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A delicious way to support early childhood programs | NONPROFIT REGISTER

Joanne Davidson Special to Colorado Politics
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From left: Clayton Early Learning's former president/CEO Charlotte Brantley; Stephany Hurst, recipient of the first Charle Brantley Teacher of the Year Award, and Elsa Holguin, president/CEO of the Denver Preschool Program.

Scott Dressel-Martin

CLAYTON EARLY LEARNING

Denver

News: Twinkling lights and the glow of a crescent moon illuminated the Clayton Early Learning campus on Sept. 8 when 300 parents, sponsors and friends gathered for the 2023 edition of A Taste of Clayton.

In addition to refreshments — an array of small bites, wines and craft beers — guests participated in live and silent auctions and heard single mom Desiree Sanders give moving testimony on the role Clayton Early Learning played in enabling her and her sons to overcome incredible obstacles and thrive.

A year ago, she said, her 4-year-old son didn't speak, but with intervention and the speech therapy he received at Clayton, "This boy does not stop talking!"

Clayton Early Learning, Sanders added, brought her "out of the darkness" surrounding her son's condition. "They showed me that there are people willing to help," she said.

In his remarks, William Browning, Clayton's president and chief executive officer, indicated that the positive outcome the Sanders family experienced is part of its whole child-whole family approach.

"Here at Clayton, we provide a sanctuary for the next generation," Browning said. "We are a factory of love, hope and compassion. We instill confidence and a sense of self-worth for each and every child, equipping them with the foundation of resiliency, which is so deeply necessary for their journey in a chaotic and unjust world.

"And we don't stop with the child. We lean in with our families to help them achieve their hopes and dreams."

A Taste of Clayton also was the occasion for Clayton teacher Stephany Hurst to receive the first Charlotte M. Brantley Award, named in honor of Clayton Early Learning's former president and CEO. It was presented to her by Brantley and Elsa Holguin, president/CEO of the Denver Preschool Program.

Those who attended A Taste of Clayton included:

- State Sen. Chris Hansen
- Cindy Schulz, chair of Clayton's board of trustees, and her husband, Steve;
- Early childhood advocate Anna Jo Haynes

- Phil Steinhauer, president of Designsapces Colorado, and Giovanna and Nik Romero from Hardy Boy Plants, all of whom have pivotal roles in designing and maintaining Clayton's two on-campus gardens that serve as outdoor learning labs and supplement the fresh produce used in the school kitchen and the shelves of the Clayton Cares Market
- Kelly Dunkin, president and CEO of the Community First Foundation
- Nicole Dorsey, a vice president at PNC Bank
- Lorii Rabinowitz, chief executive officer of the Denver Scholarship Foundation;
- Nathaniel Cradle, co-founder of Venture for Success Preparatory Learning Center; and
- Clayton trustees Matt Brill, Joe Hoelscher, Gil Gomez, Daniel Prager and Curt Reimann

About the organization: The nonprofit Clayton Early Learning is an innovation hub that fosters thriving, equitable communities by partnering with families to nurture a whole child/whole family approach to the early years.

Website: claytonearlylearning.org

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