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Weekly Spanish Storytime Comes to Lafayette Library

By Cathy Tyson



Yolima Salamanca, the very educated bi-lingual story teller at the Lafayette Library and Learning Center. Photo Cathy Tyson

Bueno dias amiguitos, como estan? - Good morning little friends, how are you - is the welcome song at La Hora del Cuento or Spanish Storytime at the Lafayette Library and Learning Center. On a recent Tuesday morning, a room full of toddlers were singing, clapping and counting in Espanol. Not a word of English was uttered by library employee Yolima Salamanca, as she led the kids through several songs and Spanish picture books. Little ones chimed in on repeated key words, especially enjoying "zoom" to illustrate the blue car accelerating in the book Carrera en la Carretera or Road Race; it was easy to understand what "muy rapido" meant. Even this reporter could figure it out.

The Spanish storytime started when former Librarian Miss Donna hosted a Spanish language event for special holidays like Cinco de Mayo and Day of the Dead. After Miss Donna's retirement, Youth Services Librarian Ann Miller instituted a monthly Spanish story time over the summer after taking a "Spanish for librarians" class while working on her master's degree in library science. The program was successful enough to expand to a weekly event starting last month with Salamanca as story teller.

"She's truly a natural," said Miller of Salamanca, who graciously runs the program using sweeping hand gestures, a gentle and engaging delivery style while repeating key vocabulary. Salamanca came to America four years ago

from her native Columbia with her husband. Armed with two master's degrees - one in human resources and one in engineering - she worked on special projects for the Columbian government. She continues to focus on perfecting her English language skills and currently is part of the Facilities Team that manages the library building and sets up for events.

The little ones, mostly up to age five, get a little squirrely toward the end of the fast-paced half-hour session; many wander over to the children's section afterwards to pick up a few books to take home. Miller says the Lafayette Library has a small but growing collection of Spanish language books for kids as well as for parents and nannies.

With more than 30 attendees recently, it's been a big success, bolstered by a solid group of regular attendees. Simple rhythmic songs that the kids can follow, a selection of story books with big pictures, lessons on vowels and counting: toddlers are entertained and learn something in the process, which is priceless. Of course this program, like many others at LLLC, is free of charge - every Tuesday from 10:15 to 10:45 a.m.

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