National Literacy Program Unveiled at Three Lincoln Schools

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$600,000 grant aims to improve language skills of Hispanic, other immigrant families

LINCOLN, Neb. ? (Feb. 18, 2010) ? A national family literacy program was unveiled today at three Lincoln 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 up-and-running at West Lincoln Elementary, Elliot Elementary and Everett Elementary. The three schools average 34 percent Hispanic enrollment.

The $600,000 funding grant is a combination of direct funding to Lincoln Public Schools and intensive program development supporting ? including training ? educational materials and technical assistance at each site over the course of three years. NCFL leads the program-implementation work, and coordinates all efforts directly with leaders in the school system.

Lincoln Public Schools is working hand-in-hand with NCFL to implement the family literacy program. Other community partners include: Southeast Community College, Family Service of Lincoln, Lincoln Public Libraries, and El Centro de las Américas.

?We are grateful to Toyota for this significant grant, essential to the continued success of family literacy in Lincoln Public Schools,? said Dr. Susan Gourley, superintendent, Lincoln Public Schools. ?Family literacy strengthens that critical connection between school and home, especially in the crucial early grades when parental involvement is so important to a student?s success in school.?

She added: ?This grant will help empower our parents with the skills necessary to help their children with homework and other school activities. We also thank and commend the work of the National Center for Family Literacy for helping to create these opportunities.?

Along with Lincoln, four other cities are part of the latest $3 million expansion of the Toyota Family Literacy Program: Louisville, Ky.; Patterson, Calif.; Pueblo, Colo.; and Rochester, N.Y. 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.

Martha Matamoros, one of the first Lincoln participants along with her son, Victor, a first-grade student at West Lincoln Elementary, said the program has already made an impact.

?Today, I can ask questions that help me in my daily life, fill out applications and enlarge my vocabulary,? Matamoros said. ?With the time spent in my child?s classroom, it has helped me a lot because I have seen the methods the teacher uses with my son and I have been able to apply it at home.?

She added: ?I feel good and happy because even though the time in the Toyota program has been short, I have seen progress in myself and in the help I can now offer to my children.?

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 Lincoln,? said Sharon Darling, president and 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 Lincoln 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 Lincoln 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 www.toyota.com/about/our_commitment/philanthropy/education.