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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 Grand Island

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 Grand Island with opportunities for both Spanish- and English-speaking parents and their children.

Grand Island Public Library will host the bilingual series on six consecutive Thursday evenings from Oct. 11 through Nov. 15. Each program begins with a light dinner and continues with storytelling and discussion based on award-winning children's literature.

The free six-week series is offered to families with children ages 6 to 10. It includes sessions on greed, courage, dreams, ingenuity and determination. All books are read and discussed in both English and Spanish.

Discussion leader Lisa Brown-Olsen and storyteller Marilee Smith will introduce parents to the benefits and pleasures of reading and discussing stories with their children. Families also will 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, Omaha, South Sioux City, Norfolk, Scottsbluff, and other Nebraska communities over the last five years. This will be Grand Island's third bilingual Prime Time.

Prime Time programs are sponsored in Nebraska by the NHC, the State of Nebraska, and the Nebraska Library Commission. Funders for Prime Time in Grand Island include the Grand Island Community Foundation, the Ralph and Pat Kelly Fund, Principal Financial Group Foundation, and Brian and Carey Hamilton. The NHC is a private, statewide, non-profit affiliate of the National Endowment for the Humanities.

For more information or to register to participate, contact Merry von Seggern at the Grand Island Public Library, (308) 385-5333.

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