

PT Library celebrates their third annual 'Day of the Dead'



Regardless of culture or ethnicity, everyone was encouraged to take part in the celebrations at the Port Townsend Public Library's third annual "Day of the Dead" Nov. 1. Local musicians contributed mariachi tunes.

LEADER PHOTO BY KIRK BOXLEITNER

Posted Wednesday, November 6, 2019 3:00 am

Kirk Boxleitner
kboxleitner@ptleader.com

For the third year in a row, the Port Townsend Public Library celebrated the Mexican Day of the Dead, as attendees of all ages and ethnicities sampled Latin American cuisine and expressed their creativity with safety scissors and glitter by making their own paper skull masks on the upstairs floor Nov. 1.

Library Director Melody Sky Eisler credited Luz Rosario, wife of Port Townsend High School media studies teacher David Egeler, with starting the event three years ago upon moving to Port Townsend.

"I'm from Mexico originally, so I was born to do this, and I'm happy to share it with others," Rosario said. "This should be a community event where all ages can participate and experience another culture. I'd love to see people from other cultures sharing the experiences and traditions of their own countries, too. Port Townsend has been so warm and welcoming to us, and I love that students have been able to participate."

Not only have the Egelers taken part in compiling cultural stories for “Day of the Dead,” but David’s colleague, Spanish teacher Reed Aubin, was able to get his Spanish I, II and III students to make 140 mantelpiece memorials to be displayed at the library.

This time last year, Aubin was teaching his third year of students at Chimacum High School how to make Latin American meals for “Day of the Dead,” coining the acronym TACO — Teaching Academics through Culinary Opportunities — to sum up his hands-on methods.

This year, Aubin is in a new school, but he’s continued to teach “Day of the Dead,” explaining to attendees of the library’s event how his students paid tribute not only to their blood relatives and other family members who had passed on, but also to influences as varied as Kurt Cobain, Jimi Hendrix and Benjamin Franklin.

“My goal was to connect them to their own ancestry, however they chose to define that concept,” Aubin said. “My main focus was to use this event to study and celebrate another culture, while also helping my students learn to keep their own significant memories alive, Because this is a celebratory, joyful event.”

Rosario concurred, and hopes that the young people who take part in “Day of the Dead” don’t feel intimidated by their elders, but instead see the occasion as proof that everyone will be remembered.

“It’s the time of year that tells you never to forget your loved ones,” Rosario said. “Since my mother has passed away, this allows me to remember her in a joyful way.”