

Interviews with 2008 Mora Award Winners celebrating El día de los niños /El día de los libros, Children's Day/Book Day



The Estela and Raúl Mora Award was established in 2000 by Pat Mora and her family to honor their parents and to motivate libraries to support and celebrate "Día," El día de los niños/El día de los libros, Children's Day/Book Day. The 2008 award went to the **Public Library of Charlotte and Mecklenburg County (NC)** and **Riverside County Library System (CA)** for their exemplary programs. We spoke with **Meryle A. Leonard**, Outreach Manager at PLCMC and **Arlene M. Cano**, Coordinator of Leer Es Triunfar at Riverside and asked them to tell us about their plans for Día in 2009. We also asked them about the successes and challenges in growing Día; their state-wide training; advice for first timers; and favorite Día idea. (*The interviews were coordinated by Laurina Cashin, We Love Children's Books.*)

Public Library of Charlotte and Mecklenburg County (NC)

Tell us about your plans to celebrate Día in April 2009.

ML: This year we are pleased to present author Arthur Dorros as our featured speaker. Mr. Dorros will make appearances in our school system as well as conduct a book writing session during the April 25 celebration. Our celebration will also include:

- The reading of the City of Charlotte Día de los Niño's proclamation in Spanish and English.
- Traditional dances from Asia and India
- Tae Kwon Do demonstration
- Snacks from Bimbo foods
- Storytelling from around the world
- Crafts from around the world
- Book give-a-way for celebration participants

PLCMC will celebrate Día de Los Niño's throughout the month of April. Several of our branch libraries will be offering the following programs to celebrate Día:

- Native American stories and crafts
- International food sampling
- Mesoamerican art/culture and mask-making
- Cinderella stories from around the world
- Names in different languages
- Bilingual storytelling
- Crafts and games from around the world

- Making piñatas

On your library's website you have a timeline showing the growth and expansion of Día from a small storytelling celebration into the large-scale community culturally diverse celebration it is today. What were some of your significant successes and challenges during this period?

ML: PLCMC has been dedicated to embracing and serving the diverse culture in our community. We strongly believe our Día celebration and its expansion was successful because we were already providing services to the Spanish speaking community. We also had great success with community partners such as our local public television station, WTVI. Not only did they provide Día programs for our branches, they were also able to provide characters for our celebration. Mya and Miguel and See More Good Stuff made our 2008 celebration memorable.

We also had success expanding the Día program beyond Latino cultures. Each year we expand our program and celebrate children and literature through many cultures. Our Día celebration included storytelling, crafts, music and dances from China, Russia, India and Africa.

Our Día celebration ends by distributing books to all of the participants. A discount from Scholastic books makes this activity possible. This has become a tradition and a highlight of the program.

One of the challenges we experienced during the expansion is duplication of services. As we expanded our celebration, other community festivals have begun and expanded as well. We must plan our festival at a time that other festivals are not taking place. One year there were three other community celebrations going on at the same time as our Día celebration. This impacts the attendance of our celebration.

Tell us about your Día state-wide training workshops and Webinar.

ML: We have hosted two state wide trainings; one training was held at PLA and our second training was held last year at PLCMC. Each training was open to all library staff in the state and it gave the participants the opportunity to learn about Día de Los Niños, plan and market Día celebrations and gain concrete ideas and activities to start or enhance a Día celebration.

On March 1, 2009, we will be hosting our first Día Webinar. The Webinar was a result of an electronic survey given to all children's library staff across the state. The information from the survey revealed that library staff would like more information and awareness regarding Día de Los Niños. The webinar will be conducted by three PLCMC staff members and it will be open to library staff across the state. Our state, like so many others is experiencing budget shortages. A webinar will allow us to continue our efforts to support Día statewide, without taxing libraries for travel expenses.

What advice would you give to a library planning a Día event for the first time?

ML: Start small and give yourself at least five months to plan. Involve community agencies, volunteers and take advantage of the information about Día on the internet (ALA). You will find creative and very inexpensive ways to host a Día event.

Please share your favorite Día idea.

ML: 100% Día Participation: We challenged twenty three of our twenty four branches to host a Día activity. This gives everyone in our community the opportunity to participate in a Día program and it produces such a variety of programs. The Día challenge produced puppet shows, story times, book displays, guest speakers, crafts and so much more.

Riverside County Library System (CA)

Tell us about your plans to celebrate Dia in 2009.

AC: Throughout the month of April, Riverside County Library System will present its sixth annual celebration of Día de los Niños / Día de los Libros, a series of special events honoring books, libraries, and reading for children. This year, many of Riverside County Library System's 33 branches will offer a variety of programming for children and adults, including author appearances, bilingual story times, crafts, games, and music. To highlight just a few of these:

Join us for a reading and talk by beloved author, award-winning poet, and spell binding storyteller Juan Felipe Herrera on April 18th at the Mecca, Coachella, and Desert Hot Springs libraries. Juan Felipe Herrera is an award-winning poet, and author of 21 books in total, during the past 10 years, whose publications include 14 collections of poetry, prose, short stories, young adult novels and picture books for children. He has taught poetry from kindergarten to the university level. His literary endeavors have earned him numerous awards including *Calling The Doves*, which won the Ezra Jack Keats Award, and *Crashboomlove*, which was prized with the Americas Award. He also wrote *Upside Down Boy*, which was adapted into a musical in New York City, and *Laughing Out Loud, I Fly*, winner of a Pura Belpré honor award.

Inspired by her Peruvian-American heritage, Dr. Monica Brown is the author of award-winning bilingual books for children, including *My Name Is Celia: The Life of Celia Cruz (Luna Rising)* which was awarded the Américas Award and Pura Belpré Honor. Other titles include *My Name Is Gabriela: The Life of Gabriela Mistral (Luna Rising)*, *My Name Is Gabito: The Life of Gabriel Garcia Marquez (Luna Rising)*, which was named a Pura Belpré Honor and a Críticas

"Best Children's Book," and Butterflies on Carmen Street (Piñata Books), recently named a finalist for ForeWord Magazine's "Book of the Year." Dr. Brown will be visiting San Jacinto, Temecula Public, and Perris libraries on Saturday, April 25th for a reading of her award-winning children's books and a book signing to follow.

Riverside County Library System has held Día events and programming since 2004, and each year has brought greater participation from both the community and your library system. What do you attribute the growth to?

AC: Participation in Día events and programming continues to grow throughout the years in large part due to our library staff's commitment to excellence which includes providing library services and resources to the community, and by working with community groups and incorporating the wishes of the community into our programming. With the successful launch of Día in 2004 we were able to create and strengthen a foundation of resources and services to the community. With this foundation Día has become what it is today.

Today we have solidified our annual Día programs, and continue to be an asset to the community becoming a partnership rather than a client/service relationship. Getting an increasing number of people to recognize the month of April as Día de los Niños/ Día de los Libros has been one of our biggest accomplishments. Riverside County Library System has been able to do this thanks to the work and dedication of our partners that strive to promote literacy, library use, culture and language to residents of Riverside County. Our goal is to promote the observation of Día de los Niños/ Día de los Libros in public and school libraries not only in April but throughout the year. Over the years we have realized that in order to run a successful Día program for the community you need the following: a committed staff, a committed community, creative advertising, and above all programming with impact that truly increases awareness and use of our library services.

What was your biggest challenge in integrating Día into your library's regular programming?

AC: My biggest challenge in Día's integration into our regular programming was providing a Día programming support system to our libraries. We formulated a method in which our libraries/community would see how important and necessary a program like Día was. In doing so, I along with our previous Día coordinator, have created our own Día website, trainings, shared countless ideas, and have been able to find various means of funding for our events. In providing this support system our libraries were able to go from only 6 libraries celebrating Día in 2004, to 33 libraries celebrating Día in 2009. We are very proud of that accomplishment, which came forth because of our dedication to Día's goals, early planning, and community/staff support.

The library system's website says that "Riverside County Library System has become a catalyst in promoting Día de los Niños/ Día de los Libros

programs in libraries across the state of California." How did your efforts help spread Día throughout the state?

AC: Riverside County Library System helped develop a statewide Día website supported by the U.S. Institute of Museum and Library Services under the provisions of the Library Services and Technology Act and administered in California by the State Librarian. The website, www.diacalifornia.org, has useful resources, kits, graphics, links, and much more for all libraries either new to Día programming or some just looking for inspiration and ideas. Through this website we were able to take our six years of experience in Día programming and develop a site with this vast knowledge for others to use. We have seen what works, what doesn't and what could be better and have created a site where libraries across the state can plan Día with ease, knowing that there is support through this network of information. Our efforts in generating this wonderful website has helped spread Día throughout the state of California allowing every library the ability to promote the power of books and reading to change young lives.

What advice would you give to a library planning a Día event for the first time?

AC: The best advice I would give for those planning a Día event for the first time would be first and foremost to do your research and plan early. Know the history and goals of the event; this is a key factor that separates Día from other programs; it is a celebration of libros (books) before it is a celebration of any other kind. Also of great importance is that you plan early for this allows plenty of time to ensure that your Día is a true success. One other point I would add is staff and community involvement and commitment, a system strength that allowed us to solidify our Día programs in Riverside County. By including both the staff and community in the process, we have made Día "our" program, a program we look forward to every year and more so, whose goals we have made part of our promotion throughout the year. Knowing the goals and history of Día, planning early, and having participation from your staff/community, I believe makes an excellent Día.

Please share your favorite Día idea.

AC: My favorite Día idea, which I hope to implement this year, is a Día Theater Tour! We will draft a play, based on a book from our featured author this year and have our students be the stars! Once we have our cast of actors, our play will be performed at local schools, libraries, and community centers. This will allow for us to spread the power of books throughout the county with our own theater rendition of a bilingual children's book!