NEWS RELEASE

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Parents as Teachers Presents 2020 Virtual International Conference from its National Headquarters in St. Louis Oct. 5 - 8

Early childhood development, promoting parenting education, and strengthening families are the core of this year’s annual meeting

ST. LOUIS, MO – Sept. 11, 2020 – Some will sign on from business offices, some will join from the comfort of their own homes, and others will engage from wherever there’s Internet access. Regardless of where people will be joining from, each of them will be coming together for the same vehement purpose: to learn how to optimize home visiting as a strategy to support parents in developing their parenting capacities, and helping their children to reach their full potential.

They are the ardent advocates of strengthening families who will be attending the 2020 Parents as Teachers (PAT) Virtual International Conference on Oct. 5 – 8. Parents as Teachers, a leader in the national in-person and virtual home visiting field, is a 35-year-old non-profit organization specializing in early childhood development and parenting education through home visiting.

Originally slated for the Sheraton San Diego Hotel & Marina, the conference has shifted to a virtual format, due to the COVID-19 Crisis, and will be delivered primarily from PAT’s St. Louis-based headquarters. Throngs of early childhood development professionals and social services experts have registered under the theme of “Listen, Learn, Lead.” Last year, a record 1,600 parent educators attended the conference here in St. Louis. Registration for the virtual conference has now surpassed that number with nearly 1,800 registrants.

“When deciding to go virtual, we listened to health professionals and learned that the best way forward was to present a platform that would keep us the safest while providing our attendees with the highest quality professional development activities,” said Constance Gully, PAT’s president, and CEO.

The conference will encourage the exchange of ideas, all concentrated on early childhood home visiting, facilitated through more than 60 workshops and panel discussions. It will also include an Exhibitor Emporium, a virtual Networking Night Out, bingo, and Zumba and Yoga classes focused on strengthening the mind, body, and soul.
Presenters and workshops will focus on topics and themes such as community engagement, collaborations and partnerships, diversity, equity and inclusion, health and wellness, parenting and child development, serving multi-cultural groups, and parenting in a digital world.

In addition, the conference will feature a tribute to the Family and Child Education (FACE) program. FACE was initiated in 1990 by the Bureau of Indian Education (BIE) as an integrated model for an American Indian early childhood/parental involvement program that supports parents/primary caregivers in their role as their child’s first and most influential teacher.

FACE is implemented through a collaborative effort of the BIE, Parents as Teachers National Center, and the National Center for Families Learning to serve families with children prenatal to 5 years of age. To date, the program has touched the lives of more than 17,000 families throughout the Indian Nation.

Keynoting the event will be William Mervin “Billy” Mills, an Oglala Sioux Tribe member, and former track and field athlete who won a gold medal in the 10,000 meters run at the 1964 Tokyo Olympics; a victory considered one of the greatest Olympic upsets because he was an unknown and the first non-European to win the Olympic event and remains the only winner from the Americas.

Also keynoting during the conference will be Dr. Gail C. Christopher, founding president of The Ntianu Center for Nature and Healing, and former senior advisor and vice president at the W.K. Kellogg Foundation; and Dr. Dipesh Navsaria, a celebrated public speaker, pediatrician, children’s librarian, educator, and public health professional.

“In planning our first-ever virtual conference, our goal was to create the most cutting-edge, technologically advanced meeting available in cyberspace,” said Gully. “We wanted to make it easier than ever for anyone who cares about children and families to come together from wherever he or she lives to discuss the benefits of early childhood home visiting.”

The COVID-19 pandemic comes at a great cost to many families, particularly those who are under-resourced, isolated at home, missing paychecks, and struggling to make ends meet. In March, when the public health crisis first hit the U.S., PAT formed a rapid response collaborative to create and support the dissemination of free resources on virtual family interactions for home visitors.

Dubbed the Rapid Response Virtual Home Visiting (RR-VHV) collaborative, led by Parents as Teachers National Center, the Institute for the Advancement of Family Support Professionals, and the National Alliance of Home Visiting Models, the collaborative is funded by a $1.13 million grant from the Heising-Simons Foundation.

The RR-VHV collaboration—witnessing the social distancing measures put into place at the onset of the pandemic and the ensuing increased isolation of families—represents a full-throttle effort to provide rapid, best practice principles and strategies to support home visiting professionals in maintaining meaningful connections with families during the health crisis.

In June, PAT received a $100,000 grant from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation to help build the capacity of home visiting programs that deliver virtual services to children and families affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. The grant from the Battle Creek, Michigan-based Foundation provides core support for the PAT-led RR-VHV Collaborative.

“Providing immediate telehealth support for our front-line home visiting staff and the families they serve is our highest priority,” said Gully. “That’s why we must use this conference to Listen, Learn and Lead the way in bringing to bear the full scope of resources available to support families in need, and to continue to partner with organizations to improve the early development, learning and health outcomes for children across the world.”

For a complete line-up of conference activities, visit www.parentsasteachersconference.org.

About Parents as Teachers
Parents as Teachers 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.