
WAUKEGAN PARK DISTRICT

PRESS RELEASE

Waukegan Park District and Sugar Skulls Xilotl Partner to Celebrate Día de Muertos

Waukegan, Illinois (September 24, 2021) – The Waukegan Park District and Sugar Skulls Xilotl (formerly Academia Cultural Xilotl) are partnering to celebrate Día de Muertos (Day of the Dead) with Sugar Skull Workshops and a community celebration. With origins in Mexico and celebrated throughout Latin America, Día de Muertos is a celebration of the lives of the deceased. Families create ofrendas (offerings) to honor their family members that have passed away. These altars are decorated with bright flowers, calaveras (skulls), photos, foods, drinks, and items to honor the departed loved ones. Día de Muertos is not the “Mexican Halloween” like it is sometimes mistaken to be because of the timing of the year.

Three Sugar Skull Workshops will be facilitated by Maria Calderon of Sugar Skulls Xilotl on Saturday, October 2; Saturday, October 9; and Saturday, October 16 from 10am to 12pm at the Jack Benny Center for the Arts, located at 39 Jack Benny Drive. Pre-registration is required to participate in the Sugar Skull Workshops.

The commemoration of Día de Muertos will culminate with a free community celebration on Saturday, October 23 from 12pm to 5pm at the Jack Benny Center for the Arts. The event will feature altar exhibits, art vendors, food, music, dance presentations, and sugar skull workshops.

Jacqueline Herrera Giron, President of the Waukegan Park District Board of Commissioners, stated, “The Waukegan Park District recognizes that Día de Muertos is an important tradition for Latinx families in our community. We are proud to partner with Sugar Skulls Xitotl to remember those departed and celebrate death through free programming and a community celebration.”

Jay Lerner, Executive Director of the Waukegan Park District, stated, “The Waukegan Park District is excited to partner with Sugar Skulls Xitotl to host Sugar Skull Workshops and a community celebration once again this year. Partnerships with local organizations like Sugar Skulls Xitotl are vital to enhance our cultural offerings.”

Maria Calderon, Executive Director of Sugar Skulls Xitotl, stated, “Día de Muertos is a fundamental part of the families in the Mexican and Latino community, a way to keep cultural traditions alive for our children (leaders of tomorrow). Sugar Skulls Xilotl is proud to partner with the Waukegan Park District to present our Sugar Skull Decorating Program to the community so that this very important tradition of Día de Muertos can be preserved throughout future generations among our very diverse society.”

More details, including registration, are available at waukeganparks.org/diademuertos.

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About the Waukegan Park District

Established on December 26, 1916, the district has 53 properties and more than 742 acres of land, including the 18-hole Bonnie Brook and 9-hole Greenshire Golf Courses. Properties are managed to the highest environmental and conservation standards. Facilities operated by the district include the Field House Sports, Fitness and Aquatics Center, Jack Benny Center for the Arts, Waukegan's Greg Petry SportsPark, Waukegan Skate Park, BMX Track, SplashZone, Percussion Playground, recreational centers, disc golf course, dog exercise area and agility course, outdoor sports fields, picnic areas, playgrounds, splash pads, and sports courts including basketball, tennis and pickleball. A full range of programs and services are offered year-round for all ages, from infants to seniors as well as special needs populations. Healthy lifestyles, wellness initiatives, and a connection with the outdoors and nature are integrated throughout programs, services, and special events. Cultural events are provided by the Waukegan Symphony Orchestra and Concert Chorus, and the Waukegan History Museum. We offer something for everyone!

The District is a member of the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA), Illinois Association of Park Districts (IAPD), Illinois Park and Recreation Association (IPRA) and the Park District Risk Management Agency (PDRMA). The District employs 64 full-time and nearly 200 part-time, seasonal, and temporary employees and is recognized by the IPRA as an Exceptional Workplace.

Nationally accredited by the NRPA Commission for Accreditation of Park and Recreation Agencies (CAPRA) and State accredited through the IAPD Distinguished Agency Accreditation. The District has received Government Finance Officer Association (GFOA) awards for Distinguished Budget Presentation and Certificate for Excellence in Financial Reporting for ten consecutive years and received the coveted GFOA Triple Crown Award recognizing the District's Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting, Popular Annual Financial Reporting and Distinguished Budget Presentation Award for 2019. The Waukegan Park District was awarded the NRPA National Gold Medal Award for Excellence in Park and Recreation Management in 2013 and named a Gold Medal Finalist in 2012, 2013, 2019, and 2021.

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About Sugar Skulls Xilotl

Sugar Skulls Xilotl is a family oriented team that promotes, preserves, and educates the community on what is Día de Muertos by encouraging communal participation in their Sugar Skull Decorating Program and their annual Día de Muertos Celebration since 2011.

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