

## Community Events

# Pass the Shrimp: Bilingual is In

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by **Madame Foo**

Over 250 people braved the weather Saturday March 24th to meet and rub elbows with the Consul General of Spain, Santiago Cabanas Ansoreña, his wife Sol and other dignitaries at the Consul's personal residence. The fundraising event was for the SIPA organization, which stands for the Spanish International Parents Association, was well attended notwithstanding the rain that attempted to thwart partygoers that evening. It seems that if you have a great event and are able to eat great paella, drink and dance, any good tent will do. A Gran Paella it was.

But the event was much more than just a great party. SIPA is a non-profit parent organization that supports the Spanish International Studies Program and serves as an overlay to the five schools in Miami-Dade County that enjoy the program: Sunset Elementary, Carver Middle, Coral Way K-8, Ada Merritt K-8 and Ponce Middle Schools. SIPA works with the Spanish Consulate and the Spanish Minister of Education to help guide the program and coordinate with the Spanish lead teachers on behalf of the students. This program begins in elementary school and continues through high school; the International Charter High School is being considered for expansion due to the huge success of the program.

The SIPA organization has provided funding for the students in the form of curriculum-enriching materials, such as textbooks, periodicals, Spanish dictionaries,

maps as well as computers. It has also provided funding for Hispanic Heritage Programs, cultural programs and field trips. Lastly, this organization has helped fund scholarships for the Fifth grade trip to Spain, which is not only a cultural experience but also allows the students to attend school with local students in Madrid, Spain.

Do not think twice about the next time you wonder what is the Spanish word for peacock [pavo real] or what is the product of 12,000 times 2 [doce-mil por dos= veinte y cuatro mil], just know that if your child is in the Spanish program, he will know, so just ask him. Because in Miami and all other hubs to Spanish speaking countries will appreciate that your child will know the words and their meaning too. It is to our advantage that these programs continue to succeed and expand even further.

The rain subsided to allow SIPA president, Mike Wallman, an opportunity to share what the program meant to him and his family who relocated to Miami from New York. Consul General Cabanas thanked the many guests and showed his support of the program and led the way to the Ministry of Education's presentation of awards to several high performing students. The evening continued with the raffle of additional gifts while sipping Bacardi imbibes.

So this event is SIPA's largest fundraiser for the year and by all early accounts, the 2007 Gran Paella was a great success. In speaking with Andrea Leal, a SIPA board member and chair of the event, she indicated that she "was very pleased with the turnout, the support from the sponsors of the event, including the many silent auction donors, as well as the Principals and Assistant Principals and other teachers that came out to attend." Mrs. Leal also praised her fellow board members and the teamwork that helped to bring this event to fruition. 2006 served as the pre-cursor for this year and yes, planning has definitely begun to make the 2008 Gran Paella even better. Well, maybe someone should talk with mother nature in advance, just in case.

