

## Lewisville Public Library launches bilingual programs

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The Lewisville Public Library is increasing its efforts to provide services to all Lewisville residents by launching a new line of Spanish programming.

The new programming will be implemented in three phases, beginning with the Bilingual Preschool Storytime for children ages 3-6 and their families. It will run every Thursday at 11:15 a.m., June 8-July 27. A free ticket is required for entry, and tickets will be handed out 30 minutes before the class starts on a first-come first-served basis.



*L-R Andrea Ortiz, Youth Services Supervisor; Isabella Ramirez, Bilingual Librarian; Carolyn Booker, Director of Library Services*

Carolyn Booker, Director of Library Services, said this new line of programming came about in response to community feedback that showed Hispanic residents made up more than 30 percent of the Library's service population.

"Our main goal with this program is to better serve the Hispanic residents of Lewisville," Booker said. "We want to make sure they feel comfortable being here, and that starts with being able to communicate with them in their language."

Isabella Ramirez has been hired as Lewisville's new Bilingual Librarian. Before coming here, Ramirez spent the past three years working in a school district in Los Angeles as a Bilingual Librarian. Her background is in Public Administration, and she has a Master's Degree. She said her desire to serve, especially the Hispanic community, and her experiences at the library as a child, led her to work in this field.

“Growing up as someone who used the library resources all the time, I knew the value of it and what it could do,” Ramirez said.

Andrea Ortiz, the library’s Youth Services Supervisor, said the need for a bilingual librarian became more evident in recent months because staff members at the library don’t speak Spanish. She said that inability to communicate made the residents’ visit to the library very unfulfilling.

“There were a lot of missed opportunities,” Ortiz said. “When I would interact with these residents, it was a very long and arduous process to figure out their basic library needs.”

Ramirez echoed Ortiz’s comment on missed opportunities. When she first came to Lewisville, Ramirez said she was surprised at how few Hispanic residents were using the library. Based on her experiences in Los Angeles, Ramirez believed part of the reason was because most people in the Hispanic community don’t know what services are there, and probably don’t realize most services are free. She believes that will change now.

Ramirez, Ortiz and Booker all agree that making young people aware of library services is key to the success of this new Spanish programming. Ramirez said it’s easier to get the parents to buy-in once they see how much their children are learning and enjoying the program. She believes her experiences growing up in the library system also will help her better connect with students and their parents.

“It makes it more real,” Ramirez said. “It’s one thing to say ‘Come in and use the library resources,’ but if I can back it up with details on how I personally used it, and how it furthered my education, then it will help them grasp the library’s significance.”

Bilingual Storytime launches this summer, which is the busiest time at the library. In the fall, the library will launch, one Bilingual Mother Goose Time on Tuesdays at 1:30 p.m. for children 0-15 months and their families; a Spanish Preschool Time on Wednesdays at 10:30 a.m.; a Spanish Toddler Time on Wednesdays at 11:15 a.m.; and a Spanish Mother Goose Time on Wednesdays at 1:30 p.m. A free ticket is required for entry, and tickets will be handed out 30 minutes before the class starts on a first-come first-served basis.

Family literacy is the highlight of the library’s Leche y Galletas program every first and third Tuesday of the month, 6:30 p.m., September 5-November 21. Families can drop in for a short storytime followed by a period of family reading enjoyed with cookies and milk. A free ticket is required for entry, and tickets will be handed out 30 minutes before the class starts on a first-come first-served basis.

All of this is an ambitious undertaking for the library, but staff is committed to making this Spanish programming a success. Ramirez knows it will start small, but she has high hopes for the

program as well as the residents. “I would love, in a perfect world, to see all the families who start out with a Spanish or bilingual class be comfortable moving into a regular English storytime class and go back and forth between the two,” Ramirez said.

Stop by Lewisville Public Library, 1197 W. Main Street, to learn more about these new bilingual classes, and to pick up a schedule of all the children and adult programs scheduled for this summer or visit the Library online at [library.cityoflewisville.com](http://library.cityoflewisville.com).