

Honoring NOLA's Latin American heritage

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The Capital One Stage's live music lineup will keep festivalgoers moving during Celebracion Latina at Audubon Zoo in uptown New Orleans on Sunday, Oct. 12. (Photo from the Stone Center for Latin American Studies)

While strolling through the wildlife exhibits at Audubon Zoo on Sunday (Oct. 12), visitors will savor the vivid sights, sounds and flavors of Latin America during [Celebracion Latina](#).

The annual family festival, presented by the [Stone Center for Latin American Studies](#) at Tulane University, honors Hispanic Heritage Month (Sep. 15 â€“ Oct. 15).

The music lineup will keep festivalgoers swaying to Caribbean beats and dancing to the merengue. Felipe's Mexican Taqueria and Celina's International Supermarket will provide Latin American dishes.

Local artist Cynthia Ramirez will coordinate children's art activities to commemorate D a de los Muertos, the traditional Mexican recognition of dearly departed loved ones that coincides with All Hallows' Eve and All Souls' Day. Ramirez will assist kids in learning about the holiday as they make masks and decorate their own traditional calaveras, colorful representations of human skulls.

Vendors will be selling handmade crafts and information will be available from social service and health organizations.

Observing its 10th anniversary this year, the event celebrates New Orleans' Latin origins, said Valerie McGinley, director of planning and management at the Stone Center.

"The festival started in 2004 as a collaboration with the New Orleans Public Library inaugurating a collection of children's books," said Denise Woltering, senior program manager for educational and community programs.

The original project promoted sharing Latin American culture through families reading together at the [Pebbles Center](#), created from a partnership between the Stone Center and the New Orleans Public Library. The children's resource center has introduced area children to Latin America's diversity through a collection of bilingual, Spanish and Portuguese literature and listening materials.

Celebracion Latina has grown considerably, with the public library playing an integral role in the festivities, offering free bilingual children's books and library memberships at the event.

The festival is free with Audubon Zoo admission.

‘We want to celebrate the Latin origins of New Orleans.’—Valerie McGinley, Stone Center for Latin American Studies