



NEWS RELEASE

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BCA Presents 3rd Annual Día de los Muertos Festival October 21–23, 2016 Featuring free family activities at the Breckenridge Arts District

BRECKENRIDGE, CO (October 13, 2016) –Breckenridge Creative Arts invites the community to embrace the folk arts of **Día de los Muertos** or Day of the Dead, an ancient tradition whose roots predate modern Mexico, from **October 21-23, 2016** on the **Breckenridge Arts District** campus in downtown Breckenridge. The weekend includes a slate of free activities in which participants craft traditional sugar skulls, paper flowers, masks, and a community altar; take part in face painting and dance workshops; and enjoy performances by the Aztec dance group, Grupo Huitzilopochtli Danza Azteca. The activities are led by bilingual instructors from Journey Through Our Heritage, a program at Metropolitan State University Denver that partners with BCA for the event.

Traditionally, Día de los Muertos celebrates the lives of people who have passed on from this world into the next, and each folk art has its meaning in that context. The paper flowers or “papel flores” symbolize the fact that “our life is a beautiful flowering event,” explained Dr. Renee Fajardo, director of the MSU Denver program. The masks and face painting offer a way to “transform yourself spiritually and mentally from walking in this world, to a different place in the universe,” she said.

Thus the Aztec dancers will don face and body paint, bringing them closer to the spirit realm as they pass on prayers through dance. “Every culture has some kind of masking tradition,” Fajardo said, citing her own people—the Pueblo Indians—who are known for their masked Katrina dancers.

“In Colorado we have always been a crossroads of lots of different people,” Farjardo said. “This was Mexico before it was Colorado. We’ve had miners and ranchers and railroad workers here. We are a conglomeration, not a melting pot—a beautiful tapestry of all the people who’ve come here.”

Not only does Día de los Muertos celebrate lost loved ones, it also reminds us that death is not something to be feared. “That’s why we do the sugar skulls—because death is sweet,” Fajardo said. “It is a transition that is part of the natural process of our time here on earth.”

Among the pieces to be featured at the Breckenridge celebration is a hand-hewn community altar at Randall Barn, decorated with candles, water, and earth to represent the elements; food for the dead; and flowers. Community members are invited to bring their own mementos of lost loved ones to place there.

Even though the altar is based in Mexican culture, the desire to celebrate a lost loved one’s life crosses cultural bounds, making for a meaningful, shared experience. At the same time, it illuminates a tradition dear to some high country residents, but less well-known by others.

“I think a lot of people don’t realize how diverse Breckenridge is,” said Fajardo, who presents educational exhibits around the state and beyond, supported by the Colorado Folk Arts Council, with her students from MSU Denver. Her students, too, represent a diversity of backgrounds. Many have never been to Breckenridge, so being a part of Día de los Muertos opens their eyes to new places as well.

Breckenridge Creative Arts aims to grow such community connections through its Día de los Muertos celebration, which is now in its third year. “We want to make the arts accessible to our entire community,” said Robb Woulfe, chief executive officer of the nonprofit. “Our hope is to open our arms and engage the greater Hispanic/Latino community in what we are doing through this celebration and other relevant programming.”

“Día de los Muertos offers many different aspects to celebrate,” Fajardo said. “There’s a whole ebb and flow of a community going on. It creates a new life of relationships between all these different people.”

Beyond that, there’s no denying the richness and beauty of the Day of the Dead folk arts. “Día de los Muertos is a colorful, layered and artful tradition,” Woulfe said. “We are delighted to present this exhibition to our community.”

The Día de los Muertos celebration is presented in partnership with The Summit Foundation and sponsored by Epic Promise. Activities are produced in association with MSU Denver’s Journey Through our Heritage and Colorado Folk Arts Council.

A detailed schedule of Día de los Muertos activities in Breckenridge follows. For more details, please visit www.breckcreate.org/ddlm

Friday, October 21

Opening Party & Reception

6 to 8 pm, Old Masonic Hall

FREE

The community is invited to the Día de los Muertos kick-off party, celebrating the first night of the weekend festivities. The evening will feature a cash bar, family activities, traditional face painting and a reception for visual artist Tony Ortega, whose original pastels from the children's book *Aztec Adventures of Cholo, Vato and Pano* will be on view at Old Masonic Hall through November 9.

Saturday, October 22

Día de los Muertos Face Painting

10 am to 4 pm, Quandary Antiques Cabin

FREE; first come, first served

Artists Leah Reddell and Alison Kenyon brings their extreme face painting experience to Breckenridge for a weekend of creative face paintings of skulls, masks, and flowers. Skulls – known as calaveras or calacas in Mexico – are an essential part of the symbolism of Día de los Muertos. They are used not only as the basis for painting faces, but also are the shape of candy such as sugar skulls and for many skeleton-inspired decorations. Free face painting is open to adults and children. This attraction is first come, first served; artists will accommodate as many guests as possible before 4 pm.

Aztec Dance Workshop

10:30 am to 12 pm, Old Masonic Hall, upper studio

FREE; space limited. First-come, first-served

Learn the history and significance of the danza to Día de los Muertos with Grupo Huitzilopochtli Danza Azteca. The company has been in the Denver area for 40 years and is under the direction of Capitan Raul Chavez, a 5th generation danzante from Mazatlan, Mexico. This hands-on dance workshop will prepare families for the candle light vigil on Saturday night and the altar dedication on Sunday. Participants will be able to join in one of the grupos sacred dances for these two events, if they wish.

Skeleton + Katrina Masks for Families

10:30 am to 12 pm, Old Masonic Hall, lower studio

FREE; space limited. First-come, first-served

Inspired by sugar skull face painting, you will learn how to decorate your own unique Day of the Dead mask. But unlike face paint, you won't have to wash your mask off at the end of the celebration. Mask making is an ancient form of celebration and reverence in Mexico. All materials provided.

Sugar Skull Decorating for Families

11 am to 12 pm, Fuqua Livery Stable

FREE; space limited. First-come, first-served

Mexico possesses a rich and complex relationship with death that extends far beyond the Day of the Dead

holiday and its iconic sugar skulls. In this workshop you will receive an introduction to the customs of Día de los Muertos and the symbolism of the sugar skull. Participants will be taken through the sugar skull making process step by step, and then create their very own skull art. All materials provided.

Community Altar

1 to 3 pm, Randall Barn

FREE

Day of the Dead altars honor the lives of those who have passed. Creating these altars is one of the most important traditions during Day of the Dead in Mexico—and in Mexican-American and Latino communities worldwide. The modern Mexican holiday is a rich blending of traditions, its origins traced back to beliefs and activities of indigenous peoples of Central and South Mexico, as well as Catholic celebrations of All Saints Day and All Souls' Day. The community is invited to bring photographs of loved ones and flowers to place on a communal altar that will be on display in the Randall Barn on the Breckenridge Arts District campus. Instructions and history of the altar will be given throughout the day in Spanish and English. Little calavera notes will be adorned with your personalized messages to send greetings to those dearly departed.

Aztec Dance Workshop

1:30 to 3 pm, Old Masonic Hall, upper studio

FREE; space limited. First-come, first-served

Learn the history and significance of the danza to Día de los Muertos with Grupo Huiziloptchli Danza Azteca. The company has been in the Denver area for 40 years and is under the direction of Capitan Raul Chavez, a 5th generation danzante from Mazatlan, Mexico. This hands-on dance workshop will prepare families for the candle light vigil on Saturday night and the altar dedication on Sunday. Participants will be able to join in one of the grupos sacred dances for these two events, if they wish.

Dancing Puppets with Tony Ortega

1:30 to 2:30 pm, Old Masonic Hall, lower studio

FREE; space limited. First-come, first-served

Create a festive dancing skeleton that moves and creates spooky shadows. This workshop is open to ages 9 and up. All materials provided.

Paper Flowers/Papel Flores-Making for Families

1:30 to 3 pm, Fuqua Livery Stable

FREE; space limited. First-come, first-served

Come learn the tradition of creating handcrafted paper flowers. In this workshop you will learn the art of Papel Picado and traditional Mexican paper flowers. Both of these Mexican traditions utilize thin paper commonly cut from tissue paper using a guide and either small chisels or scissors. This workshop is open to all ages. All materials provided.

Candle Light Vigil & Community March

6:30 to 9 pm, Old Masonic Hall & Ridge Street Arts Square

FREE

This is a time of remembrance, sacred tradition, love and bringing all our community together. Dr. Rene Fajardo of MSU Denver will speak on the ceremonial importance of Dia de los Muertos. There will be a community altar

to bring photos of loved ones, followed by a lighting of candles as Grupo Huitzilopochtli Danza Azteca leads participants in a procession through the Breckenridge Arts District campus. Families are welcome to carry the picture of loved one with them during the procession.

Sunday, October 23

Día de los Muertos Face Painting

10 am to 2 pm, Quandary Antiques Cabin

FREE; first come, first served

Artists Leah Reddell and Alison Kenyon bring their extreme face painting experience to Breckenridge for a weekend of creative face paintings of skulls, masks, and flowers. Skulls – known as calaveras or calacas in Mexico – are an essential part of the symbolism of Día de los Muertos. They are used not only as the basis for painting faces, but also are the shape of candy such as sugar skulls and for many skeleton-inspired decorations. Free face painting is open to adults and children. This attraction is first come, first served; artists will accommodate as many guests as possible before 2 pm.

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Sugar Skull Decorating for Families

11 am to 12 pm, Fuqua Livery Stable

FREE; space limited. First-come, first-served

Mexico possesses a rich and complex relationship with death that extends far beyond the Day of the Dead holiday and its iconic sugar skulls. In this workshop you will receive an introduction to the customs of Día de los Muertos and the symbolism of the sugar skull. Participants will be taken through the sugar skull making process step by step, and then create their very own skull art. All materials provided.

Skull Bracelets

12 to 1 pm, Fuqua Livery Stable

FREE; space limited. First-come, first-served

In Mexico the symbol of the skeleton is a reminder that we are all part of the same journey. Life and death are sacred. We honor our dead by embracing our mortality, and we honor our ancestors by adorning ourselves with mementos that connect us to them. All materials provided.

Aztec Dance Parade & Altar Dedication

1 to 2 pm, Old Masonic Hall & Randall Barn

FREE

Día de los Muertos demonstrates a strong sense of love and respect for one's ancestors, celebrates the

continuance of life, family relationships, and community solidarity, and allows people to talk about and find humor in death. Grupo Huitzilopochtli Danza Azteca has created a special Aztec show, based on Aztec mythology, to celebrate Día de los Muertos. The dancers perform the Battle Dance which features two Aztec warriors. When one of the warriors perishes, his soul is greeted by another soul who leads him to his next life in the Aztec underworld of Mictlan, where the dead dwell. The sequence ends when the souls who reside in Mictlan perform the Día de los Muertos Dance.

About Breckenridge Creative Arts

Established in 2014, Breckenridge Creative Arts was developed by the town to support and promote arts, culture, and creative experiences throughout Breckenridge. This multidisciplinary nonprofit organization is responsible for the successful management of a series of programs, properties and partnerships that collectively animate and populate a cultural corridor in the heart of downtown Breckenridge. From quality performing and visual arts to the development of one of the region's newest arts districts, Breckenridge Creative Arts is a transformative force for Breckenridge and the greater Summit County community. More info at breckcreate.org.

About MSU's Journey Through Our Heritage & Colorado Folk Arts Council

Journey Through Our Heritage is a multicultural educational program of Metropolitan State University of Denver (MSU Denver) Department of Chicano/Chicana Studies that fosters intercultural leadership among metro Denver high school students by pairing them with MSU Denver student mentors. Colorado Folk Art Council, whose mission is to encourage the preservation of ethnic cultural arts, history and traditions through educational workshops, youth team building, public performances and community projects, is one of Colorado's oldest multicultural organizations.

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