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## Latino Men Read Aloud: A Hispanic Heritage Month Favorite at Alfredo Andrews Elementary

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A highly anticipated activity in celebration of National Hispanic Heritage Month, September 15-October 15, is Latino Men Read Aloud hosted by Alfredo Andrews Elementary School's English as a Second Language (ESL) department that invites prominent local Latino men to read to students and encourage them to excel.

According to the Dept. of Education, on September 26, six successful Latino men from the community visited the Estate Glenn school, which has the largest Hispanic student population on St. Croix, to read to students in Kindergarten through third grade. According to Jose Perez, district ESL coordinator who helps organize the annual event, "the objective was to promote the importance of reading and the acquisition of the English language while celebrating the achievements of Latino men on St. Croix."

“Celebrating our Hispanic heritage not only entails learning about music, dance or food,” Perez pointed out. “It is also a celebration of the achievements and contributions of Hispanics to our society. The volunteers of the Latino Men Read Aloud activity serve as role models to the younger generation by demonstrating that it is cool to read.”

Students could be seen intently listening as readers impersonated characters in the stories. The guests also commended students for their active listening and good behavior. “I never thought this would be so much fun,” said Bully Navarro, founder of the Love Croix brand and owner of Love Croix Eatz. Other participating readers included Sammuel Sanes, St. Croix administrator; Paul Martinez, owner, Air R US; Joseph Olmeda, president, VIPR Committee; Carlos “Reny” Martinez, owner, Karibbean Kuts; and Wilfredo Guzman, Department of Finance.

“Our successful Latino men are not only famous athletes, movie stars, singers or politicians,” Perez added. “They are also local, hard-working citizens and entrepreneurs who hold a variety of jobs and careers.”

ESL is an instructional program for students whose dominant language is not English. The program emphasizes increasing English language proficiency of eligible students to attain academic standards and success in the classroom.

Along with Perez, ESL teachers Maria Velazquez, Brenda Resto and Elisaura Ramirez helped organize the activity.

National Hispanic Heritage Month is celebrated every year from September 15 through October 15 with activities organized in schools to recognize the contributions of Hispanics in the community.