



Toyota expands national family learning program to Tupelo

\$175,000 grant to boost literacy skills, strengthen families, improve communities

TUPELO, Miss. (April 25, 2017) – The National Center for Families Learning (NCFL), in partnership with Toyota and the Family Resource Center of North Mississippi, today unveiled a unique family learning program. This innovative, two-generation model called Toyota Family Learning is a solution to many of the educational challenges facing low-income and ethnically diverse families. The Family Resource Center of North Mississippi received a three-year, \$175,000 grant from Toyota and NCFL to launch the program.

About 55 parents and children are enrolled in Toyota Family Learning at three sites in the Tupelo area. The program empowers parents and caregivers, as well as their children, to become engaged in their schools and communities. It also leverages technology as parents and children learn together and serve their communities through NCFL's Family Service Learning approach, Parent and Child Together (PACT) Time[®], and family-to-family mentoring.

The Family Resource Center is the 16th organization to become part of the Toyota Family Learning program. In total, Toyota has committed more than \$10 million for this national education initiative.

"The Toyota Family Learning program is helping families better reach their potential by empowering adults through literacy, as well as by giving them the tools to be more involved in their children's education," said Christi Webb, executive director, Family Resource Center of North Mississippi. "The parents are getting better jobs because of the skills they're learning through this program. Additionally, the families are becoming more involved in their neighborhoods and giving back through Family Service Learning projects."

Parents and their children spend time throughout the week learning together in this free program. In addition to gaining skills to help their children succeed in and outside the classroom, parents also build important technology, language, literacy, and job skills.

Kimberly Ledbetter says the program has helped her learn how to work with her 6-year old daughter who was born prematurely and suffers from hearing loss as a result. "I've learned how to better work with my daughter on homework and reading. She's gone from struggling to now improving her reading scores and having better behavior in school."

Results of an independent evaluation from Penn State University of participants graduating from Toyota Family Learning in 2016 show 94 percent became a better parent. Additional results include:

- 79 percent improved their English skills
- 47 percent upgraded skills to keep current job
- 40 percent got a better job
- 28 percent obtained the knowledge necessary to pass the U.S. citizenship test
- 29 percent earned a GED certificate or high school equivalency

“The impacts of this program will be felt by families for generations,” said Shea Coughlin, NCFL vice president, external affairs. “This two-generation literacy model elevates families out of poverty by empowering parents with the skills and confidence to improve their life situations. Additionally, they form stronger bonds with their children – a powerful pressure point for educational success. Families also learn to be active in their own communities to make the changes they want to see.”

Toyota and NCFL have partnered since 1991 to bring family literacy programs to more than 2 million families across the country. NCFL is a pioneer in the concept of families learning and serving together to raise literacy levels and improve communities. NCFL-Toyota site-based programs have been brought to life in nearly 60 cities in 32 states.

“Toyota Mississippi is proud to partner with NCFL to bring this innovative and impactful program to Tupelo,” said Mike Botkin, vice president of administration, Toyota Mississippi. “It is important to Toyota to invest in the communities where its team members live and work. This is a great example of that philosophy.”

The Toyota Family Learning initiative also includes two online learning communities: [Family Time Machine](#), which encourages grantee site families to learn and thrive together, and [Toyota Family Trails](#), a website that inspires families nationwide to learn through family exploration and adventure.

ABOUT NATIONAL CENTER FOR FAMILIES LEARNING

The National Center for Families Learning (NCFL) is a national nonprofit organization dedicated to helping adults and children learn together. NCFL creates and deploys innovative two-generation programs, strategies, and online learning solutions that support learning, literacy, and family engagement in education. From the classroom to the community to the digital frontier, NCFL collaborates with educators, advocates, and policymakers to help families construct hotspots for learning wherever they go. For more information on NCFL’s 28-year track record, visit familieslearning.org.

ABOUT TOYOTA

Toyota (NYSE:TM), creator of the Prius and the Mirai fuel cell vehicle, is committed to advancing mobility through our Toyota and Lexus brands. Over the past 60 years, we’ve produced more than 30 million cars and trucks in North America, where we operate 14 manufacturing plants (10 in the U.S.) and directly employ more than 44,000 people (more than 34,000 in the U.S.). Our 1,800 North American dealerships (nearly 1,500 in the U.S.) sold almost 2.6 million cars and trucks (2.45 million in the U.S.) in 2016 – and about 85 percent of all Toyota vehicles sold over the past 15 years are still on the road today.

Toyota partners with community, civic, academic, and governmental organizations to address our society's most pressing mobility challenges. We share company resources and extensive know-how to support non-profits to help expand their ability to assist more people move more places. For more information about Toyota, visit www.toyotaneewsroom.com.

ABOUT FAMILY RESOURCE CENTER OF NORTH MISSISSIPPI

Originating in Tupelo in 1994, the Family Resource Center of North Mississippi provides services needed to promote the safety, stability and well-being of children and families all over north Mississippi. The FRC provides classes, workshops and seminars on topics such as family life skills, healthy relationships, youth development, fatherhood, and co-parenting at no charge to its clients. The compassionate and well-equipped staff consists of licensed social workers, counselors and educators on campuses in Tupelo, Oxford, Southaven and Columbus. Executive Director Christi Webb, a retired educator, has been instrumental in the recent expansion of the FRC. More classes are offered to more families in more locations—bringing about a healthy change in the lives of Mississippi families. The goal of the Family Resource Center is to provide education that empowers families to become stronger, more productive, Mississippians.

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