

# NEWS

## “Into the Beautiful North” is the “Great Read” for 2009-2010

□ Naperville writer highlights community, immigration themes

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

September 14, 2009

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**Plainfield** – “Into the Beautiful North” tells the story of a trio of modern Mexican girls inspired by a classic American movie to immigrate to the United States and bring back old-fashioned warriors to save their tiny village.

Their town is being overrun by bandits because the men left years ago to find work in “Los Yunaites.” Along the way they meet a cast of characters as interesting as any in modern literature.

Their journey also provides a thought-provoking overview of the many-faceted issue of immigration; changing community; and the kind of challenges and opportunities experienced by the Plainfield area in recent years thanks to its growing cultural, racial and ethnic diversity.

Sounds convoluted. But in the expert hands of master storyteller Luis Urrea – who knows first-hand about living in both Mexico and America – the story is rich, charming and inspirational.

“Into the Beautiful North” is the selection for this year’s “The Great Read” community literacy program. This year’s program officially begins on September 15, 2009 – the first day of Hispanic Heritage Month.

“The Great Read” is presented by the Plainfield Public Library, Plainfield School District 202, Joliet Public Library and Fountaindale Public Library; and the Joliet, Bolingbrook, Plainfield and Naperville Barnes and Noble stores. The program is supported by a generous grant from the Plainfield Foundation for Excellence.

This year’s “Great Read” will feature public and school programs, author readings and book signings, and special community events illustrating and celebrating America’s inherent immigration history, and the myriad contributions of its many immigrant populations.

More information about specific events will be published soon. Please watch the District 202, and Plainfield, Joliet and Fountaindale library district web sites for more information.

“‘Into the Beautiful North’ is an ideal selection for the Plainfield-area community because of the astounding growth we have experienced in recent years, particularly in our Hispanic population,” said Plainfield Public Library Outreach Coordinator Ceil Carey.

Plainfield Community Consolidated School District #202 encompasses 64 square miles and serves all or parts of seven communities.

In 1990 the district's 3,300-student population was about 96 percent white, and about 3 percent Hispanic. Last year, about 19 percent of the district's nearly 29,000 students were Hispanic.

As well, about 70 languages were represented in the school district. Spanish was second to English, with Polish and Urdu (an Arabic language) following closely.

"We were so excited to find this book, because it speaks both directly and poetically to the very changes we have experienced as a community, and that our new immigrant populations face both getting here, and once they arrive," Carey said.

"We continue to be a target destination for immigrants of all kinds. People come to this area because they see the 'American Dream' here.

"In turn, we enjoy the wonderful benefits of new cultures, life experiences and perspectives that come only through the kind of growth and change and diversity our area has experienced," Carey said.

Urrea knows a bit about that growth and change -- not to mention cultural diversity.

Born in Tijuana, Mexico to a Mexican father and American mother, Urrea now lives in Naperville and teaches creative writing at the University of Illinois-Chicago. He is a critically acclaimed author of 11 books, and award-winning poet and essayist.

"The Devil's Highway" is his 2004 non-fiction account of a group of Mexican immigrants lost in the Arizona desert. It won the 2004 Lannan Literary Award and was a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize and the Pacific Rim Kiriayama Prize.

"The Devil's Highway" was also a national best-seller and was named a best book of the year by the Los Angeles Times, the Miami Herald, the Chicago Tribune, the Kansas City Star and many other publications.

"Across the Wire," his first book, was named a New York Times Notable Book and won the Christopher Award. Urrea also won a 1999 American Book Award for his memoir, "Nobody's Son: Notes from an American Life" and in 2000, he was voted into the Latino Literature Hall of Fame following the publication of "Vatos."

"The Hummingbird's Daughter," published in 2005, is a historical novel 20 years in the making about Teresa Urrea, sometimes known as The Saint of Cabora and the Mexican Joan of Arc.

"The Great Read" (formerly "Reading Across Plainfield") was created in 2004 and designed to promote literacy, reading, conversation and community in the greater Plainfield area.