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## **Community Leaders Raise \$330,882 to Support, Celebrate Children with Special Needs**

***Microsoft's Chief Accessibility Officer Jenny Lay-Flurrie keynoted Kinding's 13<sup>th</sup> annual Salute to Courage Luncheon, a community celebration supporting the region's most robust early intervention center in its service to children with disabilities, delays, and risk factors***

**October 5, 2018 – BELLEVUE** – It is estimated that 13 percent of children have developmental disabilities, one in nine are born prematurely, and one in 59 are diagnosed with autism spectrum disorders. Fortunately, these most vulnerable among us have strong, innovative advocates to help champion their cause.

Microsoft's Chief Accessibility Officer Jenny Lay-Flurrie delivered a powerful keynote address at Kinding's 13<sup>th</sup> annual Salute to Courage Luncheon, a celebration supporting the organization's mission of serving children with special needs and their families when they need it most. Kinding, a Bellevue-based non-profit, provides life-changing early intervention therapies and education to young children with a range of disabilities, developmental delays, and other risk factors such as homelessness or participation in the foster system.

Lay-Flurrie's team is at the forefront of creating positive experiences that apply technology to make a difference in the world and the lives of individuals, from how organizations hire and support people with disabilities in employment to innovative technology that aims to revolutionize 'what's possible' for people with disabilities.

Lay-Flurrie's journey with disability started early. By the age of five, her hearing was already declining, a process that would continue over the next 30+ years. She recalls as a teenager and even through most of her twenties feeling that she needed to hide her disability, but has since come to see her disability as a strength.

This made Lay-Flurrie an exceptional fit as the keynote speaker for Kinding's Luncheon. Kinding, now in its 56<sup>th</sup> year, serves children and families in King and Snohomish counties from campuses in Bellevue, Bothell, and Renton, as well as through a robust home-visit program. Lay-Flurrie set an inspiring tone for the organization's signature fall event, sharing powerful insights on creating technologies, workplaces, and communities that celebrate and harness the power of people of all abilities.

Lay-Flurrie's message was bolstered by event host Lauren Silvernail, an alumni parent of Kinding's Early Intervention programs, who shared a moving firsthand account of the obstacles overcome by her children with the help of Kinding.

Silvernail recounted feeling deeply concerned about her son's development after he and his twin sister were born prematurely. "Around his first birthday the light and spark in his eyes, which had been present as early as his days in the incubator, seemed dim, or nonexistent. He stopped laughing, he stopped smiling, and he started having hours-long night terrors." Her family came to Kindering, where she witnessed a gradual but powerful transformation. "[He] started his therapy program, and we hit it hard. We were doing almost 20 hours a week of speech, occupational, and social skills therapy... we had [him] at Kindering, exactly where he needed to be, and slowly, ever so slowly, we saw him start to come alive again."

Kindering alumni parent Wendy Hardman also shared her story. Her son's birth in 1987 came with extreme complications, and it was a real question whether he would leave the hospital alive. "We were told that Cole had a 40 percent chance of survival the day he was born, and if he survived it was unlikely he would live past the age of two," Hardman recalled.

Cole endured a 4-hour emergency surgery, and spent the next nine months in the hospital fighting to survive. When he was finally released, he confronted a host of developmental challenges. "When we were finally able to first bring Cole and all of his hospital equipment home, you just can't imagine how lost, lonely, and scared we were," said Hardman. She illustrated how finding Kindering helped turn fear and uncertainty into hope, courage, and significant gains over several years. "We thank the doctors for keeping Cole alive, but we credit Kindering for providing the early intervention that gave him the tools to thrive."

These moving accounts inspired guests to generously donate more than \$330,000 for Kindering's programs in just a single afternoon, supporting inclusive preschool, special education, physical/occupational therapy, autism-specific programming and bilingual offerings, among many others.

The inspiring event was attended by a diverse mix of philanthropists, community leaders, elected officials and school district administrators all united around a common cause: to provide life-changing help to those who need it most.

### **About Kindering**

Kindering embraces children of diverse abilities and their families by providing the finest education and therapies to nurture hope, courage, and the skills to soar. Founded in 1962 by five Bellevue-area mothers of children with disabilities, Kindering is the largest intervention center in Washington State, one of the three largest centers in the nation, and notably the most comprehensive.

Honored with numerous awards and referenced in academic journals, Kindering ([www.kindering.org](http://www.kindering.org)) is a well-recognized national leader in early intervention services for children ages birth to three with developmental delays or disabilities. The center treats children with delays caused by autism, cerebral palsy, chromosomal abnormalities, vision impairment, extraordinary complications of prematurity, or abuse and neglect.

In 2017, Kindering helped 4,455 children and their families. Services include developmental assessments; physical; speech, and mental health therapies; special education; childcare consultation; nutrition/feeding therapy; outreach to homeless shelters, foster and kinship care interventions; family counseling; and parent education.

Decades of research have proven that ages birth to three are the most critical phase of brain development for any child – a one-time opportunity to make a powerful difference. Kindering's data show that 99% of our children make progress; 75% narrow the gap with their typically developing peers; and 46% no longer require

special education services at age three, yielding an estimated \$14 million in annualized savings for local school districts.

Those wishing to learn more about Kindering, its mission and programs may call Alison Morton at 425-653-4331 or [Alison.morton@kinding.org](mailto:Alison.morton@kinding.org), or visit its website at [www.kinding.org](http://www.kinding.org).