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The Tom Green County Library and its partner organizations will implement a Big Read program to unite the community's diverse population, reach reluctant or lapsed readers with a literary initiative that will appeal to the interests of the area and promote literary reading in general. A committee of community organizations, led by the Tom Green County Library, has been formed to plan and implement the grant, each organization taking responsibility for a portion of the program. We have 9 events planned and the following is our narrative. All events are open to the public, except those held during class times on public school campuses. Regional city and county officials are invited and encouraged to attend all events associated with the Big Read initiative. Our local radio & television stations and newspaper have expressed excitement at the prospect of supporting such a community uniting event. The following are tentative activities and dates subject to approval of The Big Read grant.

Kick off event: Sponsored by Tom Green County Library (TGCL), the San Angelo Cultural Affairs Council (SACAC), and City of San Angelo, held at the library, January 15, 2010, and staffed by SACAC and Tom Green County Library staff and volunteers: At this event, we will distribute copies of *Bless Me, Ultima*, to the public and host a fiesta, Texas style. Central High School Mariachi Band will play music while the Ballet Folklorico dances to Latin rhythms. Grammy Award winning band, Los Lonely Boys, natives of San Angelo, will help distribute the books and interact with attendees at the event. This rock/Texas blues/Tejano band will be a major draw for one of our greatest at-risk youth populations—teenage Hispanic males. Their support of literacy efforts, and especially our Big Read project, demonstrates to this population that literature and reading is cool.

Key Note Presentation: Sponsored by Angelo State University (ASU) English Department, event to take place on ASU's campus, February 11, 2010. Amy Cordova, New Mexico artist and illustrator of books such as *The First Tortilla*, a Southwest Book Award winner, will discuss "Pedagogy of Place," in the works of Rudolfo Anaya. A panel discussion led by ASU faculty with expertise in Southwestern and Hispanic history, culture, and literary tradition will follow. This is open to the general public and designed for adults.

Programs: Sponsored by the SACAC, January and February 2010, a program designed to bring together area young people, the art community and the local community at large to celebrate Hispanic art and culture, as expressed in the works of Rudolfo Anaya. Students from Fort Concho Elementary school will learn about the history and style of Native American and Hispanic art. The school is located in one of San Angelo's low income neighborhoods and approximately 90% of the student population is Hispanic. The students would create original artwork using the techniques learned in the program. The student art will be displayed at a public exhibit during the February Downtown San Angelo Art Walks.

Sponsored by Angelo Civic Theatre (ACT), January 29 – February 27, 2010: A full production of a G rated play with themes related to *Bless Me, Ultima*. The event will be publicized as part of the Big Read and will include talkbacks after performances to allow dialogue regarding how the play and novel relate.

Sponsored by TGCL, San Angelo Independent School District (SAISD), to take place at six SAISD elementary school campuses, February 11 and 12, 2010. Amy Cordova will present "The Little Read," a component of The Big Read aimed at children in grades 2-5. This program will feature the book *The First Tortilla*, written by Rudolfo Anaya. This bilingual book will be read aloud by Amy, with the assistance of bilingual students. The presentation will discuss cultural differences and include a hands-on art project whereby students can share their cultural experiences.

Sponsored and staffed by San Angelo Museum of Fine Art (SAMFA) and held at SAMFA, February 13, 2010, 9-2 PM. SAMFA will host a free Family Day with a focus on Mexican-American culture, as expressed in *Bless Me, Ultima*. The event, publicized as part of the Big Read Project, will include art activities in the Education Studio, story times featuring Anaya's children's books, copies of *Bless Me,*

Ultima, and *The First Tortilla*, available for families, hands on traditional Mexican-American cooking demonstrations, live traditional Hispanic music from local musicians and a display of Mexican-American art. Amy Cordova will present three programs on *The First Tortilla*, along with an art project for children. This event is aimed at families and has activities for both adults and children to enjoy.

Sponsored by Tom Green County Library. Herbs for Medicinal Purposes, presented at the Angelo West Branch Library by Joyce Gray. Continuing Education instructor for ASU, and local herb and garden expert, Mrs. Gray, will present a Big Read program on the use of herbal medicine, as displayed in the book, and discuss the identification, growth, and use of herbs in the American Southwest. The program is designed to appeal to adults or juveniles interested in gardening and/or herbal remedies.

Sponsored by the Howard College San Angelo Campus English Department and Library, this organization will hold a photography contest for the Big Read. Through the duration of the Big Read Project (January 15, 2010 to February 18, 2010), participants will submit a photo inspired by images from the novel. Photos will be judged by a panel of professional photographers from San Angelo. The winner will be announced during Howard College's group discussion of the book on February 18, 2010. This contest is open to everyone in the community.

Sponsored by the City of San Angelo Recreation Division, the Nature Center, and the San Angelo State Park, January 23, 2010, take a 3 or 5 mile guided hike through the state park, stopping at key locations to observe the landscape and flora of the Southwest and discuss its importance in *Bless Me, Ultima*. Listen to the sights and sounds of nature as Tony and Ultima do on their quest to gather the indigenous plants used for medicine.

Sponsored by SACAC. Celebrate The Big Read initiative with a live music concert of Latin/Hispanic music. This event expands knowledge and appreciation of the Hispanic culture related to the selected novel *Bless Me, Ultima*. The SACAC will host a concert featuring a band that performs Latin/Hispanic style music. This concert will be the last of our 4-concert Cactus Music Series. It will take place in the ballroom of a historic hotel in downtown San Angelo.

Displays: SAMFA - Art work featuring Hispanic and Southwestern Art from the SAMFA permanent collection will be on display during the months of January and February.

Tom Green County Library - Displays of literary works that reflect Hispanic heritage, culture, and tradition in the Adult Services and Children's Services departments during January and February.

Goodfellow Air Force Base Library - Big Read display of works that illustrate Hispanic contributions to the War effort, on the front and at home, during the World War II era. During the Month of January, the Goodfellow Air Force Base Library will provide copies of *Bless Me, Ultima* to servicemen and women.

Group Discussions: A multitude of groups representing the community will host discussions of Rudolfo Anaya's *Bless Me, Ultima*, during the months of January and February, 2010 to support The Big Read. Copies of the book will be distributed to these organizations in advance so that the groups may hand out copies before the discussion date. The earliest discussion will be approximately one week from the kick off event, Friday, January 22, 2010, with the final discussion on Thursday, February 18, 2010. The following groups that will host discussions for The Big Read Initiative, many groups will host more than one discussion: Tom Green County Library; West Branch Bookclub; North Branch Bookclub; SAMFA; ASU Bookclub; Howard College Library and English Department; ACT; Reader's P.S. Bookclub; Station 618 Senior Center; Lighthouse for the Blind; Hastings Books, Music, and Video; Northside Boys & Girls Club; Southside Boys & Girls Club; Tom Green County Library Teen Advisory Board; Tom Green County Juvenile Detention Center; SACAC; Central High School; Goodfellow Air Force Base Library; Emmanuel Episcopal Church, San Angelo Symphony, ASU Library.