

National Literacy Program Unveiled at Three Patterson Schools

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\$600,000 Grant Aims to Improve Language Skills of Hispanic, Other Immigrant Families

May 11, 2010 – PATTERSON, CALIF. – A national family literacy program was unveiled today at three Patterson elementary schools. The program – funded by a \$600,000 grant from Toyota – is coordinated by the National Center for Family Literacy (NCFL). It is the only initiative of its kind to focus on the needs of Hispanic and other immigrant families on a nationwide basis.

The Toyota Family Literacy Program (TFLP) is now operating at Walnut Grove School, Northmead Elementary and Grayson Charter School. The three schools average 86 percent Hispanic enrollment.

In addition to launching the program at these three schools, the funding will allow NCFL to provide comprehensive support for training, educational materials and technical assistance at each site. Patterson Joint Unified School District is working hand-in-hand with NCFL to implement the family literacy program.

“Research indicates that by better educating parents, we can transform children’s lives and end the cycle of poverty,” said Patrick J. Sweeney, superintendent, Patterson Joint Unified School District. “The Toyota Family Literacy Program created the opportunity for us to transform lives in Patterson. We are very grateful to Toyota and the staff at the National Center for Family Literacy for their guidance and support.”

Along with Patterson, four other cities are part of the latest \$3 million expansion of the Toyota Family Literacy Program: Louisville, Ky.; Pueblo, Colo.; Rochester, N.Y.; and Lincoln, Neb. A total of 126 school districts submitted applications for the five spots.

Created by NCFL, which is the country’s leader in the practice of raising the literacy level of parents and children simultaneously, the Toyota Family Literacy Program is NCFL’s signature initiative. TFLP – which got its start in 2003 and now operates in 30 U.S. cities – increases basic language and literacy skills among Hispanic and other immigrant families, and provides parents with the skills they need to help their children succeed in school. It specifically serves children in kindergarten to third grade and their parents.

The program is unique not only because it brings parents and children together in the classroom, but it also incorporates NCFL’s multicultural family literacy model, which is programming that is culturally relevant to the populations served. Since 1991, Toyota’s commitment to NCFL programming has exceeded \$36 million.

Maribel Marquez, one of the first Patterson participants along with her son, Edwin Guzman, a first-grade student at Northmead Elementary, said the program is beneficial in many ways.

“When I first came to this country, it was difficult to find a job,” Marquez said. “But the worst thing was that I didn’t speak English, and I would get upset because I didn’t understand. When I heard about the Toyota Family Literacy Program, I said, ‘this is my opportunity.’ It has raised my self-esteem more than I could have imagined. I have more energy and a great desire to learn. Most importantly, I have the confidence to help my children succeed.”

Results from the TFLP programs already implemented include:

- Adults have made significant literacy gains with 54 percent improving literacy scores by at least one level. This has contributed to an improved understanding of basic oral and written instructions in English, reading a note from a teacher, setting up a doctor's appointment and displaying basic computer literacy skills (word processing and sending e-mail);
- Children in the program exceeded peers in such areas as academic performance, motivation to learn, attendance, classroom behavior and involvement in classroom activities;
 - 92 percent of parents state they are better able to help their child with homework; and
 - 91 percent of parents state their child's grades have improved.

Toyota/NCFL partnership has thrived

"We are pleased to bring this program to Patterson," said Sharon Darling, president & founder of NCFL. "By partnering with Toyota, NCFL has pioneered a proven formula of research and delivery of family literacy services that not only works for the participants, but for the betterment of the communities. And, we're proud to say, our path to success here in Patterson has been set by the impressive gains made by thousands of TFLP participants in family literacy programs nationwide."

Patricia Pineda, group vice president, philanthropy, Toyota Motor North America, Inc., added: "Due to the incredible commitment of NCFL, the Toyota Family Literacy Program has helped improve the literacy skills of thousands of families in diverse communities across the country. We're excited to bring the program to Patterson and look forward to making even more positive and lasting contributions to students and families."

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/>.