

TOYOTA



From all angles: holistic approach employs family literacy to break cycle of poverty in Dallas

Toyota, National Center for Families Learning partner to help more people become economically self-sufficient

DALLAS (May 23, 2019) – For Erica Blanco, taking time out of her busy life for Toyota Family Learning classes is an investment in herself and her four children. The single mom from South Dallas is working to strengthen family bonds by learning how to better communicate and spending more quality time with her kids.

“No more excuses,” Blanco said. “I used to come home saying, ‘I’m too tired,’ or ‘we don’t have the money for that.’ I just paid the bills. Now, I budget for going out to eat, going to the movies. We’ve also found out there are tons of things to do for free in our community – and it is fun.”

Blanco joined Toyota Family Learning at one of three new sites in Dallas. It’s part of a broader strategy that looks at literacy in Dallas in a holistic manner; by working with parents, children, families and local non-profit organizations to help more families become economically self-sufficient.

The program is a partnership between Toyota and the National Center for Families Learning (NCFL). It works to break the generational cycle of poverty through family literacy by empowering parents and children to better reach their full potential.

Toyota Family Learning offers adult-skill building and helps parents become more involved in their children’s school and the community by creating and enhancing social networks. It includes Parent and Child Together (PACT) Time®, Parent Time classes and Family Service Learning projects.

Parents set a goal for themselves, and one for their family. Blanco’s family goal is to be healthier and exercise. Her personal goal is to stay on top of her finances by budgeting, and, in turn, raise her credit score.

“Since we began the program, my credit score has gotten better,” Blanco said. “Also, a big difference is I don’t procrastinate anymore. I’ve taken the challenge and have stepped up; I’ve made a commitment to go to every class and it has paid off.”

A Family Learning Community

“Working with Toyota and community partners, we’re building a comprehensive system in Dallas for family learning,” said Sharon Darling, president and founder, NCFL. “When parents and children come together we know that we can sustain the gains that both generations make when parents begin that climb out of poverty and children start on the path for success in school.”

More than 30 local nonprofit organizations have been meeting monthly since October with a goal of creating a strategic-literacy plan for Dallas with a focus on adults. They're part of the Literacy Coalition and are developing a shared vision that centers on equity and meaningful leadership from community members and families.

In addition, four-dozen parents are enrolled in the Parent Leadership Institute. The program, which meets monthly, began in February. It focuses on adult-skill building through service learning. Parents split into groups and tackle issues facing the community. The parents advocate, attend public meetings and talk one-on-one with elected officials. Projects run the gamut, ranging from cleaning up and updating a park to bringing a grocery store into a specific part of town.

"NCFL's model is transformative for parents, children and families, as it helps people to gain skills that change the trajectory of their lives for generations to come. This is why we have helped spread NCFL all over the U.S., which now includes Dallas," said Al Smith, group vice president and chief social innovation officer, Toyota. "The NCFL Dallas collaboration is an innovative approach for the organization, closely aligned with Toyota's philosophy of sharing knowledge and collaborating to increase positive impact in key communities."

Serving under-resourced families

Of the parents participating in Toyota Family Learning, 58 percent are not employed; 61 percent of families are living on less than \$25,000 per year; and, 45 percent did not graduate high school.

Those are sobering statistics in the face of research that shows the Number One predictor of a child's academic success is the education of the parent, particularly the mother. Studies also show starting school "ready to learn" is critical for students' long-term academic success, yet less than half of Texas children were not kindergarten-ready according to the Texas Education Agency's 2018 annual report.

Toyota Family Learning helps parents build workforce skills, become confident, and in supporting their children's education, the kids achieve more academic success and have less absenteeism. Participating parents, who graduated in 2017, reported:

- 96 percent became a better parent for their child
- 74 percent improved English skills
- 53 percent upgraded skills to keep current job
- 49 percent got a better job
- 53 percent made more money
- Families honed 40 out of 42 important employability skills
- 36 percent obtained the knowledge necessary to pass the U.S. citizenship test
- 53 percent earned a GED certificate or high school equivalency

Long-time partners

Toyota and NCFL have partnered for 28-years, sharing this proven-effective family learning model with more than 420 sites in 38 states across the U.S. More than 4.5 million parents and children have been impacted by the program. To date, Toyota has invested \$50 million in NCFL and American families.

Blanco's family participates in Toyota Family Learning at Jubilee Park & Community Center. Toyota and NCFL have also partnered with Literacy Achieves and Voice of Hope to offer the program in other areas of town.

Blanco is already seeing the change in her 12-year old daughter. Her daughter's goal was to improve her academics. Blanco reports she's trying harder, passing all her classes, and thinking about college.

"My parents were immigrants and I just thought you were supposed to get a job and try and survive," Blanco said. "I never thought about college. Now, she's in 7th grade and plans to go to college. I told her, 'where there's a will there's a way.' We will make it happen."

About National Center for Families Learning

The National Center for Families Learning (NCFL) is a national nonprofit organization working to eradicate poverty through education solutions for families. Partnering with educators, literacy advocates, and policymakers, NCFL develops and provides programming, professional development, and resources from the classroom to the community that empower and raise families to achieve their potential. For more information on NCFL visit familieslearning.org.

About Toyota

Toyota (NYSE:TM) has been a part of the cultural fabric in the U.S. and North America for more than 60 years, and is committed to advancing sustainable, next-generation mobility through our Toyota and Lexus brands. During that time, Toyota has created a tremendous value chain as our teams have contributed to world-class design, engineering, and assembly of more than 38 million cars and trucks in North America, where we operate 14 manufacturing plants (10 in the U.S.) and directly employ more than 47,000 people (more than 37,000 in the U.S.).

To date, Toyota has contributed more than \$900 million to American nonprofit groups. For more information about Toyota's contributions in the U.S., visit <http://www.toyota.com/about>.

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