

# New Haven Register

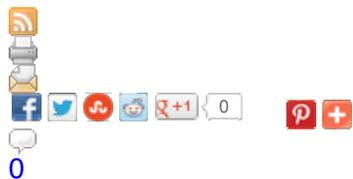
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## Entertainment

# Day of the Dead Parade and Party in New Haven this weekend

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**NEW HAVEN** — Don't be scared of the Day of the Dead. It's a happy time. No, really, says John Jairo Lugo, a founding member of Unidad Latina en Accion.

"This is a time when we celebrate life and celebrate the lives of the people we love who have died," he says. "In Mexico, death is like another state in life. People bring the favorite foods of the deceased to the cemetery and talk to their loved ones who have gone. Nobody is crying. Everybody's happy, celebrating the life of this person and the happiness this person provided for the loved ones."

With that in mind, the Latin community is putting on a wonderful celebration of life and death in a Day of the Dead Parade and Party in Fair Haven — a day that invites the collaboration of all cultures in our area, co-sponsored by UAL, Junta for Progressive Action and Bregamos Community Theater.

This is actually the second annual Day of the Dead Parade, except that last year's didn't really get to take place on the streets. A historic snowstorm dumped inches of white stuff on our area, keeping parade-goers indoors for a party.

This year, though, Mother Nature is expected to cooperate — and dozens of people are expected to bring their hand-made puppets to Bregamos Community Theater at 4 p.m. on Saturday for the parade through the streets.

But this Day of the Dead celebration has even more to celebrate. It's the fifth anniversary of the Elm City ID card, which was

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brought about by the historical struggle for immigrants' rights, says Lugo. It's also the 10th anniversary of UAL, a grassroots immigrant group which helps the immigrant community.

"This year, the city celebrated the five-year anniversary of the ID card, but our parade will be a community celebration in the neighborhood where the struggle for the ID card began," he says. "The ID card was a dream of immigrants in the barrio before it became a reality in city hall. We want to show that the barrio is a lively place full of dreams and creativity, despite the human rights violations that our community suffers every day."

For the past few weeks, the community has been getting ready for the parade by meeting at Bregamos Theater and working on life-sized puppets for the parade, says Megan Fountain, a volunteer.

"We have quite a variety of puppets," she says. "There are skeleton puppets made of bamboo and papier-mache, huge lanterns, giant birds and butterflies. Originally, we were meeting on weekends to work on the puppets, but people got so into it that they were coming in all the time."

The public is invited to attend the parade — and costumes are welcome, says Fountain. "We still need plenty of volunteers to carry the puppets and the lanterns, and we're expecting a really nice turnout," she says.

After the parade, which kicks off at Bregamos Theater, 491 Blatchley Ave., at 4 p.m., there will be music and a dance party, featuring salsa dancing from Puerto Rico and

cumbria dancing from Mexico.

And don't forget to check out the altar, Lugo says. The Day of the Dead often has an altar with meaningful objects, many of them celebrating the lives of immigrants who have died crossing the border.

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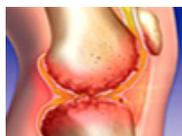


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