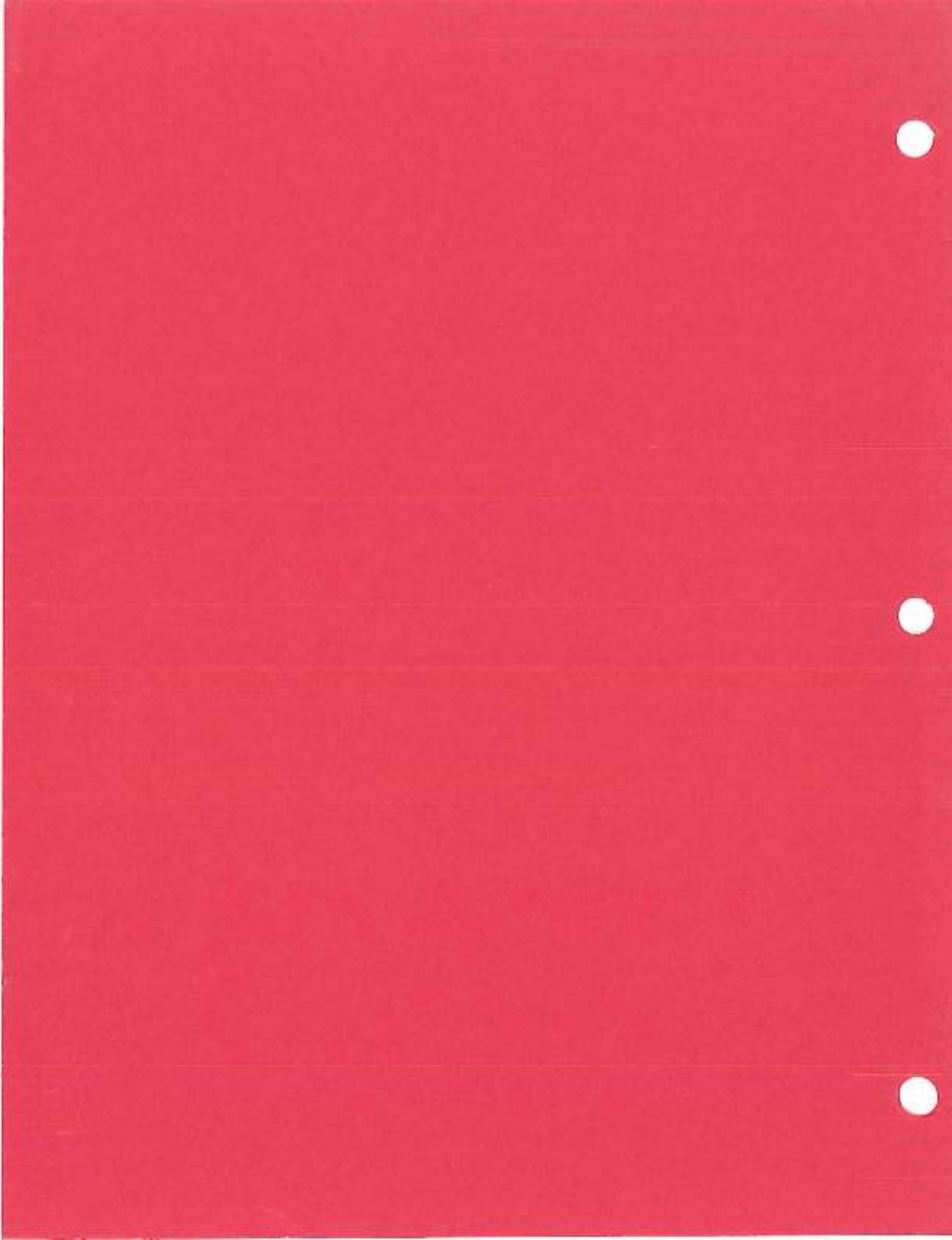


Sharon K. Darling

President and Founder
National Center for Family Literacy

Nominated by
William F. Goodling



Sharon K. Darling
President and Founder, National Center for Family Literacy

I am pleased to submit the nomination of Sharon K. Darling for the 2006 Brock Prize. Ms. Darling has developed a national model for family literacy which is the most innovative and promising educational practice to move children and their parents out of poverty. Since 1989, Ms. Darling has worked tirelessly to hone the family literacy model and embed it into changing political, economic, and educational trends. She has shaped state and federal laws that address critical education issues for the most underserved children in our society.

Ms. Darling is a revolutionary because she proved that the educational attainment of a child is directly linked to the educational accomplishments of the child's parent. Determined to spread this concept and finding for the benefit of families in poverty, she has founded a training system and model development approach that has reached every community in the nation. Countries abroad now seek to replicate Ms. Darling's work and setup nationwide family literacy centers much like the one she leads.

I approximate Ms. Darling's work to have benefited millions of children and their parents since she first pioneered family literacy by my side more than 15 years ago. She has been instrumental in helping the nation understand that we cannot end the cycle of undereducation by working with children alone—at risk children simply must have knowledgeable parents if we are to leave no child behind.

Ms. Darling has received numerous prestigious awards, including the National Humanities Medal from President and Mrs. Bush in 2002 and the Harold W. McGraw Award for Outstanding Educator.

Submitted by: William F. Goodling



**National Center
for Family Literacy**

**Nomination Materials for Sharon Darling
President & Founder
National Center for Family Literacy**

Nominated by William F. Goodling

Materials:

Ms. Darling's Vita

Selected articles and publications regarding Ms. Darling's work

Selected articles authored by Ms. Darling

Sharon Darling
President & Founder
National Center for Family Literacy
Waterfront Plaza, Suite 300
325 West Main Street
Louisville, Kentucky 40202-4237
(502)584-1133
sdarling@famlit.org

Sharon Darling has a 35-year commitment to innovating education for the nation's most disadvantaged adults and children. Her career spans teaching at the elementary school level, to teaching adults to read, to state administration and national program development. In 1985 she created the national model for family literacy. Since that time, she has created a national movement supporting educational instruction that integrates adult and child learning. Darling's pioneering achievements have led the nation to understand that family's educational success is directly tied to the economic and social well-being of every community.

Because of Sharon Darling's documented success, federal and state laws have been created on family literacy, and local school systems and communities have adopted the family literacy approach. Her work continues to develop new models for approaching intergenerational education, as well as improving the delivery of services through teacher training and professional development.

Currently, Ms. Darling leads the National Center for Family Literacy (NCFL), the organization she founded in 1989. In this role, she is the organization's chief spokesperson and strategist for a growing base of national projects, designed to help families out of poverty through assisting schools and communities improve literacy. Under her leadership, the organization has grown to a full-time staff of more than 80 professionals who support more than 6,000 programs. She speaks annually to more than 150,000 people and regularly advises education officials as well as business and community leaders on educational issues.

National Awards & Recognitions

- National Humanities Medal awarded by the President and Mrs. Bush, 2001
- "Women of Distinction" Award recipient sponsored by Birmingham-Southern College, 1999
- Albert Schweitzer Prize for Humanitarianism, Johns Hopkins University, 1998
- Featured on the Arts & Entertainment *Biography* series, 1997
- Charles A. Dana Award for Pioneering Achievement in Education, 1996
- National Caring Award, 1996
- Harold W. McGraw, Jr. Prize in Education, 1993

A complete list of awards and recognitions is available upon request.

Employment Experience

- Present Position** President & Founder, National Center for Family Literacy
Chief Executive Officer of NCFL, a private non-profit corporation, operating nationally to expand family literacy through training, policy development, and advocacy. In addition to funding model programs, the Center conducts research to improve the quality of family literacy programs across the nation, having helped establish programs in 50 states and several foreign countries. NCFL encourages a national understanding and response to address and help break the intergenerational cycle of illiteracy.
- 1987 - 1988** Executive Director of Literacy Concepts, Inc.
Chief executive officer of a private, non-profit company which provided assistance to national, state, and local efforts to combat adult illiteracy. Served as chief consultant to the Federal Action Agency, consultant to the National Governors' Association, U.S. Department of Education, and Governors' literacy initiatives in fifteen states.
- 1984 - 1987** Director, Division of Adult Community Education, Kentucky Department of Education
Administered statewide adult literacy, basic education, G.E.D. Community Education, and Parent Education programs in Kentucky. Solicited proposals, allocated funds, and directed monitoring activities for all statewide adult and community education programs and directed the activities of the national dissemination of the JCARP Literacy Program. Chaired the task force on early-childhood education and represented department as adult literacy expert in state and national conferences and related task forces.
- 1982 - 1984** Director, National Dissemination Project, National Diffusion Network, U.S. Department of Education
Directed dissemination of adult literacy model program. Provided nationwide consulting services to Governors and State Departments of Education on implementation of statewide adult literacy programs. Presented speeches, seminars, and training workshops to state and national organizations concerning the problems and solutions of adult illiteracy.
- Developed national training model and slide/tape delivery system for training of literacy instructors and volunteers. Provided training, technical assistance, and evaluative services for adult literacy in 18 states. Taught graduate and undergraduate courses for Morehead State University and Ohio State University.
- 1978 - 1982** Director, Special Projects, U.S. Department of Education
Designed and conducted a three-year research study on adult illiteracy. Designed model literacy program, prepared submission for Joint

Dissemination and Review Panel and defended findings. Published annual research reports on JCARP project results for dissemination through ERIC system. Administered home instruction and adult literacy programs. Designed training materials and trained teachers, home instructors, and volunteers to work in adult literacy and GED programs.

1975 - 1978

Supervisor, Jefferson County Public Schools, Louisville, Kentucky
Supervised adult basic education programs. Organized and administered adult education programs for the urban area of Louisville and Jefferson County. Selected, trained and supervised staff in large urban program. Prepared training materials and conducted training workshops.

1970 - 1975

Teacher, Adult Basic Education/Literacy and Elementary Education
Taught and counseled adult students attending literacy, Adult Basic Education and GED programs. Designed student materials, selected curriculum, and prepared individual student plans.

Teacher, Rangeland Elementary School, Jefferson County Public Schools, Louisville, Kentucky

Boards and National Committees

- Barbara Bush Foundation for Family Literacy, Founding Board Member
- National Coalition for Literacy, Board Member
- Heart of America Foundation, Board Member
- National Fund for Excellence in American Indian Education, Board Member
- White House Initiative on Educational Excellence for Hispanic Americans, National Partner
- PNC Grow Up Great, Advisory Board Member
- Adult Literacy Research Group (ALRG), Member
- National Institute for Literacy, past Vice Chair, Board of Directors

Publications (since 2004)

- "Strategies for engaging parents in home support of reading acquisition," The Reading Teacher, Volume 58, No. 5, February 2005
- "Parent involvement in children's acquisition of reading," The Reading Teacher, Volume 57, No. 8, May 2004
- "Family Literacy: Meeting the Needs of At-Risk Families," Phi Kappa Phi Forum, Volume 84, No. 2, Spring 2004
- "Linking parents to reading instruction," The Reading Teacher, Volume 57, No. 4, January 2004
- "Future Directions for Family Literacy," Handbook of Family Literacy, Lawrence Erlbaum Associates Publishers, 2004

Education

Post Graduate studies in Adult and Community Education,
University of Louisville, Morehead State University

Advanced degree (Rank 1) in Educational Administration,
Western Kentucky University

MA, Counselor Education
Western Kentucky University

BS, Elementary Education
University of Louisville

Honorary Degrees

Doctorate of Pedagogy from Niagara University, 2004

Doctorate of Humane Letters Honoris Causa from Bellarmine College, 1999

Doctorate of Humane Letters Honoris Causa from Spalding University, 1995



National Center
for Family Literacy

Selected articles and publications regarding Ms. Darling's work

The Gift of Literacy

This Louisville native believes so strongly in family literacy that she has devoted her life to helping others learn.

Sharon Darling received a gift when she was a child, and she has shared it with thousands of people in her beloved Bluegrass State and beyond. The gift that this one-time second-grade teacher continues to pass along is literacy, one of the most important of the basic human rights.

Reading

President and founder of the National Center for Family Literacy (NCFL), headquartered in Louisville, Sharon did not grow up planning to spend 80% of her time traveling the country promoting literacy. But it was always an important topic in her home, and the seeds of her organization were planted at an early age.

"I had an aunt who was a teacher," says Sharon, a vibrant auburn-haired woman with friendly eyes and a warm smile. "She read to me and took me with her to her classroom. She taught at an inner-city school, and they did not have what I had.

"And my father was a building contractor. His crew did not read or write; they were from a rural area in

Kentucky. They were very valued in my family," she continues. Wanting to teach, Sharon began with second graders until she started helping adults learn to read in the evenings.

More and more women began coming to classes, and they brought their children with them. "It became obvious that the children needed help too," says Sharon. "It all began to come together for me."

What came together for her was the certainty that families needed to learn together. "All this time, I was gathering enough experience to do something like NCFL," Sharon says.

Righting

When she started her community-based literacy programs, Sharon spoke at churches, then spoke to the women by phone. Many times the programs were in community centers. Participants did not want to go to a school where they had failed before due to poverty and family circumstances. "People come in and want so much more for their children," she says.

Sharon and her organization be-



Sharon Darling reads to schoolchildren whenever the opportunity arises.

lieve if the whole family can move forward, the cycle of poverty and illiteracy can be broken. They have tracked 10,000 families and know the program works. "Parents get on with their lives, get their GEDs, and go on to college. I have been to lots of college graduations of people who once could not read," Sharon says.

Arithmetic

The NCFL has been blessed with good benefactors. Many companies have donated millions to help continue the gift of literacy, and the goals continue to grow for using that gift.

In an effort to reach more people in more areas of the country, Sharon's center is working with many volunteers. "We are actually working to train volunteers online," she says. "Anyone can log on to vluonline.org."

In her rare spare time, Sharon enjoys spending time with husband George and her five grown children. She continues to foster her legacy in her own home. "My son came to me when his son was a toddler and said, 'Mom, lighten up.' The baby boy was always commanding his father to read," she says. Sharon smiles, confident that her schoolteacher aunt and parents are smiling too. WANDA MCKINNEY



"It is such a gift to wake up each morning and do something you are passionate about," says Sharon of leading a national literacy program.

For more information: Contact the National Center for Family Literacy at www.familit.org. ♦

HOW I DID IT OPENING A SECURITY STORE

TRACEY HAWKINS HAS DONE MORE THAN just pay lip service to the nation's grim crime statistics. She has launched Security Source, a personal- and property-safety shop she opened a year ago in the Mission Center Mall in the greater Kansas City, Kansas, area. By selling items like home-security



alarms, pepper spray, motion detectors and safes, Hawkins has made crime prevention and education accessible and affordable for the average consumer.

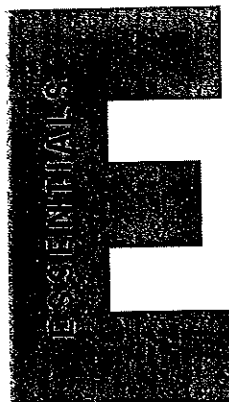
"I'd always wanted my own community-oriented business," says the 32-year-old Missouri resident, who commutes the few miles into Kansas each day. Here's how she started it up and keeps it going.

TARGETING SECURITY: "I'd seen a number of stores dedicated to selling security items, but they were always targeted to people in law enforcement, not laypeople. Since there was no store in the Kansas City area, or even in the Midwest, catering to ordinary citizens in need of personal-security items, I realized that this niche was begging to be filled."

FINANCING A DREAM: "The Mission Mall's incubator program, designed to lure and assist novice entrepreneurs, inspired me to open my business there. An initial \$5,000 I'd accrued from my retirement plan on my former job as a mutual-funds representative served as my start-up capital. The incubator program provided free business expertise and advice, and it subsidizes a portion of my monthly lease payments. And since I started up, my mom, my husband and my husband's grandparents have collectively contributed about \$10,000 to help keep the business running."

FILLING A NICHE: "People want nonlethal ways of protecting themselves, and I offer a variety of practical, affordable safety devices all in one place. I also demonstrate the proper use of the products and give out free literature on home, car, child and personal safety, so my customers leave informed as well as armed."

SPECIALIZED SERVICE: "My goal is to keep my clients from becoming statistics. I'm skilled in the use and design of my products and I've taken a self-defense course at the police academy. In fact, many of my clients are referred to me by local law enforcement. I also coordinate an assault and rape-prevention class. My place is more than a retail store—it's a consumer-safety resource center." —D.M.B.



GOOD WORKS Combating Illiteracy

"Teach the parent, reach the child." That's the idea behind the family-education program model developed by Sharon Darling, founder of the National Center for Family Literacy (NCFL) in Louisville, Kentucky.

Established in 1989, NCFL has helped implement more than 3,000 family-literacy programs nationwide and is spearheading the movement to break the intergenerational cycle of undereducation that leads to poverty.

The family-literacy concept began when Darling—who started out teaching adults to read in a church basement almost 30 years ago—realized that the adults were passing negative attitudes toward education on to their children. "Many of the adults who were struggling to learn had low self-esteem, limited expectations and no support system," says Darling. "I realized that we had to take a holistic approach and work with the literacy and social needs of the family as a unit."

In 1985, with funding from the state, Darling established a model parent-child education program at six sites in Kentucky. The program was so successful, Darling was asked to expand it nationally.

Today approximately 60,000 families are enrolled each year in literacy programs. The programs provide adult literacy training, early childhood education, parental peer support and parent-child together time, in which the parents actually learn how to teach their children through structured play-and-learn activities.

The success of family-literacy programs is evident: Half of adult participants go on to receive a GED or equivalent; there's a 29-percent increase in employment; and almost 80 percent of the children perform at or above their class average.

NCFL works in partnership with several major corporations, including Toyota, which has donated more than \$12 million since 1991 and has helped establish 107 family-literacy sites around the country through its Toyota Families for Learning program.

For information on family-literacy programs in your area, call NCFL at (502) 584-1133.

—DERRYALE BARNES ♦

GIVING

Gifts, Grants, and Good Works



Sharon Darling, who has raised \$24-million for her National Center for Family Literacy, has seen her idea of teaching illiterate parents to read along with their children become a national movement. "It was a simple approach. It wasn't meant to be any kind of brain surgery."

Literacy: All in the Family

*A former schoolteacher creates
a movement to teach children—
and their parents—to read*

By SUSAN GRAY

HER NEARLY SIX-FOOT FRAME tucked into a child's plastic chair, Sharon Darling seems completely at ease as she chats with a classroom of mothers seeking high-school equivalency certificates.

Leaning over to Natalie Calhoun, a teen-ager on welfare who aspires to open a beauty shop, Ms. Darling exclaims: "When you do that, let me know. I'll be your first customer. I bet you could fix my hair!"

Ms. Darling, whose hair is already carefully coiffed, is equally at ease talking to an audience of Fortune 500 executives. And that, observers say, is a major reason she has been able to raise millions of dollars to spread the concept of "family literacy," which she developed, across the country.

In essence, family literacy means teaching parents to read—or providing high-school dropouts with a chance to earn their equivalency degrees—as their young children learn to read at the same place. "It was a very simplistic approach," says Ms. Darling, a 52-year-old grandmother who came up with it after having spent years as a teacher. "It wasn't meant to be any kind of brain surgery."

But the simple approach has caught on fast. In nine years, she has raised \$24-million for the Na-

tional Center for Family Literacy, which she founded here in 1989. The center has been instrumental in the creation of about 2,000 programs in all 50 states, as well as in Australia, Canada, and England.

The approach seems to be working. Research has found that the family-literacy technique appears to be effective in helping welfare recipients and other poor people become self-sufficient—and Ms. Darling has been spreading that message to state legislatures debating how to revamp their welfare systems.

Cited for Her Accomplishments

In recognition of her achievements, Ms. Darling last fall received the \$50,000 Charles A. Dana Award for Pioneering Achievement in Education, and she joined former President Jimmy Carter and other past recipients as winner of the Caring Institute's National Caring Award for public service.

"She is the outstanding person today in the literacy field," says Harold McGraw, chairman emeritus of McGraw-Hill, which presented Ms. Darling with the Harold W. McGraw Award for Outstanding Educator in 1993. "What she's doing is the biggest thing going that I know of in this country."

One reason Ms. Darling has succeeded in promot-

Continued on Page 10

A Former Schoolteacher Turns Literacy Into a Family Affair Nationwide

Continued from Page 9

family literacy is that she can point to the number of social ills that it tries to heal. Her program emphasizes putting parents of young children into an adult-education class at the same site where their children enroll in a pre-kindergarten class. Among the benefits Ms. Darling says result from the approach:

- Child care is provided for parents while they learn.

- Adults who are young or ill-prepared for parenthood learn how to undertake educational activities with their children.

- Parents often form their own support groups by taking classes together, and that reduces the isolation sometimes felt by parents who receive welfare and are at home much of the time.

- Participants are more motivated to get through their adult-education courses than they would be if their children were not involved.

- Kids are less likely to drop out or have other problems in the future if their parents are accompanying them to classes early on.

Gwen Moore, who is on welfare and in a Louisville program with her 4-year-old daughter, Alexis, says she would be at home now—"with the television on next door as the baby sitter"—if not for the program.

"A lot of us left school when we should have stayed there," she says. "This allows us to be here with our children and be with school. We can't afford day care."

She says that because of the literacy program, she feels like she is "climbing upwards out of the cracks."

But Ms. Darling does not rely on personal accounts alone to persuade others that the program works: She is constantly analyzing the program and measuring its results. In the center's early days, she hired a full-time researcher and enlisted university statisticians to crunch numbers to keep track of how well participants were doing after they had been through a program.

"That has always been important," she says. "I never wanted to just do it. I wanted to figure out: Is there a difference between employed people and unemployed people that come into this literacy program? Is there a difference that needs to be modified?"

So far, the basic approach has proved to be sound. In a study of 200 families, 43 per cent of the parents who had enrolled in a family-literacy program six years before had jobs, compared with 14 per cent before enrollment; 51 per cent of the adults received high-school equivalency certificates; and 80 per cent of the children performed at or above the average academic performance at their grade levels.

Another study found that the amount of time parents spent reading books to their children increased 70 per cent and that they are now reading together once a day or more.

Those kind of numbers—which Ms. Darling slips into her discus-

sions, speeches, and Congressional testimony—make politicians and philanthropists listen.

One of the people who responded positively was Rep. William F. Goodling, a Republican from Pennsylvania. He sponsored legislation to create Even Start, a federal program that authorizes more than \$100-million in annual grants to states that run family-literacy programs, and to start an annual National Family Literacy Day.

"Sharon has really been the champion of moving everybody away from the idea of compartmentalizing education and toward thinking about the whole family," he says. "When I introduced Even Start, the eyebrows were up. Now almost everyone who has seen the results realizes it's very effective."

In addition to crediting her with getting Even Start off the ground, many observers consider Ms. Darling to be a prime reason that two other federal programs—the Adult Education Act and Head Start—have begun to emphasize family literacy. President Clinton has stressed the idea in his proposed \$2.75-billion "America Reads" program. Also, four states—Arizona, Kentucky, South Carolina, and Washington—have approved literacy programs to spread the concept.

"It's an idea that makes tremendous sense," says Benita Somerfield, executive director of the Barbara Bush Foundation for Family Literacy, which was created in 1989 by the former First Lady. Ms. Darling serves on the foundation's board and helped fashion its mission. "Family literacy is spreading," says Ms. Somerfield.

However, as the program has appeared in more and more towns and cities, it has attracted some criticism. Because many family-literacy programs receive government aid from Even Start and other sources, critics claim that government is intruding in family life. Christian fundamentalist critics say the program ignores religion, while libertarian critics say families should raise their children as they please, without intrusion.

Most literacy leaders, however,

are not worried about the critics' shutting down programs. "It's not a firestorm," said one.

Leadership Skills

While Ms. Darling has succeeded by having strong numbers to back up her lobbying, many backers say that family literacy would still be an obscure experiment, carried out in basement classrooms in Kentucky, if it were not for Ms. Darling's leadership skills.

Michael N. Harrelld, chief executive officer of FNO Bank in Louisville, serves on Ms. Darling's board and led the center's \$6-million endowment campaign, which began in 1992 and was completed successfully last year. He says her secret weapon is her "engaging sales style."

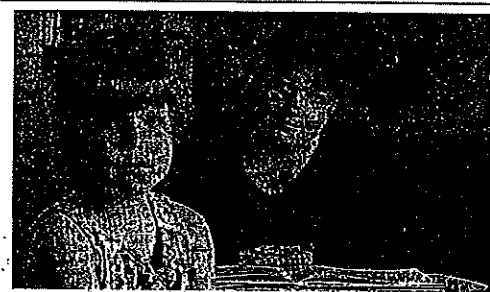
Mr. Harrelld remembers one speech that Ms. Darling gave to top executives at a convention at the Mayflower Hotel in Washington. Ms. Darling was slated to lead "the soft program," says Mr. Harrelld, which most of the business leaders attended with low expectations.

"But she left an impression," he says. "Talking to that high-browed, overachieving group, it was as good as I've ever seen. It was an educational presentation—but also a sales presentation."

Leaders at Toyota Motor Corporation, which has given more than \$9-million to the center, say they admire Ms. Darling's work ethic, among her other traits. In 1991, after an 18-month search, the company chose the center to be one of its main beneficiaries, providing it with grants as well as free advertising to promote its work.

The company's leaders were looking for an educational program, and they say they were impressed by family literacy's results—and by Ms. Darling's personal drive and thriftiness.

On one occasion, a Toyota executive spotted Ms. Darling at dawn in the Atlanta airport, looking a bit rumpled. He asked her what she was doing, and she told him, somewhat sheepishly, that she had worked so late the night before that she decided to camp out at the airport and wait for an early flight



A. Williams, Anthony J. Kishel and his mother, Emily, attend classes together through Family for Learning, a program sponsored by Toyota.

EVERY YEAR,
we help
THOUSANDS
of people get
FROM A to B.

INTERESTING IN THE THINGS WE ALL CARE ABOUT. TOYOTA

The Toyota Motor Corporation has given the National Center for Family Literacy \$9-million—along with free publicity from advertisements like this.

rather than spend money on a hotel.

Another reason why Toyota officials and other grant makers say they like to work with Ms. Darling is that she encourages them to suggest changes in how she runs her organization—an approach that is anathema to many charity leaders.

Toyota officials say Ms. Darling welcomed executives' efforts to improve her non-profit group's management. Recently, trainers from the company's plant in Georgetown, Ky., where the Camry model is made, provided the center's staff with instruction on collaboration and management. "We had the training department visit, do a needs analysis, and put her staff through 'Toyota-philosophy management,'" says Mark Murata, assistant manager for external affairs for Toyota in New York. "They loved it."

Ms. Darling says that because of her center's rapid growth—the size of its staff has grown from 6 in 1989 to 39 now: "We are hungry for help."

"If we think somebody knows something that we want to know about, come help us," she says. "We're not locked into this. You probably have some ideas that we don't."

Welfare Changes

But with all the success, Ms. Darling says she now faces a new challenge: making sure that people in family-literacy programs are not shoved out of them because of new welfare laws.

She says there is too much talk of "Let's get the parents job-ready and get them into a job." Government officials, she says, "need to think about how fragile that family is already and that it's not a

AT TOYOTA, we believe a car company can also be a vehicle for change. That's why for more than 20 years, we've been supporting educational programs that range from kindergartens to colleges to job-training programs and beyond. In the last four years alone, Toyota has invested more than \$40 million in worthwhile educational organizations like the National Center for Family Literacy, United Negro College Fund and hundreds of other projects across America. As the fourth-largest manufacturer of vehicles in America, Toyota is committed to helping individuals go as far as they possibly can.

structure that's an Orzelle and Harriet family."

Ms. Darling has already armed herself and her staff with statistics on how family literacy can reduce dependence on welfare.

One study of about 1,800 families who attended a literacy program found that about 350 of those who had been receiving government aid were off the dole within four years, shaving \$7.5-million a year from government spending.

The center has secured a \$100,000 grant from the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation to create a model program for states to use as they try to figure out how to train welfare recipients to get jobs.

"It's so difficult, though, to get it out there," Ms. Darling says. State legislators, she notes, are so "consumed" with trying to comply with the new rules for federal welfare grants that all she hears from them is "percentages. How many percentages have to be in the work force? Where are we going to find the jobs?"

As she discusses those concerns in her office, the bronze National Caring Award gleams from a side table. Nearby is a pink children's book, *Thoroughly Modern Grandma*. Ms. Darling, who recently returned from a trip to Japan to meet with Toyota executives, is the grandmother to six—five from her husband's previous marriage.

"They are my life, to be honest," she says. "It's just the most wonderful way to unwind from the week—having one of them over and reading stories."

"I wish I could be more of a traditional grandmother and sit in the rocker. But it's 'Where's Grandma?' She's in Japan. 'When's she coming back?' I don't know."

At a Glance: The National Center for Family Literacy

History: Created in 1989.

Purpose: To promote family literacy—efforts to teach parents and their children in the same setting. The center trains schoolteachers, social workers, and administrators to run programs that include families in literacy efforts, provides information and conducts research on such programs, and lobbies state and federal policy makers to support them.

Finances: For the fiscal year ending June 1996, the center raised nearly \$5-million, which equaled its expenses.

Sources of funds: \$1.4-million from foundations, \$1.4-million in income from training programs, \$1.1-million from companies, \$804,966 in federal grants, \$223,913 from endowment income, and \$65,000 from individuals.

Key officials: Sharon Darling, president and board chairman; Lee B. Thomas, Jr., chairman of the board's Oversight Committee.

Address: 325 West Main Street, Suite 200, Louisville, Ky. 40202-4251; (502) 584-1133; e-mail: ncfli@aol.com.

Teacher to be honored for work in literacy

By CAMILLE DIANA BARBEE
The Courier-Journal

hold in our society and become self-sufficient."

In 1969, Sharon Darling walked into the basement of Ninth & O Baptist Church, where she found five adult men — some of whom had driven nearly 50 miles — waiting for her to teach them how to read.

At that moment, Darling, now 54, realized that helping adults — and later families — to read was her calling in life.

"I knew that was going to be something I would spend my time and energy on," Darling said. She wanted to "help adults and children gain a foot-

THE COURIER-JOURNAL

FRIDAY,

SEPTEMBER 11, 1998

EDITOR: MARK PROVANO

PHONE: 582-4691 / FAX: 582-4200

See TEACHER
Page 4, col. 3, this section

Teacher to be honored for work in literacy

Continued from Page B 1

and the environment."

It also carries a \$15,000 prize. Past recipients include former President Jimmy Carter; former Surgeon General C. Everett Koop; Marian Wright Edelman, president of the Children's Defense Fund; Bill Frank Jr., chairman of the Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission; and pediatrician D. Holmes Morton, for his work with Amish and Mennonite children.

When Darling found out three months ago she had been nominated for the award, she was awestruck.

"I was not only surprised but in utter disbelief to be honored in such a way," she said. "It's overwhelming to be... in a league with people who made such significant contributions to our society."

Schweitzer, who died in 1965, was a philosopher, physician and missionary who won the 1952 Nobel Peace Prize for his international humanitarian work.

Darling began teaching in the late

ling begin teaching adults at night at the church.

Within two years, Darling asked for more resources to be directed into the adult literacy program, and it ultimately became the model used throughout the county and later throughout Kentucky. At the behest of the federal government in the early '70s, Darling's program was disseminated throughout the nation and adopted in 38 states.

In 1989, after 20 years of working to establish adult and family literacy programs in Jefferson County and a stint as director of adult education for the state, Darling founded the Louisville-based National Center for Family Literacy. She has been there ever since and now is being honored for her efforts in educating the nation.

"What this award will do is showcase family literacy," Darling said. "We have an opportunity and new venues to talk about the importance of bringing parents and children together so they can both learn."



Sharon Darling will receive the Albert Schweitzer Prize for Humanitarianism on Oct. 26.

"I was not only surprised but in utter disbelief to be honored in such a way."

Sharon Darling

1960s at Rangeland Elementary School, where she found many parents who weren't in a position to assist in their children's educations because they were undereducated themselves.

After three years at the school, Darling took a maternity leave. She had planned to return when her son turned 6 months old. But after he was born, a friend in the Jefferson County school system suggested Dar-

The Charles A. Dana Award for Pioneering Achievement in Education

**Building a Legacy of Success:
The National Center for Family Literacy
Sharon K. Darling**



Sharon K. Darling

A parent who is dependent on welfare because she lacks the basic reading skills necessary to hold an entry-level job; her children who, living in poverty and unprepared for school, learn only how to follow in her footsteps: underachievement, illiteracy, and poverty are an all too common legacy.

The National Center for Family Literacy (NCFL), under the direction of its founder and president Sharon K. Darling, is successfully changing this legacy of failure to a legacy of success.

The key to her innovative approach is a careful combination of adult literacy education, early childhood education, and support for families, so that parents and children become motivated and skilled partners in learning.

*Poverty and illiteracy
are inextricably linked*

Many researchers have documented what Ms. Darling first noticed as a second grade teacher in an impoverished section of Louisville, Kentucky: poverty

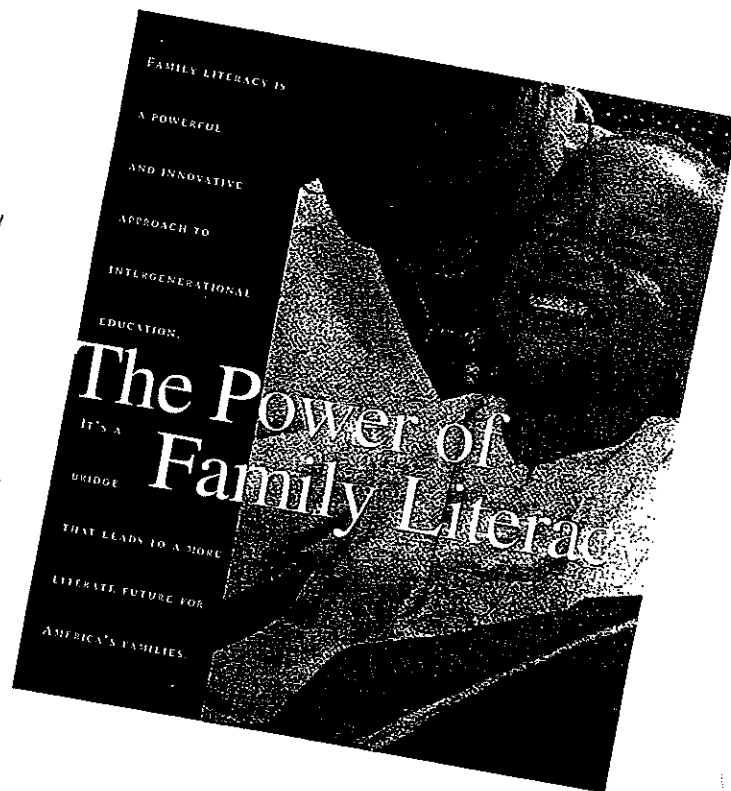
and illiteracy are inextricably linked. Children whose parents lack a high-school diploma are almost twice as likely to live in poverty as are children whose parents are high-school graduates, according to the National Center for Children in Poverty. Data from the National Center for Education Statistics show that an individual's median weekly income is directly proportional to one's level of literacy. And poverty is the most important risk factor causing damaging outcomes in families, based on research by the Harvard Project on Schooling and Children. When undereducated parents

cannot find or keep jobs, what begins simply as an education problem—not learning how to read—becomes a complex problem for the entire family.

In 1985, the Commonwealth of Kentucky asked Ms. Darling to design the Parent and Child Education Program, which provided an opportunity to focus on two generations as parents and children attended school together. Success of this program led in 1988 to establishment of NCFL, now the catalyst and driving force behind the national family literacy movement.

In NCFL programs, parents continue their education and support each other in their growth as learners and parents, while their children gain crucial preliteracy and social skills. Adult literacy education provides parents with classes to enhance their reading, math, and language skills; parents are encouraged to develop skills by setting their own goals and designing their own work plans. Parent Time provides them with critical peer support, as well as education in parenting skills and career options. At the same time, their children participate in an enriched preschool program that supports their social, physical, and educational development. Finally, PACT (Parent and Child Together) sessions allow parents and children to play and learn together, building a positive, supportive relationship.

NCFL programs now reach more than 50,000 families annually at 2,000 sites ranging from the inner city to Native American reservations. One year after completing the program, employment among graduated parents increases as much as 25%, and 41% are no longer receiving public assistance.



Their children are succeeding in school; one study shows that 80% are rated at or above grade level. Family literacy means earned income, a healthy family, better use of community resources, reduction in school failure, and reduction in need for special services for children. According to the NCFL, "The power of family literacy is the story of people who succeed."

Presenting Ms. Darling with her Dana Award, Dana Foundation Chairman David Mahoney read the

following citation:

"For creating and leading the National Center for Family Literacy—brilliantly combining literacy education for parents, quality early childhood education, and support for families in learning together—and for identifying family literacy as a key to breaking the intergenerational cycle linking undereducation and poverty, the Charles A. Dana Foundation is proud to present you with its \$50,000 prize and medallion for Pioneering Achievement in Education." ■

Becoming Families of Promise

Second-grade children in an underprivileged, inner-city neighborhood were my first teaching challenge, but I soon found myself on the other side of the equation, teaching their parents and grandparents, who were living in marginal circumstances because they did not have reading skills and could not find jobs. They were isolated socially and carried emotional scars from having failed in school; they had neither the skills

they needed to cope with everyday life, nor the resources to keep their children from following in their footsteps. Failure in school was a legacy that was likely to be passed to the next generation.

If we were going to help these children, it became clear to me that we had to reach the adults first. They needed to learn for themselves before they could help their children learn. This approach to family learning became my passion.

Family literacy tackles a myriad of long-standing social problems. NCFL teachers and trainers face the challenges to the human spirit every day, but family literacy gives them a way to offer their students more options in the fight against despair. It is a privilege for me to work with them as we continue our mission of helping families at risk become families of promise.

Sharon K. Darling

READING

The ABCs of helping youngsters achieve literacy—the first skill.

Enlisting Mom and Dad

■ Schools and PTAs are giving parents key roles in turning their children into lifelong readers. The many programs range from family literacy days and adult spelling bees to games designed to ready the youngest kids for the classroom.

By AGNES DIGGS
TIMES STAFF WRITER

Attorney Rachel Helyar is used to pressure. She regularly wades through thousands of pages of complex legal materials and writes appeal briefs under pressing deadlines.

But that stress pales compared to the tension in the 16th round of El Oro Way Elementary School's adult spelling bee.

Ten other contenders had been eliminated by words such as "obloquy" and "ophthalmologist." Now, for the win, came Helyar's turn. Her word? "Streuselkuchen," a kind of cake.

And, yes, she got it right.

Helyar went to El Oro Way to support the Parent Teacher Assn.'s first Family Literacy Day.



"I certainly believe in the importance of reading and setting a good example," she said. "Not just to tell [the children], 'Read, read, read,' but to

show them I have a passion for reading too."

Much as at the Granada Hills campus, parent organizations throughout the Southland and the nation are seeking innovative ways to promote reading. The push to improve student test scores and reading proficiency in many cases is driving parents to be more creative than ever before.

At Camellia Elementary School in North Hollywood, parents help both teachers and students through tutoring. At Santa Monica Elementary School, parents are working to bridge cultural gaps as they help prepare children for the classroom.

Other parents at any number of schools are holding spelling bees, book-reading contests and other activities in hopes of encouraging children to become avid readers.

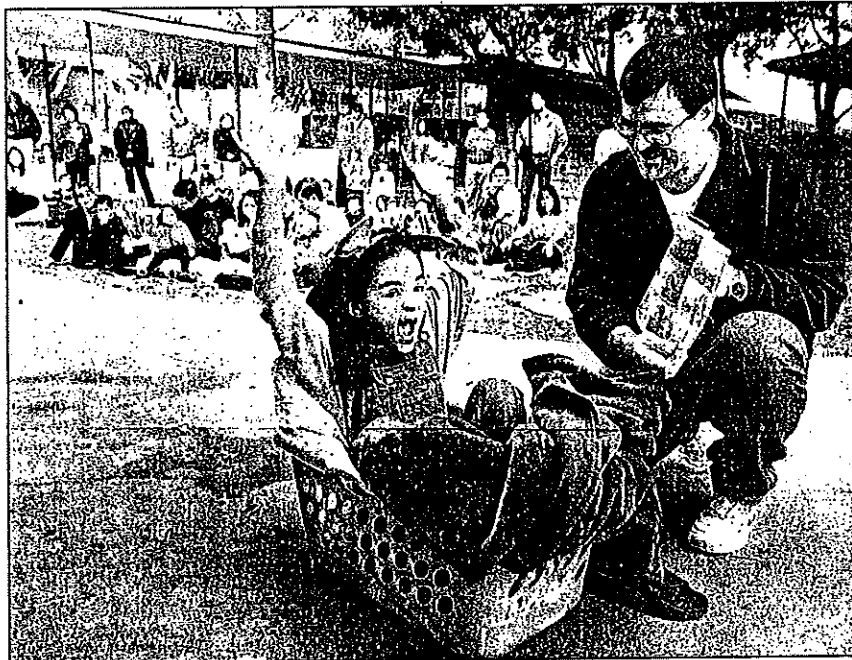
Analysis of national and international statistics shows that kids who read well in school are readers outside of school, invariably spurred on by parents, said Dave McGloin, national coordinator of Read Across America, a reading program sponsored by the National Education Assn.

Reading to children helps them learn to talk and how to use language properly, as well as how to read themselves, McGloin said. For parents, it's not just a matter of coming home exhausted at night and telling a story, but showing children basic practices, such as reading from left to right, top to bottom, and ending sentences with periods.

In 1998, the education commission of the California State PTA passed a resolution that made reading the No. 1 priority for communities as well as families and schools.

"The resolution means that the more than 1 million PTA members, through their proxy votes and the votes of their presidents, made it a goal to create lifelong readers. A resolution is our highest way of motivating things," said Jan Domene, vice president of communications for the state PTA.

Suggestions the group has made to



Megan Watson and her father, Tom, above, act out the book "If You Give a Mouse a Cookie" during Family Literacy Day at El Oro Way Elementary School, as Rose Zarconi looks over books for which she can exchange some of hers.

Photos by
ANACLETO
RAPINO
Los Angeles Times

local PTAs include sponsoring an author's day or an adopt-a-book club. Read-a-thons and birthday-book clubs are also good incentive programs, she said.

And libraries must play a part, said Patricia Hansen, reading library chairwoman of the Los Angeles 10th District Parent Teacher Student Assn.

"The key to success is a library card for everyone," she said.

Hansen encourages local PTSA members to volunteer in libraries to help compensate for staff shortages from budget cuts and to show children their commitment.

"The most important thing about family literacy is that it strengthens a family and builds a learning team," said Sharon Darling, founder and president of the National Center for Family Literacy.

In the 1980s, Darling and others began a program in Kentucky—designed to help encourage parent-child interaction—that led to the center's establishment.

Parents and schools should be a partnership, Darling said. If the home doesn't send the same message that the

school is trying to send, the home is an obstacle.

At Camellia School, parent volunteers meet with a coordinator for 45 minutes of instruction every Wednesday morning. Immediately afterward, the parent-tutors help one or two children who have previously been identified as needing extra coaching.

Charlotte Castagnola, facilitator for the Parents as Learning Partners grant, trains the parents and teachers who work together in the free program.

"For five years I've been training people in 19 elementary schools in North Hollywood, Sun Valley and Arleta," she said. "Parents and teachers can learn together. That's the best way."

At Santa Monica Elementary, teacher Andy Johnsen coordinates activities at the Parent Center. One of the programs, called Lap Read, involves 20 parents and is designed to get children ready for classroom instruction.

"When the children first come to school, they don't know letters, colors, or even how to tie their shoes, so the whole kindergarten year is spent playing catch-up, and it puts them behind from then on," Johnsen said.

In Lap Read, the parents use puzzles and games borrowed from the kindergarten classes and, with the guidance of the kindergarten teacher, spend an hour a day, two days a week, working with children 6 months to 4 years old.

The program has been operating almost four years and is showing results, Johnsen said.

"Teachers report more participation, more verbalization, more confidence and more readiness to begin the classroom learning experience," Johnsen said.

GETTING IN TOUCH and MORE ON READING

■ If you have questions for our experts, send them to Reading Page Editor, Los Angeles Times, Times Mirror Square, Los Angeles, 90053 or send e-mail to reading@latimes.com. For stories and activities, see the Kids' Reading Room in the Southern California Living section every Sunday through Friday.

science, *Theoretical Medicine*, and *Neural Computation*. She is a member of the Society for Neuroscience, the Philosophy of Science Association, the American Philosophical Association, and the Society for Philosophy and Psychology, and chairs the executive board of the Institute for Neural Computation at the University of California–San Diego.

Churchland has been married to Paul M. Churchland since 1969. Her husband's research interests, according to his profile on the University of California Web site, include "the philosophy of science, the philosophy of mind, artificial intelligence and cognitive neurobiology, epistemology, and perception." The couple have two children: Mark, born in 1972, and Anne, born in 1974. — K.E.D.



Courtesy of National Center for Family Literacy

Darling, Sharon

May 20, 1944—
Founder and
president of the
National Center for
Family Literacy

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4237

their efforts, in 1989 Darling founded the NCFL, a private, nonprofit organization headquartered in Louisville and recognized internationally as a leader in the field of family literacy. Because research has shown that parents' educational backgrounds have a strong bearing on their children's academic success, Darling designed the program so that adults can improve their academic and parenting skills and prepare for examinations for general equivalency degrees (GEDs, or substitutes for high-school diplomas), while their preschool-aged children attend classes that increase their chances of academic success. "Literacy empowers people to be the parents they deserve to be," she told Lynn Fabian Lasner for *Humanities* (May/June 2002). "It's wonderful to see parents come back to school—to smell the smells of the place where they failed—and succeed, this time. You watch them hold themselves differently. Then, they start asking what they can do for their children."

"Some 44 million Americans—that's 23 percent of our adult population—function at the lowest level of literacy," Sharon Darling, founder and president of the National Center for Family Literacy (NCFL), said in her address at the Republican National Convention in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, in 2000, as reported by the Louisville, Kentucky, *Courier-Journal* (August 1, 2000). "They can't read a newspaper or follow simple instructions. Even more tragically, when a parent can't be a child's first and most important teacher, the child suffers too." Distressed by such figures and by the impact of illiteracy on families, in 1987 Darling and a colleague at the Kentucky Department of Education founded a program that addressed the literacy of parents and children, a new approach they dubbed family literacy. (Previously, most literacy programs in the United States were aimed either exclusively at children or solely at adults.) Encouraged by the success of

The educator was born Sharon Breitenstein on May 20, 1944 in Louisville, the second daughter of Keith Breitenstein, a building contractor, and Ethel Breitenstein, a homemaker. She has recalled playing school and "teaching" her dolls when she was three years old. She drew inspiration from her aunt, Helen Breitenstein, a first-grade teacher, and remembers as special occasions the times she was allowed to accompany her aunt to school. "She was one of those teachers who believed you put your heart and your soul into teaching," she told Rachael Kamuf for *Business First-Louisville* (April 12, 1993).

Darling graduated from Eastern High School in 1962, then earned a B.S. degree in education from the University of Louisville, in 1966. She also attended Western Kentucky University, in Bowling Green, where she earned a master of arts degree in counselor education in 1970 and an advanced degree, rank one, in educational administration in 1972. In addition, she has pursued postgraduate studies in adult and community education at the University of Louisville and Morehead State University, in Morehead, Kentucky. Darling taught second grade for three years before her son Michael was born, in 1969. Shortly after her son's birth, she met Curtis Whitman, then the director of adult education for Jefferson County Schools, at a Christmas party; Whitman asked her if she would like to teach in an adult-education program held at Ninth & O Baptist Church and run by the Jefferson County public school system. Darling, who had not wanted to teach at a level higher than second grade, initially declined that offer, but Whitman persisted until she agreed to come to the program's site as an observer. As she told Kamuf, when she arrived with her infant son, Whitman "took the baby and diaper bag, opened the door to a room where [several] men were seated and said, 'This is your new teacher,' and disappeared." Despite her initial anger at being tricked into helping, she soon became devoted to the program. She earned no pay until she increased her workload to 21 hours a week, at which point she received the minimum wage. She has recalled that many students drove long distances to class because they were so eager to learn to read. "They were so fearful, at first, that someone would find out, so ashamed. But soon, four adults became eight . . . then more and more just kept on coming," she told Lasner.

From 1970 to 1975 Darling served as a teacher of adult basic education and literacy while also teaching at the elementary-school level. In 1975 she became supervisor of adult literacy in Jefferson County Public Schools. She left that position in 1978 to design and conduct a three-year research study on adult illiteracy. She also designed a model literacy program, prepared its submission to the Joint Dissemination and Review Panel, and defended the findings of her research before the panel, whose members were well-known, university-affiliated researchers. The panel described the model program as exemplary and recommended that the federal government institute it nationwide. In 1982 Darling became director of the National Dissemination Project, National Diffusion Network for the U.S. Department of Education; in that role she directed the spread of the adult-literacy model program throughout the nation. In 1984 she became director of the division of

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adult community education for the Kentucky Department of Education, based in Frankfort, a position she held until 1987.

"When I finally decided to accept the job in Frankfort, and when I started looking at [the Appalachian region of the eastern U.S.] and realized the terrible statistics, it just seemed like a lost cause to issue people GED certificates or teach people to read when we were not even staying even," she told *Current Biography*. "There were more children entering the first grade and not coming out as 12th graders than we could ever issue GEDs for. . . . No matter how hard I tried, we could never reclaim more people than we were losing every year. It became obvious to me that we needed to do something that was going to break down the barriers. . . . The problems were many, and one was that the schools oftentimes had written off certain children because of where they lived or who their parents were. . . . So the expectations were pretty low of the children. The parents were scared to death of the schools; they had failed there, it had been a pretty bruising experience for them. And the parents were pretty isolated. Appalachia's a hard place to get around."

In 1987, with \$1.2 million from the state legislature, Darling and Jeanne Heberle, a colleague at the Kentucky Department of Education, launched a pilot family literacy project in four rural Kentucky counties, called the Parent and Child Education (PACE) program. (PACE, which cost about \$700 for each participant, was designed for parents who had not graduated from high school and could spend three days a week for up to a year attending classes.) The program was born through discussions between Darling and Heberle, a childhood-education specialist, during their commutes together from Louisville to Frankfort. Heberle advocated preparing children for reading as early as preschool, while Darling felt that remedial help for adults was the solution to illiteracy. "I'd say, 'If you let me do my job right you wouldn't have a job,'" Heberle told Kathleen Teltsch for the *New York Times* (October 4, 1988). "And [Darling] would answer, 'Wrong, if I did my job I'd have all adults doing so well they would take wonderful care of their children and there would be no need for your job.'" At the time Kentucky had one of the highest proportions of adults without high-school diplomas in the United States. "Then we realized that, when the children of these people went into school, 70 percent of them never graduated from high school," Darling told Michael Ryan for the *Houston Chronicle* (July 12, 1992). "That's where the idea came from."

Through the PACE program, parents and children attend school together, with parents receiving instruction in reading, math, and other subjects in preparation for the GED test while, in another part of their shared building, their preschool-aged children take part in kindergarten-level activities to improve their developmental skills. Buses are provided to make it easier for those from isolated rural communities to attend.

In 1988 PACE won the Award for Outstanding Innovation in State and Local Government (along with a \$100,000 prize) from the Ford Foundation and Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government. In 1987 Darling became executive director of Literacy Concepts Inc.,

a post in which she served as a consultant to the National Governor's Association and assisted the U.S. Department of Education in setting up literacy initiatives in Washington, D.C. She soon attracted the attention of Bill Friday, the retired chancellor of higher education in North Carolina and the executive director of the William R. Kenan Jr. Charitable Trust. In 1988 Darling received a grant from the Kenan Trust to replicate the PACE program in the state of North Carolina. Friday and other members of the Kenan Trust were so pleased with the results that they asked her to take the project to a national level.

NCFL, which was established in 1989 with two staff members and a \$100,000 grant from the Kenan Trust, is founded on the PACE model but differs from it in several notable ways. While participation in the PACE program was restricted to those without a high-school diploma, NCFL accepts some participants who have graduated; they are often students for whom English is not a first language. In addition, adult participants are required to volunteer in schools, and children up to age five may be enrolled. (PACE limits children's ages to three and four.) NCFL currently operates on a \$13 million budget, with funding primarily from corporate and philanthropic contributions (including the Toyota Motor Corp., Verizon, and UPS). While the program costs up to \$1,500 a year for each student enrolled in a family-literacy course, Darling has said that the expense is offset by savings in the costs of remedial-education classes young students might otherwise need in school. "It is a case of pay now or pay later," she told Kamuf. NCFL is known for creating innovative programs, developing effective advocacy techniques, and providing training to professionals in the family-literacy field. Staff members support more than 5,000 programs throughout the U.S. Darling told *Current Biography* that the NCFL attracted attention immediately from community planners, policy leaders, and the media. "It just resonated. . . . It just made sense to people that you would bring [parent and child] together in a family approach. It was a little bit harder for educators, quite frankly, because they focused on one piece of the family, or one part of the equation." Adult and early-childhood educators shared rooms during training sessions, to foster communication between the two camps. The program serves approximately 150,000 people each year.

Although men are eligible for participation in the program, they represent only a small portion of adult students; the organization focuses much of its effort on helping low-income single mothers. Darling has said that that is because she realized early on that uneducated, single mothers living in poverty had a great deal of trouble competing with others for jobs, which in turn meant their children were at greater risk for academic failure. "The real issue is children who live with poor adults," she told Abe Zaidan for the *Cleveland Plain Dealer* (January 27, 1996), adding that children often adopt the lifestyles of their parents, particularly if the parents do not know how to motivate their offspring to develop skills that will prepare them for the workforce. "The problem is very complex and there is no quick solution to it," she told Zaidan. "You can't tweak it and make it go away. So what we are doing is dealing [with] the parents and children in a holistic manner. Our

hope is that when the young people enter the work force they will have the skills to be productive." She told Lasner, "I discovered early on that if we didn't look at the whole picture, we weren't going to be successful. We can't keep pretending we can 'fix' a kid in a school or just get mom a new, minimum-wage job. But, we really can work with whole families and sustain changes in order to help current and future generations have a better quality of life."

The NCFL lobbies on a number of issues, including welfare reform. Darling recalled for *Current Biography* that she was apprehensive about Congress's overhaul of the welfare system in 1996. "We really were worried that . . . if we take parents who are functioning at fourth- or fifth-grade reading level, put them in a minimum-wage job, send their children to child care . . . and then you expect that positive changes are going to occur in the family, it's just an empty dream." While she believes that welfare recipients should work, if possible, "we really wanted to advocate more for parents' being able to spend more time with children while they're learning." Some parents enrolled in work-focused family-literacy programs come to school with their children two days per week and work the other days, or attend school in the mornings and work in the afternoons. "They've spent time increasing their basic skills . . . and they're doing it alongside their children," Darling told *Current Biography*.

Adult participants in NCFL commit to a family-literacy program, which may include preparing for the GED exam, developing basic literacy, or learning English as a second language. Adult education experts work with the parents to help them meet their personal educational goals. In addition to literacy skills, the Parent Time component of the program includes discussions on improving parenting skills, dealing with domestic problems, and finding jobs. "You just can't teach a mother to read and expect that is going to make a difference in their lives," Darling told Michel Marriott for the *New York Times* (August 21, 1991). "You can't pretend that it is an isolated literacy problem." It is well known that children as young as infants learn various preliteracy and prelanguage skills, including getting along with others and communicating orally. What differentiates the NCFL's family-literacy programs from adult- or child-only literacy projects is NCFL's Parent and Child Together (PACT) component. PACT time provides an opportunity for parent-child interaction and reinforces the idea that the parent is the child's most important teacher. "If you have a parent who themselves can't read or has low literacy skills or never had an opportunity to enjoy a book themselves, it's very hard then for that child to have a role model in the home," Darling told Darla Carter for the *Louisville Courier-Journal* (March 16, 2002).

While the NCFL attracts new families to its program through churches, social-work agencies, and schools, Darling told *Current Biography*, "the best recruitment tool is . . . the students themselves, the ones who've been successful." She is pleased that adult students form support groups, particularly since many of them had been isolated before joining the program. "They really keep each other coming, and they keep each other motivated. . . . That becomes the glue that holds

them all together and keeps them moving forward." NCFL programs encourage parents to volunteer in the schools, which not only lets them get to know the teachers and principals, but also gives them job experience. (Often, young mothers in the program have never worked outside the home.) "We look at a certain segment of our society and say that they don't have anything to give back. . . . They are entitled to be able to give back too," she told *Current Biography*.

Since its founding the NCFL has kept statistics in order to monitor the program's success, and it has made changes where appropriate. A report prepared by Andrew Hayes of the University of North Carolina at Wilmington in September 2001 showed that of the 969 adults he studied who were participants in family-literacy programs, 51 percent had earned a GED or another high-school equivalency certificate; 43 percent had jobs (in contrast to just 14 percent who had jobs upon entering the program); and 14 percent were taking part in higher education or job-training programs or continuing to work toward GED certification. In addition, 23 percent of those who had been receiving public assistance when they enrolled had become self-supporting through an increase in family income and other improvements in family conditions.

Darling has said that her greatest reward is not the number of GEDs earned by those in the program, but the new confidence she sees in participants. "I met a woman in North Carolina, in 1988, when I was first getting started," she told Lasner. "She was so shy. Her hair hung in her face. A teacher had coaxed her into coming. Well, a visiting poet's work really turned her on. She discovered she had the ability to write poetry pent up inside of her. This woman scored a perfect score on her GED literature test. She graduated from college with honors . . . and she'd never even dreamt of setting foot on a college campus! Many times, creativity that we can unleash will help solve some of the other problems in people's lives." She has dismissed the view that illiterate and undereducated adults are not interested in improving their circumstances. "There is not one of these parents who don't care about their children," she told Kamuf. "They just don't know how to do such things as reading or even talking to their children. Slowly but surely you see that changing. You see the difference in how they look, how they carry themselves. It is more than education, and it is translated into their children."

Darling is a modest woman who describes herself as ordinary, but she has drawn high praise from those who have seen the impact of her work. "She is a visionary," Wally Amos, the founder of Famous Amos cookies and a national spokesperson for Literacy Volunteers of America, told Kamuf. "The idea was brilliant. By strengthening the bond between parent and child, we can break the intergenerational grasp of illiteracy. If it is not broken, we will not have an end to the problem." The late television broadcaster Charles Kuralt once compared Darling to the civil rights leader Martin Luther King Jr. and the feminist Betty Friedan. "I think we'll see the day when we might put Sharon Darling in that pantheon of those who started something that changed our lives," he said at the NCFL's third annual conference, in May 1994, according to the Associated Press (June 29, 1994).

SUGGESTED READING:

Business First—
Louisville I p20 Apr.
12, 1993, with photo

Houston Chronicle
Parade p17 July 12,
1992, with photos

Humanities p30
May/June 2002, with
photos

Louisville Magazine
(on-line) Mar. 1997

New York Times A
p20 Oct. 4, 1988,
with photo

Darling is a founding board member of the Barbara Bush Foundation for Family Literacy, the National Coalition for Literacy, the American Indian Education Foundation, and the Heart of America Foundation. She is also a past vice chair of the board of directors of the National Institute for Literacy. She has testified before the U.S. Congress and was an invited speaker at the Republican National Convention in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, in 2000. She was named Louisville of the Year in 1991, and the following year she received the Kentucky Commissioner's Award for Exemplary Service. She also received the Harold W. McGraw Jr. Prize in Education from McGraw-Hill Inc. and was named a distinguished alumna of the University of Louisville in 1993. Her other awards include the Bahá'í Peace Award (1995), the National Caring Award (1996), the \$50,000 Charles A. Dana Award for Pioneering Achievement in Education (1996), the Albert Schweitzer Prize for Humanitarianism from Johns Hopkins University (1998), the Martha Layne Collins Leadership Award from Women Leading Kentucky (1999), a Woman of Distinction Award from Birmingham-Southern University (1999), and the Razor Walker Award from the University of North Carolina for her contributions to the lives of children and youth (2000).

In 2001 Darling was awarded the National Humanities Medal, the federal government's highest honor for achievement in the humanities, by President George W. Bush and First Lady Laura Bush. (She has also worked with Laura Bush, a former librarian and teacher, on literacy issues.) She was featured on the Arts & Entertainment cable network's *Biography* series as an "Uncommon American." She has written many articles on intergenerational education, and she has received two honorary doctorates, from Spalding University and Bellarmine College, both located in Louisville. She is a member of the International Women's Forum and became an alumni fellow of the School of Education at the University of Louisville in 1998.

Darling, who estimates that she spends 80 percent of her time on the road, has advised governors, policy makers, business leaders, and foundation officials on education issues. She has also been director of the Greater Louisville Economic Development Partnership and has helped train people from England, Canada, and Australia to set up literacy programs in those countries. She and her husband, George Darling, whom she married in 1975, live in Louisville. He is the owner of Carroll & Co., a business specializing in mergers and acquisitions. The couple have five children and seven grandchildren. Sharon Darling enjoys spending weekends with her grandchildren and time on her houseboat on the Ohio River. When she leaves her current post, she plans to return to the classroom and teach family literacy once again. "This is more than a career for me; this is a mission," Darling told Melissa R. Anthony for *Louisville Magazine* (March 1997, on-line). "I am committed to helping adults, because it positively affects their children and their children's children. It is a ripple that keeps moving through the family." — K.E.D.

Word warrior

Parents learn alongside children in literacy crusader's battle plan

By HOLLY HOLLAND
Staff Writer



Darling

Sharon Darling's war against illiteracy began, as many wars do, on a small scale.

She had quit teaching second grade in the Jefferson County public schools to stay home with her first child. When a school official cornered her at a party and invited her to visit an adult reading program at a local church, Darling reluctantly agreed.

When she arrived, he immediately put her to work.

"At the time I was so mad," Darling recalled.

"I thought, 'If I ever survive this to the end of the day, I'll never come back.' But the fact was that there were five men there who couldn't read and they had gone through all kinds of trauma to even find the place. And

they were so desperate to learn. "After the first day, there was no way I couldn't go back."

Eighteen years later, Darling is still fighting illiteracy, but on a much bigger battlefield.

Darling, 44, is director of the Kenan/Southern Regional Education Board Family Literacy Project in Louisville, which teaches under-educated adults along with their pre-school-age children.

A \$720,000 grant from the William R. Kenan Jr. Charitable Trust enabled Darling to set up family literacy programs at Roosevelt-Perry and McFerran elementary schools last Febru-

See LITERACY

Back page, col. 3, this section

Literacy crusader focuses on families

Continued from Page One

ary. This fall, a third center opened at Schaffner Elementary School, and four opened in North Carolina. At the centers, children learn basic skills that prepare them for kindergarten.

The parents work toward their General Educational Development certificates and receive tips on raising children. The Kenan Family Literacy Project has a four-part agenda: to set up literacy programs, conduct research, provide information to interested groups and expand the literacy model nationwide. The last goal commands most of Darling's time. She travels around the country to meet with governors, school superintendents, legislators, — anyone who will listen to her pitch about

the value of family education.

"When she finishes (talking), you want to go right up to her and say, 'What can I do to help?'" said William Friday, former president of the University of North Carolina and now executive director of the Kenan Charitable Trust in Chapel Hill. "She has a wonderful case to put before you and she believes in it. And she's made believers of all of us."

Darling, who lives in New Albany, Ind., came to the attention of the Kenan Foundation last year. Foundation executives had asked former U.S. Education Secretary William Bennett how they could help improve elementary education. Bennett suggested that they donate money to the family literacy movement — and he recommended they start with Darling.

She's become sort of a literacy ambassador, spreading the word nationwide that a child's success in the classroom is linked to his parents' educational achievement.

In a typical month, Darling is in her Louisville office only about three days — and most of those are on weekends.

About 20 percent of Americans are believed to be functionally illiterate — unable to read traffic signs or fill out job applications. While the Kenan Family Literacy Project can help some of them, it barely nicks the problem: Each center serves only about 15 families at a time.

Officials from 18 states and England have visited project sites in Louisville, and about 1,000 people have requested information. The project has been profiled in 15 national publications, including The New York Times. ABC-TV plans to interview Darling and film one of the Louisville centers tomorrow for a future segment on "The Home Show."

"Sharon is recognized as one of the most knowledgeable and committed persons in the field of adult literacy nationally," said Benita Sommerfield, former special adviser on adult literacy with the U.S. Department of Education.

"There are a lot of vision people out there who have no idea how to translate (their ideas) into programs. Sharon can do both, and that's what makes her special."

The Kenan project is patterned after the Parent and Child Education program, which the Kentucky General Assembly approved in 1986 for rural districts. Darling helped develop the program, known as PACE, with Rep. Roger Noe, D-Harlan.

The PACE program serves about

400 adults and children in 12 counties. It received a \$100,000 award last month from the Ford Foundation and Harvard University.

Both programs aim to break the cycle of illiteracy that persists in some families for generations.

"Most of us know almost instinctively how to act with our children," Darling said. "These parents don't because they didn't have a model. Most of them are coming from generations of people whose parents dropped out of school or failed in school and didn't support education for them in the home."

"At the same time, we're helping the (school) staff better understand disadvantaged parents, and that's pretty critical. Sometimes there's just the perception that these parents don't care about the child. They don't come to parent conferences, they don't come to PTA meetings. ... They're frightened, they're intimidated, they're afraid that they can't talk to a teacher because they're not educated themselves."

Curtis Whitman, former director of adult education for the Jefferson County public schools, remembers Darling's determination when he recruited her to help with the adult reading program 18 years ago.

"We met two days a week, but Sharon would spend a lot more time with them," said Whitman, now a counselor at Southern Middle School. "She got involved with their problems and their children. It's what she does best."

In 1978, she expanded the Jefferson County Adult Reading Program

with a \$75,000 grant from the Kentucky Department of Education. As project director, she used volunteers and graduates of the program to tutor new participants.

In 1982, she became a project director for the U.S. Department of Education and traveled around the country to help states set up adult literacy programs. She joined the Kentucky Department of Education in 1984 as director of adult education; she became director of the Kenan project last year.

She now has a part-time secretary to help her with her work.

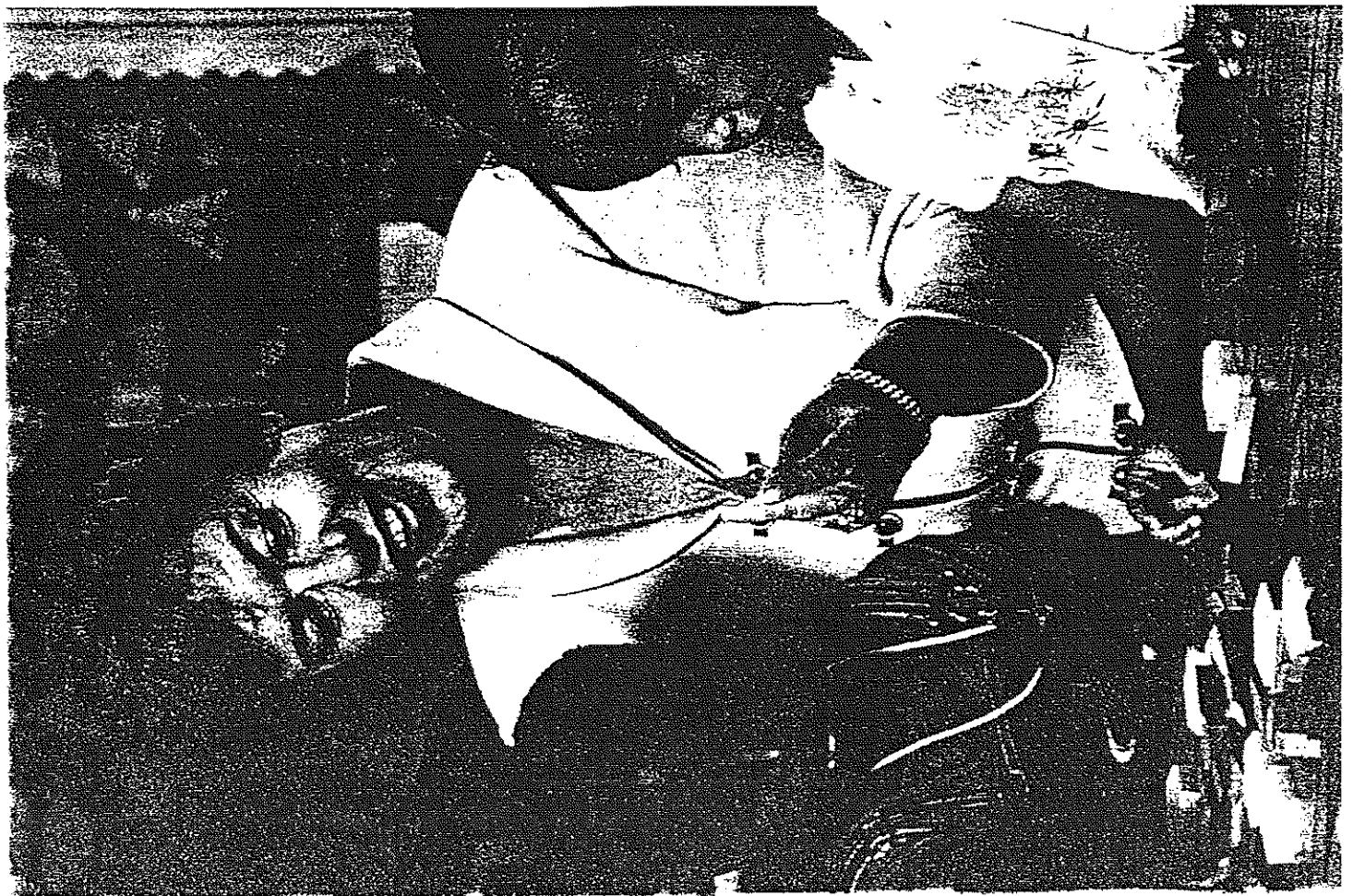
However, the Kenan Charitable Trust recently voted to increase her budget by about \$40,000 so she can hire an assistant and enlarge her office.

Colleagues describe Darling as "driven" and "committed" in her efforts to break the cycle of illiteracy. Noe, who says he has enormous respect for Darling's abilities, believes she has become "quasi-obsessive" about her mission.

But that kind of zeal may be necessary to keep the public focused on the problems of illiteracy, he said. "She has taken the lead on this issue and has seized opportunities as they have become available."

Noe said Darling would be a natural choice to lead a national program to combat illiteracy. "I think at some point there will be some federal involvement in overcoming illiteracy," he said.

"Once that occurs, Sharon Darling's name will certainly be at the top of anyone's list."



a passion for helping others succeed

Sharon Darling, CEO and outstanding servant leader, leads a smart and innovative battle against the systemic problem of illiteracy.

by Monica Regan

Robert Greenleaf, the man who brought us the idea of servant leadership, said that you can recognize a servant leader by looking at the people she has served. He said they grow as individuals, becoming "healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, more likely themselves to become servants."

This is certainly what Sharon Darling and the work of promoting family literacy is all about. Darling is the founder and president of The National Center for Family Literacy in Louisville, Ky.

Her many accomplishments have earned Sharon praise and a number of awards. But, in typical servant leader fashion, she does not dwell on the past

or herself. She keeps the present and the future vivid for those around her, and constantly presses the essential issues.

Darling spends a majority of her time on the road, bringing the NCFL message of equality in education—and giving guidance to—policy makers, businesses and foundations.

The center offers comprehensive family literacy programs covering four areas: Children's Education, Adult Education, Parent and Child Together (PACT) Time, and Parent Time. NCFL also leads family literacy efforts across the country, promoting policies at the national and state levels. The organization delivers research-based training and technical assistance to more than 5,000 educators and admin-

Photograph by Amanda Young for NCFL.

summer 2003

"Managers and CEOs need to look at it as a variety of issues. One is if we don't look at the situation today we won't have a workforce in the future that's competitive in a global economy."

istrators every year. They conduct research themselves, and strive to stay on top of current changes in the social and economic environment to best address the needs of families.

Perdido Editor Monica Regan recently talked with Sharon Darling about her work as a leader in the field of literacy and her many accomplishments.

MR: What is the scope of the illiteracy problem in America today?

SD: It really is a monumental one. There are 44 million adults functioning at the lowest level of literacy, meaning they have a very difficult time with tasks, just functioning to fulfill their role as a parent or a worker or a community member. We know that those statistics are so tied to the poverty statistics. The parents who don't have the literacy skills are the ones

who are in poverty.

We had a woman come to us the other day. She is now 21 years old. She lives in a drug-infested, roach-infested public housing area. She had her first child at 13, and she only has a fourth grade education level. She had gotten the courage to ask for help. Someone at her church had suggested that she could get some help. She is very typical of the people who come to us. She has been unable to get the information she needs to get out of poverty. This has her trapped in a way that's so demoralizing. It creates a hopelessness in people that's really hard to overcome. You hear the statistics, but it's really something when you meet the people behind those statistics. The lives of their children are really affected.

That's why this is a problem for everyone in this country. If we want to look at solutions, we have to look at the reasons behind our economic problems, our education problems, our community problems, like crime and all the things we see in our community. We're not going to solve any of these problems without addressing the literacy problem.

MR: What should today's manager, CEO or business owner be asking himself about this problem?

SD: I think that managers and CEOs need to look at it as a variety of issues. One is if we don't look at the situation today we won't have a workforce in the future that's competitive in a global

"They can really appreciate that if you invest now, in these two generations, you will have systemic change for future generations."

economy. One of the things we know is that all of these issues are tied tightly together. The education attainment of the parent is directly tied to the educational achievement of the child—whether the child will enter school prepared, whether they will achieve in school, and whether they will stay and not drop out.

There are other issues, too. We know that parents who don't have literacy skills are likely to be living in poverty, and their kids are growing up in poverty, which affects their cognitive development. The number of years a child spends in poverty is directly related to their cognitive development.

The flip side of that is that leaders and managers need to know that they can put all the efficient processes into place that they want, and make all the improvements in the workplace to make it more streamlined or make it more productive, but they really ought to look at solving the cyclical problem of literacy. You might be able

to save more in your bottom line if we don't need to spend it on the bottom 20 percent of the people who don't have the literacy skills to get jobs.

We've had some major corporations who've understood this problem from the beginning. Toyota [Motor Corp.] has given us over \$20 million to solve this problem. They see this as a way to create the workforce of the future. They can really appreciate that if you invest now, in these two generations, you will have systemic change for future generations. UPS is another one. They've invested heavily in us and in welfare reform, too. Specifically, they've invested in a program called Careers for Families, a really unique welfare reform response. Another company that has really supported us is Verizon.

MR: You didn't start out with the idea of putting adults and children together to learn. Your primary concern was teaching preschoolers. How did that focus change?

SD: I was actually teaching second grade in a very impoverished area. The lowest-achieving students were the ones I worked with. The principal said, "You really have a way of working with these students," and she encouraged me to just focus on them. But, I was working in isolation with them. I wasn't reaching their parents. Here were parents who were living on the edge of disaster every day of their lives. They were ill equipped to help their

"I saw that we have got to put together a systemized approach. That was what was at the root of family literacy."

children learn and succeed in school. 'Then, when I was teaching adults to read, I was also bringing my children with me to the church where the adult literacy program was meeting. When I finally started looking at what was going on, I realized what was missing. An opportunity was presented to me. I was focused on Appalachia at the time (when she founded NCFEL in 1989). I saw that we have got to put together a systemized approach. That was what was at the root of family literacy. I had parents who said to me, "I didn't realize that kids learn when they're little. I thought they start to learn when they get to school." But, it's not about telling parents what to do with their children. It's about helping them to grow into being the kind of parents they want to be.

MR: There was a moment, then, when your vision suddenly stretched far beyond today or next week or next year. You looked squarely at this problem, a

problem with a very long reach, and you named a possible solution. When you look honestly at all the implications, and you take responsibility for trying to solve it, how does that feel? Is it overwhelming at times?

SD: There were times when it just seemed so big you could not look at the whole scope of it. You had to put one foot in front of the other and just solve one part of it at a time. You never lose focus on the families. And sometimes, you have to stop and ask, "Are we really serving the needs of these families?" I never saw it as solving this problem for the whole country. I looked it as helping one family at a time. Then people would hear about it, and they started saying, "Wow, this is what we need."

I never really think about when you are no longer a (person educating other people) and you become a leader. For me, it was the right thing to do. I couldn't be more passionate about it. I'd talk to everybody. Any group that I had an opportunity to talk to about it, I did. Pretty soon, they were coming to me and asking me about it—at large gatherings, when I'd meet with leaders in the community or legislators, and then in congressional testimony.

MR: What are your greatest challenges in hiring and maintaining employees and volunteers who understand and advance the center's mission? How do you encourage day-to-day work at the

"There were times when it just seemed so big you could not look at the whole scope of it. You had to put one foot in front of the other..."

center to remain a source of excitement, pride and fulfillment for yourself and the others in the organization?

SD: The hiring is easy because there are so many people out there who are excellent and committed to this cause. It's harder to keep that spirit alive. You have to have your (organization's procedures), practices and processes. One thing we do is in just about every meeting we have, we don't leave it without talking about a student or a family. We bring in the pictures, we share in their lives. It lets us feel their excitement, lets us see the progress. And, at every one of our conferences, we have student speakers. We have a policy here that every employee will spend time in a family literacy program at some point. They might be (helping people learn to read), or just answering phones, so that they will really understand the program.

MR: Which innovation or current program do you most like to describe to your colleagues? How about a potential donor or legislator?

SD: It's the same thing. What we brag about is what is happening to families. What are these families' lives about? They've changed dramatically from where they were.

The latest program at the Center for Family Literacy is very exciting. It's the Hispanic Family Institute. Many families of immigrants were not even educated in their own countries. The children have a very high dropout rate. We said, "Let's help the families get the literacy skills they need and not just help the kids in the schools." It's a complicated issue. They come to this country and the kids don't do well in school. At the same time, the children are growing away from their families as they are growing up. They join gangs in order to fit in. It seems like it's such an urgent message to get out. Let's take this wonderful, rich culture that they're bringing to our country and build on that. Toyota gave us \$3.2 million to get it started.

MR: You exemplify a servant leader because you put the concerns of others before your own. Do you always picture your role in this way?

SD: I don't know that I think about it that way. I am passionate about trying to help those who need help, so I guess that's the same definition. I'm really committed to making sure I leave

"Many families of immigrants were not even educated in their own countries. The children have a very high dropout rate."

something behind when I go, that people's lives have changed for the better because I was here. Working with people who have no voice, I have the opportunity to give them a voice. And, I have certain attributes and skills that help me do that. I would not be content with myself if I didn't use those skills in that way. Watching people do that—ferri Cruise is on my board of directors. When she spoke and talked about her life when it first changed—that is amazing.

I want to be as invisible as I possibly can. Especially now, on a national level, I want to get the attention directed to these students. In the other areas of my life, I'm just shameless about taking those opportunities. I'll talk to anybody. You don't want to sit next to me on an airplane because I've always got my materials with me.

MR: Being awarded the National Humanities Medal by the President of the United States must have an

astounding impact on you and your organization. What is different today from March 2001—the month before you received the medal?

SD: We really had the opportunity to help the nation understand that literacy is a human right, that it does belong to everyone. It was really important to me to be able to say it to the nation, to just be there to talk about literacy. It's not prestigious, not usually talked about. I was able to take about 20 people from my staff along, too. They got to feel that event, be a part of it. That was the highlight, to be able to share that with people from all areas of the organization. They were from accounting, from finance, they were trainers and program developers.

MR: At the end of the day, what is most gratifying for Sharon Darling, the educator? How about Sharon Darling, the leader?

SD: It's not only the families themselves but also how much the nation has embraced this cause. You go into a school and the principal says, "We really have to have this program to improve the test scores, to close the achievement gap." To me, that's my hope, that because we were here, education has been changed. Parents will see school in a different way. Policy makers will look at the way they make laws and rules differently and they'll focus on the entire family. ☐

Sharon Darling at a Glance

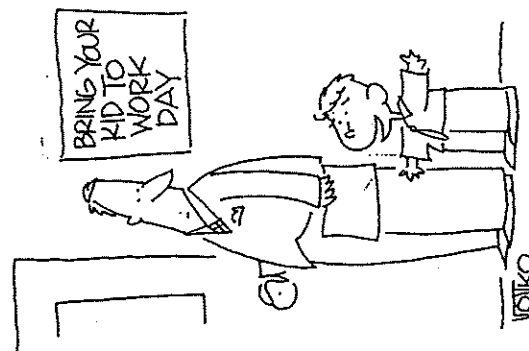
Milestones

1966 began career teaching children
1969 started teaching adults in addition to children
1982 brought her model for adult literacy to educators across the U.S.
1987 co-created PACE, a pilot family literacy project in rural Kentucky
1989 founded NCFL based on PACE

Awards, Honors and Affiliations

2001 National Humanities Medal, 2000 Razer Walker Award from University of North Carolina, Woman of Distinction Award from Birmingham Southern University (1998), Albert Schweitzer Prize for Humanitarianism (1998), Charles A. Dana Award for Pioneering Achievement in Education (1996), Harold W. McGraw Award for Outstanding Educator (1993), National Caring Award, Frederick Douglass Museum and Hall of Fame for Caring Americans, featured on the A&E television series "Biography," board member Barbara Bush Foundation for Family Literacy, National Coalition for Literacy and New School for Social Research
Sources: Current Bio, April-May 2003, National Center for Family Literacy, last sheet

FUNNY STUFF BOB VOJKO



"I know how to operate the copy machine, Dad. Show me how to fire somebody!"

Earth Angels

BY THEODORE SPENCER ILLUSTRATION BY MICHAEL WITTE

Angels are said to flutter down from someplace divine. They work their miracles, then return undetected to the heavens above, leaving among the people and places they've visited a glow and a goodness that don't seem to be of this world.

There haven't been any confirmed sightings of winged angels lately, but *Town & Country* has noticed that there *are* increasing numbers of mortals among us whose spirit and actions reveal a touch of the heavenly. In fact, in 1997, from front pages to front lines to flood-ravaged towns, Earth Angels seemed to be everywhere around us. To celebrate their inspiring gifts of faith, hope and charity in this, the season of giving, we salute here a dozen living Americans among the many whose stories this year make us truly believe in miracles. •

Winging their way into hearts all over America: Town & Country's 1997 Earth Angels. Opposite, clockwise from top left: Eugene Lang, making educational dreams come true; Joan Kroc, flying to the Midwest's rescue; Sharon Darling, spreading the word about literacy; Aaron Feuerstein, rising from the ashes; Alex Spanos, rebuilding disaster victims' lives; Shane McGregor, bringing technology to people of color; Mel and Martha Gebhardt, angels of mercy for the Red Cross. Center: Melinda and Bill Gates, getting libraries on-line; Linda Zidell, crusading against environmentally caused illness; and Ted Turner, thinking—and giving—big.

Eleven Earthly Angels We Love...

SHARON DARLING, 53, Louisville, KY. Probably no one has done more to promote the importance of literacy among American families. Since President Clinton signed the sweeping welfare-reform bill, which limits to a maximum of five years the amount of time a person may receive aid, Darling has tirelessly canvassed the country trying to convince political and business leaders to embrace her concept of "family literacy." To snap the cycle of dependency in undereducated families, she believes, both children and parents must be taught to read—preferably at the same time and in the same environment, so that education becomes part of the entire family's development. The program also teaches skills that help both adults and children become self-sufficient. Darling, a former teacher, began her campaign nine years ago, when she founded the groundbreaking National Center for Family Literacy, which has since helped create more than 2,000 family-literacy programs in all fifty states. "People don't really have this information on their screens," she says of the effectiveness of family literacy. "We're trying to put it there." *National Center for Family Literacy, Waterfront Plaza, Suite 200, 325 W. Main St., Louisville, KY 40202; (502) 584-1133.*

AARON FEUERSTEIN, 72, Brookline, MA. On a warm Sunday last September, Aaron Feuerstein proudly took in the scene before him: a standing ovation from a crowd of 10,000 as the American flag was raised over his newly rebuilt textile mill in Lawrence. It had been a very different scene on a cold December evening in 1995, when he had stood over the smoldering remains of a fire that had destroyed nearly a third of the property. That night, however, the president and CEO of Malden Mills had vowed to rebuild the venerable 19th-century buildings, and to pay all his out-of-work employees while the job was being done—and rebuild and pay he did. Not only did it mean forgoing the chance to move the entire company to a location with a cheaper work force; it meant, given the 3,000 employees, that \$15 million dollars would have to come out of Feuerstein's pocket to pay salaries during the plant's reconstruction. But Feuerstein, who has been known to pay employees' educational and medical expenses, kept his word. The new facility is one of the most technologically advanced and environmentally sound mills in the nation. "We don't believe in running away; we believe we have a responsibility," Feuerstein says, adding that news of his loyalty to his workers has actually helped business. "Hopefully, more of our modern-day CEOs will get the message."

BILL GATES, 41, and MELINDA FRENCH GATES, 33, Medina, WA. Back in elementary school, Bill Gates volunteered to shelve books in his school library during his free time. It was there that the future founder of Microsoft came to realize the transformational impact of libraries. This year, in a gift that makes them the rightful heirs to Andrew Carnegie, the father of American libraries, Gates and wife Melinda French Gates established the Gates Library Foundation. The mission: to spend over five years their gift of \$200 million to bring state-of-the-art computers, software and the Internet to libraries in disadvantaged communi-

ties. At the announcement of the gift, Gates said: "The empowerment this technology has given people underscores my belief that computers can really make a difference in the lives of others." Microsoft will also donate \$200 million worth of software to supplement the Gateses' personal gift, which itself is seen as the first of several large donations to the cause. *Gates Library Foundation, P.O. Box 97070, Redmond, WA 98073; (425) 882-1200; www.glff.org.*

MEL GEBHARDT, 63, and MARTHA GEBHARDT, 58, Seattle, WA. For most, being surrounded by the wreckage of a hurricane would hardly be the ideal background for falling in love, but it was in Puerto Rico immediately after Hurricane Hugo struck that Mel Gebhardt proposed to his wife. "We just liked each other and liked helping people" is his simple explanation for the two Red Cross volunteers' engagement eight years ago. Since then the Gebhardts have worked to help victims rebuild their lives after numerous disasters, in the past year alone running Red Cross efforts at seven sites. So much do they enjoy the hands-on work—she directs health services and he is in charge of food and shelter programs—that both have turned down promotions, because moving up would mean moving to a desk and away from the field; instead they are happy to remain in the second-most-senior positions within the group's on-site disaster hierarchy. "We get a lot of satisfaction out of seeing people recover from the devastation they've experienced," Martha says. "Some of these people have lost everything, and it's rewarding to see them start their lives again and get a roof over their heads." *American Red Cross, 8111 Gatehouse Rd., Falls Church, VA 22042; (800) HELP NOW.*

JOAN KROC, 69, Rancho Santa Fe, CA. She won't admit it, but Joan Kroc is almost certainly an Earth Angel. When floodwaters tore through parts of North Dakota and Minnesota earlier this year, squeezing people out of their homes and ruining their properties, a mysterious woman flew in on a private jet to inspect the damage. And a few days later, just as quickly and quietly as this visitor had come and gone, officials announced that \$15 million—or about \$2,500 per affected family—had been provided to relief efforts by an anonymous donor they would identify only as an "Angel." Overwhelmed with gratitude, the communities wanted to know whom to thank, but the relief agencies weren't telling. Finally, an enterprising reporter from an area newspaper traced the tail letters on the jet, as well as the credit card used to purchase fuel for it, and identified Kroc as the most likely source of the gift. Kroc has never confirmed making the donation, but as a longtime donor to numerous causes, she is probably pleased with at least one outcome of the publicity surrounding the Angel's extraordinary gift: touched by the story of her generosity, other donors gave an additional \$5 million to aid the flood victims. *Greater Grand Forks Flood Relief Fund, c/o First American Bank, P.O. Box 13118, Grand Forks, ND 58208; (701) 222-8349.*

EUGENE LANG, 78, New York City. When Eugene Lang strode to the podium at P.S. 121 in East Harlem—the school he'd attended

fifty years earlier—he was aware of the grim educational prospects facing the class of graduating sixth graders before him. He wasn't, however, aware that during his address, he would spontaneously utter the words, "If you finish high school, I'll pay for your college education." But Lang made that promise sixteen years ago, and the foundation he subsequently created, the I Have a Dream Foundation, proved him as good as his word. This year, the self-made industrialist and philanthropist, who started his career as a dishwasher, amazed those former sixth graders once again: at a reunion, he announced he would pay *their* children's college costs. "After sixteen years, I really care for these kids, and they mean a lot to me," Lang says, noting that not a week goes by when he doesn't talk to one of the original "Dreamers." "And having done this, I hope people will follow the example," he says. People certainly have been inspired by Lang; today IHAD operates 160 similar programs in sixty-three cities around the country. *I Have a Dream Foundation, 330 7th Ave., 20th Floor, New York, NY 10001; (212) 293-5480; www.ihad.org.*

ALEX SPANOS, 74, *Stockton, CA.* Sick of working fifteen-hour days and making doughnuts in his father's bakery, Alex Spanos took out an \$800 loan back in 1951 to start his own catering business. Nearly fifty years and \$600 million later, those tough times would seem like a distant memory to most, but not to Spanos, who became a leading developer in the San Diego area. When floods destroyed farms in California's Central Valley this past year, the Stockton native quickly called his good friend Elizabeth Dole at the American Red Cross and pledged \$1 million to help victims rebuild their lives. "It was hard to see the small farmer, the guy with 100 acres who is out there working hard with his family, take a shot like that," Spanos recalls. "It's gratifying to know that with so little, you've helped so many." The gift was a trademark gesture from the man who owns the San Diego Chargers football team: impulsive and impassioned. Similarly, after receiving a request earlier this year to help fix up a dilapidated school and gymnasium that was the only haven for local teens in a gang-ridden Stockton neighborhood, Spanos shocked local leaders with his offer to completely rebuild the facility, at a cost of \$700,000 to \$800,000. Says Spanos, "When the reasoning is right, I just don't like to say no."

TED TURNER, 59, *Atlanta, GA.* No matter what you may think of the brash and unpredictable Time Warner vice-chairman and founder of Cable News Network, his recent announcement of a gift of \$1 billion to the United Nations—probably the largest single charitable donation in history—is a maximum-voltage jolt to encourage other wealthy people to give more. In typical swashbuckling style, Turner says he decided to make the gift only forty-eight hours before announcing it—"on the spur of the moment, like deciding to buy a new car," he told CNN's Larry King, adding, "If you want to be a leader, you gotta blow the horn and get out in front of the parade." The gift is to be administered by a new foundation that targets children and the world's poorest people, and will be spent to fight disease and hunger, aid refugees and clean up

land mines, among other goals. Turner, who turned a single Atlanta UHF station in 1970 into a global colossus, said he made the decision after seeing his net worth rocket by \$1 billion in nine months, owing to a rise in Time Warner's value. "It's a nice round number," he said at the time of the gift. "I'm no poorer than I was nine months ago, and the world is much better off."

LINDA ZIDELL, 50, *Marin County, CA.* The new carpeting in her Lake Tahoe vacation house was one of the last things Linda Zidell suspected of being the cause of the chronic insomnia, memory loss and speech difficulties from which she and her husband began to suffer seven years ago. It would be three frustrating years before she finally realized that toxic chemicals in the carpet were the cause of the illnesses. But since making the discovery, Zidell has become one of the leading figures in the fight against environmentally caused illness. Currently, the main concern of her activism is children. If exposed to some chemicals present in everyday surroundings, their endocrine systems (affecting such organs as the brain, liver and reproductive organs) can be disrupted, causing decreased intelligence and hyperactivity, and an increased risk of disease throughout life. Babies can also be exposed through breast milk, which in many cases wouldn't meet federal standards because of the effects on it of chemicals common in foods and the environment. To tackle the problem, Zidell founded the Chemical Impact Project, which has supported top-level scientists and their work on the issue. CIP has also encouraged companies to change their manufacturing practices and has helped convince officials from twenty-two nations to draft legislation regulating chemicals. "This is preventable. We can find alternatives to these chemicals," Zidell says. "I decided not to sit back, but to do something." *The Tides Center, Chemical Impact Project, Attention: Yolonda Williams, P.O. Box 29907, San Francisco, CA 94129-0907; (415) 561-6346.*

...And One Cherub We Cherish

SHANE MCGREGOR, 25, *Denver, CO.* Though still a young man, Shane McGregor beamed like a proud father when one of his technology-savvy "kids" was chosen to introduce President Clinton at a Denver rally earlier this year. The high schooler was a product of the Youth Development Program of McGregor's Technology in Learning organization, which provides computer training to kids, teens, adults and seniors in low-income neighborhoods. McGregor first got the idea for TIL as a computer-science major at Brown University, where he was dismayed to see the shortage of other people of color pursuing careers in the same field. TIL aims to help correct the problem through programs like an after-school Web-site-design club for elementary school children; a group that trains kids 12 to 19 to become computer programmers; office-computer-skills courses for adults; and Internet training for seniors. But the work with children is where McGregor has made the biggest impact. "That's really where the reward is," he says, "to have others come up to you and say, 'You've done so much for our children, please don't ever leave Denver.'" *Technology in Learning, 929 29th St., Denver, CO 80205; (303) 295-2399, ext. 200; www.til.org.* ✕

1999 Alumni Fellow Sharon Darling Promotes Joy of Reading Nationwide

Articulate and engaging, Sharon Darling '66BS never misses an opportunity to give a voice to those who have none. So when Johns Hopkins University awarded her the 1998 Albert Schweitzer Prize for Humanitarianism, Darling said she was excited about being able to give a personal face to the national problem of illiteracy for a group of scholars who themselves couldn't imagine life without reading.

Darling, founder and president of the National Center for Family Literacy, is the first educator and the only U of L alumnus to receive the Schweitzer Prize. Other recipients include former U.S. President Jimmy Carter, Marian Wright Edelman, president of the Children's Defense Fund, and former Surgeon General C. Everett Koop.

The citation to Darling read, "With vision, tenacity and creativity, you have helped thousands of adults, children—and indeed, entire families—unwrap one of life's most precious gifts: the joy of reading."

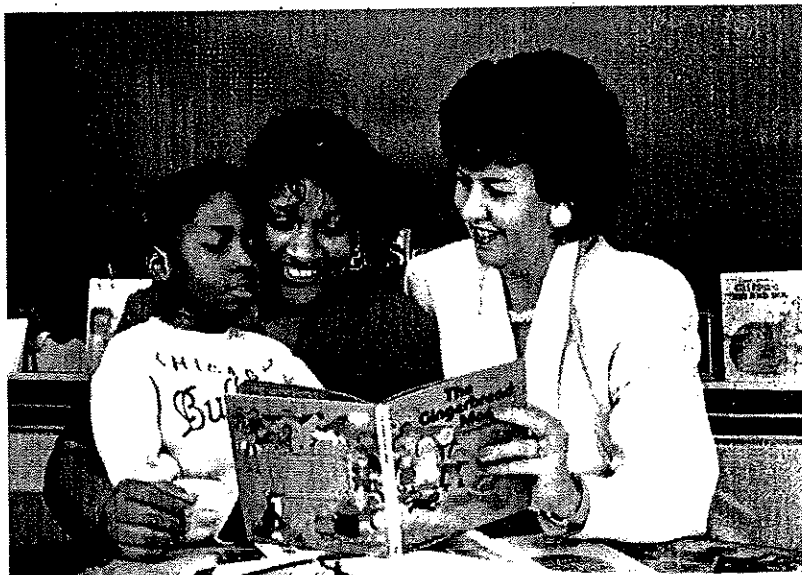
When she began working in family literacy, Darling sat at tables with adults, helping them sound out words in reading primers. Now her schedule requires her to travel much of the time, attending public speaking engagements, seminars and conferences, as well as lobbying Congress. Add to this list accepting awards.

In May, Darling was one of 15 prominent women who received the 1999 Woman of Distinction Award from the Birmingham-Southern College in Birmingham. Another U of L graduate, novelist Sue Grafton '61A

was in the class as well.

Also in May, Darling received an honorary doctorate and was the main speaker during the commencement exercises at Bellarmine College in Louisville.

Her most treasured award came this year from the University of Louisville, when the School of Education named her its 1999 Alumni Fellow. "That's home," Darling



Sharon Darling '66BS (right) promotes the joy of reading nationwide.

said. "The homefolks think what you're doing is special."

And just as at Johns Hopkins University, Darling uses each award to talk about family literacy. She describes herself as a person who upon entering a room causes everyone to go to the other side because they don't want to hear her talk about family literacy again. But those opportunities are for Darling "an incredible gift. I feel incredibly blessed to have such a gift."

Her own introduction into adult literacy came when she didn't walk to the other side of the room. When Darling was teaching in the Jefferson County Public Schools and became pregnant with her first child,

policy dictated that she quit her job in her sixth month and not return until six months after her baby's birth. Idling away the time until she could return to the classroom, Darling was approached by a friend at a Christmas Party about helping adults learn to read.

Subsequently, in a church basement, her friend opened the door to a room and told the five men inside, "Here's your new teacher," then left Darling alone. Remembering that first experience teaching adults how to master the printed page, Darling said, "It was the best lesson I ever had."

In that basement, Darling encountered the problem of illiteracy and saw that it ran through generations within a single family. She reflected on the many parent-teacher conferences she held as a young teacher when she told parents what they needed to do to help her teach their children. She realizes that many of those parents

needed as much help from her as their children.

This is the lesson she wants to pass on to education majors and classroom teachers. "It's important to have the skills, but it's also important not to close the blinds of the classroom window. You must be able to look out and see into the community and the family."

Retirement will find Darling returning to the church basements and school classrooms to teach adults to read. Describing her students' skills and talents and their courage, Darling said, "I always learned more from the people I taught than I ever taught them."

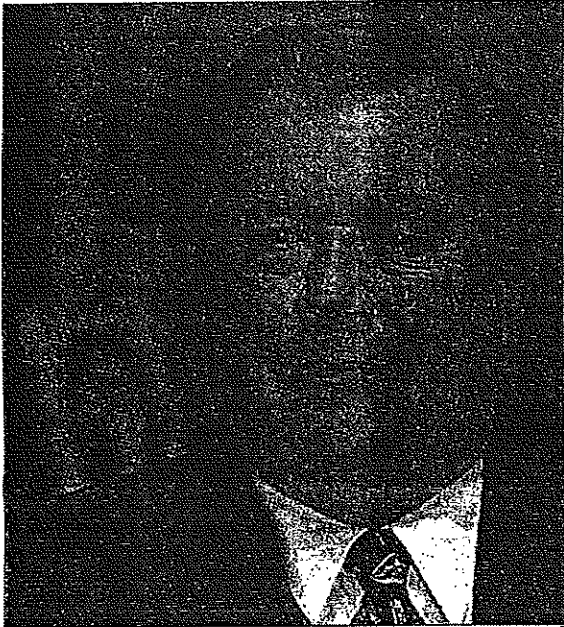
Prophets without honor?

One has worked all of her adult life helping poor families break the cycle of "under-education." The other travels around the country challenging schools to overcome years of failure and frustration. Their missions are different. Their offices, though,

both based in Louisville, are miles apart.

What links the two is that, nationally, each espouses some of the more provocative and influential thinking in education today. Yet locally?

The odds are you don't know their names.



BY PAM SPALDING, THE COURIER-JOURNAL

Phillip Schlechty and his Center for Leadership in School Reform work to help educators totally rethink the way they do their jobs.



BY PAT MCDONOUGH, THE COURIER-JOURNAL

Sharon Darling is president of the National Center for Family Literacy, which works to break the cycle of poverty by educating parents and children together.

'Nintendo has figured out ways to engage kids; the schools haven't.'

By BOB DETTEL
The Courier-Journal

LISTEN TO Phillip Schlechty and be prepared to question many of the beliefs you have about education today. You know the ones:

- That public schools are worse than they used to be.
- That vast numbers of students never learn to read.
- That if teachers would only refocus on the old ways, most education problems would disappear.

If you cling to those notions, think again, says Schlechty, whose Louisville-based Center for Leadership in School Reform last year advised educators in 38 states and five provinces in Canada.

Slechty leads a stable of former teachers and principals who say schools must totally rethink the way they do their jobs.

Among the group's preachings:

- Schools aren't worse than they used to be, but they've got to be a whole lot better than they ever were.

■ Students don't learn from teachers. Students learn from the work that teachers require and inspire. To better educate students, schools must improve the

work they assign.

■ Private schools have many of the shortcomings of public schools, only no one realizes it. Why? Private schools still attract enough students able or willing to muddle through mundane work.

Just wait, however. "Private schools are beginning to lose them, too," Schlechty warned. "Nintendo has figured out ways to engage kids; the schools haven't."

Who is this man and why is he making such statements?

Slechty, 59, came to Louisville 12 years ago to head the public schools' Greens Professional Development Academy, a training-and-idea center for teachers and administrators. Four years later, he created the Center for Leadership in School Reform as a not-for-profit consulting organization.

After garnering national attention for Jefferson County, Schlechty left Greens in 1990 to focus on the center. A staff of 20 works with schools and school systems from Washington state to Florida.

The center's challenge to schools begins with the definitions of teacher and student.

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'Our goal is to put a family-literacy program in every community of need.'

By BOB DETTEL
The Courier-Journal

IT WAS THE end of August, campaign time, and President Clinton was about to call for spending an additional \$3 billion to help children learn to read. First though, someone from the White House called Sharon Darling in Louisville to cue her in on the plans.

Darling, president of the National Center for Family Literacy, didn't blink. She is used to the glare of national literacy politics.

In fact, she would get a similar call a day later: A Republican congressman from Pennsylvania wanted help evaluating the Clinton plan.

It was just another whirlwind 24 hours for Darling, who has had quite the whirlwind decade, actually.

Ten years ago, while working for Kentucky's education department, Darling helped start a small program with a gargantuan goal: Break the cycle of poverty by simultaneously educating adult dropouts and their preschool-age children.

Three years later, a charitable foundation bankrolled Darling to spread "family literacy" nationwide.

Today the National Center for Family

Literacy has 38 employees in downtown Louisville, small offices in California and in North Carolina, and connections with literacy programs in every state, on 23 American Indian reservations and in England.

Darling is away so often speaking, training and advising, that her dog has commandeered her pillow at home and won't let her into bed, she joked.

"Sometimes I travel so much, I don't even know what season it is."

She tells of flying to family-literacy sites in New York, Arizona, Louisiana and Washington state last December and marveling at how each program marked Christmas in different ways and languages.

"It was so incredible to think that what began as a little concept in rural Kentucky now was in all these cultures ... and has the same power, the same effect, the same commonality of parents caring about their children and trying to make a better life."

"We've come such a long way."

The concept is strikingly simple. In each family-literacy program:

- Parents work on reading, math and

See BREAKING
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Educating educators

Continued from Page H 1

Students aren't "products"; they're "customers."

And teachers? They must become "inventors," able to provide each student with engaging, intellectually demanding tasks.

That means customizing lessons to reach children of differing abilities, interests and backgrounds. It means competing with the visual allure of television and the interactivity of video games.

Want to teach children to write better? Perhaps have them compose theatrical scripts. Or have them correspond by e-mail to students cross-country. If the lesson is spelling, require that words be correct before e-mail can be sent.

Jack Edwards, one of the center's consultants, told of seventh-graders in Canada who created a computer CD-ROM about their community. They explored and researched and also learned to create a CD. At the end, they had a real product and real reason for pride.

Too many assignments aren't meaningful, Edwards said.

"You can have a lot of kids on a task that isn't worth doing, and call that 'engagement.' We think that's misleading."

Educators need education, too, said Schlechty and his colleagues, whose office is at 950 Breckenridge Lane. They told of working with an elite East Coast school whose gradu-

ates ascended to Ivy League colleges. The school's attitude: "Why change?"

A survey of former students answered the question; the graduates said they had been bored and unchallenged.

Slechty taught school for four years before becoming a college professor, and he turned himself into a student of teaching. While at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, he developed programs to help teachers and principals. Eventually he was loaned as an assistant to the Charlotte, N.C., schools.

Improving education will require new ways of evaluating teachers, the Schlechty group says. Don't judge lectures or teacher "performances"; watch how students respond to the work.

Teachers need to watch and advise each other, too, just as surgeons and lawyers learn by observation, said Marilyn Holmann, who now works for the center but was a national proponent of reform as principal at Fairdale High.

All of this requires risk taking, including asking students if lessons are working. Do students know what they're doing? Do they know why they're doing it?

Slechty, who is married and has two grown daughters, debunks any nostalgia for the "good old days."

In the 1950s, the school dropout rate was about 50 percent, he said. Now it's about 20 percent, "but dropouts are more of a problem today than they ever were."

Why? There were many job opportunities for dropouts in 1950.

Then there is the myth of illiteracy. Unlike generations past, most Americans now can read, Schlechty said.

"We've got to get 95 percent of the kids to do what we used to assume only 15 percent could do," said Phillip Schlechty of the Center for Leadership in School Reform:

"The trouble is, about half of them don't read very well, and reading is a bigger requirement today," he added. "We've got to get 95 percent of the kids to do what we used to assume only 15 percent could do."

It's no simple task, Schlechty warned. American schooling is built on the notion that half of all students are below normal. Parents depend on the failure of others to prove their children's worth.

Through workshops, training and support, the Schlechty group guides school districts toward change. "We try to get people to ask those 'What if questions,'" Schlechty said.

"We don't have programs to sell. We've got questions we ask, questions we hope they will ask, questions we hope will cause them to give answers."

He describes it as more jazz than symphony. It takes improvising.

Then he added, "Some schools aren't ready."

Breaking cycle of poverty

Continued from Page H 1

language skills while their children attend preschool programs.

■ Parents and kids play together at times, so parents can learn to nurture their children at home.

■ Parents spend time with each other to compare notes and offer mutual support.

"So many of these families feel so isolated, have so far to go and have so little confidence that they can ever accomplish anything," said Andy Hayes, the center's director of research.

"But the desire there is just incredible."

So is the need. The center sees its role as more urgent than ever, now that time limits and get-to-work requirements have been placed on welfare recipients.

"We think family literacy is the key to welfare reform," Darling said.

Family-literacy workers say much the same, that intensive support and training are needed before many of the "under-educated" can hope to survive in the work world.

"At the same time, preschoolers desperately need stimulation at home to grow up ready and able to learn. Pushing kids into day care and parents into work won't solve those problems," Darling said.

"Wouldn't it make more sense to leave the parents with the children and let the parents learn the skills they need to help their children while they're learning skills for their job?" she asked.

"It would send a very different message than, 'Hey, get off your duff and into the workplace and take your children someplace.' It sends a message that you're important as a parent as well as a worker."

The center has tracked nearly 3,000 families in family-literacy programs. The findings:

By most measures, parents not only improved their academics; they also gained confidence as parents and became more involved in their kids' schooling. Their children made impressive gains in mental development and ability to succeed in school.

It's a powerful influence to watch Mom bettering herself, Darling said.

The family-literacy model has matured, too.

Programs begun with charitable grants now operate on their own. Local efforts have become statewide initiatives. Family literacy is now promoted by such federal education programs as Even Start and Head Start.

"We've built systems out there that are lasting," Darling said.

Big donors have been crucial. The center, at 325 W. Main St., was founded through money from the William R. Kenan Jr. Charitable Trust, a New York-based foundation. Toyota Motor has pumped in \$9 million nationwide and recently pledged \$225,000 to open four family-literacy programs in Lexington, Ky. Other major grants have come from the UPS and the John S. and James I. Knight foundations.

Political help has been bipartisan. Former first lady Barbara Bush is a zealous supporter. U.S. Sen. Paul Simon, D-Ill., and U.S. Rep. William Goodling, R-Pa., have been two major backers in Congress.

"Our goal is to put a family-literacy program in every community of need," Darling said.

Each victory leads to more work, of course. Laws are passed, then regulations are needed. Speak to one national gathering, and 25 statewide groups clamor for attention.

"It's a real slow process in some ways, because you really are working one family at a time — one parent, one child," Darling said.

But that's also a strength.

"We've run out of simplistic approaches," Darling said. "We've tried them, we've repackaged them and called them something else, and we've rolled them out again."

Now 52 and a grandmother, Dar-

"So many of these families feel so isolated... and have so little confidence," said Andy Hayes of the National Center for Family Literacy. "But the desire there is just incredible."

ling knows the history. She taught school in Jefferson County, quit to stay home after becoming a mom, but was hired back to action when invited to see an adult reading program at a local church. From the late 1970s to the '80s, she worked in adult education for Jefferson County schools and the federal and state education departments.

National awards and kudos have followed since, and more are coming soon. The years have flown by, Darling said.

"You have a tiger by the tail, and you can't really stop," she said. "Hopefully, these things will stay in place long after all of us are gone."



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Literacy group plans Hispanic institute

Culture-based programs will serve as model for the nation

By NANCY C. RODRIGUEZ
nrodriguez@courier-journal.com
The Courier-Journal

A national literacy organization with headquarters in Louisville that has helped thousands of people learn to read is turning its attention to Hispanics.

The National Center for Family Literacy is creating the Hispanic Family Literacy Institute to develop programs based on Hispanic culture.

The idea isn't simply to trans-

organizations beginning this fall, she said.

Hispanics are America's fastest-growing population. According to the 2000 Census, 35.3 million Hispanics live in the United States, including 60,000 in Kentucky. But other estimates, including those of local and state governments, place Kentucky's figure between 100,000 and 135,000.

About 14 million of the nation's Hispanics are foreign-born, according to the literacy center.

And parents in many recently arrived Hispanic families speak little or no English, possess low literacy skills in their native language because of limited educa-

tion, and often struggle to help their children learn English, the center said.

"The need for a Hispanic Family Literacy Institute in our nation is undeniable," Darling said.

Felix Garza, vice president for the Hispanic Latino Coalition in Louisville, applauded the plan. While he doesn't know the details yet, it "sounds like it's a great project," he said.

The National Center for Family Literacy is a nonprofit organization that trains educators, researches effective practices and raises public awareness.

See HISPANIC
Page 5, col. 5, this section



BY PAM SPALDING, THE COURIER-JOURNAL
From left, Erik Galvan, Karina Velazquez and Ezequiel Nova worked with tutor Hegenia Kaselow in Shelbyville, Ky.

Hispanic literacy institute planned

Continued from Page B1

Its comprehensive program weaves together adult education, children's education, interactive literacy activities between parents and their children, and parent training. There are more than 6,000 family literacy programs nationwide based on the center's model.

The center's Hispanic institute is greatly needed, said Sister Lupe Arce, who works for Catholic Charities in Bardonia and does outreach with migrant farm workers.

"They want to learn English, and if they (the institute) were to make it

easy by making it in their culture, that would be wonderful," she said. "It is so important because they're not going to make it unless they learn English."

Increasing literacy rates among Hispanics will, in the long run, reduce high school dropout rates and propel them beyond minimum-wage jobs, Darling said.

She said linguistic and reading experts from throughout the country have been recruited to serve on the Hispanic Family Literacy Institute's advisory board.

Additional staff will be hired for the effort, she said.

Sharon DARLING

Providing the
promise of
a brighter
future
through
literacy

Picture yourself with a small child, new to parenthood, dreaming of your child's future success but not knowing how to read. Imagine yourself new to a country, with little education in the new nation's native language. Its a frightening picture.

Sharon Darling doesn't need to imagine these scenarios. She sees them daily in her role as founder and president of the National Center for Family Literacy (NCFL). "I really think literacy is the stem of the flower," she explains. "It has to be strong or the other petals won't be able to stay on." That belief drives the mission of the NCFL.

Darling's parents instilled in her the understanding that every person has something to contribute, a lesson reinforced through regular contact with people who worked for her father, people who lacked literacy skills and who needed further education to con-

tribute more. Darling learned early in life the value of education and the desire to help others attain it. "To be able to help somebody open a door, and then once that door is open, you see another door and another door. That comes with the ability to access knowledge, to read, to be free. That's what it's about. To be able to think and contribute because you're free," she says.

Darling began her career as an elementary school teacher. Then, 27 years ago, in a church basement two nights a week, she began teaching adults how to read. She real-



"To be involved is the greatest treasure any of us could have," says Darling, seen here with former First Lady Barbara Bush.

Photo courtesy of NCFL

ized the great courage it took for them to overcome their embarrassment and seek help. It was then that Darling knew that she wanted to help anyone who sought help to learn how to read. She says, "The deprivation of the human spirit is what we really can't afford, and that's what we face. We see it constantly in our society. We have to give people the gift of literacy as a part of helping them free their spirit."

Central to Darling's work with literacy is the belief that family literacy programs can better motivate parents and children to succeed together by addressing the literacy issues of both generations. Experience has taught her that working with parents and children as a unit, rather than individually, helps break the intergenerational cycle of under-education. "The key to our future is to make our nation literate. Improving the education of children—especially those at-risk—and meeting the crucial needs of adults with low literacy skills are imperative. My dream is for there to be a family literacy program in every community."

She took the first steps toward the realization of that dream in 1985, when she was serving as director of adult education for the Commonwealth of Kentucky. She led the development of a project called Parent and Child Education (PACE). In 1986 the Kentucky legislature opened model PACE programs in six rural counties; PACE continues to operate statewide.

Darling's work with PACE launched the family literacy movement in this country. In January 1988 the William R. Kenan, Jr. Charitable Trust asked Darling to expand the scope of the family literacy model to schools in Louisville, Kentucky, and in four counties in North Carolina. In September of that year, the Ford Foundation and Harvard's Kennedy School of



Photo courtesy of NCFL

"There's a world of joy waiting out there for you when you can come into a literacy program."

Government both named PACE one of the 10 outstanding innovations in state and local government and awarded the program a total of \$100,000. Because of this national recognition, Darling and her associates found themselves flooded with requests for information about replicating the program. The following year, the Kenan Trust provided funds to further expand the family literacy model. And in 1989 Darling founded NCFL as a national nonprofit corporation headquartered in Louisville, Kentucky. NCFL took the original program model of PACE and modified it to address the diverse needs of the nation.

One of NCFL's first tasks was to train others to start and operate family literacy programs using a modified PACE model. As of January 1995, NCFL had helped implement thousands of family literacy programs across the country and trained individuals from Canada, England, and Australia, who have taken the family literacy program concept back to their countries. Through funding from corporate and private sources, NCFL has provided direct support for 125 US sites.

Each year 30,000 families enroll in family literacy programs that NCFL has helped through training and technical assistance. Thanks to Darling's visionary leadership, NCFL has become the catalyst and driving force behind the nascent family literacy movement.

NCFL provides a holistic approach to learning through a four-part program. The early childhood education component stresses preliteracy skills (such as vocabulary building) as well as organizational and social skills, preparing children to do well in school. The adult education element encourages parents to set goals and to develop their reading and math skills. During parent time, parents have the opportunity to discuss discipline, self-esteem, problems with social services, and career options, among other issues. Parent/Child Interaction Time allows parents and their children to come together to play and learn. Many parents realize for the first time that they can guide and teach their children and act as their children's first and most important teacher. More than 100,000 parent and their preschool children have enrolled in family literacy programs.

*"If I could wave
a magic wand,
it would be to
make this nation
literate and able to
access education.
It's the key to our
future."*

The approach appears to work. Children entering family literacy programs usually come from a population classified as at-risk for school failure. One study of the preschool children who participated with their parents in the original Kenari Trust Family Literacy Project found that after one year in the program, more than 90% of the children were judged by their teachers to be ready for entry into kindergarten, with no expected academic or social difficulties.

NCFL also functions as an advocacy group. As such, it helps design and assess federal and state policies to sustain and expand family literacy nationwide. NCFL helps states develop their own family literacy legislation and was actively involved in the 1991 Adult Literacy Act and the formation of the National Institute for Literacy; Darling has served as vice president of the board of the institute since its inception. This involvement has given NCFL the opportunity to share resources and serve as a key player in the implementation of services for families.

Darling spends much of her time collaborating with other organizations and planning the growth of NCFL. She works with Even Start (a federally funded program) studying the collaboration between state agencies to include family literacy in reform initiatives on the national

agenda. She also works with adult education organizations and early childhood education agencies, and she spends a great deal of time fundraising for NCFL. Darling's dedication and vision are what drive the NCFL.

Darling's impact on the family literacy movement has been extraordinary. A followup study of parents enrolled in family literacy programs showed that one year after completing the course of study, graduated parents were employed at a rate that increased by more than 25%, and 41% of them were no longer receiving public assistance—a decrease of 7%. Children who have attended family literacy programs are succeeding in elementary school. An NCFL study shows that almost 80% of the children were rated at or above their class average on all factors. As a matter of fact, in Rochester, New York, 88% of the graduates are above grade level on standardized tests. They were all below the 20th percentile when they first enrolled in a family literacy program.

The source of Darling's motivation is an unwavering belief in the importance of sharing the gift of caring. "We have to work on both

ends of the continuum, but, ultimately, it's not going to happen until one person cares about another person and it starts to change. But it's hard. If nobody's ever cared about you, how can you give back? We have to reach out and help somebody first experience that somebody wants to help and there is hope in their life. And then they will be able to give hope back."

More than 500,000 people have improved their basic skills or learned the English language as a direct result of Darling's efforts. In spite of that, she simply hopes that she has "helped people [have] a better life. It doesn't matter the magnitude of that. Just that I gave something back and didn't just take. That I was able to help along the way and things improved in people's lives because I was here." Her ambition for NCFL's impact is much more far reaching. "If I could wave a magic wand, it would be to make this nation literate and able to access education. It's the key to our future and the key to our human psyche." Through her leadership of NCFL, Darling has already helped provide the promise of a brighter future for hundreds of thousands of people.



Photo courtesy of NCFL

"I get so much more back than I ever give that I don't feel like it's service."



Photo courtesy of NFL

Leading the way

Sharon Darling, head of National Center for Family Literacy, leads adults out of the darkness of illiteracy

Voice-Tribune Profile



By
MARY ALAN
WOODWARD
Staff
Correspondent

If you've ever muttered "I just don't get it" when struggling to understand your VCR manual or tried to decipher street signs in Paris, Moscow or Madrid, you know what it's like to be an adult who has trouble reading.

For millions of Americans, however, that temporary inconvenience is a daily dilemma in their own country, because they've never learned to read their native tongue. Living lives marked by hidden shame and stunted dreams, they pass their hopeless-ness onto their children.

Unless, that is, they find out about the National Center for Family Literacy (NCFL), which has its headquarters in downtown Louisville's Waterfront Plaza, 325 W. Main St. For the past 34 years, founder/president Sharon Darling has dedicated herself to breaking the cycle of illiteracy and its legacy of poverty that is passed from one generation to the next.

A hidden problem

Raised on her grandparents' farm on land later bought by the Kentucky Fair & Exposition Center, Darling (born Sharon Brenten) remembers trying to make sense of black letters on a page.

"My aunt was constantly reading to me," she said. "I struggled to read back to her exactly what she had read to me. Then, in first grade, I had the breakthrough of being able to see the sentence in that long line of symbols."

After graduating from Eastern High School and the University of Louisville, where she earned a B.A. degree in elementary educa-

tion, Darling began building what might have stayed only a modest career teaching elementary grades in the Jefferson County public school system.

However, her determination to teach people to read led her to a second job, this time as a volunteer.

"I started teaching adults to read in the basement of Ninth & O Baptist Church in 1969," she said. "After hiding their inability to read from their employers and their families for years, they had found the courage to ask someone to teach them. Hiding that problem devastates an adult's self-esteem, because they're afraid people will find out and think they're stupid."

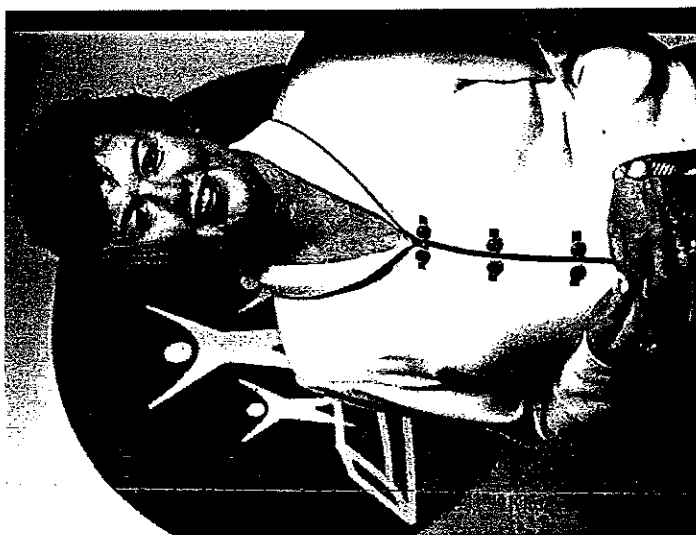
Feeling privileged to be part of this courageous effort, Darling became a tireless advocate of adult literacy and literacy programming. An outreach that began with a handful of people soon attracted dozens of adults who played with their children in that basement - and learned to read right alongside them.

Breaking the cycle

The actual model for NCFL programs was developed in Appalachia between 1984 and 1987, while Darling served as director of the Division of Adult Community Education for the Kentucky Department of Education. Responsible for issuing high school equivalency certificates (GEDs) throughout the commonwealth, she was determined to raise her home state's rate of high school completion.

"That seemed like an empty dream," she said. "Seventy percent of children in some counties who entered first grade didn't graduate, largely because their parents didn't have reading skills. Looking at something more systemic than simply teaching the child to read led to family literacy programming, and that launched a national movement. We now have more than 6,000 programs across the country based on that original work."

With early funding from the North Carolina-based Kenan Trust and other visionary sup-



SHARON DARLING

porters, NCFL was founded in 1989 to help parents and their children break the cycle of illiteracy, because, Darling said, "the primary predictor of how well a child will do in school is the educational attainment of parents in the home, particularly the mother."

The National Ad Council has chosen to feature NCFL in its public-service advertisements, both in print and on television, for the next three years. Darling experts those ads, written in English and Spanish, to make more parents aware of NCFL's programs, such as Parent and Child Together (PACT), which lets parents learn alongside their children in the pre-school classroom.

It's not a chore

It isn't just poor families whose children can have difficulty learning to read and succeed.

"People from all walks of life get so busy," Darling said. "We recommend that all parents spend at least 15 minutes a day reading with their young children, but many people have trouble fitting that on their 'to-do' lists. Actually, snuggling up with your son or daughter to read a book should be a treat for both of you."

Darling, who devours fast-paced potboilers when she's flying but juggles three or four more thought-provoking books at once when she is home, especially encourages parents to help their children learn to love the classics,

which she described as "good literature which has a richness that has stood the test of time."

NCFL invites parents to request its suggested reading lists for various age groups (call 584-1133 for information).

With her own grandchildren, three of whom live in the Louisville area, Darling practices what she preaches.

"When I look one of my grandsons on a weekend trip recently," she said, "I made sure that he put a good book in the car with him, and his pocket video game in his luggage."

Powerful partners

With 34 years of teaching and promoting family literacy to her credit, Darling has earned more than a dozen prestigious awards, including the 2001 National Humanities Medal, which was presented by President and Mrs. George W. Bush.

Darling earned honorary doctorates from Spelman University and Belknap University in the late 1990s, and has received Distinguished Alumni and Alumni Fellow awards from U of L. She has even been profiled on the A&E Network series "Biography." However, Darling has never rested on her laurels. Now 58, she keeps up a grueling schedule of appearances before as many as 100,000 people each year. In one recent week, she visited 20 cities, gave several radio interviews, and testified before the U.S. Congress about the importance of corporate involvement in promoting family literacy.

NCFL's successful track record, which now includes parent-and-child programs on 32 Native American reservations, has earned multi-million-dollar support from companies such as UPS, Toyota and Verizon.

"Our programs have been powerful in every culture, including among Hispanic families in the Southwest," Darling said. "It transcends geography and culture, and builds on the strengths of the family. Our society today says that parents don't have much value or responsibility, and that

Darling Bio

Name: Sharon K. Darling
Position: President/founder, National Center for Family Literacy
Age: 58
Education: B.A. degree in elementary education, University of Louisville; M.A. degree in counselor education, Western Kentucky University
Family: Husband, George; five adult children; six grandchildren
Birthplace: Louisville

they should just send their kids off to day care. We give parents the skills and knowledge they need to be part of the team - to be the parents their children need them to be."

Roll up those sleeves

For the past decade, studies have tracked many of NCFL's participants, and have found that, in most cases, that downward spiral of illiteracy and poverty has begun to reverse. Almost nine out of 10 children in some studies are now reading at or above their grade level.

In addition, more than half of the adult students involved in NCFL programs with their children have received their GEDs or other high school equivalency certificates.

"We often find that children who have fallen behind in school because of poor reading skills are very bright kids who simply have been undiscovered," Darling said. "Not long ago, I ran into a Korean woman who had been in my class at Ninth & O years ago. She now has her own barber shop, and said that her granddaughter is making straight A's."

Darling intends to stay at NCFL's helm until she retires. When that day comes, she hopes that the passion and commitment she and others have had will have made a difference in many lives. See Profile, page A-5

If you are sitting on big, unrealized stock market gains, there's never been a better time to get generous with your favorite causes.

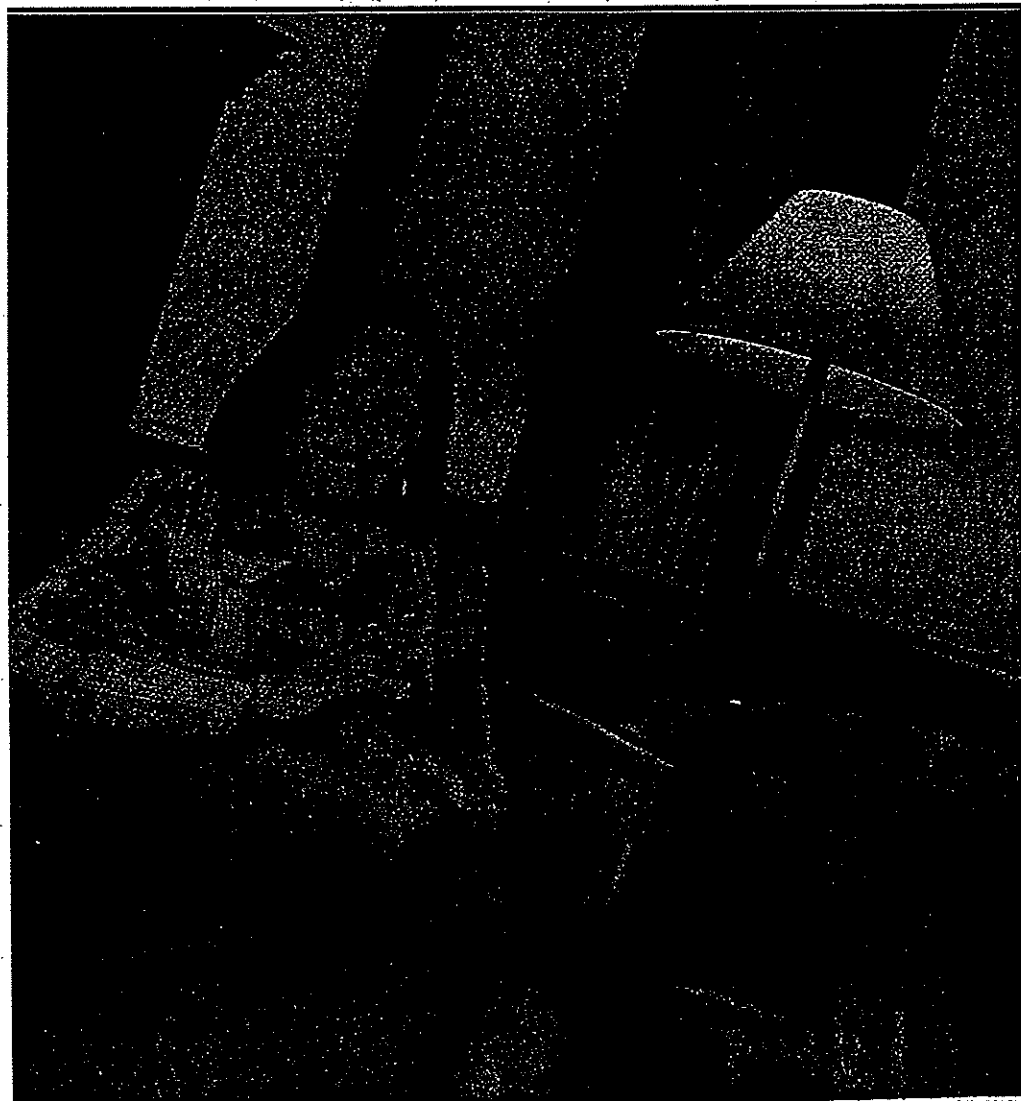
Loosen up a bit, folks

By Susan Lee and Christine Foster

SPELMAN COLLEGE in Atlanta, Ga. needed money to build a new science building. In the course of hitting up alumnae, Spelman's then-President Johnnetta Cole breakfasted with

Yvonne Jackson, a 1970 graduate of Spelman and senior vice president of Burger King. Jackson was usually good for \$10,000. This time Cole somewhat nervously asked, for

\$100,000. Jackson looked right at her and without missing a beat said, "I've been blessed in my life, and I think I can do that." Cole nearly dropped her fork.



Yvonne Jackson

The Burger King senior vice president typically contributed \$10,000 annually to her alma mater, Spelman College in Atlanta. When the college's president asked if Jackson might give \$100,000 for a new science building, she was even more generous. "I've been blessed in my life, and I think I can do that."

An unusual story? Not really. Americans are mighty generous folks. They volunteer \$190 billion worth of time every year, according to the National Commission on Philanthropy & Civic Renewal. And in 1996 they gave \$150 billion to charity. That's 1.9% of the nation's income.

Okay, some of this was giving by

foundations (\$12 billion), corporations (\$9 billion) and bequests (\$10 billion), but even inking out these givers, individual Americans gave up \$120 billion of their walking-around money to others. And they gave through thick and thin. During the past two decades—through high and low marginal tax rates, recessions and booms—charitable donations

have stayed at around 2% of national income.

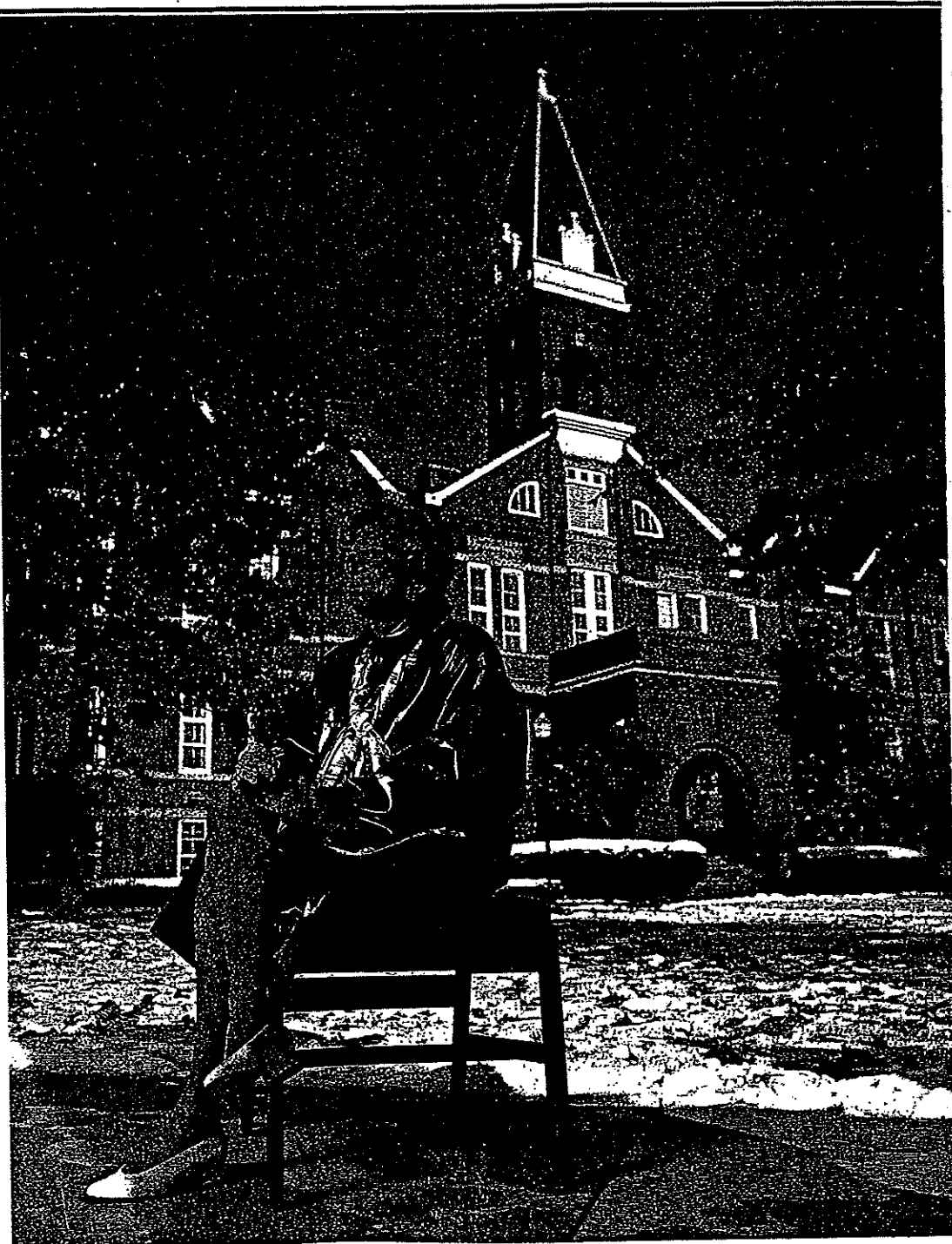
This generosity is widespread. Two-thirds of households donate money. Ninety million Americans gave an average of more than four hours a week volunteering for charitable activities.

You hear a lot about drugs and violence among teenagers, but how

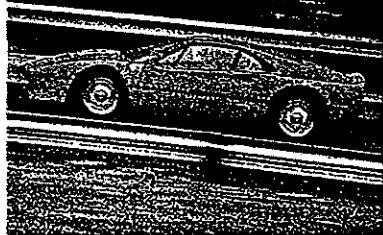
Maddie Levitt

For a decade Levitt worked without pay as a fundraiser for Drake University. Now 73, she continues to work 45 to 50 hours a week as a volunteer for the school.

CHRIS CONSMER



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I gave at the IRS

AMERICANS fork over an average of 35.2% of their income to local, state and federal government. Since social spending accounts for most government spending, we could be pardoned if we say to people who ask for charity: "Sorry, I've run through my share. Happily, we don't." But

Richard Stenberg, an economics professor at Indiana University-Purdue University in Indianapolis, who has studied charitable

giving, says there is only minor crowding out. He estimates that a dollar of government spending displaces only about 10 cents of charitable giving.

Donors are not necessarily concerned with tax breaks either. In a recent survey, Americans ranked the issue of deductibility as the least of their concerns (see *Forbes* 11/18/97, p. 72). Well behind them was the issue of the work and the effectiveness of the organization.

Stenberg has found that higher marginal rates, which lower the

cost of giving, do not act as a powerful incentive for more giving.

Law does, however, make a difference in the timing and type of giving. With state tax rates sharply favoring charitable contributions, which have a more favorable tax treatment, donors have tended to shift to the more tax-favored status of charitable donations. Stenberg also found that those with incomes above \$200,000 are especially likely to favor status of charitable donations. On average, property tax rates are 1.5% to 2% higher in high-income areas.

often do you hear about kids like Katie Eller of Tulsa, Okla.? She's a typically busy high school freshman who plays tennis and basketball after school and works at her parents' restaurant on weekends.

Yet Eller somehow finds ten hours every week to raise money for a homeless shelter. "My family believes that we're a lot better off than some families, so we should help families that are unfortunate," she says matter-of-factly.

For some Americans, giving time is literally a way of life. Maddie Levitt works 45 to 50 hours a week—gratis—raising money for Drake University in Des Moines, Iowa. This is a schedule she's kept to for the past 11 years, ever since she turned 62.

Sharon Darling has spent 29 years working an average of 60 hours a week to promote adult literacy. Although she is now paid a decent salary by the Louisville, Ky.-based National Center for Family Literacy (a group she founded ten years

ago), she volunteered her energy in the early years and was happy, later on, to earn \$4 an hour. (Last month she was in New York City fundraising, dragging a suitcase with a broken wheel. Why? No time to buy a new one.) "I feel so fortunate to be able to do this with a salary," says Darling. "But I would surely do it without one."

Wait just a minute, say the cynics, some of that time and money are given for less than altruistic reasons. Who doesn't know of an arriviste who spent a million bucks or more to buy a seat on the board of an art museum, an ideologue who bankrolls a think tank or a gazillionaire who wants to see her name hugely displayed over the door of a hospital?

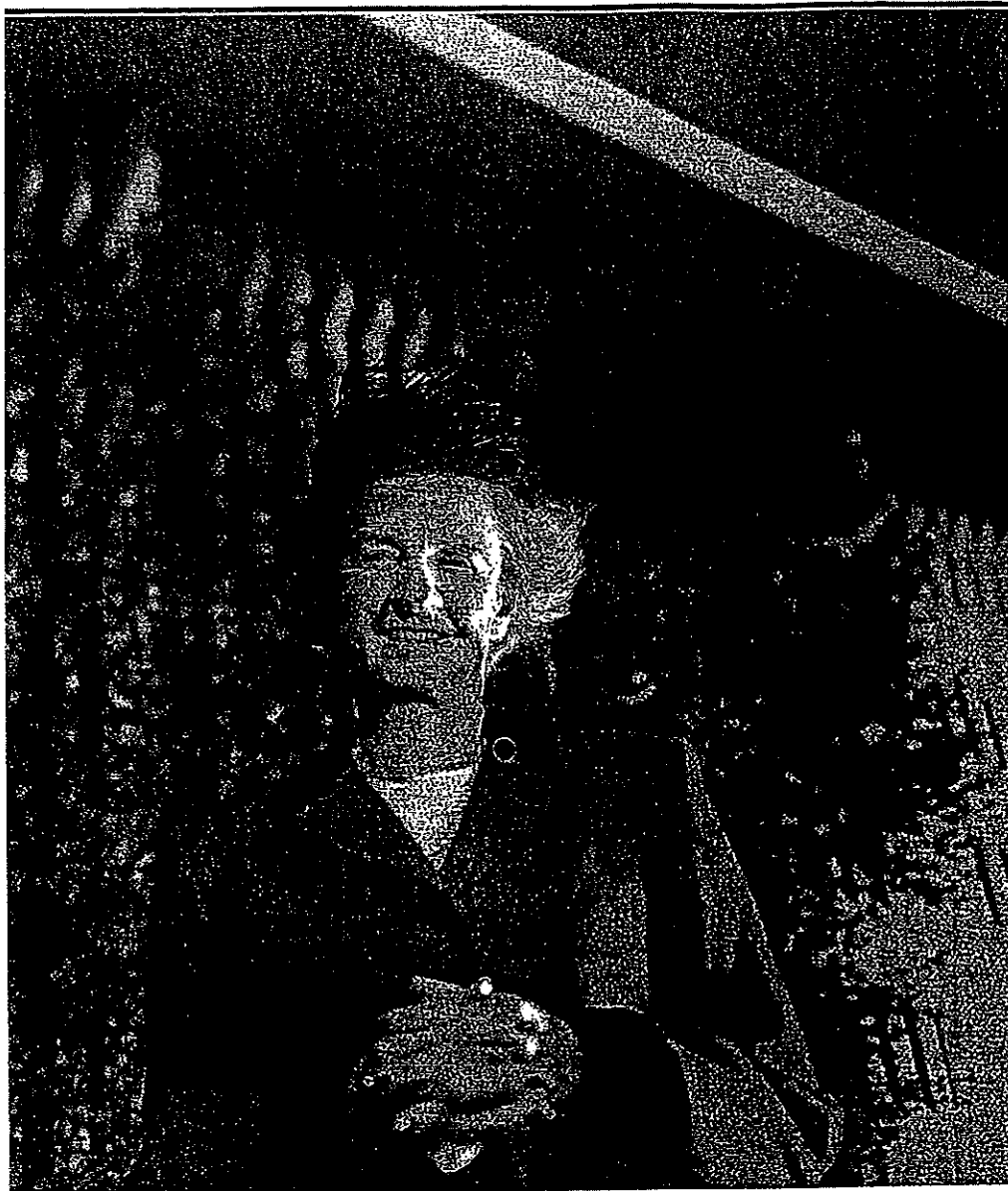
And, sure, there are benefits of power, social status and even networking. Michael Bloomberg of Bloomberg L.P. in New York City is an enthusiastic believer in giving to promote his business. He figures that since businesspeople are



Decade
of greed? No,
the stock
market boom
has made
the rich
more generous.

JOSH MCHUGH

Forbes ■ December 15, 1997



MORGAN S. AZIM

Virginia Olney
Doctors at California's Torrance Memorial Medical Center have been loyal customers during Olney's tenure as a salesperson for SmithKline Beecham. She repaid the hospital with a \$250,000 charitable remainder trust.

usually big donors to charity, they respect other big donors, and that donating time is a nifty way for them to meet potential customers.

So what? Whatever the motives, his time and money are there. Several months ago Bloomberg boarded a bus with 75 of his employees to travel to Brooklyn, N.Y. to paint Thomas Jefferson High School. They left at 8 a.m. and painted their hearts out until 4 p.m. Nothing phony about that.

Who can say what motivates charity? Lots of people give for pure pleasure. This type of altruism is what students of philanthropy call "the warm glow"—the personal sat-

isfaction that comes from making a gift. If you want to be cynical, you can call that self-serving, too, but it helps get the job done.

Lots of people give because they feel they have a moral obligation to do so. Rabbi Roy Rosenbaum, vice chancellor of the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York City, points out that the Old Testament demands charity as a duty. "You don't expect a pat on the back," he says. "The Hebrew word for charity literally means justice or what is proper. It is your obligation as a human."

The U.S. is still a fairly religious country—and that's a good thing for charity. People who belong to

religious congregations are more likely to give and to give more (2.3% of income) than those who don't (1.1% of income). In fact, churches and religious organizations get the majority of donations; 46% of all individual charitable dollars go to religious groups, with education (13%) and health (9%) the next most popular destinations.

Charity tends to be higher among people who are better educated, live in small cities, are married, have children, own homes or had parents who gave regularly.

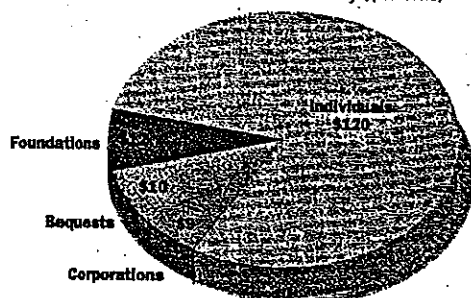
But the single most powerful force in giving, as in most human affairs, is an intimate association

A country of givers

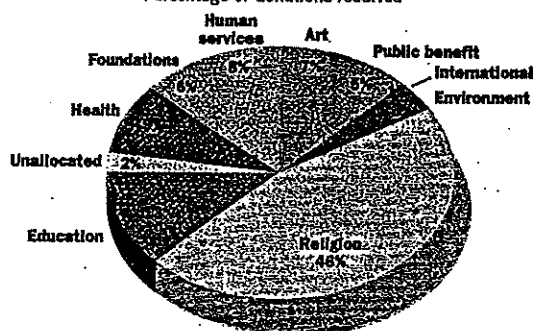
How much do people give?
To what kind of charity? Why?
Individuals outpace all other contributors,
with churches and synagogues
getting the largest share.

STATISTICS

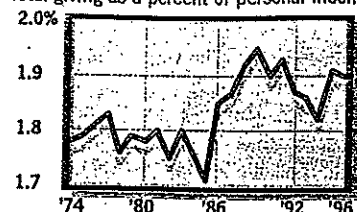
1996 contributions to charity (\$billions)



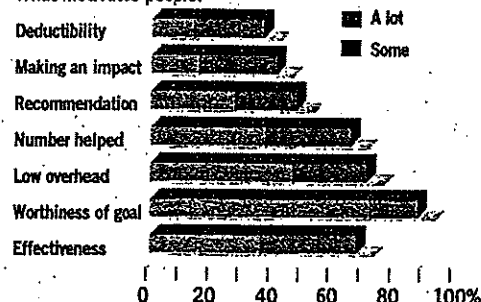
Percentage of donations received



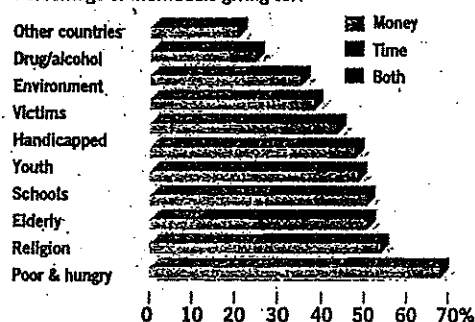
Total giving as a percent of personal income



What motivates people?



Percentage of individuals giving to:



Sources: Giving USA;
National Commission on
Philanthropy & Civic Renewal.

between giver and recipient. This is what is known as the Matthew effect, from Matthew 6:21: "Where your treasure is, there is your heart also."

Virginia Olney just set up a \$250,000 charitable remainder trust for Torrance Memorial Medical Center in Torrance, Calif. As a 25-year veteran of selling prescription drugs for SmithKline Beecham, she knows her beneficiary well. "The hospital has been good to me. The doctors buy SmithKline drugs, and I will probably end up as a patient there someday," she says.

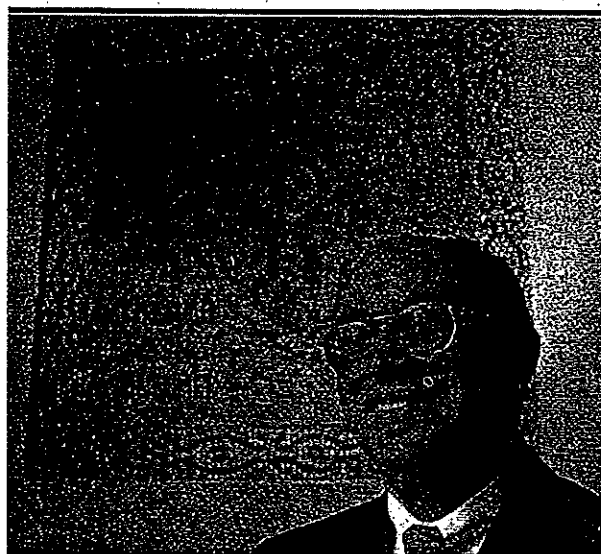
An MIT graduate student (who wants to be anonymous) gives 10% to 20% of his monthly take-home income of \$1,500 to charities, including a food pantry where a friend works. "I give," he says "because it makes me feel very rich."

The Matthew effect. Both Olney and the grad student illustrate this

very personal nature of giving. The welfare state essentially ruptures the Matthew effect. Giving money to a bunch of not particularly trustworthy politicians and bureaucrats is not

the same as giving it to a minister, a hospital or an educational institution you know and trust.

When Ronald Reagan proposed his sharp cuts in marginal tax rates in



Rabbi Roy
Rosenbaum

Quiet giving is best, but advertised charity is better than none. "Nobody thinks it's inappropriate if there should be a little item in the paper that says Roy Rosenbaum gave a million dollars to help the poor."



Sharon Darling

For three decades, Darling has worked 60 hours a week to promote adult literacy. She used to volunteer at the National Center for Family Literacy. Now she earns a salary, but she would still work without one.

1981, the opposition argued that tax cuts would make the rich less generous and would thus hurt charities. They reasoned that lower tax rates would make charity more costly to the rich because the price of giving goes up. They were dead wrong. Though the top federal income rate

was cut from 70% to 28% during the 1980s, there was no drop in giving.

The critics were wrong because they simply misunderstood human nature. Whereas government programs are crafted to suit the professionals who administer them, charity comes from the heart. One is a trans-

action, the other is a gift.

No gift was ever more truly from the heart than Andrew Carnegie's. Carnegie never forgot the "precious generosity" of one Colonel Anderson, who opened his library of 400 books to working kids in Pittsburgh like Carnegie and his brother. Carnegie promised himself that if he ever got rich he would establish free libraries.

He did. More than 2,800 libraries benefited from Carnegie's gifts. At a time when books were scarce and expensive, and literacy was by no means universal, this proved a priceless gift to generations of Americans and pays dividends to this day.

Carnegie, of course, put his name on many of his gifts, a practice that Rabbi Rosenbaum does not disapprove of. "The best way of giving is when the donor is anonymous," says Rosenbaum. "But most philanthropic organizations recognize that people like to have a certain amount of psychic gratification. If I give a million dollars to some worthy cause, nobody thinks it's inappropriate if there should be a little item in the paper that says Roy Rosenbaum gave



Thomas Murphy

His foundation gives to a project that aims to reduce recidivism among ex-cons. You want a grant for your organization? Deliver a lot of results with a little money: "Waste is something I am reluctant to tolerate."

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a million dollars to help the poor."

As a Mormon, Clayton Christensen tithes his required 10% to his church, which, he says, "I do happily." But he also gives to other charities. Christensen, who teaches at Harvard Business School, spent time in the 1970s working as a missionary in South Korea back when it was a desperately poor country. "I realized how blessed we Americans are. So I feel grateful to be here and, as a consequence, to somehow use what God has given us, to help other people," he says.

Paul Schervish, a Boston College sociologist who has made a study of charity, points out, however, that not all people are equally charitable. He found that at *all*

levels of income, there are a small fraction of households that make very large contributions relative to their income and wealth. "About 10% of each group," says Schervish, "give more than 5% of adjusted gross income."

Few people go as far as Hugh Maclellan Jr. of Chattanooga, Tenn., a retired businessperson. He and his wife, Nancy, started giving away 70% of their income 18

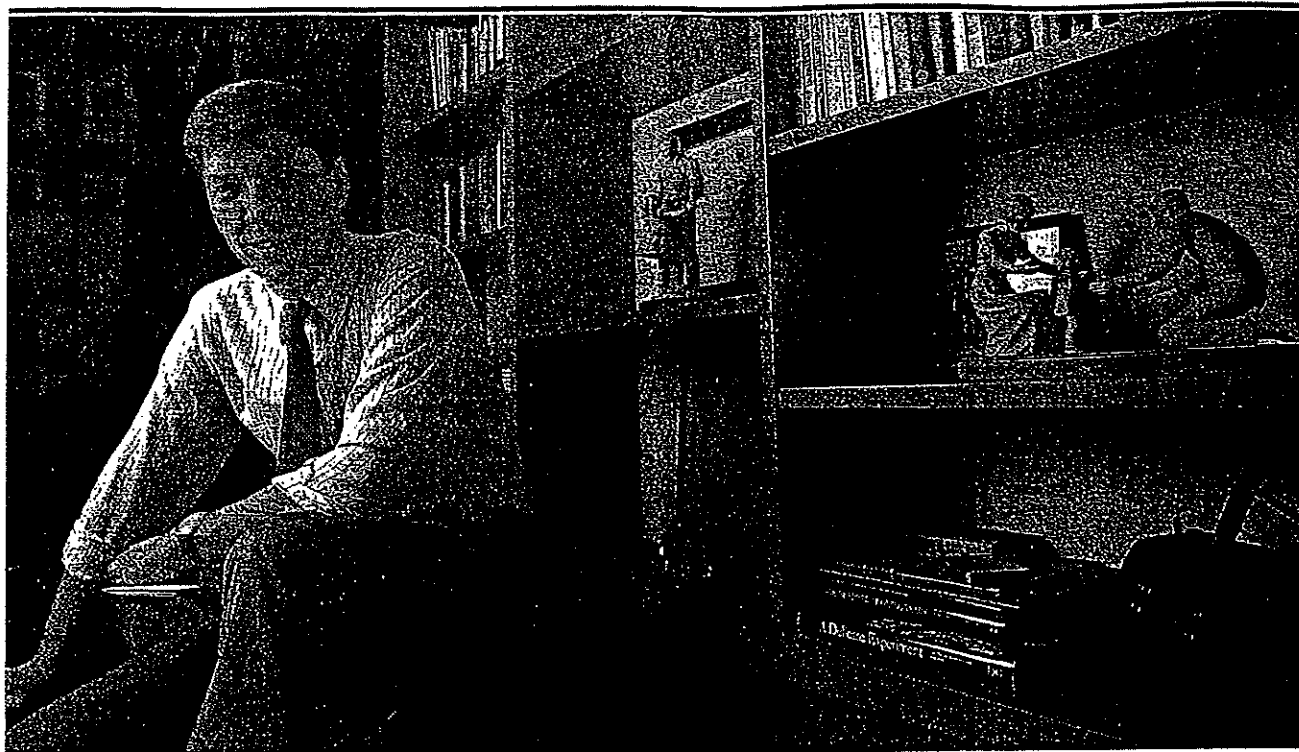
years ago, when Maclellan was 39 years old. Ten percent goes to his church, Lookout Mountain Presbyterian; 15% goes to "encouragement/mercy gifts"—to people who need "a little bit of help"; and 45% goes to big projects like local schools. "It is God's asset, and I am responsible to be an effective steward of it," says Maclellan. "That's where the real joy comes in."

A poor person or a struggling family obviously couldn't afford to be as generous as the Maclellans. Contrary to the conventional wisdom—that the poor give a higher share to charity than do the



Religious causes receive the lion's share of charitable donations. Education is a distant second.

Forbes ■ December 15, 1997



SETH RESNICK

Clayton Christensen

A Mormon, Christensen tithes to his church. He also gives to other causes. His experience as a missionary in Korea taught him this: "I realized how blessed we Americans are."

wealthy—the higher a person's income and the plumper a person's assets, the more he or she gives.

Professor Schervish found that when both contributing and non-contributing households were taken into account, those with incomes of up to \$100,000 give approximately 1.8% to 2% of gross adjusted income; that percentage then rises to 3.5% as incomes increase above \$100,000, and reaches 4.9% of incomes over \$1 million.

Ditto for wealth. Households in the lowest net worth category (below \$5,000) give an average \$77—0.6% of their income. Households with a net worth of \$50 million or more give an average of almost 18% of net income, or \$240,000 a year.

The rate of participation for giving

also increases from 48% for households with incomes under \$7,000 to nearly 100% for those with incomes over \$125,000.

This, of course, is as it should be: Those who can afford to give should give. Are the rich getting richer faster than the poor are getting richer? Perhaps so, but they are also becoming more generous.

In 1988, according to Paul Schervish, the 3.5% of households with the highest incomes contributed about 35% of all charitable dollars; six years later that group accounted for 48% of individual donations.

The 15-year stock market boom has created vast new fortunes. This enhanced affluence seems to make the rich more generous than ever. In 1988 the 0.08% top earners gave 10% of all charitable dollars; in 1994 those households shelled out 25% of all charitable dollars.

No discussion of giving would be complete with-

out mentioning the Ted Turner-Warren Buffett controversy. The Mouth of the South proclaims his own generosity while decrying Buffett's refusal to give away a significant portion of his fortune.

In fact, Buffett is planning to give almost all of it away after his death, and Turner's gifts to date are more

hot air than money. But the debate is valid: Should the wealthy give it away now or should they wait until they die?

Of course Warren Buffett can do whatever he wants with his money, but we think he is making a mistake.

Consider what's happened to three of the best known and richest foundations—Ford, Carnegie and Rockefeller. Their founders were exemplars of laissez-faire capitalism. They all had strong ideas about how the world worked, what virtue was and how it should be rewarded.

Today, however, the liberal pooh-bahs who run



The most potent force in charity is an intimate association between giver and recipient.

their foundations waste much of the income on left-wing causes that would appall the original donors.

According to Heather Mac Donald of the Manhattan Institute, the Carnegie Foundation pumped

nearly \$20 million into various left-wing advocacy groups during the 1970s. What, one wonders, would Andrew Carnegie make of his foundation's long history of generous gifts to Hillary Clinton's middle-

some Children's Defense Fund?

That's what happens to foundations set in perpetuity. They are eventually subverted by the professional philanthropy class that exercises control. Leslie Lenkowsky,

A how-to-give primer

JEAN BARRETT and her sister Betty have over \$500,000

over the past decade to endow funds primarily to benefit other African Americans. But Barrett is uncomfortable to get accustomed to the idea of thinking of herself as a philanthropist. "We thought philanthropists were white people with inherited wealth or who made big deals in their investments or in their industrial work like the Carnegies and the Rockefellers," she says.

Today, making substantial gifts is within reach of many middle-class families. Maybe you have appreciated stock, an unused vacation home or a bonus comm that you don't really need. You've been toying with contributing to the local animal shelter for a couple of years. What are the best ways to proceed?

Foundation-like charities. Sometimes called donor-advised funds, these function like smaller-scale foundations. Donor-advised funds have been around for a long time. Charity investments ran with the tide five years ago, and recently a handful of other financial services companies started offering them, too.

Bridging Systems Charitable Gift Fund is a big success and has garnered \$20 million from nearly 10,000 accounts.

With the Charitable Gift Fund, donors can deduct

charitable amounts to the fund, which allows the donor a choice of four mutual fund pools to invest in. The donor can ask Bridging to write checks against the Charitable Gift Fund in amounts of \$250 or more to any registered charity.

Here's the advantage: The donor gets to take a deduction against taxable income for the full amount given to the foundation, but has the option of making charitable distribution at her convenience. While you make up your mind when to give and to whom, the foundation earns income and has capital gains potential that can further enhance your ability to give. You can state Bridging Charitable Gift Fund account with Charlie's \$10,000, the Conville-Ha-Baxco Farmers Bank and Boston-based PNC Bank. New England also requires \$10,000 for the donor-advised funds.

These foundations like funds are useful not only for small donors but also for big donors who don't want to hassle with the red tape, expense and tax bills of a private foundation. Last year one individual opened a Bridging Charitable Gift Fund account with more than \$30 million.

Charitable remainder trusts. Charles B. Goldman, executive director of Planned Giving and advisory

services at the New York City Bar, says the donor has a choice of planned giving. A donor gives assets to a trust.

Unlike a foundation, a charitable remainder trust provides income for the donor during his lifetime. As a result, the donor does not get a deduction for the full charitable value of income, but only a portion discounted for his expected life span. However, it does have this advantage: It

may be more highly appreciated than other income-producing assets. For example, it can convert a source of income without having to sell them and pay huge capital gains tax.

Charitable remainder trusts generally run until the beneficiaries die—the principal then goes to the designated charity.

Some charitable institutions will accept remainder trust for a half of \$100,000. Many charitable institutions are passing up these trusts to older alumni.

Pooled income funds. These are run by big charities and financial services companies. They work basically the same way as charitable remainder trusts. You get the principal after you die. The foundation for example, you have given \$50,000 to support charity. The remainder must with-

Betty and Jean Barrett

The sisters from Bridgeview, Ill., to help other philanthropists as white people with inherited wealth. Here they gave \$500,000

to endow several charitable funds primarily benefiting minorities.

cash or publicly traded stock, but you can own a pooled income fund for \$25,000.

Endowment funds. Donors set up a fund from which income is distributed each year to the designated charity. The donor gets no income, but has the satisfaction of knowing that each year the charity is getting a certain

amount. The full amount of the fund is deductible from taxable income in the year the fund is given. Virtually any step can be taken.

any step can be taken. The full amount of the fund is deductible from taxable income in the year the fund is given. Virtually any step can be taken.

who teaches about philanthropy and public policy at Indiana University in Indianapolis, says, "People crave immortality, but it's a surefire recipe for being remembered for something you despise," he says. "It's

hard to control things from six feet under."

The moral here is pretty simple: You can't take it with you, or really control what happens to it after you die. So we kind of like Michael

Bloomberg's dictum: "Assuming your money makes a difference—it'll help cure cancer or educate kids or bring music to people—why make another generation go without these benefits?" ■



Charitable lead trusts. This is basically the reverse of a remainder trust. The trust's income goes to charity, and at the end of the term of the trust the principal

reverts to the donor or her heirs. The gift the charity receives effectively offsets a portion of the taxes that the donor or the estate would otherwise pay. This

is one arrangement with an upside for children. If the drawback is they need to wait for the money until the trust ends. Because a lead trust generally provides no income tax deduction, it usually makes sense only for wealthy donors who want to pass appreciating property on to their heirs. Harvard, for example, recommends them only for those giving \$500,000 or more.

Private foundations. This is a gift created specifically to benefit charities. If you have less than \$5 million to give away, a donor-advised fund is probably a more efficient way to go. In the beginning, private foundations provide personal control. You alone decide what to support and who to name to your board of directors. But after you die, who knows what the trustee will do with your money. Subsidize performance artists who come out on stage clad only in a smear of chocolate.

Plus be prepared to deal with IRS regulations on deductions, administrative costs that can add up and lots of paperwork.

Cash. If you simply want to write a check, don't forget to ask whether your employer matches gifts.

Larger companies often do. Hang on to your acknowledgment. It allows you to write off up to 30% of your adjusted gross income (one option to consider. Many charities now accept gifts charged to credit cards. If

this is the best way for you to give, considering your card needs frequent replenishing, the charity gets a nice contribution. You get a trip to Bermuda.

Requests. When making a request, consider tapping your IRA or 401(k), which would otherwise be hit by both income and estate taxes. If your heirs are in a high tax bracket, the tax collector may well end up with 80% of the balance left when you die. Better leave these to charity and give your heirs non-retirement funds.

Appreciated property. To qualify for a full charitable deduction, a gift of personal property must reasonably relate to the charity's work. Donation of an antique violin to a soup kitchen would not qualify for the full deduction, but the same gift to the New York Philharmonic would.

Caveat: If you are giving securities or cash, you can take deductions equal to no more than 30% of your adjusted gross income. But if you are giving cash, the deduction extends to 50%. In other cases, deductions for contributions in excess of these limitations may be carried forward for an additional five years.

Many big charities have departments to help you plan gifts. They can deal with special issues like partnership interests, mineral and timber rights or unique collectables.

TRIANGLE BUSINESS

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"I've dealt with projects like these for 35 years," says William C. Friday, executive director of the William R. Kenan Jr. Charitable Trust, "but I've never seen one where every aspect of it does something that's better than what was going on."

Photo by Steve Wilson

New ideas on illiteracy

Kenan Trust nurtures innovative program from Kentucky's hills

by L.D. Gibson

The back country of Kentucky is hardly where one would expect to find William C. Friday, the former president of the UNC system, in pursuit of innovative ideas in education.

But there he was, along with Thomas S. Kenan III, to observe the work of a woman with the endearingly lyrical name of Sharon Darling. The two men, representing the William R. Kenan Jr. Charitable Trust, had been referred to this unlikely outpost by none other than William Bennett, former U.S. Secretary of Education.

► The Kenan family's ties to UNC reach back to the school's founding. Story on page 6.

"I was in Washington and I asked Bill Bennett, 'Who is doing the most creative work in the country today in the field of literacy,'" said Friday, executive director of the Kenan Trust. "He gave us the name of Sharon Darling. We had never known the woman before. We drove out there, visited her school in Taylorsville, Kentucky."

Friday and Kenan observed Darling's work for an entire day. To say

they were impressed would be an understatement.

"I've dealt with projects like these for 35 years," Friday said, "but I've never seen one where every aspect of it does something that's better than what was going on. That doesn't mean it's that unique; it just means it all came together."

Said Kenan: "I've never been involved in anything like this. It's very exciting to see. This is really getting right down to the core problem [of illiteracy]."

More on page 3



"I've never been involved in anything like this," says Thomas S. Kenan III regarding a program that recognizes a link between poverty and illiteracy. "It's very exciting to see. This is really getting right down to the core problem [of illiteracy]."

Photo by Steve Wilson

Kenan Trust helps support, expand Kentucky program to fight illiteracy

Continued from page 1

Darling's program recognizes the link between poverty and illiteracy, as well as recognizing that a healthy attitude toward learning and the importance of education must begin in the home. "It's a cycle," Darling said in a recent telephone interview. "Over and over, we see the cycle repeat itself. Children of parents who are not economically stable and unable to read go through the cycle themselves. And they pass it on."

They're caught in a web of poverty. This program is designed to hit the problems they have head on."

Friday agreed. "It's all in the same mix, you see, because illiteracy and poverty are handmaidens. A person can't improve his economic status by not knowing how to do certain things, that is, simple skills of communication."

Darling said she developed her program after working in the field of illiteracy for 20 years. "Parents themselves often are fearful of schools," she said. "We know that when parents take part, their chil-

dren's participation in school is much better. At the same time, we have children living in homes of poverty where there is no educated role model. They enter school two or more years behind their peers. They fail by the first day of school."

In Darling's program, a parent of a child who is 3 or 4 years old boards a school bus each day with the child to attend school. While the child is given pre-school training, the parent—usually the mother but sometimes the father—is given instruction leading to a high school equivalency degree. But, perhaps as importantly, the parents

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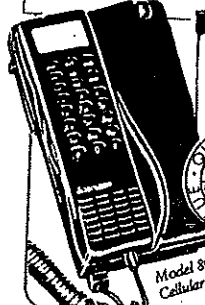
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also are taught basic parenting skills, are instructed in the importance of education and are asked to volunteer time at the school to help overcome their fear of the educational system.

"These parents often are intimidated by teachers and administrators," said Darling. "Parents need to feel comfortable in school."

Friday said he and Kenan returned from Kentucky "convinced this is something that would really break the cycle. You see, the trouble with this illiteracy problem is that if you tell me how far mother and daddy went in school, I'll tell you what'll happen to the children in 90 percent of the cases. They [parents] just don't encourage them [their children] to go on. Well, you've got to break this thing."

Aware that Darling's program was on the verge of losing the small amount of government funding it had obtained, Friday and Kenan asked the board of trustees of the William R. Kenan Jr. Charitable Trust to consider adopting the program. The board agreed, allocating \$560,000 to continue operating two programs in Kentucky — one urban and one rural program — as well as setting up four model programs in North Carolina for the 1988-89 year. Each program enrolls about 14 to 18 participants. The board has agreed to continue funding the project for another year.

The project was named the Kenan Family Literacy Project and has since attracted attention in the national press and at the White House, where first lady Barbara Bush



— who has set the problem of illiteracy at the top of her personal agenda — has offered her support. Darling, in fact, sits on the board of directors of the Barbara Bush Foundation for Family Literacy.

The Kenan Trust's role in this project is somewhat of a departure for a charitable organization that over the years has earmarked its resources primarily in the fields of higher education through the establishment of professorships and endowments. But both Friday and Kenan said it is vital that the problem of illiteracy in this country be overcome so that workers are able to cope in increasingly complex work environments.

Kenan said: "We never expected the charitable trust, frankly, to get involved in it, but it just happened in a very wonderful way. The literacy program is one of our newest projects and probably the one that is going to have the main thrust for the next several years."

Kenan said he was moved when students in the Kentucky program were given an opportunity to address their visitors. "They all stood one by one except for this one young woman who ... obviously came from very low circumstances," he recalled. "I said, 'You know, I think she's going to be the only disappointment,' and all of a sudden this little girl stood, she's about 17, had four children, I think, she stood and she gave the most emotional and convincing testimony of any of them. And then I was convinced this program was very, very unique and very special."

Friday said he also was moved by the testimony of the adult students. "The trouble is that when you sit and watch this, you say to yourself how lucky you've been. You have a very different reaction to all this because there it is right in front of you — ignorance, poverty, deprivation and still they're smiling and you say to yourself, 'Well, what on earth can I do to lift the burden? Those children don't have a chance.' That's what we see here. We might be able to start something."

Estimates from the 1980 census show that more than 800,000 people in North Carolina — nearly one-sixth of

The Kenan Trust's participation has been crucial to the Family Literacy Project, says Sharon Darling. "It's what has made the difference in putting this whole issue on the national agenda. Without their support, I think we would have continued and expanded in Kentucky. But as far as any national visibility and replication, it wouldn't have happened."

the population — cannot understand, communicate and comprehend sufficiently to earn a living. Nationally, poverty is on the rise with nearly one-third of all young families classified as poor — more than double the level of two decades ago. One-fourth of all households are headed by a single parent, and some 15 million children, nearly 24 percent of those under 18, lived in these households in 1986. These stark numbers, combined with studies that estimate 500,000 jobs will be created in North Carolina alone by the year 2000, make it imperative that the state begin educating these people who have fallen into a cycle of poverty and illiteracy, said Friday.

"It's there and it's real and it's a terrible economic loss to this state right now," Friday said. "This project will be intensely helpful to the business community." He said a number of North Carolina companies, including Duke Power, Broyhill Furniture and Burlington Industries, already have recognized the need to produce a better educated work force. He cited a small company in Statesville that offers \$1,000 to any employee who obtains a high school equivalency degree.

Friday also is working with others to convince the legislature to set up a statistical center to track health funding, jobs and employment funding. "You've got to know what you're working with," he said. "But let me tell you, they're out there and it's a painful thing."

The Kenan Trust's goal for the Kenan Family Literacy Project is to keep the model programs going in Kentucky and North Carolina for about three years while at the same time developing a national training center, which will be called the National Center for the Training of Personnel in Family Literacy Instruction, to train personnel across the country in the Darling approach to attacking illiteracy. "We've begun to see right off that it is a viable program, but the big problem is teaching the teacher," said Friday.

The ultimate goal, said Darling, is to have the program implemented on a nationwide basis. The program is in line with recent national welfare legislation that recognizes that poverty and illiteracy are linked. "That legislation is saying that when a child is three, the parent will go into education and training and the child will go into day care," said Darling. "So, when we look at a model for that, instead of further fragmenting the family, doesn't it make more sense to look at a program that leaves the two together?"

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Darling has been contacted by 38 of the nation's 50 governors who have asked her to come to their state to assist in setting up a project. "She tried that but got overpowered," said Kenan. "That's why we felt the need ... to set up the national training center in Louisville." That center will enroll its first attendees when representatives from 10 states, including North Carolina and Kentucky will come to Kentucky for intensive training. The other states are Arkansas, Virginia, New York, Mississippi, Rhode Island, South Carolina, Minnesota and California.

The four model programs in North Carolina — at Wilmington, Fayetteville/Fort Bragg, Henderson and Madison County — are being operated through the state's community college system. Friday hopes the state will adopt the program once the model project is completed and the training center is fully functioning. "If this is a viable model, the state of North Carolina should, the county school systems should, pick it up."

Darling described the various elements that make up the program and comprise a typical school day for the parent and child:

- "We bring them to school together on a school bus because transportation often is a big problem. We provide them breakfast ... because nutrition sometimes is a problem," she said.

- After breakfast, the parents go into a literacy program to increase their basic communication skills and also to help foster a healthier view of the educational system. Meanwhile, the child works in a pre-school program because many already are behind their peers. "We know if a child has a good early childhood education, he is 50 percent less likely to need remedial work in school," said Darling.

- Parent and child are then brought together for learning activities and practice teaching in an atmosphere where learning is fun.

- Parents and teachers have lunch together.

- Children then take a rest while parents volunteer in a school project, perhaps assisting with clerical work in the office, for 45 minutes to foster trust in the system. This also helps teachers and administrators to "understand that these parents care deeply about their children even if they don't come to PTA meetings," Darling said.

- Finally, while children nap, parents are given training in parenting skills. "I've had parents say to me they didn't think children learned anything until they got to school," Darling said. "In this program, their own self-esteem grows not only as they accomplish tasks in education but also as they learn to deal with their children."

Darling said the graduation exercise for the program in Louisville ended with no dry eyes in the house. "One father stood up and said it's much more than a literacy program. He said it's also a program that brings the family together."

She added: "I've been in adult literacy for 20 years on the local, state and national level. I've never seen anything as powerful as this program. ... We can no longer afford to educate people to the fourth- or sixth-grade level. That's no longer going to be

"We never expected the charitable trust, frankly, to get involved in it, but it just happened in a very wonderful way. The literacy program is one of our newest projects and probably the one that is going to have the main thrust for the next several years."

Thomas S. Kenan III

enough to keep our economy competitive in a global market."

Darling said the Kenan Trust's participation has been crucial to the program's success. "It's what has made the difference in putting this whole issue on the national agenda," she said. "Without their support, I think we would have continued and expanded in Kentucky. But as far as any national visibility and replication, it wouldn't have happened."

Friday said: "We've created something here that's moved so fast and gotten so much attention, not because we've been that successful with it in this state yet, but because people are so hungry for something that will work. There's got to be an answer to this problem. We can't go on like this." □

Crescent Hill church focuses on fellowship

The Rev. Pam Ogilvie is pastor of Open Door Community Fellowship, which will hold an open house tonight. Page B2



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Literacy crusader to receive medal from president

Darling will get national honor for work helping educate families

By DARLA CARTER
dcarter@courier-journal.com
The Courier-Journal

Sharon Darling, president of the Louisville-based National Center for Family Literacy, will receive the 2001 National Humanities Medal from President Bush and first lady Laura Bush next month.

Other recipients sharing the limelight will include the National Trust for Historic Preservation and Tom Wolfe, the author of such books as "The Bon-

ic continuum," she said. "They needed so much. . . . They just had such low esteem from not having the skills of reading."

In 1989 Darling, a former Rangeland Elementary School teacher, founded the national literacy center with a grant from the William R. Kenan Jr. Charitable Trust.

Darling said the award represents the center's work as well as her early literacy efforts. "I really am just thrilled," she said.

The annual humanities award honors individuals and groups whose work deepens the nation's understanding of the humanities, broadens people's in-

volvement with the humanities or helps preserve and expand access to important resources in humanities.

The endowment takes nominations from groups and individuals across the country, then makes recommendations to the president, who chooses the winners.

Past recipients include documentary filmmaker Ken Burns; authors Stephen Ambrose and Toni Morrison; and filmmaker Steven Spielberg.

"It's quite a stellar list of people," Turner said. The National Center for Family Literacy provides services to promote family literacy and



Sharon Darling said the National Humanities Medal will increase the visibility of the National Center for Family Literacy.

help people escape poverty and be better parents so their children can succeed.

Through the center, Darling promotes the idea that "we can never fully succeed with the education of a child unless the parent also is a partner in that

education." "If you have a parent who themselves can't read or has low literacy skills or never had an opportunity to enjoy a book themselves, it's very hard then for that child to have a role model in the home," Darling said.

Her organization has more than 3,000 programs across the country. Receiving the National Humanities Medal will elevate the center's work and help to validate the efforts of "so many people in family literacy programs," she said.

The award also will increase the center's visibility among corporations, foundations and policy leaders and give Darling a platform for continuing to promote the cause of family literacy, she said. "It's really a great opportunity to one more time be able to tell the nation how important it is to create a literate America with parents and children being able to read," she said. This year's other winners are Jose Cisneros, a historical illustrator; Robert Coles, a child psychologist; researcher and professor of psychiatry; historian and writer William Manchester; author Richard Peck; and musicologist Eileen Jackson Southern.

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SPEAKING OF PEOPLE

Teaching adults to read makes close allies of teacher and students



Joan Kay

Courier-Journal columnist

Thanks to the machinations of a colleague 14 years ago, Sharon Darling plunged head first into teaching adults how to read.

The former elementary school teacher had been staying home to care for her baby son, Michael, when the man who then directed adult education for the Jefferson County Public Schools invited her to visit some classes at Ninth & O Baptist Church.

One day she dropped by the church with baby and diaper bag in hand. The director deposited the infant in the nursery and took Ms. Darling on tour. Suddenly he opened a door, announced to four men sitting inside, "This is your new teacher," and left the room.

Ms. Darling was stunned. "I had no intention of staying past the first day," she recalls, but "I got hooked. The men wanted so desperately to read."

As she continued to teach, she became increasingly concerned about the other illiterate adults in the community who were not being reached.

When someone who could not read turned up for adult-education classes, "we tried to serve them, but we didn't recruit them" because of lack of expertise and manpower.

Five years ago, with a grant from the adult-education division of the Kentucky Department of Education, Ms. Darling began to develop a model program in Jefferson County for teaching adults who read below sixth-grade level. "After just a month of recruiting in 1978, we end-

ed up with 290 students on the first day."

In the past five years, "we have taught about 2,500 students to read," says Ms. Darling, project coordinator for the Adult Reading Program of the Jefferson County Public Schools.

And the program has reached out into Kentucky through training sessions for representatives from 45 counties that wanted to establish literacy programs.

The teaching method combines textbook with reading material pulled from everyday life. If a student wants a job, the teacher uses an employment form to teach language.

To encourage adults to stay in the program, the instructors set short-term goals, such as reading labels on cans — "something they can learn in a month."

Attention is also paid to other human needs through counseling. "The biggest thing we have to overcome is a low self-concept," says Ms. Darling. "They have been made to feel stupid."

Through the struggle to learn, teacher and student become close allies. The feeling grows that "we are in this together," says Ms. Darling. Some of her students from eight years ago still call to let her know how they are doing.

Students are allowed to enroll throughout the year. "I'm afraid if they have to wait three months (for a new class to begin), they won't come back."

After initial counseling, a student may be placed with a volunteer for individual sessions or, more likely, in a small group of people who need the same skills. Group study is effective because the students "develop a camaraderie. They help each other."

Since the program began, 60 percent of the students have been under 30. The average student has completed 9.5 years of school but has been out of school 8 1/2 years. Seventy percent are unemployed,



Sharon Darling: "I got hooked."

and 58 percent have annual incomes below \$4,000.

"We've retained 78 percent of the students in class, compared to a national average of 48 percent," says the coordinator.

This year 22 centers in Jefferson County are located in schools, community centers and churches, with a total enrollment of about 700 men and women. The 18 part-time teachers are assisted by about 125 trained volunteers. Anyone interested in being a volunteer may call the St. Augustine Center, 584-5463.

Last year the Jefferson County program was cited as an exemplary program in education by the Joint Dissemination Review Panel, set up by the U.S. Department of Education. Only three other adult-education programs in the country have received this status, and none was a literacy program. It is also the first instructional program in Kentucky to receive this status.

Because of this designation, the Jefferson County Adult Reading Program became part of the National Diffusion Network, which sends out information throughout the country. Funds from the network enable Ms. Darling to make presentations in other states and to develop materials. "We had 500 requests (for information) in the past six months."

During two summers Ms. Darling and a team trained representatives of 50 Tennessee counties. This fall she was invited to speak in Washington, D.C., to 200 U.S. Education Department officials and adult-literacy workers.

Ms. Darling, who lives in New Albany, Ind., with her husband, George, and two sons, no longer teaches, and she misses the chance to see firsthand how learning to read changes people's lives. "There are so many things they can do then."

She recalls a man from Southern Indiana who appeared at her door after she had been teaching only two days at Ninth & O Baptist Church. He had a banjo under one arm and he asked if she could teach him to play it. When she said no, he asked her to teach him to read a book on playing techniques.

At age 66, he had never been inside a classroom. He had never felt the need to read until he wanted to learn the banjo and particularly the lyrics to "Up on Crippled Creek."

After two years, on the last day of the semester, he asked Ms. Darling to go outdoors with him. "We climbed up in his camper. He pulled out a banjo and played 'Up on Crippled Creek.' I never saw him again."

"I think about him all the time. He taught me so much about adults — not to stereotype them."

By bringing adults back to school,
a bold Louisville program is helping families

Where Parent And Child Learn Together

THE GOVERNMENT estimates that about 83 million people in this country are illiterate," Sharon Darling told me one recent morning. "That does not mean just people who can't read at all. Most are people whose reading skills are not sufficient for them to do their jobs correctly."

When she gave me that startling statistic, Sharon Darling was preaching to the converted. That very morning, I had to help two adults read. A parking garage attendant was unable to figure out my claim check, and a rental car clerk misread the contract and gave me the wrong car. Both were grown people in their 20s who couldn't do their jobs correctly because they couldn't read well. Those two small events taught me what Darling's statistic really means: Our society and our economy are suffering because too many adults can't read well enough to get jobs, or to do the jobs they have.

Sharon Darling has made adult literacy her life's work and passion. As president of the National Center for Family Literacy, she is also making a change in the lives of people who thought they were condemned by lack of education to an unending cycle of poverty, dead-end jobs or welfare.

"A few years ago, I was the director of adult education in Kentucky," Darling explained as we drove toward the Wheatley Elementary School in a run-down section of Louisville, Ky. "We had one of the highest proportions of adults without a high school diploma in the country. Then we realized that, when the children of these people went into school, 70 percent of them never graduated from high school. That's where the idea came from."

The idea Darling and her colleagues came up with was Family Literacy—and I saw it in action as soon as I walked down a corridor at Wheatley. In one room, about a dozen women were busy at work. Several were writing in workbooks, practicing spelling or math. Others were reading the day's newspaper

or consulting with a teacher. Two huge, dark-tinted picture windows allowed them to see into an adjoining room. There, another teacher was working with a very different group of students. They were learning the names of colors and figuring out how to put pegs into holes of corresponding shapes. The students in this class, Darling explained, were 3 or 4 years old, and they were the children of the women in the first room. The students in both rooms seemed to be enjoying what they were learning.

As Sharon Darling sees it, getting parents and children into school to learn together is a major breakthrough. "All of these parents dropped out of school for one reason or another," she said. "Many of them were afraid of school and afraid of teachers. That translated into one generation after another of parents not having confidence to go into schools and take part in their child's education." If you could get parents to come back and finish their educations, Darling and her colleagues reasoned, you could make them comfortable with school. In turn, they could teach their children by example to enjoy school and to learn.

Evelyn Brown helped teach me how the concept works. "I've been out of school for 25 years," she said. "I have two boys, 4 and 6 years old, and I knew that if they started bringing homework home, and I didn't know what to do to help them, I'd be in bad shape." As she talked, Brown looked up from a workbook in which she was practicing spelling. Like all the adults in the program, she works at her own pace, concentrating on areas in which she needs to improve. "This is the first program that has provided child care," she explained, "so that I'm able to come and learn."

Promptly at 11 a.m., we moved to the next room for the daily session of PACT—Parent And Child Together. Here, the teacher Charlotte Williams explained, parents participate every day in their child's education. Evelyn Brown and her younger son, Bryant, played a game which helped him identify colors. Then the women sat in a circle with their

continued



Robin Turner Hall helps her daughter, LaKeetha, 4, to color during their daily session of PACT—Parent And Child Together.

Many parents don't realize how important they are to their child's education," says Sharon Darling, president of the National Center for Family Literacy.

LEARN TOGETHER/continued

children and talked about each youngster's progress.

"Parenting is an important part of this program," Sharon Darling told me. "Many parents don't realize how important they are to their child's education. The child is watching and learning from the parent all the time." For Evelyn Brown, the idea that she can help her sons to learn is thrilling. "I feel better that they're looking up to me," she said.

"We teach more than just literacy," Darling explained. In fact, the program asks each adult participant to commit to a year of classes, which will culminate in taking the examinations required for a GED—a high school equivalency certificate. In addition, adults are given instruction on parenting skills, dealing with spousal abuse and finding jobs. For the first time, they begin to see that their lives are filled with possibilities.

"I dropped out of high school when I got married," Lorrie Jorgensen told me. Without her diploma, she seemed doomed to dead-end jobs. "I've done everything from washing dogs to waitressing," she said as her son, James, clung to her for reassurance. "But now I've taken all five of my GED tests, and I got my diploma last year." Even Lorrie seemed amazed that she had come this far—and exhilarated by what might come next. "I love computers. I've worked on some really advanced ones

here. I'm going to college and studying computing."

Does Family Literacy really work? The program, in one form or another, is now in place in 38 sites in Kentucky. A grant from the Kenan Charitable Trust has helped establish it in Louisville, as well as in cities in North Carolina. A new grant from Toyota has helped it expand to 10 other cities. And the Bureau of Indian Affairs is trying it out on reservations across the country. More than 15,000 adults have been through the program, most of them women. (Men are eligible but seem more reluctant to admit that they need educational help.) "We're finding that 80 percent of the adults who commit to the program finish it," Sharon Darling told me. "And their children are performing better in school."

The numbers are good, but I found the best proof of how well Family Literacy is doing in Benita Ennis, a 31-year-old mother of six. "I left school at 14," she told me. "It was the biggest mistake of my life." Three years ago, Ennis decided to make some changes in her life. "I decided it was time to get off welfare," she said. Her desire to finish school put a strain on her marriage, she said, because her husband was opposed to the idea, but she enrolled in the Family Literacy program with her youngest daughter and stuck with it. She kept up with her studies, getting her GED and her first job in 1989. Ultimately, her marriage ended in divorce.

PROFILE

Modest Sharon Darling literally helps thousands

*Fighting illiteracy is main mission*By RACHAEL KAMUF
Business First Staff Writer

To hear Sharon Darling describe herself, one would think that she has done nothing exceptional with her life. After all, she considers herself to be an average person who is really rather dull and boring.

Not so, says William Friday, retired president of the University of North Carolina.

"The only thing she has done is touch hundreds of thousands of lives. I would consider that quite an achievement," says Friday, now the executive director of the William R. Kenan Jr. Charitable Trust in Chapel Hill, N.C.

"Her whole life outside her family is devoted to people who don't have a spokesman. The only regret is that there aren't thousands more just like her."

Friday has come to know Darling through her efforts to eradicate intergenerational illiteracy and poverty. His admiration for her personally and professionally led the Kenan Trust to provide the seed money for her acclaimed National Center for Family Literacy in 1988.

"The experience of finding Sharon Darling has been one of the most rewarding of my career," adds Friday, who says she has only one vice. "She can't pass up brownies."

Darling—whose own teaching career began at 3 years old when she "taught" her dolls—started the non-profit Center for Family Literacy to train adult-education and early childhood teachers to work with families in tandem through programs tailored to meet a community's special needs.

"She is a visionary," says Wally Amos, founder of Famous Amos cookies and national spokesman for Literacy Volunteers of America. "The idea was brilliant. By strengthening the bond between parent and child, we can break the intergenerational grasp of illiteracy. If it is not broken, we will not have an end to the problem."

Darling once said, "We are in a position to make a major difference in education in this nation."

In proving the validity of the concept, Darling has moved into what she calls the "eye of the hurricane."

The U.S. Department of Education is requiring that all Head Start preschool agendas have adult-literacy components. And more and more demands are being put on her time as Darling's stature as a pioneer in education continues to be enhanced by studies showing how well youngsters



Business First photo by Ron Galt

Sharon Darling is president of the National Center for Family Literacy, which trains adult-education and early childhood teachers to work with families in tandem. "She is a visionary," says Wally Amos, founder of Famous Amos cookies and spokesman for Literacy Volunteers of America.

involved in family-literacy programs do in school.

An adviser for The Barbara Bush Foundation for Family Literacy, Darling is also building a reputation outside the education field as the result of numerous national newspaper and magazine articles and network news stories on the success of an idea that was nurtured and developed in Kentucky.

Such attention has brought Darling elbow-to-elbow with the power elite in social and business circles as well as the world of politics. But Mildred Shelton says she is still the same Sharon Darling who went to Marshall, N.C., on a hot August day in 1988, when the first of seven model programs in that state opened.

"That is the one thing I admire the most about her," says Shelton, an early childhood teacher at Walnut Elementary School in Marshall. "Sharon Darling is one of the most marvelous people God ever put on this earth."

Shelton is impressed with Darling's ease in conversing with presidents, millionaires, movie stars and women so poor their homes have no electricity.

"Her opinion is sought by national policy-makers, but when she walks into Walnut Elementary School and talks to our moms, every student feels she cares about them individually. And she does," Shelton says. "To make people feel special is a real talent."

Darling has an immense respect for the people who battle the odds to make life better for themselves and their families. "If you could just hear the moms and the children. They did it."

Darling seems to have been born to teach; she can't remember a time when she didn't want to be just like her Aunt Helen Breitenstein, a first-grade teacher.

It was always a treat when the then preschooler was allowed to accompany her aunt to school. "That was special. It was my Aunt Helen's class," Darling recalls. "She

was one of those teachers who believed you put your heart and your soul into teaching."

There was never any question about whether Darling would do the same. Following her 1962 graduation from Eastern High School, Darling enrolled in the University of Louisville, where she earned a degree in education.

Working with adults was not part of the plan, though. "I never wanted to teach anything above the second grade."

After the birth of her son, Michael, in October 1969, Darling chose to stay home. But her role as a full-time mother was short-lived.

She found herself back in a different kind of classroom after encountering Curtis Whitman, then the director of adult education for the Jefferson County school system, at a Christmas party.

He asked her if she would be interested in helping out at an adult-education program held in the basement of the Ninth & O Baptist Church. Her response, Darling says, was a resounding, "Heavens no." But he persevered.

Finally, she says, Whitman convinced her to "bring the baby and see what we do." When she did, she says Whitman "took the baby and diaper bag, opened the door to a room where five men were seated and said, 'This is your new teacher,' and disappeared."

Darling says she was more than a little disconcerted and a bit angry. But before long, Darling admits, "I was hooked," although to this day she doesn't know "whether to bless him or curse him."

Encountering students who drove from as far away as Salem, Ind., and Elizabethtown, Ky., two nights a week because they were "hungry to learn to read," Darling says, "I didn't know if I could do it, but I knew I was going to try."

That is typical of his daughter, Keith Breitenstein says. "She has confidence in herself. If she wants to do something, she'll do it."

Darling has a wealth of stories about the difference adult education has made in her own life.

One of the students in that first class at Ninth & O was a Hoosier who wanted to read so he could teach himself to play the banjo. "He drove 2 1/2 hours. He signed an X for his name. He didn't know left from right. But he was bright. He was like a child ... bright-eyed and eager. Every day he came in with something new he had learned."

She worked with the man—who called her "teacher"—for two years. He came in one day with his banjo and played "Up on Cripple Creek" for his teacher. She never saw him again, but his memory lingers. "I learned more from him than he ever could learn from me."

Darling says the same about everyone who went through her adult-education classes and the parents who have "graduated" from family-literacy programs.

Illiteracy creates a sense of isolation that is foreign to Darling. Not only are the parents hampered by their inability to function in a world that requires more than basic learning skills to survive, but the poverty that is illiteracy's partner forces many to live under conditions that are conducive to failure, she points out.

"In Los Angeles, I listen to mothers talking about shielding their children from gun fire. I have heard abused Appalachian mothers who have no where to turn. They all feel isolated. I can't imagine not having a friend. Not having someone to talk to. Now, they have each other."

The greatest joy Darling has seen from her efforts is not in the general equivalency diplomas—or GEDs—that are earned, but in the new esteem participants have in themselves and the resulting sense of hope that their children will not suffer as they have.

"There is not one of these parents who Please see DARLING on next page

BIO

Sharon Darling

Title: President, National Center for Family Literacy

Age: 48

Hometown: Louisville

Education: Bachelor's degree in education, University of Louisville; and master's degrees in counselor education and educational administration, Western Kentucky University

Family: Husband, George; two sons; three stepchildren; and five grandchildren

Darling

Continued from preceding page

don't care about their children. They just don't know how to do such things as reading or even talking to their children. Slowly but surely you see that changing. You see the difference in how they look, how they carry themselves. It is more than education, and it is translated into their children."

Darling admits that she doesn't have all the answers to the country's social and economic problems nor can she or other teachers turn around the lives of everyone who takes part in such programs.

"I can't fix everything. But if each person will take just one piece of the puzzle and be determined to make it the best, each piece can be combined piece by piece, community by community. We can make our nation strong again."

Darling is a believer in research and more research, but she uses more than statistics to back up her point.

Because of the National Center for Family Literacy, a young mother in Louisville is off the welfare rolls, a father on a New Mexico Indian reservation can read to his sons and a woman from the mountains of North Carolina was invited to the White House, where she received an award from the president.

When Regina Osteen Lynn—a divorced mother of four and a former eighth-grade dropout who now attends college, where she is on the dean's list—joined the five other 1992 recipients of the National Literacy Honors Awards, Darling says she felt like "a proud mother. I didn't stop grinning for a week."

Darling believes that Lynn's newfound "elegance and grace" has been passed on to her children. All were failing in school, but as their mother "moved to the bottom rung of the ladder and up," their grades improved and now they, too, are on the honor roll.

Chloe Gentry, who earned her GED

through a joint program sponsored by the center and the Jefferson County Public School District, is another illustration of the validity of the family-literacy concept. Going back to school was difficult, she says, "but I did it. This shows my children the importance of education. Now, I push them."

Such successes carry a hefty price tag. It costs up to \$1,500 a person annually for each child or adult enrolled in family-literacy courses. In the long run, however, the expense is offset by savings on remedial-education classes for the children when they enter school and the burgeoning cost of welfare, Darling says. "It is a case of pay now or pay later."

The Kenan Trust, which provided \$720,000 to start the National Center for Family Literacy, now contributes \$500,000 a year. The remainder of the current \$3.5 million budget comes from other corporate and philanthropic contributions, consultative services to help communities set up their own programs and a contract to research the results of those efforts for the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

One of the supporters is Toyota Motor Corp., sponsor of the Toyota Families for Learning Program. The Japanese automaker, which has a plant in Georgetown, Ky., uses the Louisville center to administer grants—totaling \$3.6 million since 1991—awarded to communities for establishment of family-literacy projects. Ten cities are now participating.

The staff has also joined with the Louisville Area Chamber of Commerce, Louisville Community Foundation and the school system to provide teachers who go to job sites to teach GED-level classes. The service is not available outside Louisville.

Darling, who is a director of the Greater Louisville Economic Development Partnership, says the center does not have the resources to expand that program elsewhere. She is committed to continuing it here, though, in appreciation of the sup-

port the center has received from businesses and individuals in her hometown.

Darling now has more requests for assistance than she can possibly handle.

It was different in the beginning. Then, she had her experiences with the Jefferson County schools and the Kentucky Department of Education, U.S. Department of Education and promising research from systems that emulated the first family-literacy program in Kentucky. Still, skeptics abounded in the mid-1980s as she laid the groundwork for what would become the National Center for Family Literacy.

"She had a time selling the program," says Mark Emblidge, executive director of the Virginia Literacy Foundation. Yet, he says, she was an effective salesperson. "In a very quiet way, Sharon is a very charismatic person. People want to listen to her."

Amos, a member of the national center's board of directors, came under her spell when they met in 1982. "You want to do anything for her," he says.

And with the progress that has been recorded, "more and more people have bought into the concept at least enough to look at it," Emblidge says. The result? "This thing is spreading like wildfire."

Darling sold Friday and Frank Kenan, a foundation director, during a marathon visit to a state-sponsored family literacy site in Taylorsville, Ky., in 1988. They had heard about Darling from nationally recognized educational leaders and asked Darling to open such a center in Chapel Hill.

She wanted Kentucky—as well as North Carolina—to be recognized as progressive states in education and convinced them that she could be effective by staying here.

The faith that Darling, who now lives in New Albany, has in her hometown is appreciated by Brad Richardson, president of the Economic Development Partnership. "The

very work that is being done is vital to having an educated work force, which is critical to attracting new business. This is at the core of what we are doing."

The literacy center is prominently mentioned in packets promoting the Louisville area, says Richardson, who refers to it as an economic development "jewel."

Friday likens it to the mighty oak that grew from a tiny acorn. And tiny was a correct description five years ago, when Darling had only one part-time assistant. Currently, 24 trainers travel throughout the country as well as lead classes for teachers at the center's workshop in the downtown Galleria.

As president of the National Center for Family Literacy, most of Darling's waking hours are spent making speeches and sharing her expertise with others in corporate and political settings. Airports, Darling says, have become almost like home to her.

She sometimes regrets being away from the classroom and appreciates the sacrifices that her family, which includes two sons, three stepchildren and five grandchildren, have made to make her dream come true. Her husband of 18 years, on the other hand, doesn't think the family has had to give up much.

"You can't expect an even keel all the time," says George Darling, vice president of Markets USA, which specializes in mergers and acquisitions. "It has never been a problem. You go along and do what you have to do. There is no magic formula. It just seemed to work out."

And whatever his wife might say, he agrees with those who take exception to her statement that she has done nothing extraordinary with her life.

"There would be a Sharon without the National Center for Family Literacy," he says. "I don't believe there would be a National Center for Family Literacy without Sharon, however."

Family literacy conference scheduled for April 17-20

The National Center for Family Literacy is going all out in its welcoming of guests to the second annual National Conference on Family Literacy April 17.

In addition to the usual opening reception, the 1,200 people expected to attend the three-day meeting at the Galt House will have front-row seats for the largest fireworks display in North America.

"We are calling it 'Thunder over Literacy,'" said Mary Anne Cronan, vice president of planning and resource development at the non-profit organization. Actually, it is Thunder over Louisville, a pyrotechnic extravaganza on the Ohio River that will kick off the 1993 Kentucky Derby Festival.

In addition to the Saturday night fireworks, volunteers and educators involved in family-literacy programs from throughout the country will be exposed to movers and shakers from the world of business, politics and education.

Sen. Paul Simon of Illinois, a director of the National Center for Family Literacy's board of advisers, will speak Sunday on the national implications of the effort to eradicate intergenerational illiteracy.

U.S. Rep. William Goodling of Pennsylvania will join Mayor Jerry Abramson and New Orleans Mayor Sidney J. Barthelemy in a panel discussion Monday on the impact literacy has on economic development efforts.

The Founder's Award will be presented

at a banquet Monday evening to Dr. Shoichiro Toyota, chairman of Toyota Motor Corp. The Japanese automaker has given \$3.6 million to sponsor family-literacy projects in 10 U.S. cities.

The master of ceremonies for the event will be longtime literacy advocate Wally Amos, who started the Famous Amos cookie company and serves on the center's board of advisors.

Sharing the spotlight with Amos and Toyota will be Walter Anderson, editor of Parade magazine and member of the advisory board, and 10 "graduates" of the Toyota programs.

The conference will conclude Tuesday with a luncheon featuring Bill Blakemore, education reporter for ABC.

First lady Hillary Rodham Clinton, who served on the national center's board during her husband's first term as governor of Arkansas, has also been invited. She has cancelled all recent public appearances because of the serious illness of her father, and Cronan said she is not expected to attend.

Bea Romer, whose husband Roy is governor of Colorado, will participate. She is an early-childhood and family-life specialist and is one of the founders of a parent cooperative preschool in Denver.

She will be joined by Lynne Waihee, first lady of Hawaii and honorary chairman of that state's Governor's Council for Literacy.

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Beyond words

\$1 million donation to bring Louisville U.S. literacy center

By HOLLY HOLLAND
Staff Writer

Inspired by the efforts of a crusader against Kentucky illiteracy, a North Carolina charity has donated \$1 million to establish a National Center for Family Literacy in Louisville.

The William R. Kenan Jr. Charitable Trust will set up the center to provide free training and technical assistance to groups that want to start family literacy programs nationwide. The center also will assemble literacy information, publish a national newsletter and conduct seminars for government officials and business executives.

The trust chose Louisville primarily because of the work of Sharon Darling, director of the Kenan Family Literacy Project in Louisville and a nationally known literacy advocate. Darling, who lives in New Albany, Ind., will become president of the center when it opens next month.

"I think (the Kenans), of course, would like to have the center in Chapel Hill, N.C.," Darling said. "But I think they were willing to let me have the center here because this is where I live ... and it was a place where we really have a great need" for literacy programs.

Darling said she will seek additional money from the Kenan Trust and from other groups to fund the center beyond its first year. Until she can find permanent quarters, Darling will operate the center from the Louisville Chamber of Commerce offices at One Riverfront Plaza.

She expects to hire five professionals who are nationally recognized in such fields as early childhood education and adult liter-



DARLING:
Hopes center
can be
"underpinning
for quality."

Gift to establish literacy center

Continued from Page One

acy, and three clerical workers. Darling said she hopes the center can become a "national think tank" to help advance programs that try to break the cycle of illiteracy.

Initially, she said, visitors to the center will learn how to replicate the Kenan Family Literacy Project, which teaches undereducated adults along with their preschool-age children. Children learn basic skills that prepare them for kindergarten while their parents work toward their General Educational Development certificates and receive tips on raising children.

The Kenan Family Literacy Project has programs at McFerran, Roosevelt-Perry and Schaffner elementary schools in Louisville and at four sites in North Carolina.

Darling said she eventually wants the National Center for Family Literacy to find and duplicate programs that work well for specific regions of the country, such as those focusing on illiteracy among migrant farm workers.

"We rarely have the opportunity to plan, to do research and to really look at how we're training people," she said. "And that's what I hope this center can do, to be the underpinning for quality around the nation as family literacy becomes prominent in people's minds."

Darling said the Kenan Literacy

Project has received more than 5,000 requests for information, including inquiries from Great Britain, Japan and Sweden. She said groups from 10 states have raised money and will start family literacy programs once they've received training at the center.

National attention to family literacy has exploded in the past year, said Benita Somerfield, executive director of the Barbara Bush Foundation for Family Literacy in Washington, D.C. But the concept of teaching undereducated parents along with their children is unknown in most parts of the country, she said.

The National Center for Family Literacy can fill a void by training people and providing up-to-date information about literacy programs, she said.

"This is not something that there's a well-blazed trail for," Somerfield said. "This is a whole new ballgame."

Until recently, literacy programs focused primarily on disadvantaged children or undereducated adults. Few tried to reach children and parents at the same time, said Dr. Joan Abrahamson, president of the Jefferson Institute in Los Angeles and chairman of the Barbara Bush Foundation.

Abrahamson said the Kenan Family Literacy Project and others have demonstrated that teaching parents and children at the same time gives

the entire family a chance to succeed. But no organization currently evaluates which programs work and why, she said.

"I think what happens is that people operate in a vacuum, in isolation," said Margot Woodwell, vice president and station manager of WQED-TV in Pittsburgh, which frequently broadcasts commercials focusing on literacy efforts.

With a national center for family literacy, Woodwell said, "every time someone wanted to start a new (literacy) program, they could see what has worked elsewhere and build on that instead of starting from scratch."

Darling expects about 200 people to be trained at the Louisville literacy center by the end of the year. Policy-makers and members of the center's advisory committee also will travel to Louisville on a regular basis, she said.

That's good news to people charged with promoting the area's economic development. They believe the center's presence in Louisville and the number of people traveling here to participate in its programs will help business-recruitment efforts.

"We're finding it more and more important in working with potential investors that we have a quality education system," said Crit Luallen, senior vice president of the Campaign for Greater Louisville.

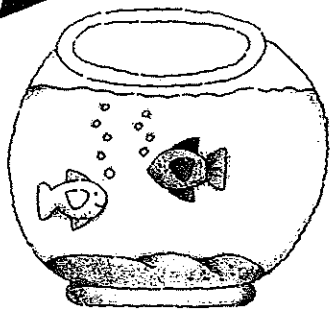
"That a center for literacy would come here sends a message about the commitment this community has made to education."

See GIFT
Back page, col. 1, this section



National Center
for Family Literacy

Selected articles authored by Ms. Darling



Linking parents to reading instruction

Sharon Darling, Jon Lee

When young children learn to read, their chances for later school success improve. Family is the root of a child's early literacy experiences. Comprehensive family literacy is one approach that values and supports the impact parents have on a child's early years and links that impact to the delivery of systematic reading instruction. Much has been written about the importance of reading to a child's overall academic achievement. According to Moats (1999),

Reading is the fundamental skill upon which all formal education depends. Research now shows that a child who doesn't learn the reading basics early is unlikely to learn them at all. Any child who doesn't learn to read early and well will not easily master other skills and knowledge, and is unlikely to ever flourish in school or in life. (p. 5)

A child's earliest experiences with reading are crucial; they lay the groundwork for development along a continuum of abilities that expedite future success. In their joint position statement, the International Reading Association and the U.S. National Association for the Education of Young Children (1998) stressed the importance of establishing this early foundation.

Learning to read and write is critical to a child's success in school and later in life. One of the best predictors of whether a child will function competently in school and go on to contribute actively in our increasingly literate society is the level to which the child progresses in reading and writing. Although reading and writing abilities continue to develop throughout the life span, the early childhood years—from birth through age eight—are the most important period for literacy development.

How do children acquire essential early literacy skills?

While formal education has a tremendous impact on a child's development, research consistently points to parents as the originating source of literacy experiences for their children. According to Shonkoff and Phillips (2000),

A vast store of research...has confirmed that what young children learn, how they react to the events and people around them, and what they expect from themselves and others are deeply affected by their relationships with parents, the behavior of parents and the environment of the homes in which they live. Even when young children spend most of their waking hours in child care, parents remain the most influential adults in their lives. (p. 226)

Gopnik (2000) stated that "we have undeniable evidence that babies and those who care for them together seem to be a beautifully designed system for human learning" (p. 6). Although research supports this intrinsic system of learning between parent and child, we must also recognize that learning, specifically reading development, does not happen by accident. Studies continually link parents' education with the academic achievement of their children. One study of kindergartners by Denton and Germino-Hausken (2000) showed that as a mother's education increases, so do the reading and math scores of her child. Another study by Britto and Brooks-Gunn (2001) specifically correlated the education level of a mother to her child's vocabulary skills. According to Primavera (2000), parent-child literacy activities in the home, such as helping children recognize letters, reading to

children, or assisting children with reading and writing assignments, improve children's language skills and heighten their interest in books.

A systematic approach

Reading is a complex skill that requires a systematic approach to instruction. When that approach is linked to a child's home environment and interactions with parents or intimate caregivers, the likelihood for success is enhanced. In the United States, comprehensive family literacy services, as defined by federal legislation, are one approach that intentionally structures multigenerational reading instruction across four interdependent components: children's education, parenting education (Parent Time), interactive literacy activities between parents and children (Parent and Child Together Time), and adult education.

In family literacy programs, the children's education component is designed to promote young children's growth and development and also engage parents in their child's educational process by fostering meaningful involvement. Parent Time offers parents a forum to learn specific strategies to support their children's literacy development, guided by both the adult educator and their children's teachers. The content for Parent Time draws directly from the child's curriculum and current reading ability. During Parent and Child Together (PACT) Time, parents and children come together to practice reading and other literacy skills under the supervision of instructors who honor parents' significant roles in their children's literacy development. Parents try out new strategies that they can then transfer home.

The significance of the adult education component as it pertains to children's literacy development is easy to overlook. The obvious connection is that as parents increase their education, they are more likely to provide an economically stable home environment. The 2000 unemployment rate for adults 25 years old and over who had not completed high school was 6.4%, compared with 3.5% for those with four years of high school and 1.7% for those with a bachelor's degree or higher (U.S. Department of Education, 2001b). As household income and parental level of education increase,

so too does parental involvement in a child's school experience (U.S. Department of Education, 2001a).

A subtler link occurs as parents change their perspective on literacy, recognizing and capitalizing on their role as their child's first and most important teacher. As parents' reading and basic skills increase, they are better equipped to support their child's education. In turn, as they increase their understanding of how their child learns, they often gain new understanding about how they themselves learn. This can be a powerful motivator for adults to continue working toward their own educational goals while becoming more involved in their child's literacy development.

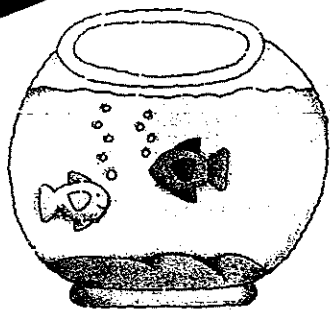
In a comprehensive approach, the four components of children's education, Parent Time, PACT Time, and adult education are integrated to create a system of influence that has an impact on children, adults, and the learning relationship between them. The following is an example of how this system can work to provide intentional experiences that build on systematic reading instruction.

During story hour, a kindergartner enjoys listening to her teacher read out loud to the class, pointing out words that "sound the same," which the teacher calls rhyming words. The kindergartner feels confident when the teacher calls her to the front of the room to pick out rhyming words from the story.

In Parent Time, the kindergartner's father learns that repeating and copying down rhyming words that he points out for his child can enhance her "ear for language" and her "eye for words." The father learns that these are important steps in building phonological, phonemic, and eventually phonic development. He jokes that it's a lot easier to remember "eyes" and "ears" than all those "P" words!

When the kindergartner and her father are united in PACT Time, she proudly shows him the chart and the rhyming words she correctly identified during story hour. Later, as the teacher reads a familiar rhyming book out loud to the whole group, the father listens to the teacher pause to let the children complete the sentences. The father notices how the children are able to identify many of the rhyming words on their own.

Following PACT Time, the father practices word analysis in his adult education class, identifying word families and creating real words by attaching different consonants to the word families. Next, everyone in the class reads an article and highlights the word patterns they are working on. The father realizes how closely related his own reading work is to that of his daughter.



Parent involvement in children's acquisition of reading

Sharon Darling, Laura Westberg

Parent involvement has a positive influence on student achievement (Epstein, Clark, Salinas, & Sanders, 1997; Jordan, Snow, & Porche, 2000; Shaver & Walls, 1998; Westat & Policy Studies Associates, 2001). In addition, evidence demonstrates that parent involvement at home has a more significant impact on children than it does in school activities (Christenson & Sheridan, 2001; Hickman, Greenwood, & Miller, 1995; Izzo, Weissberg, Kaspro, & Fendrich, 1999; Trusty, 1999).

The National Reading Panel (National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, 2000) report provided educators with important scientific evidence about effective classroom practices for reading instruction in the United States. This report, however, did not address the impact parents have on their children's reading achievement or how educators might support parents in helping their children learn to read.

The lack of clear scientific evidence on the effectiveness of parent involvement in children's reading acquisition led the National Center for Family Literacy, with funding from the National Institute for Literacy, to conduct a meta-analysis of the research literature to determine the effect of parent involvement on the reading acquisition of children from kindergarten to grade 3 (Sénéchal, in press). The primary goal of this meta-analysis was to inform those working in family literacy and related fields so that they may better equip parents to support their children's literacy development. A second goal was to extend the scientific evidence provided by the National Reading Panel and supplement the current evidence on parent involvement in general. In this column, we describe the

methodology of the meta-analysis, share the results, and outline some implications for practice.

Methodology

For the purposes of this meta-analysis, parent involvement in literacy acquisition was narrowly defined to include parent-child activities that focus on reading. Reading acquisition, as a general term, refers to the early literacy behaviors of children in kindergarten as well as the more advanced behaviors of children in grade 3. Thus, reading acquisition includes early literacy behaviors such as knowledge of letter names and letter sounds, phoneme awareness, and early decoding abilities, as well as word recognition and reading comprehension.

Three categories of questions were addressed. The first two were related to whether the characteristics of (a) the interventions and (b) the sample affected the impact of parent involvement. Interventions were defined for purposes of this study as intentional teacher-parent interactions intended to influence the way parents support their children's reading; these interventions may have included direct training, parent workshops, and materials sent home to parents. The third category concerned questions about the design of studies. This article focuses on the first two categories; those interested in the third category may contact the National Center for Family Literacy at www.famlit.org for the complete technical report.

A search of the research literature was conducted through electronic databases, review articles, and reference lists from the selected databases and review articles. For the electronic searches,

three categories of search terms on parent involvement, literacy, and grade level were used. Articles selected for coding had to be studies that

- (a) were published in a peer-reviewed journal;
- (b) used an experimental or quasi-experimental design or a pretest-posttest design;
- (c) tested the hypothesis that parent involvement affects the acquisition of reading;
- (d) included at least five participants; and
- (e) reported statistics permitting the calculation or estimation of effect sizes, or reported effect sizes.

The coding instrument included three sections with studies coded on dimensions for intervention, participant, and study characteristics.

Results

A total of 20 interventions representing 1,583 families were meta-analyzed. Results clearly show that parent involvement has a positive effect on

children's reading acquisition. The three types of parent involvement (see Figure) identified in this research differed in their effectiveness.

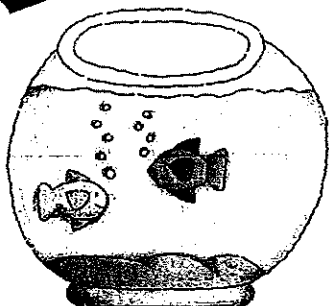
Training parents to teach their children reading with specific exercises produced greater results than having parents listen to their child read with or without training. In addition, training parents to listen to their child read was two times more effective than having parents listen to their child read without training. Due to considerable variability of the studies within the three intervention types, results must be interpreted with caution.

Interventions four months or shorter were more effective than interventions longer than five months. The amount of training and any supportive feedback the parents received had no impact on the effectiveness of the intervention.

Parent involvement had a positive effect on children from kindergarten to grade 3. In addition, the interventions were as effective for children at risk for or experiencing reading difficulties as they were for typically developing children. Socio-economic status of the participating families did not affect the positive effect of the interventions.

Types of parent involvement

Type	Description
Listen to child read (3 studies)	In these studies, parents were encouraged to listen to their child read. Teachers provided specific suggestions to the parents. Suggestions included reading locations, talking about a story before reading it, encouraging children, avoiding criticism, and using good reading practices. In all of these studies, books were sent home from school.
Trained to listen (7 studies)	Techniques to train parents varied and included corrective feedback; the paired reading technique; using sentence context to determine the correct word; using initial phoneme sound to guide word choice; encouraging children to self-correct; praising children; using meaning, context, and phonic cues instead of direct word prompts; and delaying intervention when children struggled to read a word. In two of these studies, parents read books to their children. In all but one of the studies in this category books were sent home from school.
Trained to teach (10 studies)	Parents were trained to teach their children specific reading skills. Strategies included using flashcards with children learning to read new words, sentences with these new words, and letter names; selecting reading environments; correcting children's errors; teaching letter-sound correspondence and letter-sound blending; helping children learn to read one-syllable words; recognizing and saying beginning consonant and ending vowel-consonant sounds; and blending beginning and ending sounds to sound out new words. In four studies, parents were given a structured program that included exercises and texts with controlled difficulty levels. In some cases, the texts promoted specific letter-sound knowledge or reading specific words. In three studies parents were trained to use reading programs: <i>Teach Your Child to Read in 100 Easy Lessons</i> (Engelmann, Haddox, & Bruner, 1983), the Reading Recovery model, and the <i>Reading Made Easy</i> program (Harrison, 1981).



Strategies for engaging parents in home support of reading acquisition

Sharon Darling

In their report, the National Reading Panel (National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, 2000) identified five key areas of reading instruction for children from kindergarten to grade 3: phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and text comprehension. Other studies show that understanding how print is used, as well as having knowledge of letters, affects children's reading ability in primary grades (Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998). In their synthesis of the scientific research on early literacy development, the National Early Literacy Panel (National Institute for Literacy, 2004) determined that print concepts, writing, and invented spelling among others, are key predictors for reading at school age.

Evidence suggests that when teachers and parents partner to support children's reading and academic achievement, at-risk children exhibit demonstrable gains. The U.S. Department of Education's (2001) *Longitudinal Evaluation of School Change and Performance in Title I Schools* followed the progress of students as they moved from third to fifth grade in 71 high-poverty schools. Growth in reading scores between third and fifth grades was 50% higher for those students whose teachers and schools reported high levels of early parental outreach than for those students whose teachers and schools reported low levels of parent outreach activities for the third grade. According to Livingston and Wirt (2003), children with richer home literacy environments demonstrate higher levels of reading skills and knowledge when they enter kindergarten than do children with less literacy-rich environments. A Teacher Report on

Student Performance Survey was developed by the National Center for Family Literacy to gather opinions about children participating in the Toyota Families in Schools (TFS) program, as well as a comparison group of classmates whose parents did not participate in family literacy. Teachers were asked to assess students on nine domains, including overall academic performance, motivation to learn, support from family, and likelihood of future school success. TFS children were rated significantly higher by their teachers in all nine domains than the randomly selected comparison children (Hill, 2003).

Children benefit when teachers and parents reinforce the same concepts and ideas. For this to happen, teachers and parents must have some knowledge of what happens in the classroom and what happens at home that support reading acquisition. The following are strategies teachers can share with parents to help them support reading instruction.

Phonemic awareness

In the classroom

Phonemic awareness improves children's word reading, reading comprehension, and spelling. There are a number of strategies teachers can employ in the classroom, such as using songs, rhymes, poems, and chants; working with syllables; concentrating on the beginning sounds of words; and playing word games.

At home

To support their child's phonemic awareness, parents can

- Sing alphabet songs with their child;
- Read stories that their child chooses;
- Help their child clap the beats or syllables in words;
- Point out letters, especially letters in their child's name;
- Play with language and rhymes; and
- Sing songs that manipulate phonemes, such as The Name Game.

Phonics

In the classroom

Systematic and explicit phonics instruction improves students' word recognition, spelling, and comprehension. Some strategies teachers can use include helping children relate letters to sounds and decode words in stories, providing opportunities for children to spell words and write stories using letter-sound relationships, and practicing word families.

At home

To support phonics instruction, parents can

- Talk with the teacher about their child's phonics progress,
- Encourage children to point to words and say them out loud when writing,
- Listen to their child read,
- Help children sort words by long- and short-vowel sounds,
- Help children define larger words by breaking them into smaller chunks, and
- Play spelling and word games like Scrabble and Hang Man.

Fluency

In the classroom

Fluency can be developed by modeling fluent reading and having students engage in repeated

oral reading. Oral reading strategies for teachers include student-adult reading one on one, choral reading, tape-assisted reading, partner reading, and Readers Theatre.

At home

To support the development of fluency, parents can

- Read aloud often, encouraging their child to read aloud;
- Let their child choose books to read and reread favorite books;
- Model reading for fun and pleasure;
- Act out a book or story;
- Read aloud a sentence and then invite their child to read the same sentence (i.e., echo reading);
- Help their child read new words and talk about the meaning; and
- Talk with their child when they go to the library about how to pick out books of interest at an appropriate reading level.

Vocabulary

In the classroom

Vocabulary can be developed indirectly when students engage daily in oral language, listen to adults read, and read extensively on their own. It can also be developed directly when students are taught individual words and word-learning strategies. Teachers promote vocabulary development by adding new words into meaningful conversations, teaching specific words before reading, and providing new and different experiences for children to research and talk about.

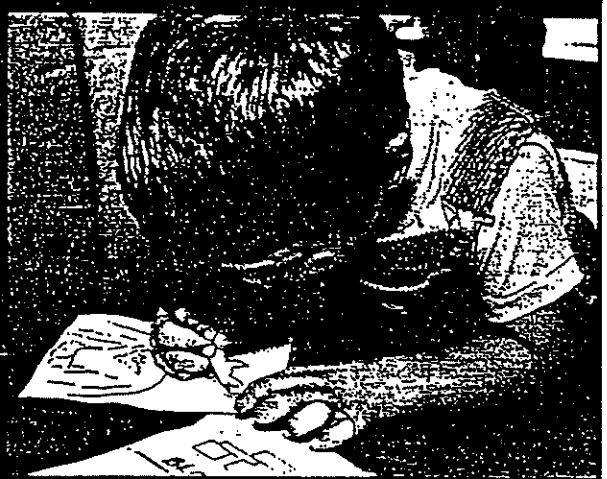
At home

To support the development of vocabulary, parents can

- Read aloud a variety of genres,
- Talk with their child about daily events and about books they read together,
- Talk about how the illustrations and text in a book support each other,

The three R's spell SUCCESS

(sək-ses') *n.* 1. The achievement of something desired, planned or attempted.



Family literacy programs help children with the developmental skills they need to succeed in school.
Photo: National Center for Family Literacy.

Millions of families across the United States seem trapped by a lack of education and ensuing poverty. An uneducated parent who lacks jobs skills cannot support a family. What began as an education problem becomes an economic problem for the whole family.

Children of undereducated parents are at grave risk of continuing the cycle. Fewer are in preschool programs, and more fail or drop out of school than do the children of more educated parents.

Family literacy programs address literacy across two generations, providing remediation for parents and prevention for children simultaneously. The primary goal of a family literacy program is to break the intergenerational cycle of a poor education and poverty. Family literacy does so by improving parents' basic skills, self-sufficiency and parenting skills, children's school readiness skills, and the quality of parent-child relationships. Four components of a family literacy program include parent literacy training, early childhood education, time together for parents and children, and parenting and life skills development.

Sharon Darling is president of the National Center for Family Literacy.

Education can help families break out of poverty when parents, as well as children, become literate.

BY SHARON DARLING

A typical day in a family literacy program starts with parents and children leaving for school together. Parents attend adult basic education classes while the children participate in early education classes. Later, parents participate in programs to enhance their job and educational opportunities and promote self-sufficiency. They also learn positive parenting techniques. Then parents and children spend time together in the classroom, enabling them to develop better relationships.

Because family literacy preserves and strengthens families, creates self-sufficient families and expands work and training opportunities, it provides a model for a coordinated system of services that maximize scarce dollars for welfare reform. For families to escape the welfare cycle, literacy is key to long-term success. Statistics show a strong link between poverty and lack of education. Consider the following:

- 40 percent of female single parents have an eighth grade education or less,
- 75 percent of female heads of households with less than a high school education live in poverty.

Also consider that children's literacy levels are strongly linked to their parents' educational levels, especially their mothers', and there is an even stronger case for a family approach to education to break welfare dependency.

Literacy leads to success

Studies show that family literacy improves family life and improves the lives of families. Research shows that when families learn together in family literacy programs, they begin to read together, go to the library together and spend more quality time together. In a recent study, 79 percent of those who enrolled completed the program, and 83 percent of the adults in those families completed requirements for GED certification or a diploma.

The data also show that gains parents and children make in family literacy programs continue after they leave the programs. A follow-up study showed that one year after the program, 66 percent of the adults were

either employed, enrolled in another educational program, or had definite plans for continuing education.

In another follow-up study of different families two years after completing the program, 71 percent are either employed, enrolled in higher education or assuming a role as homemaker in a stable family. Among these adults, 38 percent more are employed than were before the program.

Family literacy parents take a much more active role in their children's education, and the children do much better in school than would have been otherwise expected. The parents volunteer in their children's schools, maintain contact with teachers and support their children's education activities at home. The children enter school ready to learn and progress in school.

All follow-up studies of family literacy children show a consistent pattern of performance. They are not being retained in grades nor being placed in special programs at near the rates otherwise expected for them. Their teachers consistently rate family-literacy children highly, with over 75 percent of these children at or above the average for their class on academic performance, motivation to learn, support from family, self-confidence and probable school success. They are rated even higher — generally over 85 percent at or above class average — on relations with other students, attendance and classroom behavior. Furthermore, more than half of the teachers initiate a response of "support from parents" when they are asked to list strengths of the children.

Although they come from a population of children classified as "at-risk" for school failure, a study of children who participated with their parents in the Kenan Trust Family Literacy Project found that label no longer applied. The study showed that after one year in the program, more than 90 percent of the children were judged by their teacher as ready for entry into

kindergarten with no expected academic or social difficulties. Once in school, the percentage of these children rated average or above in their class by their teacher was 75 percent on overall academic performance, 84 percent on motivation to learn, 78 percent on support from parents, 90 percent in relations with other students, 87 percent in attendance, 89 percent in classroom behavior, 75 percent in self-confidence and 85 percent in probable school success.

Road to welfare reform

While family literacy may have a profound impact on individual families, its impact extends beyond the fam-

- And according to the Census Bureau, workers who lack a high school diploma have a mean monthly income of \$452, compared to the \$1,829 earned monthly by those with a bachelor's degree.

- The average annual cost per pupil in public school for 1990 was almost \$5,000 — and that is only part of the cost incurred every time a child must repeat a grade.

Consider the societal impact of families getting off the welfare rolls and parents entering the work force, of adults who have increased earning potential because they have a higher level of education, and of children who are prepared for school success



ily. It touches the communities in which these families live, the states in which the communities are located and the nation.

It might be useful to look at some indicators of the widespread lack of education:

- In 1993, the National Adult Literacy Survey made headlines with its revelation that 90 million American adults have literacy skills in the lowest two levels, making it difficult for them to fully function in society.

- In 1991, 4.4 million families received Aid to Families with Dependent Children, with an average payment of \$389 per family per month. That added up to \$20.5 billion in total assistance.

and don't have to repeat grades.

Addressing welfare and education reform through family literacy is an opportunity to address the following four tenets:

- Cease financial dependency on a government system

The National Adult Literacy Survey concludes that adults with proficiency within the two lowest levels of literacy are far less likely than their more literate peers to be employed full time, to earn high wages and to vote. Moreover, they are more likely to depend on food stamps, to live in poverty and to rely on nonprint sources for information about current events, public affairs and government. Individuals with

poor skills do not have much to bargain with, they are condemned to low earnings and limited choices. Poor skills translate to welfare dependency.

- Provide work and training opportunities

Family literacy programs instruct parents in basic skills based upon their needs and goals for self-sufficiency.

relationships. Parents who bring these new skills into the home replace the legacy of failure with success.

- Create programs that focus on outcomes for communities through coordination and collaboration of existing services

A welfare recipient is more likely to transition to self-support when there

literacy programs identify family needs and provide the vehicle to implement community coordination. Family literacy programs deal with families. They are more than adult education or child-development programs. A family literacy program capitalizes on elements of both and facilitates a multifaceted approach that pulls similar programs together.

With Congress' resolve to balance the federal budget and return responsibilities for many welfare programs to states through block grants, states will be faced with redesigning services within fixed budgets. There are many public funding sources which may support family literacy services. Some can serve as primary funding sources by covering the cost of core services like adult education and preschool instruction. Others can serve as supplementary funding sources, for example, providing staff and in-service training or transportation for families.

Block grants could simplify delivery systems to better fit the needs of families and children. Family literacy is an intergenerational program that seeks to solve the problems of parents and children. It helps young children get the best possible start in life and at the same time helps their parents become economically self-sufficient. □



The instruction is presented in context with the literacy skills the parent needs to function as parent, consumer, employee and citizen. Parents are expected to pursue high-school diplomas, vocational opportunities and further education and training.

- Preserve and strengthen the family unit

Family literacy preserves the family unit by recognizing that the parent is the first and prime educator of a child. It helps parents get the skills they need for self-sufficiency and to help their children succeed.

Early results from evaluations of family literacy programs indicate that families gain from combining the four components of family literacy programs. Parents learn how to teach their children through play. They communicate with their children and often develop more positive, supportive

is synergy in the community and coordinated services. Being able to manage one's affairs, being part of a community setting, and having access to both mental and physical health services can assist a welfare recipient in the quest for self-sufficiency. By coordinating systems, family literacy programs maximize resources offered to families.

Family literacy programs seldom rely on the resources of a single agency. They often do not require new dollars but a reallocation of resources from programs that often don't work. Family literacy builds on existing programs such as adult education, Head Start, family support centers, job training programs and early childhood programs. This holistic approach helps existing programs be more effective.

Families have a variety of needs that can be best met through a collaboration of services and resources. Family

Resources

For more, contact:

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Sharon Darling

Family Literacy: Meeting the Needs of At-Risk Families



Family literacy is an educational strategy developed by the National Center for Family Literacy to meet the needs of at-risk families. It brings parents and children together to learn and acknowledges the important role that parents have in their children's language and literacy development. Family literacy is based on the premise that a child's first and most influential teacher is the parent. It capitalizes on parents' motivation to do what is best for their children, fostering in families a love of learning, not just as a temporary patch, but as a permanent solution that will last a lifetime.

THE NEED

Each day 34 million people in our country wake to a world that brings them too little to eat and too little to wear, housing that is inadequate and unsafe, and minimal health and child care. According to *Poverty in the United States: 2002*, this figure represents the number of Americans who are living in poverty — an increase of 7.1 million since 2001. The National Center for Children in Poverty reports that in 2000, 2.1 million children under age three were living in poverty and that in 2001, 5 million American children were living in extreme poverty.

These are compelling figures. What does living in poverty mean for these Americans?

Poverty is a serious problem with many complex and deep-rooted causes, the most obvious of which is an economic one. In 2002, the poverty threshold for a family of four was \$18,400, while severe poverty meant having an income less than half of this — an annual income of \$9,200 or less for a family of

four. Low income is often the catalyst for problems such as malnutrition, abuse and neglect, inadequate housing, and lack of support systems that ensure high-quality child care, health care, and safety.

Certainly, one of the underlying causes of unemployment, underemployment, and poverty is low-level literacy skills. According to the 1992 National Adult Literacy Survey (NALS), individuals with high levels of literacy are more likely to be employed, work more, and earn more than individuals demonstrating lower proficiencies. Individuals at the lowest literacy level have median weekly earnings that are \$450 less than those at the highest level (\$23,400 less per year). The survey also found that 40 to 44 million adults in the United States have literacy skills at the lowest level, and nearly half of these adults live in poverty. The correlation is clear — lack of education contributes to being poor.

Performing at the lowest literacy level of the NALS means being unable to read a bedtime story, a prescription label, or a note from a teacher. It means lacking the skills necessary to read and fill out a job application, to decode a bus schedule, or to understand a tax statement. Some respondents had such limited skills that they were able to respond to only a small part of the survey.

Many parents who struggle with supporting their families economically also face enormous challenges when trying to support their children's language and literacy development. Poverty creates its own priorities, and parents who are facing the many challenges of poverty often find it difficult to view education as a priority — either for themselves or for their children.

Children of parents who lack basic literacy skills are less likely to have access to reading and writing materials at home, to have educational opportunities outside of the home, and are less likely to be enrolled in pre-kindergarten programs. They also are less likely to observe role models who are reading and writing throughout the day.

In their book, *Meaningful Differences in the Everyday Experience of Young American Children*, Hart and Risley (1995) describe a lack of language experience that plagues children in poverty. Their study found that children in professional families will hear 20 million more words by age three than children in welfare families. Hart and Risley found that the differences in language interactions between parent and child in the early years were directly reflected in a child's vocabulary growth and use of vocabulary, two measures of an individual's ability to succeed both in school and in the workplace.

Parents are their children's first and most important teachers. If parents lack the skills that they need to encourage and enhance their children's language and literacy development — a primary predictor of academic success — their children are more at risk of failing in school.

By the time that disadvantaged children enter kindergarten, their dearth of language experiences and limited exposure to a varied vocabulary can be difficult to overcome and may result in a frustrating school experience. As teenagers, these children may find leaving school an easy alternative to struggling to keep up.

The intergenerational cycle of poverty is a self-perpetuating one, as low literacy skills are passed down from parent to child in a legacy of want. How can we help families — not just adults, not just children, but *families* — to break this cycle? One solution is to give families the opportunity to learn and grow together, as a unit, building on the strengths of each other.

A SOLUTION

The National Center for Family Literacy (NCFL), located in Louisville, Kentucky, is a nonprofit organization founded in 1989 with a grant from the William R. Kenan, Jr. Charitable Trust. NCFL devel-

oped a comprehensive system that stresses adult literacy, parenting, children's education, and interactive literacy experiences between parents and children. Through these four components, family literacy programs provide integrated learning experiences based on families' educational needs.

The *adult education* component addresses the literacy goals of adults. Parents pursue their educational and career goals, gaining the skills that they need to be effective employees, active community members, and leaders and supporters of their families. Comprehensive family literacy services include a focus different from stand-alone adult education programs — working within a family context to make learning relevant for adults as they strive toward their goals and the goals that they have for their children's future.

Children's education, designed to promote the growth and development of young children, focuses on the whole child, emphasizing language and literacy development and fostering cognitive, social, and emotional skills. This component engages parents in their child's education to foster meaningful involvement that can be main-

tained throughout the child's educational experience.

Parent Time provides opportunities for parents to learn more about their children's social, emotional, and cognitive growth, develop parenting skills and life competencies, and bond with other parents for support and friendship. Through Parent Time sessions, parents increase their knowledge of their children's language and literacy development and the important role that they play in that development. Parents also practice problem-solving and learn about resources available in their community.

Parent and Child Together (PACT) Time is a regularly scheduled time for parents and their children to come together to read, work, learn, and play. During this time, parents learn how to create and extend the meaningful intentional interactions with their child that can lead to enhanced language, literacy, and emotional and cognitive development. As instructors model ways to support and extend children's learning, parents recognize opportunities

Children of parents who lack basic literacy skills are less likely to have access to reading and writing materials at home, to have educational opportunities outside of the home, and are less likely to be enrolled in pre-kindergarten programs. They also are less likely to observe role models who are reading and writing throughout the day.

to interact with children during everyday routines at home or in the community.

Family literacy programs operate throughout the country, in urban and rural areas, preschools and elementary schools, and community-based and faith-based organizations. They consistently serve those populations most in need. Family literacy as a formal educational approach has been recognized through a federal legislative definition that includes programs administered by the U.S. Department of Education and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

CENTER INITIATIVES

The NCFL has pioneered family literacy in the United States and supports it in myriad ways. We provide training to the staff of the 6,000 family literacy programs nationwide as well as develop resources for their use. Key to our approach is identifying and applying research to inform our training and to ensure that programs are on a path of continuous improvement and that the services which families receive are of high quality. We serve as advocates for legislation and funding, and we develop program models to explore new strategies in family education.

One of our most enduring initiatives is the Family and Child Education (FACE) program. The FACE program is a collaboration led by the Bureau of Indian Affairs and includes the Parents as Teachers and Engage Learning programs. It has been serving American Indian parents and their children for more than a decade. Though all family literacy programs honor the cultures of the diverse populations served, nowhere is the concern for preserving culture and language more prevalent than in the FACE program. With literacy as the vehicle, FACE programs use language and culture to provide relevant educational experiences for American Indian families.

Our newest initiative, which also infuses education with culturally relevant learning activities, builds on the experiences gained through the FACE program and other initiatives working with widely diverse, high-risk populations. The Hispanic Family Literacy Institute (HFLI), established with an initial \$3.2 million grant from longtime partner Toyota, seeks to expand and enhance family literacy services for the educational, social, and economic advancement of Hispanic and other immigrant families in need.

As the Hispanic population continues to grow (it is now the largest minority population in our country and has the highest school-dropout rate of any of our populations), providing for the needs of these families has become a priority not only in large cities

but in small communities as well. Hispanic children entering our school systems often have parents who do not speak English well, may not be literate in their own language, and do not have the necessary skills to compete in the workforce. Never has the need for intergenerational programs been more pronounced.

As part of HFLI, the Toyota Family Literacy Program (TFLP) has been implemented at fifteen sites in five cities with high percentages of immigrant populations. TFLP is designed to help bridge the gap between Hispanic families and schools — a gap created in part by language and educational barriers as well as by poverty. These program models will guide our training services and the development of improved family literacy services for English language learners.

HFLI will enable NCFL to develop an array of resources and programs to help educators understand and honor the rich cultural and family-oriented experiences of Hispanic families.

ADVANTAGES OF FAMILY LITERACY

The flexibility of family literacy makes it a solution to a variety of needs. Many programs incorporate the philosophies of family literacy into their existing services. One major advantage of family literacy as an intervention is that it does not require the creation of new government programs or funding streams. Rather, it builds on existing public support for parental involvement and children's education through programs such as Title I, Reading First, Even Start, and Language Instruction for Limited English Proficient and Immigrant Students. We are reaching out to families in many ways to empower parents to seek educational improvement for themselves and to help their children to learn.

Volunteerism is an increasingly important element in the broad literacy spectrum. NCFL offers a variety of services that takes advantage of the latest technology to support volunteers and programs. By increasing the capacity of programs to use and train volunteers, family literacy can reach the maximum number of parents and children seeking to improve their education.

Verizon Literacy University (VLU) is the first online university dedicated solely to literacy. It is designed to provide better-prepared volunteers and program staff to support literacy organizations. Through an interactive Web site (www.vluonline.org), VLU offers online courses free to potential volunteers, existing volunteers, and program staff to help them all make the most of their volunteer experience. VLU also provides resources

that help users understand the need for literacy services throughout the nation.

Vital to the success of family literacy is making sure that families in need connect to the programs that can help them. Funding from the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation has made possible a national public-service advertising campaign that, along with the Ad Council, is spreading the word about the availability and effectiveness of family literacy. As part of this wide-scale project, and with support from the William R. Kenan, Jr. Charitable Trust, NCFL operates a toll-free call center. Those who call the Family Literacy InfoLine (1-877-FAMLIT-1) in response to the ads have their questions answered by a live operator in English or Spanish. Those with Internet connections can visit NCFL's Web site at www.famlit.org to access a Family Literacy Program Directory, which helps users find a family literacy program in their area.

Family literacy provides holistic services that prepare adults for the workplace and help them fulfill supportive roles as parents. At the same time, family literacy fosters bright futures for children by preparing them for academic success in school. When we give low-income families the tools to create better lives for themselves, we are investing not only in families but also in America's future.

Berta Perez, a student speaker at the 2002 National Conference for Family Literacy in Albuquerque, New Mexico, was a family literacy participant, received her GED, and then began a full-time job working in the family literacy program that she had attended. Her words serve as testimony to the power of family literacy:

It is such a great feeling to be able to work in the same family literacy program that taught me to become the person I am today. Every time we get a new student, I see myself standing in the doorway, unsure of my future, unable to speak English, but longing for a better life. I am so happy that I can be a living example of the power of family literacy. They can look at me and say to themselves, if she can do it, so can I. Most of all, my children will know that determination, hard work, and education will open doors and allow you to fly like an eagle.

NCFL relies on private donations to design and sustain programs that meet the most urgent needs of disadvantaged families. Many organizations, including *Worth* magazine, have recognized NCFL as one of the nation's leading charities. NCFL was recently recognized by the Committee to Encourage Corporate Philanthropy as one of three finalists

for the 2003 Excellence in Corporate Philanthropy Directors Award. The award recognizes nonprofit organizations for exemplary efforts in building effective partnerships with corporations.

With the support of many corporations, foundations, organizations, and countless individuals who have given their time and talents as well as their treasures, family literacy is reaching families and, as Berta demonstrates, is making a difference in their lives.

For more information about family literacy and the National Center for Family Literacy, visit our Web site at www.famlit.org or call the Family Literacy InfoLine at 1-877-FAMLIT-1.



Sharon Darling has been a teacher, administrator, and educational entrepreneur, receiving recognition for her groundbreaking work and leadership in the field of education. She serves as an advisor on education issues to governors, policy makers, business leaders, and foundations throughout the nation. Her work has been instrumental in shaping state and federal policies and laws that address critical societal issues such as welfare reform, education reform, and the development of the skilled workforce of tomorrow. Her many awards and recognitions include the 2001 National Humanities Medal awarded by President and Mrs. Bush; the Albert Schweitzer Prize for Humanitarianism, Johns Hopkins University, 1998; and the Charles A. Dana Award for Pioneering Achievement in Education, 1996. Ms. Darling is a member of Phi Kappa Phi.

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