

# Mexican Day of the Dead a 'celebration of life'

*Día de los Muertos, celebrated at the University since 1981, is a 'community offering' for loved ones*

BY CANELA WOOD  
NEWS REPORTER

Mariachi music echoed from the EMU Fir room Tuesday, as the band La Catrina rehearsed before its performance at an event to celebrate Día de los Muertos. The event began at 7 p.m., the room colorfully adorned with skulls and thin paper cutouts that surrounded an altar and were strung along the ceiling.

Día de los Muertos, the day of the dead, is a three-day Mexican holiday beginning Oct. 31 and ending Nov. 2. The celebration is a time for people to remember those who have died.

"Día de los Muertos has indigenous roots laid in with the Mexican

culture," said Brenda Sifuentez, the internal director of MEChA and a senior ethnic studies and history major.

"It's a celebration of life. The U.S. has Halloween, but that's spooky; we view death as a celebratory thing," Sifuentez said. "It's a time to get closer to our families and those we've lost."

The celebration was sponsored by the University's MEChA Club and is the 23rd annual event at the University. This year's theme was "La Muerte de Carton y Azucar," the death of carton and sugar, and the featured artist was Jesús Pastor, an art teacher from Guanajuato, Mexico.

Pastor spent the last two weeks

working with MEChA club members to educate them about the traditions and customs of Día de los Muertos. He also helped them create the ofrenda, or altar, that was the center of the evening's event.

The three-tiered altar was covered in picados of all colors, which are thin sheets of paper with cutouts similar to a paper snowflake. There were also candles; fruit; pan de muerto, a bread made especially for the holiday; and pictures of the dead surrounding the altar. A large picture of Caesar Chavez was the focal point at the top of the altar.

"It's important that there is a continuation of popular traditions and customs, which is the identity of a community," Pastor said. "This is a community offering so people can remember their own loved ones; as MEChA we are remembering Caesar Chavez, who did so much for the migrant farm workers movement, but this is a community offering."

Sophomore Lorena Landeros expressed her desire for people to understand what this holiday is really about.

"Día de los Muertos is not a negative thing — calaveras or skulls aren't bad," Landeros said. "People should see that everything is colorful and positive, not negative."

Landeros explained that her family celebrates the holiday throughout the year.

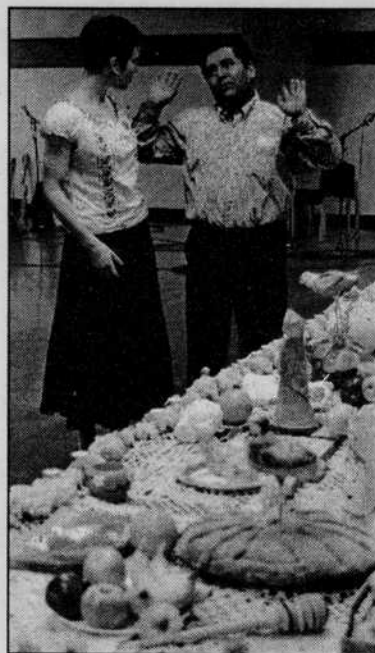
"My mom, all year long, has a candle lit or flower on the windowsill to remember those who have passed," Landeros said. "We acknowledge Día de los Muertos every year, but because we always have a candle lit, we're always remembering."

Armando Morales, MEChA adviser, said he began the event at the University in 1981.

"Every year this event gets bigger and bigger," Morales said. "We were the first out of all Oregon and Washington schools to celebrate Día de los Muertos."

The event was well-attended by University faculty and students of all ethnicities.

canelawood@dailyemerald.com



DANIELLE HICKEY | PHOTO EDITOR  
Senior Kaleen Mills talks with guest artist Jesús Pastor from Mexico at the Day of the Dead event in the EMU Tuesday night.



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## Local: Candidates voice their thoughts

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candidates Al Gore, "so my vote didn't matter."

Platt said he was planning on voting absentee in New Jersey this year but registered in Oregon after learning how heated the campaign was expected to be.

8:50 p.m. — Senior Kevin May said he wanted to see the outcome of Oregon Ballot Measure 37, which "has the potential to bankrupt the state," and Measure 36, which would limit marriage in Oregon to one man and one woman, although he said both measures were close. Even though May said he had work at 5 a.m. today, he said he would probably stay up until midnight or go without sleep to watch returns.

May said the youth vote will matter in this election.

"I think the youth vote is going to make a difference," he said. "I guess we'll find out tomorrow."

College Democrats member Gabe Zitrin, who has been extensively involved in the Kerry campaign, arrived at election central around 9 p.m. and said he was not at all distressed by Bush's lead in the electoral college because Ohio results still hadn't been announced.

Zitrin said because the election is hinging on Ohio and he didn't think Ohio would be declared until the early hours of the morning, "I'm just waiting for Oregon to come in so I can have my work validated."

Zitrin didn't have to wait long. Television networks declared Kerry the winner in Oregon at around 9:45 p.m., sending a loud cheer through the crowd.

"Now I can go home," Zitrin said, as he pumped his fist in the air.

9:00 p.m. — The Eugene Peace Choir performed as a small contingent of Bush supporters cheered the latest returns, showing Bush is ahead in the electoral college.

Lane Community College student Dan Basaraba said he wanted to see the outcomes of Measures 35 because he said it will have a big impact on medical issues. He also said he was interested in Measure 36 because he was "against the way Oregon snuck through the back door" to authorize gay marriage in Multnomah County earlier this year.

University sociology professor Chuck Hunt left the fairgrounds at about 10:15 p.m. grappling with what he said was the very real possibility that Bush will be re-elected.

Hunt said voters in America have



ELLIOTT ASBURY | DESIGNER  
John and Ralph Smeed transfer ballots to return to Lane County Elections Tuesday.

a history of making mistakes.

"I'm afraid they made a terrible one this time," he said.

Hunt said he will retire and move to Canada if Bush is re-elected, a claim other citizens have made but one Hunt said he fully intends on keeping.

Meanwhile, local Republican candidates and their supporters watched live returns from the Eugene Town Club at the top of the Key Bank building.

Lane County Republicans Chairman Bob Avery said he was disappointed by the outcome of Jim Feldkamp's campaign for Congress.

"I think that Jim is a very substantial candidate," he said. "I would hope that he would run again. Not very many challengers win the first time out, but many win the second or third time out."

Avery added that the election was positive for Republicans.

"I think we've seen a tremendous new energy for the Republican Party," he said. "We're going to keep building on where we're going."

At about 11:30 p.m. freshman Erin Swartz and four of her friends gathered in a Spiller Hall room to discuss the election results. All five expressed disgust over the very real possibility of Bush winning the election.

"My friends have been calling me crying," Swartz said. "People are just freaking out."

Swartz said she was most distraught over the probable passing of Measure 36 and Bush's likely win.

"His stronghold on this country is scary," she said.

Spiller Hall resident freshman Brendan Nelson, who had already created a sign promoting Sen. Hillary Clinton for president in 2008, said he was "disappointed" by early results, especially

about measures around the country banning same-sex marriage.

"I was really, really pissed off every state voted 'yes,'" he said.

### Candidate reactions

As the votes were tabulated, candidates shared their short and long term plans and reactions to the results.

U.S. Sen. Ron Wyden, who regained his seat, said he would focus on economic and higher education issues during his next term.

"You cannot have a big league economic growth with little league policies in higher education," he said.

Wyden's opponent Al King, as of 8:30 p.m., said he still felt he might win the election. Either way, he said he would go to the lake to unwind with his dog Dexter and added that he would continue to serve on the Klamath Community College Board. U.S. Representative Peter DeFazio said he is pleased with his win.

State Senator Floyd Prozanski, who was appointed to his seat in December 2003, had his position reaffirmed by voters.

"It's very gratifying to have that support from the voters," he said.

State Representative Paul Holvey regained his seat by a large margin. He said had several priorities for his coming term, including improving funding for education, public safety and health care.

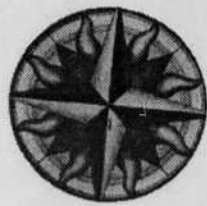
"I'd like to see a dedicated fund for public safety... to free up funds for health care," he said.

parkerhowell@dailyemerald.com  
meghannuniff@dailyemerald.com  
News Reporter Moriah Balingit  
and News Editor Jared Paben  
contributed to this report

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