# Louisiana Educator Named Toyota Family Literacy Teacher of the Year

April 11, 2010

***National Award to Contribute $7,500 to Literacy Center in Bernice***

April 11, 2010 – SAN ANTONIO – Louisiana educator Kay Brown received the national 2010 Toyota Family Literacy Teacher of the Year award today at the National Conference on Family Literacy in San Antonio.

As part of the award given by Toyota and the National Center for Family Literacy, Brown's Northeast Louisiana Family Literacy Consortium program will receive $7,500. Brown also has been featured on an electronic billboard in Times Square earlier this month. (A photo is attached.)

"Family literacy changes lives," said Kay Brown. "It has changed mine – making me a better teacher. It has changed the community's – getting them more involved in the education of all our children. And it has changed the families themselves – transforming them into eager learners who are motivated by the possibilities it provides."

The program, operated by the Ouachita Parish School Board, serves parents and their children up to age 8 for adult basic education including English as a Second Language instruction, civics education, and life skills assistance; early childhood education; parent education; and parent-child interactive literacy activities.

Program results earned in the last two years include 100 percent of the participants who set goals for diploma or GED, employment, or postsecondary education have achieved the goals they set. The program participants also met 100 percent of the early childhood indicators for attendance, grade promotion, reading readiness and achievement as well as 100 percent of the parent education indicators for improvement in literacy behaviors.

"Kay is shaping the futures for our next generation and helping the entire community through family literacy," said Patricia Pineda, group vice president, philanthropy, Toyota Motor North America, Inc. "Her efforts are why we continue the tradition of honoring the unsung heroes of education through the Toyota Family Literacy Teacher of the Year."

Families in rural Bernice, La., are improving their lives because Brown and her staff are always on call in case any of the families in the program need them, including raising money for a mother to pay for the funeral for her 12-year-old son.

The program also became family to a destitute man with a three-year-old niece who had nowhere else to turn. He came in one day because he heard the program could change his life and asked Brown to do just that. And she did in ways neither he – nor the entire community – could have imagined. He persevered in the family literacy program, received a perfect score in writing on his GED exam and is enrolled to become an RN. He still turns to the family literacy program for help with issues such as Pell Grant applications. Members of the community were so amazed at the transformation that many attended his graduation, at which he was the featured commencement speaker.

"Louisiana is proud to be the home of the 2010 Toyota Family Literacy Teacher of the Year, Kay Brown, who is helping hard-working families make better lives for themselves and their children," U.S. Senator Mary Landrieu

said. “Kay’s work demonstrates that families can achieve anything when they have the right tools and the community behind them. Increasing literacy is one of the greatest workforce development and economic development strategies we can pursue.”

The community has embraced and supported family literacy in other ways – from helping recruit families for the program to creating and managing a library for the center because the nearest library requires transportation that many families in the community do not have.

“Research and results at family literacy centers throughout the country demonstrate that working with multiple generations is the best way to lift up the entire family,” said Sharon Darling, president & founder of NCFL. “It increases their stability and financial well-being, and it opens the door of infinite possibility to them. Kay’s dedication is having an immediate and long-term impact not only on those families she touches but on the entire community.”

This national honor builds on prior local and statewide recognition. The Louisiana Department of Education designated the center as one of three outstanding English Language/Civics programs in the state in 2008. “Kay’s accomplishments are proof positive that literacy is the gateway to success for families,” Congressman Rodney Alexander said. “Because of the Toyota award, her program will be able to help more families during such an economically challenging time.”

This is the 14th year for the Toyota Family Literacy Teacher of the Year award. Toyota and NCFL also recognized the Teacher of the Year runners-up, who received scholarships to the NCFL conference and a $500 grant for travel expenses:

- Rosa Hernandez, Long Beach Family Literacy Program, Long Beach, Calif.;
- Gayle von Keyserling, Families Learning Together, Palmyra, Va.; and
- Norma Sandoval-Shinn, Pima College Adult Education Family Literacy Program, Tucson, Ariz.

**ABOUT NCFL**

The National Center for Family Literacy, founded in 1989 and based in Louisville, Ky., is the worldwide leader in family literacy. More than 1 million families have made positive educational and economic gains as a result of NCFL’s work, which includes training more than 150,000 teachers and thousands of volunteers. For more information, contact 1-877-FAMLIT-1 or visit www.famlit.org.

**ABOUT TOYOTA**

Since 1991, Toyota and NCFL have forged successful programs to promote family literacy in the United States. Today, the Toyota/NCFL partnership accounts for 256 family literacy sites in 50 cities and 30 states. As part of this partnership, the Toyota Family Literacy Teacher of the Year award has been presented annually since 1997 and recognizes individual teachers’ contributions to improving literacy among youth and adults. Additional information on Toyota’s commitment to improving education nationwide is available at http://www.toyota.com/about/philanthropy/education/