

National Literacy Program Unveiled at Three Memphis Schools

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MEMPHIS, Tenn. ? A national family literacy program was unveiled today at three Memphis 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 Berclair Elementary, Egypt Elementary and South Park Elementary in Memphis. The three schools average 31 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. Memphis City Schools is working hand-in-hand with NCFL to implement the family literacy program.

?On behalf of the more than 104,000 students in Memphis City Schools, I express my sincere gratitude to the Toyota Motor Company and the National Center for Family Literacy for awarding Memphis City Schools with this significant TFLP Grant,? said Dr. Kriner Cash, superintendent, Memphis City Schools. ?This grant will support our vigorous aim to ensure that our students and their families are provided with the resources and support they deserve to be successful. I applaud Toyota and NCFL for identifying and addressing literacy as an essential building block for student achievement.?

Parents and their children will benefit.

Along with Memphis, four other cities are part of the latest \$3 million expansion of the Toyota Family Literacy Program: Springdale, Ark.; Las Vegas, Nev.; Las Cruces, N.M.; and Long Beach, Calif. A total of 191 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 25 cities across the U.S. ? 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.

Zulema Matute, one of the first Memphis participants along with her daughter, Dariela, a first-grader at Berclair Elementary, said the program has already had an impact.

?The Toyota Family Literacy Program is helping me to learn English and be a better teacher and mother for my children,? she said. ?I have learned that I am my children?s first and most important teacher.?

Results from the TFLP programs already implemented include:

- Significant literacy gains by adults 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 (79 percent), motivation to learn (86 percent), attendance (96 percent), classroom behavior (91 percent), and involvement in classroom activities (88 percent);
 - 92 percent of parents stating they are better able to help their child with homework; and
 - 91 percent of parents stating their child's grades have improved.

“By partnering with Toyota, NCFL has nurtured 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,” said Sharon Darling, president and founder of NCFL. “And, we’re proud to say, our path to success here in Memphis has been set by the impressive gains made by thousands of TFLP participants in family literacy programs nationwide.”

Toyota is proud of its partnership with NCFL.

“Through the efforts of NCFL, the Toyota Family Literacy Program has already proven successful in reaching thousands of families in diverse communities across the country,” said Patricia Pineda, group vice president, philanthropy, Toyota Motor North America, Inc. “We’re thrilled to bring the program to Memphis and we 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 <http://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 241 family literacy sites in 47 cities and 29 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.

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