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LOS ZORRITOS SPANISH CAMP: NO SIESTA, ALL FIESTA

FOX CHAPEL, PA – Last week, Cooper-Siegel Community Library (CSCL) youth patrons explored various countries rich in Spanish language and culture – all without leaving the library!

During the free, five-day Los Zorritos Spanish Camp, participating children enjoyed hands-on activities, music and traditional foods; all led by local Spanish teacher Bea Conte. “Los Zorritos” translates to “the little foxes.”

Conte, who launched the popular summer camp in 2022, previously offered similar programs at O’Hara Elementary School.

“I feel that it was very important to offer the possibility for elementary students to ‘travel’ to different countries and learn from them,” Conte said. “I always choose countries that speak Spanish, because it is my native language, so they can also practice and incorporate new words in their vocabulary.”

CSCL Youth Services Department Head Megan Fogt said the camp is a “wonderful opportunity” for children to “be exposed to Spanish and Latin American culture in a fun and engaging way.”

“Bea is not only a fantastic Spanish teacher; she also provides engaging activities that provide kids with information about Latin American countries. Her expertise and vision for the camp makes this program possible,” Fogt said. “I love watching the kids excitedly share what they learned at camp with their families.”

This year, participants learned about Peru through testing handcrafted buildings on an earthquake simulator and making science-experiment volcanoes. Next, the children learned about Argentina by making dulce de leche and other recipes.

Their next stop was Colombia, the birthplace of popular dance-exercise Zumba, where Conte taught the children a few steps and helped them craft traditional instruments, such as maracas and Palo de Aguas. In addition to outdoor water balloons and a game called “Cielo, mar y tierra,” the little foxes learned about Chile’s penguins and Galapagos Island tortoises.

The camp culminated in a Mexican fiesta with traditional snacks and a pinata, where campers also learned about axolotls and made hats. Conte said some children even gave presentations in a show-and-tell session.

“One spoke about Venezuela and some home traditions, and the other one played an ancient instrument called an ocarina,” Conte said. “I have a lot of favorite things about camp, but I always like the last day, because we have the fiesta. While the kids eat yummy food from those countries, we also chat about what they learned during the week and always have such good conversations. I also always like the

second day, because they come back after day one feeling more confident and bring so many good questions.”

Registration for Los Zorritos Spanish Camp opens each spring, but Conte’s program has become so popular, spots typically fill up within a few days. Conte said she hopes her little foxes will “chat with their grownups” about what they learned and “how they felt about ‘traveling’ to another country.”

“Maybe someday soon they can travel for real with their families and explore different cultures,” Conte said. “I would also love it if they learned some new words in Spanish along the way.”

For more information about Cooper-Siegel Community Library, including upcoming programming, visit www.coopersiegelcommunitylibrary.org.

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