

# National Center for Families Learning (NCFL) Tackles Education Challenges at Annual Summit

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Washington, D.C. (Feb. 18, 2014) – Recognizing that families play such a crucial role in a child’s learning process, the annual [Families Learning Summit and National Conference on Family Literacy](#), from [NCFL](#), today convened national education leaders to consider the special challenges and opportunities that exist surrounding family learning.

The Summit features a keynote luncheon sponsored by Toyota, a longstanding partner of NCFL.

Teachers, education advocates, policy makers and families have gathered for stimulating events, discussing everyday learning opportunities for children and their families. The goal is to inspire a thirst for knowledge that that begins in school but thrives outside the boundaries of a school.

“We have long-believed in the importance of ongoing learning to confront educational challenges, respond to societal changes and present new opportunities,” said Emily Kirkpatrick, vice president, NCFL. “And for more than 20 years, Toyota has been the perfect co-pilot on the road to making that shared vision a reality.”

Today’s keynote luncheon, featuring actress and learning enthusiast Holly Robinson Peete and Toyota’s Michael Rouse, vice president of diversity, philanthropy and community affairs, celebrates that mission and honors current programs and teachers who share NCFL’s and Toyota’s mission with two notable awards: the Toyota Family Learning grants and the Toyota Family Teacher of the Year. The winners were announced today.

“Toyota applauds the National Center for Families Learning and the winners of the Toyota Family Learning grants and Toyota Family Teacher of the Year award for their work to enrich the lives of families around the nation,” said Michael Rouse, vice president of diversity, philanthropy and community affairs for Toyota. “In the words of our honorary chairman Dr. Shoichiro Toyoda, ‘An investment in our youth is an investment in our future.’”

### **Toyota Family Learning Grant Program**

Toyota Family Learning is a new six-year, nationwide initiative offering mobile learning adventures and online resources for families and grants for communities to fund new mentor and service learning programs targeting vulnerable families.

The [five winning grantee communities](#) come from across the nation and represent just a few of the threads that weave together the fabric of this country and its diverse educational challenges.

The winners are:

- **Dorcas International Institute of Rhode Island (Providence, RI):** Dorcas International Institute empowers families, refugees and immigrants to become leaders in their community by teaching them to advocate for their own needs with the school and civic leaders.
- **East Side House (Bronx, NY):** East Side House believes children succeed in school and reverse falling test scores—even in the poorest congressional district in the nation—when parents are able to successfully continue education in the home.
- **Houston Public Library (Houston, TX):** Houston Public Library provides a learning lifeline and hub of resources for all family members, creating a strong family unit that can succeed at every level.
- **Lincoln Public Schools (Lincoln, NE):** Lincoln Public Schools’ programs aim to help parents more effectively share the literacy and learning experience with their kids to lead to improved performance in school.
- **Toberman Neighborhood Center (San Pedro, CA):** Toberman empowers families of all backgrounds to be an influential part of their community, providing support in the face of poverty and violence.

In a highly competitive selection process, with more than 1,000 communities expressing interest, these winning

communities were selected to receive the first-ever Toyota Family Learning grant and become the flagship family learning projects in their community. Each winner is awarded a three-year, \$175,000 grant, in addition to a wide range of NCFL training and communication support, learning items and materials.

### **Toyota Family Teacher of the Year**

Now in its 17<sup>th</sup> year, the popular Toyota award has evolved into the Toyota Family Teacher of the Year Award to emphasize the importance of a well-rounded education network and bring recognition to a teacher's school or program that exemplifies bringing families into the learning process.

- This year's Toyota Family Teacher of the Year is Elizabeth Atack, of the Nashville Public Library.
  - Ms. Atack's program focuses on preparing early childhood students for Kindergarten through parent and family workshops and is recognized for impressive statistics that confirm increased family participation and literacy development.
  - Elizabeth and her organization will receive a \$20,000 prize to further their exemplary workshops based on parent needs, strategic partnerships and culturally and linguistically responsive teaching strategies.

NCFL and Toyota will also award a second prize winner \$5,000, double the amount of previous years.

- This year's second-place winner is Kathleen Johnston, a fourth grade teacher at Tuscano Elementary School in Phoenix, AZ.
  - Kathleen is recognized for going the extra mile, investing time outside school hours to get her students and their families to a shared place of success, creating the perfect parent, teacher and child connection.

In combining data and student-developed goals to build skills and a love of reading and learning, Kathleen is generating results that will shape her entire school district.

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