



## NEBRASKA HUMANITIES COUNCIL

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# **N E W S   R E L E A S E**

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## **Prime Time program continues at Washington Branch Library**

After losing its long-time leader mid-series in October, Omaha's Charles B. Washington Branch Library will continue the Prime Time Family Reading Time program on March 6 under the guidance of new Branch Manager Joanne Ferguson Cavanaugh.

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

The Washington Branch Library in north Omaha will host the series on six consecutive Saturday mornings, 10 a.m. until noon, March 6 through April 10.

Each program begins with a light meal and continues with storytelling and discussion based on award-winning children's books. Selected books will help families explore different aspects of what it means to go on a journey—leaving, encountering others, discovery, identity, patience and reflection.

Janice Collins-Brooks and Karen Mallory, now in their fifth year as Prime Time 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.

"We're not showing participants how to read, but why—for enjoyment, for insight, for conversation," said NHC Senior Program Officer Erika Hamilton, 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 is important in the classroom, in the workplace, and in life."

John Bernardi, former manager of the Washington Branch Library, organized and implemented 10 Prime Time series before his death in October. "Prime Time continues to be one of the most valuable programs we offer at this library," he wrote in a 2008 report to the Nebraska Humanities Council. "It has become an established part of our library activities, and I hope we will continue this in the future."

In a 2009 survey of more than 85 Nebraska families who participated in Prime Time, 88 percent said they spend more time reading now as a family, 91 percent said the program improved the way they read and discuss books together, 76 percent improved their attitude toward the library, and 100 percent showed interest in participating again in Prime Time or similar family reading and educational programs.

Initially developed by the Louisiana Endowment for the Humanities, more than 55 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.

Prime Time is sponsored in Nebraska by the NHC with funding from the State of Nebraska and Nebraska Cultural Endowment. Primary sponsors for Prime Time in Omaha include Omaha Public Library, Omaha Public Library Foundation, and Friends of the Omaha Public Library.

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 Joanne Ferguson Cavanaugh, manager of the Washington Branch Library, at (402) 444-4849.