

A Solid Foundation: Toyota Family Teacher of the Year Award Winner, Runner-up Arm Parents With the Tools to Improve Children's Academic Outcomes

October 13, 2016



When Jean Ciborowski Fahey of Weymouth, Mass., joins a circle of moms and newborns, she condenses decades of knowledge about brain development into a 20-minute message that's straightforward and provides parents ways to help their children develop a strong foundation for learning.

"It's important that parents of all income and education levels understand the benefits of early reading and its profound impact on the future success of their children," Ciborowski Fahey said. "Our classes and the book give parents the tools to help their child start life on the right path."

The Weymouth, Mass., community educator was named 2016 Toyota Family Teacher of the Year today by the National Center for Families Learning (NCFL) and Toyota for her efforts to educate parents of babies and young children about reading and brain development. Central to Ciborowski Fahey's outreach strategy is a book she wrote, "*Make Time for Reading: a story guide for parents of babies and young children.*" Ciborowski Fahey will use the \$20,000 grant from Toyota and NCFL to reprint her book in English and Spanish, which will enable her to reach nearly 7,000 more parents.

Since self-publishing in 2014, Ciborowski Fahey has printed and donated more than 10,000 copies of her book to mothers who deliver babies at South Shore Hospital, local Head Start parents, and area pediatric practices that serve low-income families. She also teaches other teachers, high school students, librarians, foster parents and child care providers these family literacy strategies.

“Jean is unwavering in her stance to build parent capacities as a way to improve child outcomes,” said Faye Weir, director, Parent Child Services for South Shore Health System. “‘*Make Time for Reading*’ is a response for an innovative teaching and learning tool that attracts more parents of all income and educational levels. It takes only minutes to read, but is packed with information parents can immediately use.”

The Toyota Family Teacher of the Year award, a national honor now in its 20th year, recognizes that families play a crucial role in the success of children and salutes educators who are exceptional at using intergenerational approaches to engage students and their families in education.

“[Research](#) is clear that when parents are engaged in their child’s education, student achievement is increased,” said Dr. Joshua Cramer, NCFL vice president. “Jean’s work to teach parents how critical reading is to their child’s development not only has the power to provide successful outcomes for the child’s academic career, it also strengthens family relationships.”

Ciborowski Fahey and runner-up, Ellin Klor of Santa Clara, Calif., will be recognized for their accomplishments at the annual [Families Learning Summit](#) in Detroit on October 18. The Summit convenes the nation’s most progressive experts in education, policy, and family and parent engagement to discuss and share the latest information regarding multigenerational approaches to learning.

“Jean’s book is an example of the forward-thinking strategy we want to recognize and help expand through the Toyota Family Teacher of the Year grant,” said Mike Goss, general manager, social innovation, Toyota Motor North America. “The extraordinary work of both Jean and Ellin in engaging families in their children’s education will pay dividends for these students, their families, their schools and their communities for generations to come. Toyota is committed to supporting efforts that help people gain the literacy and language skills needed for upward mobility and future success.”

Klor, a family literacy librarian with Read Santa Clara, works with at-risk families with limited literacy and/or language skills. She developed the [Santa Clara 0-6 website](#) focusing on early learning, health, nutrition and development, play and parenting. With this recognition, Klor received a \$5,000 grant to continue engaging families through literacy events.