



Elvia Valdovinos describes to her children, Gerardo and Natalie, the many countries that she studied during Spanish Heritage month.

Hispanic Heritage Month is celebrated at the Family Service Center

Each year, during Hispanic Heritage Month, Floridians celebrate the important contributions made to our state's unique heritage by Hispanics and Latin Americans. Hispanic Heritage Month is a wonderful opportunity to educate Floridians, especially students, on the many contributions Hispanic and Latin Americans have made across the state and the impact of these influences on Florida.

The students in the *Learning Together* "Family Literacy Initiative, a Program of the Volunteer USA Foundation" along with their teacher, Virginia Fusco, have spent the last month researching, writing, and reporting on specific Hispanic and Latin Americans as well as the countries that they originate from.

Hispanic Heritage Month is an annual national celebration (September 15 – October 15) that was proclaimed as the time America celebrates the culture and traditions of U.S. residents who trace their roots to Spain, Mexico, and the Spanish-speaking nations of Central America, South America, and the Caribbean. September 15th was chosen as the starting point for the celebration because it is the anniversary of independence of five Latin American countries: Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Nicaragua.

Many Hispanic figures have made countless contributions to our society and profoundly influenced American communities through avenues such as the arts, politics, and law.

Each day, Hispanic culture continues to shape the American experience with a strong commitment to family, love of country, and respect for others. Over 30 million Americans claim Hispanic origin, one of the largest ethnic groups in the nation. The Hispanic population contributes to everyday American life while continuing to preserve the unique customs and traditions of their ancestors that are reflected in their art, music, food, and faiths.

“It has been an exciting, informative, and growing experience for the class to learn and share the customs, culture, and food of these Hispanic countries. All of the students at the Family Service Center have enjoyed the colorful posters made to illustrate the research done through books from the library and computers,” said Fusco.

