

DAVIE

## Teacher uses bilingual lyrics as learning tool

■ A Hollywood teacher introduces love of languages to children through her unique music program.

BY JULIE LEVIN  
Special to The Herald

Keeping 30 preschoolers interested and in their seats is no small job. Jody Dreher uses little more than her voice and her personality to accomplish the tricky task.

Armed with her guitar and a love of languages, Dreher has been teaching children Spanish for more than seven years.

"I teach through music and games," she said. "The kids take the music right in, memorize it, and end up owning the language."

Dreher took two of her favorite passions, music and language, and created "Sing

Your Way to Spanish With Jody." It's an innovative program aimed at helping youngsters become bilingual.

Dreher has been spreading her music across South Florida. She has a CD out and also performs for children at parties, events and school functions.

The Hollywood woman entertained at the Nova Southeastern University's Mailman Segal Institute for Early Childhood Studies on Feb. 23 before more than two dozen squirming preschoolers.

The performance is high-energy and geared directly to her young audience. Playing her guitar, Dreher sings about things young minds can relate to. She asks them their names and what they'd like to be. She uses props, a clown costume, and encourages everyone to join in.



PHOTOS BY JULIE LEVIN/FOR THE HERALD

**LANGUAGE FUN:** Jody Dreher performs *Sing Your Way to Spanish* at Davie's Mailman Segal Institute.

The learning comes in the music. She writes her own songs and bilingual lyrics. As she sings, she effortlessly

glides between English and Spanish, providing an instant translation for everything she is saying.

She says music is a powerful memory-maker.

"The kids are drawn in by the music. They latch on to the language they already speak and the translation comes right before or after," she said. "So they end up memorizing the song and language."

She sings songs like *Los Tres Osos* (The Three Bears), *Palabra Magica* (Magic Wand), *Como Te Llama?* (What Is Your Name?) and *Quiero ser un Payaso* (I Want to Be a Clown).

Dreher says her program and CD are ideal for children 3 to 8 years old.

Penny Bernath, the education coordinator at the Mailman Segal Institute, agrees.

"By the time you try to

learn in high school, the brain synapses are closed. Right now, their brains are open and ready. There's no prejudices about language at this age," she said.

Dreher has been learning and teaching languages for 20 years. She holds a master's degree in linguistics from Florida International University, speaks several languages, and has taught Spanish at the college level and to adults.

She said teaching children Spanish at a young age will only help them to cope later in life.

"Now it is a necessity. It is a different world out there. They think that by 2050, 25 percent of our country will be of Hispanic origin," Dreher said.

For information, visit Dreher's website at [www.singyourwaytospanish.com](http://www.singyourwaytospanish.com).