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## Georgia Library Spotlight - Clayton County Library System

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# GLA SPOTLIGHT

## Clayton County Library System

The Clayton County Library System's (CCLS) mission is to contribute to the success of the citizens of its diverse community by offering a full range of library services that meet their informational, educational, and leisure interests, fostering the love of reading in youth, and the lifelong pursuit of knowledge for all. Clayton County Library System consists of six branches in the north central portion of Georgia, south of Atlanta. Its six branches serve 65% of the county population, making it one of the highest attended library systems in Georgia per capita. The library collection boasts over 500,000 volumes throughout the six branches. The library was founded in Jonesboro, Georgia, in 1941 by the Jonesboro Women's Club with a collection of only 200 books. By 1960, the single collection started by the Women's Club had grown so much that they joined the Flint River Regional Library System as part of a consortium.

Forest Park and Riverdale branches were added in 1967 and 1968, respectively, with the Morrow location opening its doors in 1975. After years of building a collection and following, the Clayton County Library System decided to leave its consortium with Flint River to form their own library system as we know it today.

In the summer of 2020, CCLS will open its seventh branch—the new Northwest Branch. Northwest is over 20,000 square feet and boasts a separate teen area, state-of-the-art makerspace, multipurpose room, and a computer and educational instruction lab.

Clayton County Library System strives to build a stronger connection with the community, to create spaces that appeal to its patrons, and to provide free resources that make Clayton County a great place in which to live, work, and play.

The Early Learning Teachers Career Pathway & Child Development Associate Program is one example of many collaborations between the Clayton County Library System and the community. Within Greater Atlanta communities, there is significant teacher turnover and a constant need for substitute and entry-level teachers. In most fields, when an employee calls out sick, their work can wait. For childcare providers, there

are no off days and often no suitable replacements to help children thrive. At the same time, many people want a career change and an opportunity to work with kids, but they lack the credentials to get started.

The Early Learning Teachers Career Pathway & Child Development Associate Program's meetings, trainings, and most of their critical



courses were taught at the Headquarters Library in the computer lab. During their graduation ceremony in the spring of 2020, the group, sponsored by the United Way of Greater Atlanta, presented a plaque to thank the Clayton County Library System for the partnership. What makes this celebratory event much more special is that four of the graduates were actively involved in other CCLS initiatives. Graduates Brisa Aguirre and Evelin Ramos are former interns through the Hearts to Nourish Hope partnership. Brisa and Evelin worked on STEAM activities, digital library card applications, and other children and teen programming. Two other graduates are active translators for Clayton County Public Schools and assist library staff during Parent Workshops.

In the past 10+ years, more than 183 courses and workshops were offered, and over 3,800 individuals have graduated from the program with a direct pathway to Child Development Associate credentials, and a new career path. Many of those people are now childcare center directors and full-time teachers with classes of their own. The Clayton County Library System is very proud to have played such a critical role in the lives of its citizens!

Pictured: Clayton County Library System Deputy Director Scott Parham accepting the plaque from the Early Learning Teachers Career Pathway & Child Development Associate Program during the graduation ceremony for spring 2020.