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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

Prime Time Family Reading Time will return to Lincoln Elementary School in Norfolk on March 2 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 and talking about books. The six-week series is offered free to families with children ages 5 to 12.

Lincoln Elementary School will host the bilingual series on six consecutive Tuesday evenings from March 2 through April 6.

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 greed, curiosity, cleverness, kinship and determination.

Discussion leader Darlene Rodriguez and storyteller Juanita Ramirez 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, provided by Northeast Community College's Early Childcare Program, 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."

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. This will be Lincoln Elementary's fourth bilingual Prime Time, having held their first in the spring of 2007.

Prime Time is sponsored in Nebraska by the NHC with funding from the State of Nebraska and Nebraska Cultural Endowment. 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.

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