

Chispa Productions starting a movement!

Ruth Kunstadter of Chispa Productions LLC is launching a fun and engaging series of cultural videos for kids and teens to teach Spanish and highlight Latino cultures in the U.S.

Ruth created Chispa Productions LLC after finding a shocking lack of culturally authentic, age-appropriate Spanish language materials for older children and young teens. "As a Spanish teacher, I've been so disappointed with the materials available for my classes and for my own children," says Ruth. "The animated videos are fun, but have absolutely no culture. The 'cultural' videos always feature children in other countries -- which is wonderful, but we have so much of the richness and diversity of Spanish language and culture right *here*, in this country! I want to highlight that, not only to promote language and culture, but to celebrate how much we have here, and how wonderful and diverse it is."

The videos will be perfect for bilingual families who are looking for Spanish language programming that is more culturally authentic than "Rugrats in Spanish," and more appropriate than variety shows or telenovelas.

Chispa Videos will feature U.S. Latino families doing things they love, that are fun, and that reflect both the culture of their home country and their lives here. They will highlight simple, everyday things - things that someone watching would be able to do themselves, if they wanted to. It might be making tostones with an abuela, a tamalada en familia, a game of dominoes, making cascarones, dancing, music, etc.

At the same time, the Chispa series will weave in a bit of the professional lives of the people involved, and showcase the way they contribute to their communities.

The videos will teach and reinforce Spanish while also teaching about culture. "Chispa Videos mix language and culture, so that people learn about the culture while they're learning the language, and vice versa," explains Ruth. "Since many families are really bilingual, the videos will include sections where some people speak in Spanish and others answer in English, reflecting the reality of many Latino families today."

But language and culture aren't the only things Ruth hopes to address with her Chispa Videos. "I do want to add that there is another motive to my making these videos to promote Spanish language and Latino cultures," she notes. "I hope that in some small way, these videos can help validate the many Latino children in this country who rarely see themselves on TV or in videos, ni mucho menos in situations celebrating their language and culture; I also hope that they can open the eyes of other children to how wonderful and rich the Spanish-speaking cultures in our country are, how there are millions of Spanish speakers all around them that they can share with and learn from, and how all they have to do is say "Hola" to get that conversation started."

The videos will be distributed nationally, to schools and to bilingual families.

Right now, Ruth is looking to identify people in the New York/New Jersey area who would be interested in being featured in the videos. Specifically, she is seeking families with children, who have something that they do at home that they particularly love, that reflects their heritage, and that they would like to share. The families would need to understand that the videos will be for national distribution, but they would not need to be identified by name if they didn't want to be. At a later date, Chispa Productions will be filming at other locations around the country.

For more information, check out Chispa Productions' website, www.chispaproductions.com.

You may also be interested in checking out Ruth's blog on Spanish language and culture, La Tertulia: www.chispaproductions.blogspot.com.