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season to share

Enriching day care a life-saver for parents

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In prosperous Boulder, where a month of day care costs \$1,200, children from low-income families may miss out on quality early-childhood education -something that could hurt them for the rest of their lives.

So Boulder Day Nursery levels the playing field. Ninety percent of the nursery's clients pay subsidized fees, and about half are single-parent families.

Good care is vital for a child's emotional and academic development, said Steve Callander, executive director.

"When kids have access to Boulder Day Nursery, it can be life-changing for them," Callander said. "If kids aren't socially, emotionally and cognitively prepared for school, that's hard ground to make up."

The nursery is seeking funding from this year's Post-News Season to Share campaign.

Every week, the children go on field trips. Teachers take them down to the creek to turn over rocks and look for bugs. Sometimes they go to shows at Fiske Planetarium or for hikes in Chautauqua Park.

John Davis' two sons, Colin, 3, and Julian, 5, especially like the trips to weed and water the nursery's plot at the community garden. Davidson moved to Boulder from Memphis, Tenn., to take a position teaching at the University of Colorado. He took a \$14,000 pay cut to transfer, and with the moving expenses, money is tight. With Davidson's busy work schedule, he relies on the teachers to answer questions and give him advice about his sons' behavior and development.

"The teachers have seen it all," he said. "They are professionals, and I've learned about parenting from them."

The children at Boulder Day Nursery get a full day's nutrition served to them, and this is great for Davis.

"It takes some of the pressure off me, and it saves me money," he said. "And it's probably better than anything I cook."

The nursery boasts low teacher-to-student ratios, which is one reason there are 300 names on the waiting list. Priority is given to needy families. Another reason for the nursery's popularity is the culturally diverse environment it provides the children.

"Boulder can seem like a homogeneous community," Callander said. "But there's a lot of diversity out there if you make an effort to tap into it."

Callander said he wants families to see their culture reflected in the care their children receive at the nursery.

With the chaos of single fatherhood, a new job, a pending divorce and a new city, the one thing Davis doesn't worry about is the quality of his boys' care.

"They saved my life; I don't know how I would have managed," Davis said. "Things are hard enough."



Tehya, 4, shows off a story she's written to one of her teachers at Boulder Day Nursery, a day-care provider that subsidizes its fees for about 90 percent of its clients. The kids enjoy early education activities that help them start their school years better prepared. (Post 1 Kathryn Scott Osier)