

SIUE students use Spanish course to highlight heritage in Fairmont City

October 23 2017 9:50 AM



EDWARDSVILLE - Sixteen Southern Illinois University Edwardsville undergraduates studying Spanish for Heritage Speakers expanded their knowledge and integrated it at the local level when they engaged in service learning throughout Hispanic Heritage Month at Fairmont City Public Library.

The students hosted a variety of educational activities for local patrons, ranging from lessons on famous Hispanic artists to showing family films and leading bingo games. Their high-impact community engagement practice demonstrated SIUE's values of citizenship and excellence, as students enriched young patrons' lives while immersing themselves in "lived language."

“Many of the readings we do in class are about diverse groups of Latin Americans and their relationships with the United States,” said Carolina Rocha, professor of Spanish and Latin American Studies in the College of Arts and Sciences’ Department of Foreign Languages and Literature. “Thus, knowing about Spanish-speaking communities in our area enriches the information from the textbook and provides a more complete overview of the language and Hispanics in the U.S.”

“Due to the expected population growth of the Hispanic population,” she continued. “Many of our students will spend their working lives using Spanish in different professional contexts. We want to develop their oral and written Spanish for academic and professional purposes, as well as educate them on the Hispanic communities in the region.”

Students organized, planned and implemented their own projects, an experience which sophomore Jessica Mateo says enhanced her learning and motivated her and her classmates’ desire to inform and educate others. Mateo, of Streamwood, is pursuing a bachelor’s in international business with a Spanish minor.

“My group presented four Hispanic films for our service learning project, because we wanted children to learn about the Hispanic culture,” Mateo said. “We also prepared games that helped them better understand the movies. It was hard work to create our lesson plans for each week, but it was fun seeing our accomplishments in the way the kids got excited and learned about their culture.”

Library patrons praised students’ fluency in Spanish and expressed their appreciation for bringing attention to their heritage through their interactive presentations.

One said to Fairmont City Library Center Manager Katie Heaton, “I about cried when I saw your library, and how you support the Spanish community. I never felt comfortable expressing that side of my family. This was wonderful.”

A \$750 Meridian Award from the SIUE Meridian Society supported the project, “Hispanic Heritage Month.” The award was used for supplies and materials such as posters, DVDs and paper.

“Meridian Awards are sponsored by women from our geographical area who understand the relevance of community engagement,” Rocha said. “I am proud of the ways students carefully considered expenses and needs for their projects, stretching the funds as much as possible.”

Central to SIUE’s exceptional and comprehensive education, the [College of Arts and Sciences](#) has 19 departments and 85 areas of study. More than 300 full-time faculty

/instructors deliver classes to more than 8,000 undergraduate and graduate students. Faculty help students explore diverse ideas and experiences, while learning to think and live as fulfilled, productive members of the global community. Study abroad, service-learning, internships, and other experiential learning opportunities better prepare SIUE students not only to succeed in our region's workplaces, but also to become valuable leaders who make important contributions to our communities.