COMMUNITY, GENERAL

Día de los Muertos celebrates loved ones who have died

by By Sharon Sullivan Moab Sun News
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The Moab Valley Multicultural Center invites community members to celebrate their loved ones — both humans and pets who have died — at the seventh annual Día de los Muertos Festival on Sunday, Oct. 28, from 1 to 5 p.m.

Día de los Muertos (Day of the Dead) is a popular celebration among Latin American cultures in Peru, Bolivia and Mexico on Nov. 1 and 2, when the
spirits of deceased family members and friends are believed to return for a visit. People welcome the spirits by decorating tombs and altars with their loved ones’ favorite foods, water, flowers, candles and other meaningful objects.

The Moab Valley Multicultural Center’s (MVMC) outdoor area will be transformed into a mock cemetery, where Moab residents will decorate both “tombs” and altars in honor of their own loved ones.

The Moab celebration is “an awesome event that brings out a huge cross-section of the community,” said Joanna Onorato, MVMC outreach coordinator.

Moab added its own spin on the holiday by creating pet tombs to decorate, as well.

“In Moab, many people feel their pets are part of the family,” Onorato said.

Community members can reserve tombs and altars to decorate the day before the festival. While the altars have all been reserved, there may still be tombs available for decorating. People interested in reserving a tomb may do so by calling the multicultural center.

On Sunday, there will be traditional Mexican food for sale, a kids’ tent with face painting and other activities, plus an art exhibit by well-known Mexican artist Jose Guadalupe Posada. Proceeds from the sale of tamales, tacos, green chili and mole during the event will benefit the Moab Valley Multicultural Center.

The festival also features live mariachi music from 2:30 to 5 p.m. The eight-piece band, “Mariachi Raza Kora,” is from Ixtlán del Río, Nayarit, Mexico.

The mariachi music is always a big draw, Onorato said.
At the end of the day, the mariachi band will join a procession through the decorated cemetery to serenade each of the spirits represented by the tombs, in a similar way to how it’s done in Mexico.

The festival’s art show is part of a traveling exhibition from the Salt Lake City-based nonprofit called Artes de Mexico in Utah. The exhibit features 11 artworks by the late Guadalupe Posada, known for his prints, engravings and the famous image “La Calavera Catrina.”

Artes de Mexico in Utah is also sending an art history expert to Moab to explain the significance of the skulls and other symbols in the artwork.

“His work influenced a lot of artists and cartoonists because of his use of satire,” said Rhiana Medina, executive director at MVMC. “He used skulls and skeletons to make political and cultural satire.”

Día de los Muertos is considered a spiritual occasion and has little to do with Halloween or trick or treating.

“Everyone is invited,” Onorato said. “It’s a great day. We hope lots of people come to celebrate.”

Local nonprofit festival welcomes community to traditional Mexican holiday

When: Sunday, Oct. 28, 1-5 p.m.

Where: Moab Valley Multicultural Center, 156 N. 100 West

Cost: Free

Information: Call 435-259-5444
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