

## **Champions for Youth Breakfast Generates Messages of Hope and Perseverance**

On March 21, 250 people gathered at Old Country Buffet for the 13<sup>th</sup> annual Champions for Youth breakfast. Guests were treated to a delicious breakfast, inspirational stories and opportunities to learn more about the work of Communities In Schools of Lakewood (CISL).

Danny Rodriguez set the tone by sharing his amazing life story from drug addiction to managing a successful auto body shop. He credits his progress to mentors and people who offered him an opportunity to prove himself. Danny encouraged guests to make time to mentor young people in our community so they, too, would have a better chance at breaking through barriers to success.

Clover Park High School (CPHS) senior, Auston Hehman, talked to guests about his struggle with poverty-related challenges that were making it hard to stay in school. CPHS site coordinator, Leah Livingston, worked closely with Auston to help him in a variety of ways, including getting a job working with Danny Rodriguez. Auston admitted that had it not been for Leah's support he would have dropped out of school. He now has newfound hope.

Jermaine Kearsse talked about being part of a military family, graduating from Lakes High School and attaining a sociology degree at University of Washington. He told the crowd how happy he was to re-sign with the Seahawks so he could stay in the northwest and continue supporting youth in military families through the 15 to 1: Jermaine Kearsse Foundation. The foundation has helped many youth who have lost a parent to persevere and regain hope. Jermaine said, "It only takes one to start a chain reaction". He urged guests to be the "one" who helps a young person to overcome adversity and reach their potential.

CISL appreciates the generous donations of those who attended and the businesses that sponsored the event. The \$33,000 that was raised at the event will help CISL to strengthen and expand site coordination at Tyee Park, Tillicum and Four Heroes Elementary Schools, Lochburn Middle School and Clover Park High School. If you see one of our sponsors, please thank them for supporting kids and families in Lakewood:

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