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N E W S R E L E A S E

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Prime Time program returns to three Norfolk schools

Prime Time Family Reading Time will be offered in three Norfolk elementary schools this fall. The Nebraska Humanities Council (NHC) has approved Grant Elementary, Washington Elementary, and Westside Elementary as authorized Prime Time sites based on their work with students who struggle with reading and their outreach to ESL learners.

Prime Time is a NHC family literacy program designed to help strengthen participants' interest and skills in reading and talking about books. The six-week bilingual series is offered free to families with children ages 5 to 10.

Grant Elementary will host the series on six consecutive Thursday evenings, Sept. 8-Oct. 13. Washington Elementary will host the series Tuesday evenings Sept. 13-Oct. 25. Westside Elementary will host the series Tuesday evenings Oct. 25-Nov. 29.

Each program begins with a light meal and continues with storytelling and discussion based on award-winning children's books. All books are read and discussed in both English and Spanish. Selected books will help families discuss themes such as cleverness, compassion, courage, curiosity, determination, dreams, fairness, loyalty, and responsibility.

Discussion leaders and storytellers 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 and the Norfolk Senior High Book Club, will be available for younger siblings.

"We're not showing participants how to read, but why—for enjoyment, for insight, for conversation," said Erika Hamilton, NHC director of literary programs and state coordinator of Prime Time. "We look at situations in books and ask, 'Why did this happen?' 'Has this happened to you?' 'What would you do?' This kind of analysis helps students succeed in all of their classes, not just in reading and writing."

A 10-year impact study found that students who participated in Prime Time during their early elementary years outperformed their peers on grade level content in standardized exams. Prime Time students scored higher in language arts and reading, mathematics, science, life science and other subjects. The study, published in 2010, was conducted in Louisiana where the Louisiana Endowment for the Humanities developed Prime Time in 1991.

In Nebraska, more than 75 bilingual and English-only Prime Time series have been held in 14 public libraries, eight elementary schools and two community centers since 2002, including programs in Lincoln, Omaha, Grand Island, Norfolk and Scottsbluff. Prime Time has been offered in Norfolk since 2006.

Prime Time is sponsored in Nebraska by the Nebraska Humanities Council with funding from the State of Nebraska, the Nebraska Cultural Endowment, and Carol Gendler. Sponsors for Prime Time in Norfolk include Norfolk Public Schools and Read Aloud Norfolk.

The NHC is a private, statewide, non-profit affiliate of the National Endowment for the Humanities.