

National Literacy Program Unveiled at Three Rochester Schools

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

March 24, 2010 – ROCHESTER, N.Y. – A national family literacy program was unveiled today at three Rochester 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 Abraham Lincoln Elementary, Dag Hammarskjold Elementary and Longfellow Elementary. The three schools average 30 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. Rochester City School District is working hand-in-hand with NCFL to implement the family literacy program.

“Promoting literacy is an integral part of our work to improve student academic achievement. The more we can involve parents and families, the better the results for our students,” said Jean-Claude Brizard, superintendent, Rochester City School District.

“Through the Toyota Family Literacy Program, we are encouraging reading and promoting literacy skills for the entire family. That has incredible benefits – particularly for families that are struggling with literacy, learning English as a second language, or just need to reinforce good reading habits with their children,” he added.

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

Josefina Lopez, one of the first Rochester participants along with her daughter, Jacqueline, a first-grade student at Longfellow Elementary, said the program is beneficial in many ways.

“I am attending because I want to improve my English, get my GED and go to college,” she said. “Also, I enjoy being in my daughter’s classroom. Being in class with her has helped me learn better English skills. I also feel

that I have developed good communications with my other children's teachers. I have helped the teachers understand them better."

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 Rochester," 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 Rochester 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 Rochester 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.