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# Press and Publicity Report

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## Pueblo Library District hosts Hispanic Heritage events through mid-October

The Pueblo City-County Library District will host several events during Hispanic Heritage Month, including the 8th annual Latino/a/s Book Festival which began on Sept. 16 and an upcoming meet-the-author event for Gabriela Garcia, author of "Of Women and Salt," which focuses on her family history in Mexico, Miami and Cuba. Garcia's 4 p.m. event on Sept. 24 will round out the end of the book festival.

On Sept. 30, Puebloan George Autobee will discuss how his family helped found Pueblo and Avondale. The event is scheduled for 5 p.m. at the Giolone Branch Library, 246555 US Highway 50.

Charlene Garcia Simms, a special collections librarian at the Robert Hoag Rawlings Public Library, said that the influence of Hispanic culture has had an impact on many aspects of life, but one particular item of note is food.

In early October, the library district will host a presentation on foods and the historical exchange of foods between nations that has created shared culture. She noted that in the past there could have been no way for a typical Mexican combo plate to be made. Corn tortillas originated in the Americas, but a chicken taco would not have been possible until Europeans brought chickens across the ocean.

Simms also noted the city's historical signage in south Pueblo — brown and white signs were installed next to the standard, green street signs — show the historic street names reflecting Mexican heritage across the city. The initiative was spearheaded by Heraldo Acosta, who headed the nonprofit organization the Pueblo Celebration of Culture and Diversity.

The library also will host a presentation on Chaco Canyon, including the indigenous cultures and the importance of the canyon to those peoples.

Simms also discussed the importance of Ballet Folklorico. She said a folklorico performance represents "the culture, traditions, music, dance and history of all the regions of Mexico. It is choreography at its best."

She noted the complicated costumes and intricate makeup and hairstyles that dancers will ardently perfect before stepping on-stage.

"Each dance energizes you as you hear the music and hear the strategic click of the dancer's heels. Each performance, whether for a small crowd at a park on Cinen de Mayo or a larger venue in a city square, takes an entourage of instructors, parents, professionals, others, and the stars of the show, the dancers who make it seem simple," she said.

"They touch the heart and soul as the audience yells out 'otra, otra,' meaning they want more."

**More:** Pueblo man sentenced to four years probation for marijuana burglary

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By: Deni Bitter

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PUEBLO, Colo. — A total of 7,074 kids earned \$100 by a Pueblo City-County Library's reading challenge conclusion on Wednesday, Sept. 22. Registrants, ages 0 to 17, had to check out 10 library materials then submit a response to what they borrowed.

As part of a special school outreach program, an additional 356 kids completed the challenge twice, earning them a gift bag filled with an age-appropriate book and gift certificates to Cold Stone Creamery, Applebees and the Pueblo Ice Arena.

"The Reading Pays: Pueblo \$1 Million Reading Challenge awarded well over 7,000 young people \$100 each for their reading achievements this past summer. I know that kids who read succeed, and I feel certain that our local young people have been positively impacted with these great reading outcomes during the summer of 2021," said Jon Walker, PCCLD executive director.

Library officials noticed that kids living in higher-income zip codes completed the program at higher rates. Starting in August, students living in lower to moderate-income zip code areas were auto-enrolled into Reading Pays. Twenty-two schools in both Pueblo City School District 60 and Pueblo County School District 70 as well as private and charter schools added Reading Pays into their curriculum, ensuring that those students have the opportunity to engage with the library.

A total of 2,178 students completed the September cohort including students at District 70's South Mesa Elementary. The school recorded a 100% finishing rate, with all students successfully completing the challenge. Officials from Pueblo County, District 70 and the library will give the students their \$100 vouchers or gift bags during an assembly at 1:30 p.m. on Monday, Oct. 25 at South Mesa Elementary.

Community engagement with the library district increased as well. Registrants checked out over 70,000 library items during a four-month span. Overall circulation increased by 50% during June and July, and there was a 66% increase in new library card issuance during May, June, July and August than were issued in 2019.

"Programs like Reading Pays or Summer Reading help children to stay engaged over the summer and keep them prepared while they are out of school. It is the goal of these programs to help children identify as readers and see reading as a treat and not a chore. Reading Pays allowed us to make this summer exceptionally exciting by offering \$100. It was the goal of this program to get kids excited to read. I truly believe it did its job," Nick Pottier, director of Community Relations and Development said.

The \$1 million funding for Reading Pays is part of the American Rescue Plan to help Pueblo rebound from the effects of COVID-19. All funds will directly impact area youth, and the library district will not keep any of the funds for administrative fees.

Registrants opting to open a savings account with Bank of the San Juans will receive an additional \$10, so long as their account maintains a \$50 balance for the next six months. Unused funds will be returned to the City and County of Pueblo, as required by an inter-governmental agreement.

Community partners in the Reading Pays program include the city and county of Pueblo, the library district, Bank of the San Juans and EPIC of Pueblo.

To learn more about PCCLD, visit [www.pueblolibrary.org](http://www.pueblolibrary.org)



## Over 7,000 students complete \$1 million Reading Challenge



Two schools in Pueblo County showed that it pays to read. The Pueblo Library district honored South Mesa Elementary School with an assembly on Monday after 100 percent of the school's 322 students participated in the \$1 million summer reading challenge.

By: [Caitlin Sullivan](#)

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PUEBLO COUNTY — Two schools in Pueblo County showed that it pays to read. The Pueblo Library district honored South Mesa Elementary School with an assembly on Monday after 100 percent of the school's 322 students participated in the \$1 million summer reading challenge.

John Neumann Catholic School in Pueblo was the other school to clock in at 100 percent participation.

Over the summer students in Pueblo County were challenged to check out 10 items from any of the Pueblo libraries and provide a response to the Library District about what they read. If they were able to complete the challenge they would receive \$100.

"Well I read a lot of leadership books so I learned how to be a leader and lead and try to stay positive," said South Mesa Elementary student Skylar Snell.

In total, more than 7,000 students got \$100 from the program.

The money comes from federal stimulus funds distributed to the City of Pueblo and Pueblo County through the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA).

Jon Walker, Executive Director of the Pueblo Library District, said summer reading program prevent learning loss between the school years.

"With this special disruption that happened this last school year, we know that that is sort of rebuildable," he explained. "You had sort of a disrupted school year, some of the kids didn't get their full educational interaction, and then the idea was well, they'll have even more with the summer."

Before the challenge, the library district had already given out \$150,000 worth of certificates for kids to take to the bank to earn their cash reward.

Walker said many of the students opted to put their reward money in savings for college.