to GLBT causes in Colorado. Tonight we are honoring an awesome ally and activist, Jean Hodges.**

**It's true that Jean is not your textbook queer activist. Instead of a Harley, she and her husband Jack have an RV and Jean insists she has never danced naked on a gay pride float. She's a retired teacher and a grandmother. But, when Colorado passed Amendment 2 the same year that Jean and Jack's son Ben came out to them, she took it personally. That year, she formed the Boulder chapter of PFLAG that has become the model for all PFLAG chapters across the United States. Today, ten years later, you might find Jean addressing hundreds of thousands of people on the mall in Washington, DC. Or you might find her counseling the parents of a gender conflicted 7 year-old in her living room in Boulder. This is how profound and personal Jean's work is.**

**Jerry Falwell, have you met my friend Jean Hodges? If not, let me introduce you to a true person of faith. When Jean's church fired its openly gay youth minister, she and Jack hosted their own congregation for 3 years in protest until their church changed its position. One friend of Jean says, "There are many today who invoke Christianity and Christian principles into discourse whose intent is not genuine. Jean lives out the tenets of her faith by being honest and unafraid to fight the unpopular fight. She will always be found at the forefront for human equality."**

**Everyone in this room would have been lucky to have Jean around when we were 14 years old. If she were, we could have walked down the corridors of our high school without being called a faggot or a dyke. We could have played basketball or football without being subjected to homophobic harassment from our teammates and coach. We could have met with other students after school to plan our queer prom. This is real life for Boulder Valley high school**

students, because Jean has gone head to head with teachers, administrators, coaches and parents. How true it is when the superintendent of Boulder Valley Public Schools describes Jean as “one of the most remarkable advocates for human rights and the education of today’s young people.”

In 3 minutes, I cannot convey the sincere goodness and remarkable spirit of Jean Hodges. If you haven’t had the pleasure of meeting Jean, once you do you will be awed by her presence and her resolve to leave the world a better place than she found it. Here in Colorado, our world is certainly a better place because we have such a strong and passionate ally in Jean. I can tell you that without her, our movement would have no legs. And, more importantly, no heart. To my friend and role model, Jean Hodges, thank you for amazing us and inspiring us every single day.

[I’d like to introduce Jean’s son Ben Hodges who is going to say a few words about his mom.] On behalf of HRC Colorado, I am honored to present Jean Hodges with the 2003 Paul Hunter Award.