

Unique after-school program will offer a 'Latino sampler'

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An after-school program starting next month for elementary school students will expose children to Latino culture through learning conversational Spanish, studying Latino arts and music, and even learning to cook Latino dishes.

Escuela Amistad (Friendship School) will open the last week of January for children in grades first through sixth, said Sheila Carrillo, a school representative. Classes, which will meet once during the week, will be held between 3 and 5 p.m. at the Family Health Education Center in Santa Cruz.

Classes will meet on either Tuesday or Thursday, Carrillo said. The day will be set at a later date.

The aim of the school is to provide children with Spanish language development and introduce them to Latino culture. Classes will include instruction on preparing Latino dishes, learning Latino music, poetry and arts, and staging monthly performances by children, Carrillo said.

While many schools in the county — particularly in the Pajaro Valley — already provide a bilingual and bicultural curriculum, Carrillo said many other schools do not. Numerous schools, especially in the greater Santa Cruz area, have no bilingual programs.

"It's important for people in California to be bilingual," Carrillo said. In Europe, for example, schools teach students several lan-

guages. Carrillo calls it a "good-neighbor policy."

Carrillo said she has gotten calls about the school from numerous areas in the county. Many of those calls, however, were from parents in Aptos. Some of these parents already have their children in bilingual classes, but they want to enhance that curriculum. The school, she said, will do just that.

On Saturdays, students will be able to take lessons in art, poetry and music from local artists through the county's SPECTRA program, which acts as a clearinghouse for artists in the area. One Sunday a month, the children will present a show for their parents.

The after-school program will be conducted by two Pajaro Valley teachers: Joann Yablonsky, a Spanish teacher at Rio Del Mar Elementary School, and Marta Puga, a bilingual teacher at Alianza Elementary School.

Carrillo said the school will offer four classes, with 12 children per class. Cost is \$50 for the eight sessions.

The school will sponsor an evening of poetry, music and storytelling Jan. 30 at 2 p.m. at the Loudon Nelson Center. Acclaimed poet Francisco Alarcon and local musician Steve Cervantes will perform at the event.

The presentation — titled Meso-America: Poetry, Story, and Song — is open to the public. Admission is \$5 for adults, \$3 for children.

For more information about the school or the event, call 458-4101.