

Spanish taught with song, games

Library will start using the program

BY SALLY J. LING
SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

The Boca Raton Public Library is about to debut a program that uses songs, musical instruments, dance, games and magic to teach children Spanish.

Set for May 5, it will substitute for the usual storytelling session the library has done for the past five years to observe Cinco de Mayo, commemorating a battle Mexicans won over the French in their fight for independence.

"I feel we have a diverse population, and I hear more and more people speaking other languages in the library. ... I usually present a Spanish theme during this time of year," said Rose Mendici, youth services program coordinator.

"The children love music, so I think it will be well received. The presenter is very enthusiastic and works well with the children."

IF YOU GO

What: Cinco de Mayo program to teach children Spanish

When: 3 p.m. May 5

Where: Boca Raton Public Library; 200 NW Boca Raton Blvd.

Details: Call the library's youth services desk at 561-393-7968

The program is geared to children ages 4 to 11. Reservations are not required, Mendici said.

Jody Dreher of Hollywood developed the presentation after teaching group classes and tutoring middle and high school students in Spanish.

To help her students remember common phrases, she put the bilingual expressions to music in a program she calls "Sing Your Way to Spanish."

"Even if you haven't heard a song in years, if you hear one word or a note, it comes right back. It's hard to remember vocabulary, but if you put it to music everyone remembers it," Dreher said.

Simone Baikovitz is a believer. Her daughter

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THE COVER: Jody Dreher's CD teaches Spanish by using songs that use common phrases. Photo courtesy of Jody Dreher.

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ter, Jacqueline, 11, and son, Alex, 7, have been working with Dreher for a year.

"I started the traditional lessons, and they were totally bored with private tutors learning vowel sounds and weren't learning anything. One day, I saw an article about Jody with singing and playing games, and I said, 'Let me try this.' They started loving the lessons and singing along with the CD, and actually learning the language

at a much quicker pace than through reading and conjugating verbs," Baikovitz said.

Her daughter chimed in.

"It's really fun. Every few weeks it's a different song, and we play games, too. I learned much more when I had the music. I talk to my grandparents and my friends in Spanish. . . . it is very fun and I look forward to going to the lessons," she said.

The CDs help lay the groundwork for fluency, Dreher said.

"Nobody learns a language in one CD, but the outcome of the first CD is the listener has a working vocabulary and a lot of

repetitive phrases, such as 'Good morning.' The songs are short and sweet, so you have a mini-lesson in one song. Each song has its own theme and is completely original music," said Dreher, who has a bachelor of arts degree in Spanish from Georgetown University in

Washington and a master's degree in linguistics from Florida International University.

The CD sells for \$14.95 on Dreher's Web site, www.singyourwaytospanish.com. She recently completed a workbook to accompany the CD.