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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, has returned to two libraries in Omaha with opportunities for Spanish- and English-speaking parents and their children.

The South Omaha Library is hosting a bilingual series on six consecutive Wednesday evenings, Oct. 1 through Nov. 5. The Washington Branch Library is hosting an English-only series on six consecutive Saturday mornings, Oct. 11 through Nov. 15. Each program is free and open to the public. Sessions begin with a light meal and continue with storytelling and discussion based on award-winning children's books.

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

Discussion leaders and storytellers introduce parents to the benefits and pleasures of reading and discussing stories with their children. Families also learn about library resources and services. Separate pre-reading activities are 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 recent survey of North Omaha parents who participated in Prime Time, 77 percent said they read more often with their children than they did before Prime Time, and 100 percent showed interest in participating again in Prime Time or similar family reading and educational programs. When asked how Prime Time benefited their family, 60 percent of responding parents said it was quality family time. One said, "It has given us something positive to do on Saturdays."

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

Prime Time programs are sponsored in Nebraska by the NHC with major funding from the State of Nebraska, Nebraska Library Commission, Nebraska Cultural Endowment, and the Gilbert M. and Martha H. Hitchcock Foundation. Local sponsors and funders for Prime Time in Omaha include the Omaha Public Library and its Foundation, Mutual of Omaha Foundation, Omaha Community Foundation, and The Sherwood Foundation.

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

For more information about the bilingual South Omaha program, contact Norma Pountney at (402) 444-4850. For more information about the English-only Washington Branch program, contact John Bernardi at (402) 444-4800.

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