

News Release

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

### **Celebrating Life in Death**

**Hayward** – Each autumn, the Hayward Area Historical Society explores the various aspects of Day of the Dead through traditional and contemporary altars and art. Interest in Day of the Dead has grown steadily over the years since Chicano/a activists and artists introduced the celebration to California audiences in the 1970s. The festive holiday is celebrated throughout Mexico, Central America, and much of the United States, but similar holidays exist in cultures through the world. It has become a fusion of traditional Mexican elements mixed with modern themes and materials.

This year's exhibition explores symbols and the items used or represented most often in Day of the Dead art and altars. Such items as sugar skulls, water, the arch, marigolds, candles, butterflies, papel picado, and pan de muerto are just some of the things seen in Day of the Dead exhibitions, but it isn't always understood why they are used or what they represent. The exhibition opened September 30 and will be on view at the HAHS Museum of History & Culture through November 26.

"As a historian, I find the tradition and history of the celebration fascinating as it pertains to a particular culture. As a human, I find the meaning and beauty of the celebration captivating. As a curator, I find the exhibitions thought provoking and beautiful. As a California native with roots dating back to the Spanish and Mexican periods, I am learning about a part of my heritage," says HAHS Curator Diane Curry.

Complementing the exhibition are two programs. On Saturday, October 14, families are encouraged to drop in between 10:00 AM and 1:00 PM for "History for Half Pints: Day of the Dead" where kids of all ages will have the opportunity to decorate their own sugar skulls to add their home altars. Other related crafts and activities will also be available.

On Saturday, October 28, Day of the Dead specialist Bea Carrillo Hocker will address the Pre-Hispanic concept of death as portrayed in the paintings and sculptures of Mexico's early artists, the impacts of Spanish Catholicism on indigenous funerary rites, and offer insights into the present-day pageantry of Day of the Dead along with the reclamation of these traditions by Mexican Americans. Following the presentation will be a Jumping Jack Workshop where attendees will have the opportunity to create a toy similar to those sold during Day of the Dead festivals. Funding for the Day of the Dead programs is generously provided by Berty Nebenzahl and Ruth Talley.

The HAHS Museum of History & Culture is located at 22380 Foothill Boulevard in Hayward. Admission is now free thanks to a generous grant from the Edward E. and Donna L. Martins Foundation. The museum is open 10:00 AM through 4:00 PM Wednesday through Sunday. Special school tours are available. For more information, please call (510) 581-0223 or visit [www.HaywardAreaHistory.org](http://www.HaywardAreaHistory.org).

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**Image caption: Painting by Karla Lopez is one of many installations and artworks on view in the exhibition.**