Parents as Teachers launches Women’s Partnership Network to deepen community engagement

**Professional women meet to share life’s experiences with young moms**

**St. Louis, MO – Oct. 30, 2018** – In efforts to deepen its community engagement in St. Louis and beyond, Parents as Teachers (PAT), a non-profit, internationally-recognized leader in the early childhood development home visiting field, has launched a Women’s Partnership Network comprised of local influential, professional women.

The organization recently held a “Professional Women’s Engagement Café” at its headquarters here to introduce the network. One Thursday evening, PAT brought together 18 professional women and several young mothers who receive PAT services via its Show Me Strong Families community outreach program. They gathered to participate in a life sharing exercise to explore their paths toward success and the challenges of motherhood, respectively.

“We created this network and subsequent event as an opportunity to have a positive effect on the lives of young mothers served by our organization, and to illustrate the collective impact PAT and these accomplished women can have on enriching the lives of people living in underserved communities,” said Constance Gully, PAT president and chief executive officer. Gully opened the event with a welcome.

PAT board member and Build-A-Bear Workshop Founder Maxine Clark, along with City of St. Louis Treasurer Tishaura Jones, Dr. Sharonica Hardin-Bartley, superintendent of the University City School District, Jessica Adams, executive director of the St. Louis Area Diaper Bank, and Jackie Hamilton, chief development officer with Beyond Housing, were among the invited guests.

“I loved every minute of it,” remarked Clark. Adams echoed her sentiments, saying, “What a great idea and so well executed. It was really more of a group sharing session than us sharing with them (young mothers), which I absolutely loved.”

Also present were Rhonda Adams, corporate diversity lead for Illinois Water; Rebecca Fritsch, vice president/Commercial Relationship Manager at Monsanto Corp., and Sylvia Jackson, executive director of the Women’s Safe House, just to name a few.
About 20 local mothers came with their children. The kids enjoyed pizza and games under the watchful eye of PAT childcare providers. The adults feasted on a catered dinner followed by roundtable discussions. Each woman answered prepared questions ranging from “Why is it important to further your education”, to, “how do you balance work and personal life”, to, “do you have tips for accomplishing goals?”

A poignant moment in the program came when Ellicia Lanier, associate professor at St. Louis Community College at Florissant Valley, stood and delivered a somewhat raw and moving account of her years as a teen. The feeling in the room was palpable, as all listened intently.

Ellicia, now 37, told how as a 17-year-old pregnant teen, she sought refuge in the Missouri Baptist Children’s Home in Bridgeton, MO., where she stayed until meeting a PAT parent educator who would change her life forever.

Parent educators are trained in PAT’s early childhood development home visiting model. They make personal home visits and help new mothers with parenting skills, among other services. Ellicia’s parent educator helped her set family goals around earning a GED.

She would eventually give birth, earn a college degree, and start her own business - Urban Sprouts Child Development Center in University City. Her triumphant story galvanized the group and brought the audience to its feet in applause. The evening concluded with each participant receiving parting gifts and the assurance that similar events would be staged in the future.

Becky Moss, PAT’s chief development officer, who spearheaded the event, said, “Our goal was to create a forum for women from diverse backgrounds to share experiences and learn from each other. This exercise, along with other outreach efforts, will help us expand our community involvement and bring together people and resources to help empower families.”

If you would like to learn more about the Women’s Partnership Network, contact Becky Moss at 314-432-4330 ext. 1283 or by email at Becky.Moss@ParentsAsTeachers.org.

About Parents as Teachers
Parents as Teachers (PAT) builds strong communities, thriving families, and children that are healthy, safe and ready to learn by matching parents and caregivers with trained professionals who make regular personal home visits during a child’s earliest years in life, from pregnancy through kindergarten. The internationally-recognized evidence-based home visiting model is backed by 35 years of research-proven outcomes for children and families. PAT currently serves nearly 200,000 families in all 50 U.S. states, 115 Tribal organizations, six other countries, and one U.S. territory. Parents as Teachers National Center, Inc., is a non-profit organization headquartered in St. Louis, Missouri.

CUTLINES:
Build-A-Bear Workshop Founder Maxine Clark, a PAT board member (center) was one of 18 professional women who participated in round table discussions with some young mothers during a life sharing exercise at the first-ever Professional Women’s Engagement Café as part of Parents as Teachers’ newly-formed Women’s Partnership Network.

Ellicia Lanier, (standing) an associate professor at St. Louis Community College at Florissant Valley, addresses Parents as Teachers inaugural meeting of the Professional Women’s Engagement Café as part of PAT’s Women’s Partnership Network.