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*SANTA MARIA JOINT UNION HIGH SCHOOL DISTRICT*

**PRESS RELEASE**

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October 22, 2020

Covid-19 and distance learning will not keep SMJUHS students from bringing to life an ancient, indigenous tradition from 3:30 p.m. to 4:30 p.m. on Nov.1-2.

Students from the ERHS Latinos Unidos club are collaborating with SMHS, DHS and PVHS students and teachers to celebrate *Día de los Muertos* (Day of the Dead), in remembrance of loved ones and community members.

This year, the celebration is going virtual (see flyer for zoom code). Students will be hosting a series of workshops covering the history and significance of the tradition, and teaching others how to create a home altar to honor the dead. The celebration will also include a virtual *calavera* face painting competition.

“*Día de los Muertos* is a tradition that most of our families are aware of,” said Susana Espinoza, ERHS 10th grade and Latinos Unidos President. “I think that including others that do and do not celebrate our traditions is important. I hope that this event opens the minds of others that this event is not only about honoring our dead, but also about including and supporting our community.”

District students wishing to participate in the virtual events can attend a drive through distribution at their school to receive a bag of items including face-paint, altar materials and other surprise goodies. Supplies are limited. Students should contact the following teachers to reserve their materials: ERHS-Mrs. Villalobos, [pvillalobos@smjuhsd.org](mailto:pvillalobos@smjuhsd.org), Delta HS-Mrs. Galvez, [sgalvez@smjuhsd.org](mailto:sgalvez@smjuhsd.org), PVHS-Mrs. Maldonado, [rmaldonado@smjuhsd.org](mailto:rmaldonado@smjuhsd.org), SMHS-Mrs. Cortez, [ecortez@smjuhsd.org](mailto:ecortez@smjuhsd.org).

“Given our global pandemic, I think more than ever it’s important for us to reflect on the lives of those we’ve lost. *Día de los Muertos* is a cultural tradition that brings the community together to heal, share stories and remember our deceased family members and friends,” said Patricia Villalobos, Latinos Unidos Advisor. “I encourage everyone to join us for a two-day event that will include history, traditions, storytelling, and crafts.”

*Día de los Muertos* is a tradition that goes back more than 3,000 years. It is a commemoration of life and death with the purpose of honoring beloved ancestors, family and friends. It is one of the few practices of indigenous people in Mexico and Central America that has survived 500 years of conquest and colonization.

Villalobos and students established Latinos Unidos eight years ago out of a desire to promote cultural pride of Latinx and indigenous roots and this collaboration focuses on putting this vision into action.

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