Smithsonian Latino Center Announces Annual Day of the Dead Celebration

Latin American Holiday Is Celebrated Online

The Smithsonian Latino Center announces its fourth annual Día de los Muertos, or Day of the Dead, festival in its Latino Virtual Museum in Second Life, Oct. 31 to Nov. 2. This three-day online event will feature activities that celebrate this popular Latin American holiday. Day of the Dead is celebrated throughout Mexico, Central America and in many Latino communities in the U.S. as a way to honor deceased family and friends through the creation of altars or ofrendas, which include traditional foods, sugar skulls, marigolds and material goods that the deceased enjoyed while alive.

This year’s Día de los Muertos festival will feature ofrendas to late Mexican singer Chavela Vargas, actress Lupe Ontiveros and artist Carlos Alonzo. Visitors will have the opportunity to tweet messages and offerings during the ceremony, which will be delivered in the Nagual language. Live art, music and cultural performances from artists and writers throughout the country will be featured, including activities from the National Museum of the American Indian. A highlight of the festival will be an ancient Mesoamerican ballgame played between Smithsonian Latino Center staff and University of Texas El Paso alumni. Information about the game can be found at [www.ballgame.org](http://www.ballgame.org). Other activities include the building of a community altar, drumming workshops, a fiesta de las calaveras (skeletons), a costume contest, a literary series and a film festival.

“This year’s festival allows visitors to create a virtual presence with their avatars and to engage in the spirit of this culturally significant celebration by sharing their offerings with a global audience via Twitter,” said Melissa Carrillo, Latino Center director of New Media and Technology. “This celebration continues to grow in popularity, which is evidenced by more than 11,000 visits to our online festival last year.”

In addition to the cultural activities, educators will have access to several online resources, including Smithsonian Latino collections, a Day of the Dead user’s guide and glossary, lesson plans,
resource links and a website featuring an altar-building kit and video tutorials from last year’s festival.

Registration for this year’s Day of the Dead festival and a complete listing of events are available on Latino Center’s website at latino.si.edu/education. For more information, visit latinovirtual.blogspot.com.

The Smithsonian Latino Center ensures Latino contributions to arts, sciences and the humanities are highlighted, understood and advanced through the development and support of public programs, scholarly research, museum collections and educational opportunities at the Smithsonian Institution and its affiliated organizations across the United States. For more information, visit latino.si.edu.

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