

The Bandera PROPHEET

October 28, 2019

Frontier Times Museum celebrates The Day of the Dead

Halloween is not the only day of the year spirits return to visit the living. In South Texas, Mexico and parts of Central America, *Dia de los Muertos*, or Day of the Dead, altars are created to welcome spirits of passed love ones back to earth. The two-day celebrations on Nov. 1 and 2 combine pre-Hispanic religious rites with Christian rituals and coincide with All Saints' Day and All Souls' Day on the Catholic calendar.

Texas artist Joan Estes has created an elaborate *Dia de los Muertes* altar exclusively for the Frontier Times Museum. The altar will be on display in the museum's Doane Western Art Gallery through Nov. 8. Original Day of the Dead artwork by local artist Dusty Pendleton, from the collection of Judith Pannebaker, will be on display as well. On Nov. 2, from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m., the museum will have children's activities to help celebrate this unique holiday along with Mexican cookies and aqua frescas.

The centerpiece of the Mexican celebration is an altar, or *ofrenda*, built in private homes and cemeteries, which welcomes spirits back to the realm of the living. Alter offerings include favorite food, including tamales, and treats of departed loved ones, even alcohol and cigarettes. Other items that might adorn an alter are family photos and a candle for each dead relative, as well as pictures of saints, particularly the Blessed Virgin Mary and Our Lady of Guadalupe. Small toys and candy are placed for the spirits of children. Marigolds and marigold petals are traditionally used as well. Their scent is believed to guide wandering souls.

Altar offerings also include water to quench the thirst of the departed after a long journey and salt which stops the souls of the dead from

being corrupted by earthly temptations. The offerings are to keep the spirits happy so they will in turn provide protection, good luck and wisdom to their families.

Estes has created altars for other museums such as the Panhandle Plains Historical Museum in Canyon. In addition to Estes' altar, two smaller altars will be on display that are a more traditional *ofrenda* found in private homes. Museum staff Rebecca Norton and Avelinda Winslow will recreate the altars they have made in their own home to honor their loved ones.

Dia de los Muertos is not a sad time but rather a joyous holiday that honors and remembers family and friends who have died with joy.