

RCPL PARTNER SPOTLIGHT: FAMILIAS UNIDAS

In addition to the collections, services and programs provided through the four library locations that make up the Redwood City Public Library, the library has a proud tradition of engaging with our community outside the walls of library buildings. To highlight the importance and benefits of many successful library partnerships, we will occasionally highlight community partners in this column.

Familias Unidas was founded in 2006 by a dynamic duo of educators who also happen to be a husband-and-wife team: Secundino and Ninfa Zuno. Their vision was to provide an opportunity for parent engagement in their children's education by giving families the opportunity to learn together and by teaching immigrant parents how to navigate the potentially unfamiliar bureaucracy of the school system to help them effectively advocate for their children.

The Familias Unidas curriculum includes a nine-week series of evening courses offered each semester at four Redwood City School District elementary schools: Fair Oaks, Garfield, Hawes and Hoover. Redwood City Public Library provides the financial support for the programs at Hawes and Hoover in addition to participating in the instructional component of the program at all four schools.

Of course, one essential tool to help children succeed in school and to help parents keep themselves informed is a library card, and library staff visit the program to describe the collections available for checkout, the online resources on the library website and the numerous early literacy and STEAM (science, technology, engineering, arts, mathematics) programs available at libraries.

This year, a new addition to the library's contribution was La Cocina, a mobile demonstration kitchen that allows library staff to partner with a local chef to provide food and nutrition programs and healthy cooking demonstrations. This new element of the partnership was so successful that Dignity Health Sequoia Hospital decided to provide support for more collaboration between the library and Familias Unidas programs in the year ahead.

With parents and children working together on reading, math, science and technology skills, as well as soft skills like proper study habits, emotional resiliency and effective communication with teachers, and a focus on healthy practices related to food and nutrition, they learn how to take a balanced approach regarding the interrelationships between academic success and other elements of a healthy life.

Familias Unidas and Redwood City Public Library share the goal that every child in our community should have the opportunity to attend a university. As children from the over 600 families that have participated in Familias Unidas have grown up, success stories are starting to accumulate as families realize the benefit of approaching lifelong learning together as a family.

For more information about Familias Unidas, please visit www.unitedthrougheducation.org. For more information about Redwood City Public Library, please visit www.redwoodcity.org/library.

Editor's note: This article is supplied by Derek Wolfgram, library director at the Redwood City Public Library. Look for similar articles in upcoming Spectrum Magazine issues.