



NEBRASKA HUMANITIES COUNCIL

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N E W S R E L E A S E

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NHC seeks new Prime Time applicants statewide

The Nebraska Humanities Council seeks to expand Prime Time Family Reading Time to public libraries in Nebraska communities and neighborhoods where student reading scores are not meeting state standards.

Since 2002, the Nebraska Humanities Council has funded Prime Time—a six-week reading and discussion program for low-income families with children ages six to 10—at 14 libraries and five schools in 13 communities across the state.

A recent study conducted by a University of Nebraska at Omaha research team confirmed the program's success at instilling in families a love for reading. The report included results from a survey of families who attended the fall 2007 Prime Time at Omaha's South Branch library.

According to the survey, 100 percent of responding parents said that Prime Time changed the way they read and discussed books with their children. Of those parents, 92 percent said they participated in reading activities more often with their children, and 83 percent agreed that the program encouraged them to spend more time reading and discussing books together.

These numbers echo comments from Prime Time sites statewide. In South Sioux City, a discussion leader said that a few parents “had to read all three books nearly every night of the week with their children because the children were so caught up in the experience.” A Grand Island discussion leader said, “I was talking with the mother of a six-year-old boy who had hated reading. Hated it so much he was doing very poorly in school. She feared he would never be successful and one day drop out. She knew what happens to most young Hispanic men who don't finish school. In the six weeks since they had come to Prime Time, he had come to love reading and was starting to like school. In her heart and mind, we had saved her son's life.”

In the Omaha survey, 92 percent of the parents indicated that their children shared Prime Time stories and experiences with other family members—siblings and adults. In South Sioux City, one parent said that, because of what her daughter learned in Prime Time, “she tells the story in her own way with a great deal of feeling.”

Last summer, the NHC expanded Prime Time beyond Spanish-speaking families to help fund sessions at Omaha's Washington Branch library, serving African-American families from neighborhoods where poverty is high and student reading scores are low. According to John Bernardi, director of the Washington Branch, several participants told him that Prime Time was “one of the best programs the library offers and that it has become very important to them.”

For more information or to apply as a new Prime Time site, go to: www.nebraskahumanities.org/programs/prime or contact the NHC office at (402) 474-2131 or nhc@nebraskahumanities.org.