

# In The LEAD

Haring Center Auction // Benefiting the Experimental Education Unit // May 16, 2015

Dear Friends of the EEU,

It is my pleasure to introduce myself as a co-chair of the 14<sup>th</sup> Annual Haring Center Auction benefiting the Experimental Education Unit (EEU), an inclusive early learning center at the University of Washington.

The EEU is an early childhood special education program providing inclusion-based educational services to children birth through Kindergarten, with and without disabilities – **at no cost to families**. Over 200 families a year receive a world-class education, resources, therapies, and profound family support that cannot be found anywhere else in the world.

Our journey at the EEU started in September of 2012. Keagan was freshly diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder a few months prior and it was, without a doubt, the most difficult time of our lives.

After receiving our diagnosis, we grieved Keagan and the hopes and dreams we had for him. Hopes, dreams and aspirations turned into doubt, fear and uncertainty. Will he learn to play appropriately with toys? Will he be able to communicate and tell us “I love you”? Will he learn? Where will he learn? What kind of dynamic will he and Khloe have, and will he make friends and have meaningful relationships? We were at a loss in so many ways and the EEU could not have come into our lives at a more perfect time.

For Keagan, Khloe and our family, the EEU has been a safe haven in which teachers, staff and families have provided invaluable support, hope and compassion. It is a place where Keagan is celebrated for who is he rather than what he has and where he can be himself and learn amongst his typical peers without judgment. To him, he is no different than his typical peers and to his typical peers, he is no different from them.

This truly inclusive environment is where Keagan came alive. His progress was inspiring! Never in a million years did we think that he would initiate a game of chase and tag, participate in circle time, learn how to read and write, start talking or enjoy singing and dancing. He also started calling his teachers and classmates by name and referred to them as “my friends”. And after 2 long years of Keagan ignoring “Baby Khloe”, who was no longer a baby by then, they too now play (and fight) beautifully, just like any other siblings.

The EEU has made a lifelong impact on our family and we are one of many, many more that has experienced these life-changing services. With your help, the EEU can continue to do what they do best. It is our sincerest hope that you will support us at this upcoming year's Annual EEU Auction. **This year's “In the Lead at the Kentucky Derby” Auction will be held on May 16, 2015.** We chose this theme because the Haring Center and the EEU are leaders and innovators in the field of early childhood special education and inclusion.

Thank you for considering supporting the Haring Center ([haringcenter.org](http://haringcenter.org)) by donating to the Annual Auction. Please join us as we strive for our most successful year yet! With your contribution, it is a **sure bet** that the EEU can continue to provide invaluable services, resources and inclusive learning environments to students and families alike.

With Sincere Appreciation,



Linda Song



*Purple and gold runs in our family.  
Five year old, Keagan is a recent  
EEU graduate and two and a half  
year old Khloe is a current student.*