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N E W S R E L E A S E

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Prime Time reading program returns to Omaha

Prime Time Family Reading Time, a Nebraska Humanities Council (NHC) family literacy program designed to help strengthen participants' interest and skills in reading, will return to two locations in Omaha with opportunities for both Spanish- and English-speaking parents and their children.

The Washington Branch Library will host an English-only series on six consecutive Saturday mornings, Oct. 13 through Nov. 17. Spring Lake Elementary School, in conjunction with the South Branch Library, will host a bilingual series on six consecutive Monday evenings, Oct. 22 through Nov. 26. Each program begins with a light meal and continues with storytelling and discussion based on award-winning children's literature.

The free six-week series are offered to families with children ages 6 to 10. They include sessions on fairness, greed, courage, dreams, ingenuity, determination and compassion. In the bilingual series, all books are read and discussed in both English and Spanish.

Discussion leaders and storytellers will introduce parents to the benefits and pleasures of reading and discussing stories with their children. Families will also learn about library resources and services. Separate pre-reading activities will be available for younger siblings.

Prime Time reinforces the role of family in society, encourages parents and children to bond over reading and learning together, and teaches parents and children to read and discuss humanities topics. The program also encourages parents to enter or continue their own educational programs to improve their employment opportunities.

"It is so important for children to learn the joys of reading early in life, especially when it involves reading and discussing books with their families," said NHC Program Officer Erika Hamilton, state coordinator of Prime Time. "A love for learning through reading has a positive impact on how well a child does in school."

Earlier this week, the National Assessment of Educational Progress showed that black and Hispanic students in Nebraska fared worse on math and reading exams than their white counterparts. While 79 percent of white fourth-graders met or exceeded the basic reading level, only 41 percent of black and 47 percent of Hispanic fourth-graders met or exceeded that level. Prime Time is designed to help address this achievement gap.

Initially developed by the Louisiana Endowment for the Humanities, bilingual and English-only Prime Time sessions have been held in Lincoln, Crete, Grand Island, South Sioux City, Norfolk, Scottsbluff, and other Nebraska communities over the last five years. Five English-only and seven bilingual Prime Time programs have been offered in Omaha since 2004.

Prime Time programs are sponsored in Nebraska by the NHC, the State of Nebraska, and the Nebraska Library Commission. Sponsors and funders for Prime Time in Omaha include the Omaha Public Library, Mutual of Omaha Foundation, Lincoln Financial Foundation, and Omaha Community Foundation. The NHC is a private, statewide, non-profit affiliate of the National Endowment for the Humanities.

For more information or to register for the English-only Washington Branch program, contact John Bernardi at (402) 444-4800. For more information or to register for the bilingual Spring Lake/South Branch program, contact Norma Pountney at (402) 444-4850.

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