

Entertainment News and Notes

Children's Show Speaks To A Multicultural Population

(NAPSA)—Children today are growing up in the most diverse culture America has ever seen. As a result, there is a growing need for positive media representations of cross-cultural understanding. While there are a number of children's television shows that provide high entertainment value and educational curriculum, TV can provide an even more powerful role in showing children the strengths of a diverse society.

In the context of the country's demographic shifts, Scholastic Media President Deborah Forte conceived an original idea for a series that would celebrate cultural diversity by respecting and validating a variety of perspectives, traditions, languages and experiences that populate today's world.

Since its very first season, "Maya & Miguel" has made an immediate and positive connection with its audience. The series—targeted to all children, with a special emphasis on the Latino population—is now in its third season and continues to be a top-rated show on PBS KIDS GO!

"As producers of children's media, we bear an important responsibility to address the country's rapidly changing demographics with programming that better reflects the nation and the world's diverse population," says Scholastic's Forte. "By doing so, we can make a positive contribution to children's understanding and appreciation of multiculturalism and diversity."

Taking a unique approach to children's programming, "Maya & Miguel" offers appealing and authentic role models—particularly the Santos family, a modern bicultural and bilingual family—



A pair of irrepressible twins is the focus of a popular TV and book series that fosters an understanding of multiculturalism.

and provides positive portrayals of minority groups that are often underrepresented or misrepresented in media.

"The series is all the more meaningful to our Hispanic viewers, because they will see themselves and their life experiences reflected positively in the world we create, whether through Maya and Miguel—who are second-generation Hispanics, born and raised in this country and fully bilingual—or their cousin Tito, an English language learner from Mexico," adds Forte.

Media Research

Scholastic Media commissioned its own research study (conducted by the Michael Cohen Group) to measure the attitudinal impact of "Maya & Miguel" among minority children. What the study found is that the program has a significant positive impact on children and their attitudes toward learning English, appreciation of ethnic diversity and tolerance of non-

native speakers and English language learners.

In addition, the study revealed that "Maya & Miguel" has a positive effect on children's attitudes toward bilingualism. Specifically, English language learners felt positive about learning English and the importance of speaking both Spanish and English.

Outreach Program

Building on the success of the show, Scholastic Media is pursuing a number of meaningful initiatives that effectively bring the values and lessons of "Maya & Miguel" into communities across the country. For example, working with US Youth Soccer, the characters will have an active presence at 12 Kohl's American Cup tournaments across the country, encouraging children to stay involved in sports to meet new friends and reinforce the importance of teamwork.

In addition, the costume characters from "Maya & Miguel" are touring the country for the Hispanic holiday "Día de los Niños" ("Day of the Children") to participate in kid-friendly events that celebrate the traditions of their Hispanic culture and heritage.

"The outreach translates the excitement of the television show into meaningful participatory activities that not only help build language skills, but also enhance children's understanding of and exposure to different cultures and ethnicities in positive, nonstereotypical presentations," says Project Director Mindy Figueroa.

To find airtimes for "Maya & Miguel," check local PBS listings. For more information about the program, as well as additional content, visit www.pbskidsgo.org/mayaandmiguel.