



**SHERMAN HEIGHTS COMMUNITY CENTER**

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE (9/13/06)

**In Mexico they decorate the graveyard.  
In Sherman Heights we decorate the Neighborhood.**

**“Día de Los Muertos” (the Day of the Dead)  
in the Sherman Heights Historic District, San Diego, CA**

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**12th Annual Event  
Saturday & Sunday, October 28 & 29, 2006**

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**Vibrant Altars \* Dancers \* Mexican Crafts  
Walking Tours throughout the Historic District**

For the 12th year, the historic community of Sherman Heights in San Diego will throw a magnificent celebration of Día de los Muertos, the Day of the Dead. More than a dozen local families will create magnificent **traditional Mexican altars inside the Sherman Heights Community Center** located at 2258 Island Avenue, San Diego, CA 92102. In addition, **amazing outdoor altars will be in front of historic homes throughout the neighborhood** and in front of the **Villa Montezuma Museum** located at 1925 K Street (corner of 20th and K Streets). The outdoor altars will be created by residents, local artists, and community organizations.

Any person, artist, or group interested in honoring a departed loved one or important cause is encouraged to sign up to do an inside or outdoor altar. You do not have to be of Mexican heritage to participate! No experience necessary. There is no cost to participate. People creating altars will get a complimentary business card ad in the keepsake event program. Reserve your outdoor space by

October 15. (See “Call for Artists” information at [www.historicsandiego.org](http://www.historicsandiego.org) under Day of the Dead, or call Louise Torio at 619-233-8833.) To check on space for placing an altar at the Sherman Heights Community Center, contact Community Center Board Member Patty Medina at 619-238-7006 or via e-mail at [Sherman\\_Center@yahoo.com](mailto:Sherman_Center@yahoo.com).

### Special Creative Workshops before Día de los Muertos

Día de los Muertos Special Workshops at the Sherman Heights Community Center are scheduled for **Saturday, September 30**, and **Saturday, October 21, 2006**. Workshop attendees will discover the beauty and symbolism behind the different traditional shapes, art, and creations relating to Día de los Muertos. A small, personalized class size allows each participant to learn the craft. Registration is required. The workshops run from 11:00 a.m. until approximately 12:30 p.m. on each day and cost \$15 per person for each workshop. Choose from the following:

- Sugar Skull Making and Decorating.
- Skeleton Coffin Box Creation and Decorating.
- Wire basket weaving.
- Aztec tote bag acrylic paint design.

### Family Workshops on the Weekend of Día de los Muertos

On **Saturday, October 28 and Sunday, October 29**, 2006, both children and adults are invited to enjoy and participate in a variety of workshops that will happen throughout the day. There is only a small cost for materials (listed after each workshop). Families are encouraged to participate.

- Plaster Mask Making (\$2)
- Paper Flower Making (\$1)
- Plaster Skull Medallion (\$2)
- Skeleton Face Painting (\$1)
- Coloring Aztec Design (\$1)

### Events on October 28 & 29

A  **blessing of the altars** will take place in the opening ceremony on Saturday, October 28, followed by Danza Azteca Group “Campolli Xmexicatl” (Aztec dance circle). New this year is the “**Chalk Art Street Rugs**” painted by local student artist from different San Diego colleges and universities from 10:00 a.m. until 4:00 p.m. **Folk art and food** (*pan de muerto, pozole, tamales, champurrado, elotes, aguas*

*frescas*) will be available for purchase at the Community Center. **Walking tours of the altars through the historic district** will be held throughout the weekend. The outdoor altars will only remain up through Sunday evening, October 29, but the indoor altars will be on view at the Community Center until Wednesday, November 1, 2006. (Further details about specific events and their times will be posted closer to the event.)

A **free event program** will give details about both the indoor and outdoor altars. For more information about the events at the Community Center call 619-232-5181. For more information about the walking tours, the Friends of the Villa Montezuma, or the outdoor altars, call Sherman Heights Neighborhood Cultural Council at 619-233-8833.

#### Walking Tours on October 28 & 29

On October 28 and 29, visitors to Sherman Heights may go on a self-guided tour of the outdoor altars or, for a \$2 donation, take a guided walking tour to visit the outdoor altars to learn more about the history, architecture, and growth of Sherman Heights, one of San Diego's oldest neighborhoods. See the restoration and revitalization that's bringing out the beauty of this fabulous urban community. Area resident Louise Torio of Historic Sherman Heights Walking Tours (and the Chair of the Sherman Heights Neighborhood Cultural Council) will lead these informative, fun, insider tours that will give you a glimpse of old Sherman Heights while showing you how neighborhood determination and historic preservation have been used to bring out the beauty in our community. Wear comfortable shoes for this one-and-a-half-hour tour. During Día de los Muertos, tour donations benefit the Sherman Heights Neighborhood Cultural Council (SHNCC).

Unfortunately, this year visitors will not be able to see inside the Villa Montezuma Museum, the Queen Anne-style former home of international pianist and spiritualist Jesse Shepard (also known as author Francis Grierson). The Villa is currently closed for restoration, but an altar honoring Jesse Shepard will be created by the San Diego Historical Society in front of the museum this year. This magnificent mansion can be found at 1925 K Street, at the corner of 20<sup>th</sup> & K Streets.

### Viewing Altars at the Sherman Heights Community Center on October 30 & 31

Viewing the altars is free and open to the public. Other times to see the altars:

- On Monday and Tuesday, October 30 and 31, school children will receive guided tours of the altars at the Community Center from 9:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m. Call the Community Center at 619-232-5181 if you'd like to schedule your class to visit.
- From **3:00 p.m. – 9:00 p.m.** on **October 30 and 31** the Community Center will be open to the public. All are welcome.

### Día de los Muertos Background

Día de los Muertos is a joyous Mexican custom which honors the memory of departed loved ones each year at their gravesites with beautiful, colorful altars. It is traditionally observed on November 1 and 2. Neither macabre nor morbid, the holiday is spent in celebration with friends and family, and it's a special time and opportunity to entertain the spirit and remember loved ones fondly. The altars are adorned with offerings to the dead, which might include traditional items like candles, tamales or other foods, a glass of water to symbolically refresh the dearly departed who is weary from traveling, the abundant and uniquely scented cempasúchitl (marigolds), pan de muerto (orange- and anise-flavored bread of the dead), calaveras de azúcar (beautifully decorated sugar skulls), and papel picado (colored tissue paper with elaborate cutout motifs). Outside, the altars might be less traditional but totally in keeping with the spirit of Día de los Muertos. Artists, organizations, and residents will honor departed loved ones and important causes to pay tribute to people and ideas that have shaped their lives.

In Sherman Heights we say, "in Mexico they decorate the graveyard, but in Sherman Heights we decorate the neighborhood." Traditionally, Día de los Muertos is commemorated at the departed loved one's gravesite. (In Sherman Heights, where over 80% of the residents are Latino, the custom started when residents far from their home asked to use the Sherman Heights Community Center to construct altars and bring offerings.) This new appreciation for a very old tradition has allowed one generation to teach the next about ancient cultural ways. The Community Center provides a place for the tradition to live on and be shared with others. The Sherman Heights Community Center and Sherman Heights Neighborhood Cultural Council encourage local residents and artists of all cultural backgrounds to learn about Día de los Muertos in order to create their own altars. Visitors will enjoy seeing delightful outdoor offerings based on inspiration from this very old tradition.

### The Sherman Heights Community Center (SHCC)

The Sherman Heights Community Center is an intergenerational, nonprofit organization founded in 1986. Its purpose is to provide growth opportunities for families and individuals in order to tap into their natural abilities, improve the quality of life, to be a voice, and build community. The mission of the Sherman Heights Community Center is to serve and offer programs in education, health, personal development, and culture that will enable area residents to develop to their greatest human potential. Full participation in our democratic society is encouraged, cultural diversity is valued, and heritage and traditions are appreciated. For more information about the Community Center call Doris Villasenor at 619-232-5181, Ext. 31, visit the website ([www.shermancenter.org](http://www.shermancenter.org)), or e-mail Doris at [dvillasenor@shermancenter.org](mailto:dvillasenor@shermancenter.org).

### The Sherman Heights Neighborhood Cultural Council (SHNCC)

The SHNCC was founded in 2001 under the National Trust for Historic Preservation's *Share Your Heritage* program to promote what is unique and authentic in the Sherman Heights Historic District. Under encouragement from the City of San Diego Commission for Arts and Culture, SHNCC members and supporters include residents, business owners, artists, and others who care about what is special about our neighborhood. The SHNCC promotes "Sherman Heights: the Victorian Neighborhood with Latino flavor – An Unexpected Cultural Mix!" Sherman Heights was chosen to participate in the *Share Your Heritage* program to promote cultural heritage tourism to visitors (both San Diego residents and tourists) so they might experience the Sherman Heights Historic District. For more information about the Sherman Heights Neighborhood Cultural Council, call Louise Torio at 619-233-8833, visit the website ([www.historicsandiego.org](http://www.historicsandiego.org)), or e-mail [historicsandiego@aol.com](mailto:historicsandiego@aol.com).

### Brief Sherman Heights Background

Sherman Heights is named after Matthew Sherman, who bought the 160 acres in 1867 soon after Alonzo Horton bought the land that would become downtown San Diego. This area up the hill had beautiful views of the San Diego Bay and Sherman built two homes in the area, first a simple farmhouse and later a large mansion after he prospered. Both of Sherman's homes still exist. Sherman served as San Diego's mayor from 1891-1892.

Many beautiful homes were built between the 1880s and the 1920s. The Villa Montezuma Museum at 20th and K Streets, built in 1887 for the famous spiritualist and pianist Jesse Shepard, is now owned

by the City and operated by the San Diego Historical Society and supported by the Friends of the Villa Montezuma, Inc., as one of the finest Victorian house museums in the state. It has been closed for restoration since late February 2006.

Through the 1940s, the mostly residential Sherman Heights thrived as a middle class neighborhood next to downtown San Diego. Highway building in the 1940s through 1960s, coupled with the lure of the suburbs, led to many residents leaving this urban neighborhood in mid-century. The highways created new boundaries for Sherman Heights (19th Street to 25th Street from west to east, and G Street to Imperial Avenue from north to south) that exist still today.

Sherman Heights has a long history of housing a variety of newcomers. At the turn of the last century, Sherman Heights had many German, Italian, and Jewish immigrants. Japanese- and Chinese-Americans called Sherman Heights home from the 1920s through 1940s. It was primarily an African-American neighborhood during the 1950s through the 1970s. Since the 1970s it has had a strongly Latino population. Like many inner city areas that were considered past their prime, the area went through a rough period during the 1970s through 1980s. Now Sherman Heights is an ethnically diverse and thriving community enjoying a period of great interest and revitalization. There is strong support for historic preservation and restoration of the many fine buildings, and the neighborhood was declared a historic district in 1987. The current residents are multi-ethnic, with a majority being Latino, and half the residents own their own homes. Those who live here are passionate about the area.

Sherman Heights is located east of the East Village of downtown San Diego and only 10 blocks from Petco Park, the new baseball stadium for the San Diego Padres. We are just south of Golden Hill and north of Logan Heights. Visitors can easily reach Sherman Heights via Interstate 5 or the Martin Luther King, Jr. Freeway (Highway 94), or take the San Diego Trolley (Orange Line) to the Cesar E. Chavez/ 25<sup>th</sup> and Commercial Trolley Station.

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