

Cincinnati Educator Named National Family Teacher of the Year

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CINCINNATI (October 28, 2020) – Once a child raised in poverty in North Africa, Leila Kubesch arrived in America seeking solutions for families in need. She has fulfilled this mission and more, demonstrating an extraordinary capacity to impact the lives of families through her work. Her career as a Norwood Public Schools teacher has included making home visits, building a school library, advocating for youth and immigrants living in foster care, founding a nonprofit organization, and much more. For these efforts that have propelled learning across generations, she has been named the 2020 Toyota Family Teacher of the Year by Toyota and the National Center for Families Learning (NCFL).

“Leila Kubesch’s endless drive aligns with Toyota’s focus on continuous improvement and providing opportunities for everyone,” said Mike Goss, general manager, Social Innovation, Toyota Motor North America. “She has overcome myriad challenges to impact the world in a positive way—a goal we also strive to carry out each day. We are inspired by all of Leila’s efforts and so honored to name her the 2020 Toyota Family Teacher of the Year.”

Throughout her career, Kubesch has worked to secure funding and develop initiatives that foster learning in inclusive and impactful ways. Grants she has won have bolstered her school’s library with multicultural books and allowed her students’ work to be featured in the National Underground Railroad Freedom Center. After witnessing too many families do not receive the services they needed, Kubesch founded a nonprofit called Parents2Partners, which works to educate families about available community resources and remove barriers to academic success.

“Leila has an incredibly unique ability to catalyze both localized and widespread meaningful family learning efforts,” said Dr. Joshua Cramer, executive vice president, NCFL. “Research shows that when families are engaged in learning together, student academic success results. We are proud to recognize Leila as our 2020 Toyota Family Teacher of the Year.”

Kubesch was surprised today with a \$20,000 check from Toyota and NCFL to be used to continue her family engagement efforts. This year, she is partnering with two school districts to help them develop their capacity in supporting students who are at-risk or underrepresented through social emotional learning and family engagement in order to elevate vulnerable communities.

“We are so proud to have Leila as a member of our staff,” said Mary Ronan, superintendent, Norwood City Schools. “In addition to being an excellent academic teacher, she reaches out to our families in the community to engage and involve them in ensuring our students are successful. Leila has developed a network of community resources to assist [in meeting] the needs of our students and their families and is ever so deserving of this award.”

The Toyota Family Teacher of the Year award, a national honor now in its 24th year, recognizes families play a crucial role in the success of children and salutes educators who are exceptional at using intergenerational approaches to engage students and their families in education.

Kubesch and runner-up Aminah Williams, of St. Louis, were surprised virtually in front of their classes. Each will be invited to the 2021 Families Learning Conference, which will be held in Dallas from Oct. 25-27, 2021. The conference convenes national experts in education, family engagement, and research to discuss and share the latest information regarding multigenerational approaches to learning.

Williams, a parent educator with Parents as Teachers, was chosen as the Toyota Family Teacher of the Year runner-up. As a certified adult educator, licensed clinical social worker, public policy advocate, and certified doula, Williams has positively impacted families throughout the spectrum of life. Parents as Teachers will receive a \$5,000 grant award to implement a doula program with parents in the community.

Since 1997, Toyota Family Teacher of the Year winners, runners-up, and their respective organizations have received \$600,000.