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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 Norfolk

After its first session was delayed by icy winter conditions, the weekly Prime Time Family Reading Time returns to Lincoln Elementary School in Norfolk on March 17 with opportunities for Spanish- and English-speaking parents and their children.

Prime Time is a Nebraska Humanities Council (NHC) family literacy program designed to help strengthen participants' interest and skills in reading. The six-week series is offered free to families with children ages 5 to 12. Each program begins with a light dinner and continues with storytelling and discussion based on award-winning children's books. All books are read and discussed in both English and Spanish.

Lincoln Elementary School will host the bilingual series on Tuesday evenings through April 14. Selected books will help families discuss fairness, dreams, courage, compassion and loyalty.

Discussion leader Darlene Rodriguez and storyteller Juanita Ramirez will introduce parents to the benefits and pleasures of reading and discussing stories with their children. Separate pre-reading activities, provided by Northeast Community College's Early Childcare Program, will be available for younger siblings.

"It's 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 Senior 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."

In a 2008 survey of Nebraska families who participated in Prime Time, 87 percent said the program changed the way they read and discuss books together, 68 percent improved their attitude toward the library, and 98 percent showed interest in participating again in Prime Time or similar family reading and educational programs. After attending Prime Time, one Norfolk participant said, "I try to be more enthusiastic when I read and let my children ask questions while I'm reading."

Initially developed by the Louisiana Endowment for the Humanities, 48 bilingual and English-only Prime Time series have been held in 15 Nebraska libraries, five schools and one community center in the last five years, including programs in Lincoln, Omaha, Grand Island, South Sioux City, Norfolk, and Scottsbluff. This will be Norfolk's sixth bilingual Prime Time, having held their first at Grant Elementary School in the fall of 2006.

Prime Time is sponsored in Nebraska by the NHC with major funding from the State of Nebraska, Nebraska Cultural Endowment and Nebraska Library Commission. Sponsors for Prime Time in Norfolk include Norfolk Public Schools, Read Aloud Norfolk, Norfolk Daily News, Culver's and Runza Restaurants.

The NHC is a private, statewide, non-profit affiliate of the National Endowment for the Humanities. For details about Prime Time at Lincoln Elementary, call Lisa Guenther at (402) 644-2550.

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