



**AIELLO PUBLIC RELATIONS
& MARKETING**

969 Broadway • Denver, CO • 80203

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CONTACT:

Wendy Aiello
Aiello PR & Marketing
303-619-5162
303-355-3838

**27J School District and Oakwood Homes Announce Innovative “NextGEN”
Agricultural High School to be Built in Reunion**

Commerce City, CO – October 23, 2019 – 27J Schools Superintendent Dr. Chris Fiedler, Amy Schwartz of BuildStrong Education and Kelly Leid of Oakwood Homes have announced a much anticipated and highly innovative high school offering a curriculum developed to support the changing realities of modern agricultural that touches every aspect of our daily lives. The STEAD School -- Science, Technology, Environment, Agriculture and Design, was approved unanimously by the 27J Schools Board of Directors last evening, with an anticipated groundbreaking planned for late Summer/early Fall 2020, in the Reunion Center - a sports, entertainment and cultural district being established by Oakwood Homes in the eastern portion of Reunion off of 104th and Tower Road. As a small high school, STEAD is designed to attract and educate students with an interest in a broad range of career pathways across animal, plant, environmental, and food sciences, representing thousands of career possibilities for these future leaders in business, policy, science, energy and health.

The STEAD School is a science-based, personalized learning experience for students through an active hands-on project-based learning platform open to all high school-aged students from School District SD27J, as well as students outside the district based on availability and open-enrollment policies. STEAD will fully integrate business entrepreneurship skills development into the school’s curriculum that

is aligned with post-secondary educational institutions like Colorado State University and Colorado's community college system, giving students the opportunity to earn college credits while still in high school.

The STEAD school will offer a unique approach to learning, grounded in real life questions, problems, discoveries, experiences, relationships and solutions. Slated to open Fall 2021, this dynamic school will educate an estimated 660 students at full build out in 2024. The development of STEAD's school culture is central to its success, so the school intends to open with 165 9th graders in 2021, growing a grade per year thereafter.

Amy Schwartz, executive director of BuildStrong Education has more than 20 years of experience leading complex educational initiatives including the development of The Colorado Homebuilding Academy and Z Place. "STEM schools are popping up all over the country which has been an amazing transformation for the K-12 educational system," noted Schwartz. "Building on the success of S.T.E.M., STEAD combines the areas of science, technology, engineering and math with the important elements of environment, agriculture and systems design thinking that are each so necessary in the environmentally-conscience world our students live in today. Our goal is to create a learning environment that is so engaging and empowering that these students will own their paths from the first day they walk onto STEAD's campus." The STEAD School builds on the nearly two decades of community centered school work Oakwood Homes has invested in under the leadership of its founder, Pat Hamill, president and CEO of Oakwood Homes.

Kelly Leid of Oakwood Homes, previously director of operations for [Denver Public Schools](#) (DPS) dedicated his efforts at Oakwood to overseeing the developer's education initiatives. He began exploring the concept behind STEAD when he was leading the [redevelopment of the National Western Complex](#). Leid returned to Oakwood to work on the Reunion development and brought the educational idea with him. "Not only is this school the first of its kind but is revolutionary in that it's a new approach to education that encourages students to experience and steer the impact of their learning immediately, but its physical design is equally compelling," said Kelly Leid, a founding board and advisory member. "The campus will look and feel like an active farm with multiple buildings, including crops and animals that celebrate the heritage of our agricultural past, but on the inside, it will feel like one of Google's facilities, a high-tech, high-touch learning environment that promotes innovation and collaboration, which we've affectionately call "google in a barn."

The STEAD School will invite students from all walks of life, not just those whose learning styles are analytical in nature, to interact and engage. "We'll have students who aren't engineering or math focused but still want to engage in this type of learning," noted Candace Chueng, an educational planning

advisor on the project “We want to produce students who are problem solvers and creative thinkers who can collectively anticipate and solve problems in the world which have not even begun to emerge.”

Projects like this require a number of partnerships. Oakwood Homes has been sharing the vision of the Reunion Center and STEAD School with Fulenwider, the owner of the land in and around what is now Reunion. Under three generations of leadership, The Fulenwider family, who still has substantial landholdings in Reunion and the region, has been developing the area that will be the home of the STEAD school, changed the face of the northeast Front Range, helped make Commerce City one of America’s most livable communities. Since its inception in 1904, the Fulenwider company has become synonymous with quality Colorado real estate development. Cal Fulenwider, III, chairman and CEO of Fulenwider, knew the location for the STEAD school would be an ideal reflection and a testament of his grandfather’s experience in farming and ranching and an important role in carrying forward the legacy of Colorado’s agricultural heritage. “More than a century ago, my ancestors invested in and were devoted to the land, while creating a livable city and dedicating their lives to this area in particular,” said Fulenwider. “We are proud to support a learning environment that will be focused on creating a better world that will include agricultural and environmental learning. We look forward to working closely with Oakwood Homes to make the STEAD School a reality” Fulenwider is driven by a deep responsibility to set the stage for the next generation. This unwavering stewardship is, and always will be, the Fulenwider legacy.

The location of the school will be at approximately 106th and Walden Street and be part of the developed Northeast Quadrant around DIA within the Reunion master-planned development. The 2,500-acre master planned community, originally developed by Shea Homes, is anchored by the Buffalo Run Golf Course; Denver International Business Center, a 300-acre business park, and most currently, Peña Station, a mixed-use transit-oriented development near DIA that is anchored by the North American Headquarters of Panasonic Enterprise Solutions that bridges two cities, Commerce City and Denver.

The STEAD mission is to transform the educational experience from a listen-and-learn to an experience-and-do. “We want to transform the way kids learn and are confident that our school will become a place of community that will augment the classroom and will build a deep sense of pride and values for our world,” added Leid. Further, 27J Superintendent Dr. Chris Fielder shared “The STEAD School’s project-based learning model aligns very well to our districts’ goals around what we call, “The Thinking Classroom” where students are actively engaging and leading their learning. We are excited to offer 27J families an additional smaller high school option and we would not be able to do this without the public-private partnership we have developed with Oakwood Homes and BuildStrong Education.”

STEAD will allow students to follow their passions, dig deeper, ask more, debate with confidence and push their own boundaries as they apply their hands-on learning to tangible issues locally and

globally. The campus will spark ideas and encourage meaningful debate and broad thinking. The students will be empowered with the skills, knowledge, confidence and resiliency to be relentlessly curious, fearlessly inquisitive and constantly innovative as they become prepared to succeed in higher education, career and beyond all while making a real difference today.

For more information about The STEAD School, please go to: www.thesteadschool.org

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