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TAOS COUNTY AND THE MORENO VALLEY

Millicent Rogers Museum

Art in Culture: Weaving the past with the future

By Sandy Penny

Millicent Rogers Museum (MRM) has two major successes to celebrate — the Art in Culture children's program, and the docents and volunteers program that makes operating the museum possible. It's definitely not a typical museum. It's the living, breathing legacy of a woman who loved Taos, Northern New Mexico and everything the area had to offer. It's also a tribute to the creativity, diversity and beauty of the people of New Mexico.

Millicent Rogers, a wealthy socialite with a reverence for art, fashion and history, moved to Taos in 1947. During the six years before she died, she collected New Mexico jewelry, pottery, textiles, metal work and religious art. She never envisioned her collections in a museum. They were simply objects she loved and

"Every one of the more than 8000 objects in the collection was created very personally and sometimes ceremonially. When the children see something they've seen in their own family, perhaps at their grandmother's home, it gives them a sense of their own connection to the history and culture being preserved."

Carmela Durán,
Museum Coordinator

used in her everyday life. In 1956, her family shared her collection with the public. Now, that collection is part of local history and culture. The museum is dedicated to acquisition, preservation, research, display and interpretation of the art, history and cultures of the Native American, Hispanic and Anglo people of the Southwest, particularly Northern New Mexico and Taos.

The MRM is also committed to instilling the love of this artistic history in children through tours, talks and experiential projects like pottery making, beading, art and weaving. The children's Art in Culture educational programs are offered to schools, churches, camps and other children's organizations. Activities that weave the past, present and future together can be selected from a list designed for the participating age group. "I think we inspire the kids who come here to think of education as fun. They always leave so happy," mused Kathleen Michaels, MRM office manager.

Seasoned docent Inni Barrett introduces students to the MRM collection.

The nice thing is that when these groups return year after year, they are offered new activities each time. Younger children may make simple clay pinch pots while older students may create sophisticated painted and fired pottery. Others may weave placemats in historically popular patterns. New activities are being created all the time to excite and challenge students to remember history through the same kind of experience a child might have had a hundred or more years ago.

These educational programs could not be offered without the dedicated docents and volunteers from the community. In 2007, the docents led 27 different tour and activity groups, working with 665 students. There were also 31 docent-led tours, guiding 580 people through the museum. Sixty-eight additional tour groups did not have docents because they could not predict a solid arrival time for scheduling.

This tapestry was made by Taos Charter School students on their MRM tour.

Docents complete a special museum training program and then donate their time to lead tours and teach about the museum collection, local history and culture. They also conduct the activities. Faith Hensley, MRM public relation's director, said, "We are so fortunate to have all the wonderful people from the community who support the museum with gifts of time and energy as docents and volunteers. And, we always welcome more."

In addition to the groups and visitors from out of town, MRM encourages locals to visit through discounts and special events like the recent Northern New Mexico Folk Life Festival. Locals were treated to music, dance, weaving and basket and pottery making demonstrations. It's a true celebration of Taos diversity. There will be plenty more fun and excitement at MRM throughout the year. No boring history here.

Children are intensely immersed in creating their clay projects.

THANK YOU!

Docents:
Peggy Boucom
Mary Ann Boughton
Susan Chester
Sandy Cox
David Danforth
Patricia Danforth
Phyllis Hills
Lin Jones
Ursula Jones
Suzi Juarez
Tom Knapp
Peter Mackaness
Honore Maloney
Catherine Meyer
Donna Schilling
Kay Solomon
Ida Sprague
Janet Tahl
Christine Valvano
Sarah Wilder

Volunteers:
Christopher Albert
Barbara Barrett
Nancy Beck
Brenda and Terry Clark
Michelle Concha
Al and Janet Daffin
Marianne Dennisiton
Eligio. Manuel & Andreatta Durán
Jeni and Ted Dyman
Bill Eble
Hannah Engel
Lillian Guillano
John Glasgow
Nicki Korjenek
Peter Lindsley
Barbara and Michael Martinez
Katie Martinez
Roger Martinez
Barbara Moniux
Bill Pinkerton
Alonzo Rodriguez
Janet Scott
Asaria Speicher
Ken Tahl
Elise Taylor
Scott Thayer
Bransen, Francisco and Chenoa Velarde
Gail Walsh
Marcie Winters
Mary Esther Winters
Winona Hope Winters

at a glance

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