



## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

### **NCFL founder receives Dyer Pearl Literacy Award for exemplary work in family literacy**

*Sharon Darling honored for her outstanding contributions at summit headlined by First Lady*

**LOUISVILLE, KY (October 22, 2021)** – Following an inspirational keynote address from our nation’s First Lady Dr. Jill Biden, Sharon Darling, founder of the National Center for Families Learning (NCFL), was given the distinction of being named a recipient of The Dyer Pearl Literacy Award. The award was presented at the Barbara Bush Foundation for Family Literacy’s biennial National Summit on Adult Literacy at the Reach Center at the John F. Kennedy Center for Performing Arts. The Summit marked the launch of the first-ever National Action Plan for Adult Literacy, a welcomed next phase in the continued efforts to combat low literacy and improve economic well-being for millions of struggling adults.

Starting in a small Kentucky church basement in the 1970s helping adults learn to read, Darling went on to become the nation’s pioneer of family literacy—which brings parenting adults and their children together to learn. Since she founded NCFL in 1989 in Louisville, the organization has piloted, evaluated, and scaled the family literacy model under Sharon’s leadership. One major accomplishment, among many across Darling’s career, was successfully aligning an approved federal definition of family literacy with the philosophy of family literacy created by NCFL.

Today, NCFL remains headquartered in Louisville, with statewide offices in Arizona and Nebraska and partnerships with local cities and communities throughout the nation. A 30-year partnership with the Bureau of Indian Education has extended the organization’s footprint to dozens of American Indian communities. Its policy work continues to reverberate across the country with a federally recognized annual National Family Literacy Day®, Family Service Learning Week, and ever-growing family engagement support.

Darling has received scores of awards for her groundbreaking work including the National Humanities Award and the international Albert Schweitzer award for Humanitarianism. This award is particularly meaningful to her as she transitions into retirement. Darling says, “I am deeply honored and grateful for this recognition. The field of adult literacy is near to my heart having worked with so many families and partners to implement and scale family literacy nationwide. To be recognized for this work by the Foundation is a full circle moment for me as I reflect on my close partnership with the late Barbara Bush, who was a dear friend and fierce advocate for this issue.”

Darling announced her retirement earlier this year and Dr. Felicia Cumings Smith has been named as her successor to carry on her decades-long legacy. Dr. Smith says “The field of literacy and family engagement in education has deep gratitude and respect for the work Sharon Darling has done to establish family literacy as a proven model for the nation. I am thrilled to be leading NCFL into future. We will build upon the strong foundation Sharon has created as we evolve to meet the ever-changing needs of families and communities, today.” Darling will continue to impact the organization’s mission as a member of its board of directors.

**About the National Center for Families Learning**

The National Center for Families Learning (NCFL) is a national nonprofit that works 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](http://familieslearning.org).

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