



Mission: To cultivate a passion for science, leadership, and service in a diverse community of learners

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Environmental Learning for Kids Celebrates 20th Anniversary
Marks Progress helping Denver Urban Youth and Looks to Future Expansion

Environmental Learning for Kids (ELK) was joined by community leaders, supportive Colorado businesses, elected officials and over 280 Coloradans to celebrate its 20th Anniversary at its 7th Annual ELK 'n Eggs Breakfast at the Denver Museum of Nature and Science Friday, October 7. ELK is a Denver nonprofit that provides science education and outdoor experiences for underserved urban youth. At the breakfast, ELK recognized legacy leaders and updated supporters on ambitious future plans to expand programming and services to the Northeast Denver community.

“As I move into my second year leading ELK, I realize now more than ever the enriching effect ELK can have on youth,” said ELK Executive Director Loretta Pineda. “Over the last 20 years, ELK has reached more than 200,000 youth and families and for the 5th year in a row, ELK youth have a high school graduation of 100%. We offer several lessons – exploration and protection of the outdoors, academic and science skills, career exploration, summer employment, teaching and leading in the community.”

In 2015, ELK conducted 116 programs – serving 3,069 youth and families - 490 through year-round programs and 2,579 through community education programs. 128 school programs, 1,482 youth, 6 districts and 30 schools; \$0 to participate. 100 youth and families journeyed with ELK to Grand Teton National Park, Yellowstone, Great Sand Dunes National Park, and Rocky Mt. National Park.

Nancy Gonzalez, an ELK graduate and current University of Colorado-Denver student majoring in Early Childhood Education, gave an inspiring talk about her experiences at ELK, from being on a path to dropping out of high school to earning straight A's and attending college. "If it was not for ELK I do not know where I would be today. ELK gave me the opportunity to learn about myself through the field trips, the activities, Leadership Corps and the Urban Ranger program," said Gonzalez.

Nancy then went on to talk about [ELK's planned](#) Education & Community Center in a 5.5 acre restored prairie open space park in the heart of Montbello in Northeast Denver, "With the Education & Community building in a high need community, it brings promise and security to the neighborhood that their children will have bright and well guided futures. I hope to one day be an Education Coordinator with ELK and help the kids that need help the most, enabling their lives to change like my life did when I joined ELK."

Loretta Pineda added that the Montbello Open Space Park component is 90% complete [with continued support from The Trust for Public Land and many other important sponsors](#). The Open Space is poised to serve as a trail head to the Rocky Mountain Arsenal National Wildlife Refuge. Pineda then went on to present the Arsenal with ELK's Celebrated Partner Award.

"ELK is pleased to recognize the Rocky Mountain Arsenal National Wildlife Refuge which has been instrumental in providing a base for ELK youth to engage in science based curriculum," said Pineda. "The Refuge has been supportive of our community campaign to build a home for ELK in the heart of Montbello and we look forward to continued partnership."

ELK co-founder and Denver City Councilwoman Stacie Gilmore presented Dr. Scott Sampson, long a champion of ELK during his time at the Denver Museum of Nature and Science but currently serving as president and CEO of Science World British Columbia in Vancouver, B.C, with Environmental Learning for Kids' 7th Annual Lifetime Legacy Award.

Finally, Luis Benitez, among the world's foremost high altitude mountaineers and now Director for the Colorado Office of Outdoor Recreation Industry gave the Keynote address. He talked about the importance of the outdoor industry to Colorado's economy and recognized ELK as one of the leading organizations nationally enabling a diverse community of learners to experience Colorado's great outdoors.

As the successful breakfast ended with over \$70,000 raised from 280 attendees through table sponsorships and an energetic paddle raiser facilitated by master of ceremonies

and former Denver Bronco, Reggie Rivers, Executive Director Pineda was pleased with the breakfast but was already focused on ELK's next challenges.

"It is critical that the Denver metro area support re-upping the Scientific and Cultural Facilities District (SCFD) this fall. The SCFD is a metro wide tax district that supports thousands of metro area cultural facilities and nonprofits like ELK all the way up to the Denver Zoo and the Denver Museum of Nature and Science," said Pineda. "ELK has enjoyed 20 years of bringing youth to the outdoors and exposing them to careers in science. We need the SCFD to continue our programs and to support all the other deserving organizations and iconic facilities in the Denver metropolitan area."

Please go [here](#) for pictures of our breakfast or go [here](#) to watch our 20th Anniversary Video.

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Environmental Learning for Kids

Environmental Learning for Kids (ELK) is a Denver-based, 501(c) 3 organization established in 1996 to address the growing need to introduce and educate Colorado's urban youth about science, leadership, and careers. Nineteen years later, ELK continues to provide strong educational support, good role models, and opportunities for positive community action for youth, helping them to become engaged, productive, and successful members of society. For more information about ELK please visit www.elkkids.org.