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The Day of the Dead celebration included exhibits of altars, ofrendas and art pieces Sunday in Waukegan.

'REUNION BETWEEN DEAD AND LIVING'

Day of the Dead exhibit in Waukegan celebrates tradition

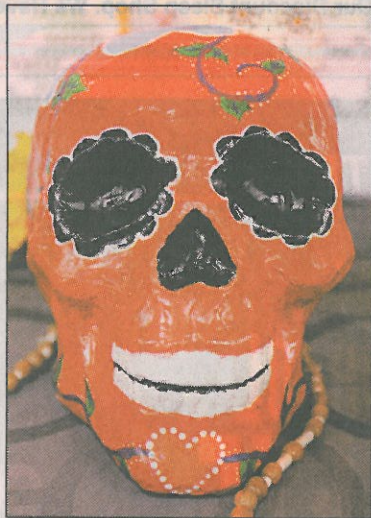
BY YADIRA SANCHEZ OLSON
News-Sun

It's been 30 years since Dulce Sanchez's husband Domingo was killed in Mexico, but to this day Dulce said that she feels his presence near her and vividly remembers all the things that made her love him when he was still alive.

On Saturday, the Texas native was one of seven families who participated in the Day of the Dead event that is hosted annually by the Waukegan Park District and is presented by the Academia Cultural Xilotl.

The exhibit displayed altars that are raised in observance of the Mexican tradition Dia de los Muertos. They showed the way in which those who celebrate the holiday welcome dead loved ones during their visit back to this world during the first two days of the month of November — All Saints' Day and All Souls' Day.

"It's the reunion between the dead and living," said Kimy Lopez



of Round Lake Beach, volunteer guide of the exhibit.

Each of the altars showcased the colorfully decorated skulls and the richly dressed skeletons that have come to signify the celebration of death in Mexico.

"We all die someday. There's no way of getting out of it," Lopez said.

"This tradition is a way of laughing at death instead of crying about it. That's what differentiates the Mexican culture."

The altars are used to show the dead spirits of the loved relatives that they're still loved and welcome. They're set up with offerings of their favorite foods and beloved items and trinkets.

Some of the altars at Sunday's event were elaborate, while others were small. All of them were filled with photos of the deceased person or people.

The traditional treat of pan de muerto, or bread of the dead, was placed in most of the altars at Sunday's exhibit.

"It's beautiful to remember him this way," Dulce said, picking up Domingo's black and white portrait from the altar that included photos of Domingo and other dead family members.

Lopez said that although the event was smaller this year and didn't include a dance presentation like in previous years, the hope was to give those who celebrate Dia de los Muertos a place to do so while teaching others about the meaning of the tradition.

Yadira Sanchez Olson is a freelance reporter for the News-Sun.