

# MAKE AN OFRENDA for Day of the Dead

The ofrenda is the centerpiece of any Día de los Muertos celebration. It is a decorative array of objects, thoughtfully selected and arranged to honor and evoke memories of a departed relative, friend or public figure. Tradition holds that the ofrenda attracts and guides the spirit home, to linger once a year in the love and companionship of the living. The heart of Evansville's Day of the Dead celebration is its ofrenda room, which this year will be in the downstairs conference room in West Branch Library, a reverent, magical island of calm right in the center of the party going on outside. Here the music and crowds disappear, and visitors are surrounded by ornate, glowing displays from individuals and organizations around the community.

West Branch library's address is officially 2000 W. Franklin Street, but it is also widely recognized as the home of the farmer's market or the rides at the Fall Festival. The space to set up the ofrendas is downstairs. Look for a sign on a ground level door at the back of the building, or come to the front and go down the main steps and to the left. We will be there to greet you and show you to your spot.



## Setup Hours:

**2:00 to 7:00 Friday, November 3**

**10:00 to Noon (setup MUST be completed by noon)**

**Saturday, November 4**

## Teardown Hours:

**6:00 to 7:00 PM Saturday, November 4 (directly after the festival)**

**10:00 AM to 6:00 PM Monday, November 6**

Here are some things to keep in mind:

Please email us at [dayofthedead@evpl.org](mailto:dayofthedead@evpl.org) if you can contribute to the ofrenda room.

The tables available are 2.5' by 6', but these are only available to the first seven participants. If you'd like to see if one is available, let us know; otherwise, you can bring your own table.

The walls are painted masonry, so lighter things can be temporarily attached with poster putty. We may be able to suspend slightly weightier elements from the drop ceiling track, but you will need to make arrangements with us to do so. In the center island, we can pin items to the cloth room divider. We'll address all of this as needed.

As much as we'd like to, we can't allow real candles in this space. Luckily, LED votives are easily found and are looking more realistic all the time.

A good way to get a feel for what an ofrenda can look like is to do a Google image search!

# Consider featuring some of the following in your display:



The **base** of an ofrenda is often a table or a piece of furniture, stacked with an arrangement of boxes to produce levels, which are then covered with decorative cloth. In varying folk traditions these levels can represent heaven, Earth, purgatory, or the stages a soul travels through to reach the afterlife.

An **arch** can represent the gateway between the worlds of the living and the dead.

**Sugar skulls** are meant to represent the deceased to whom the offering is dedicated. The name is often written on the forehead.



## THE "FOUR ELEMENTS":

- **Candles** (in our case LED ones!), representing FIRE, guide the spirit home.
- **Paper** (paper picado), which moves so easily in the breeze, represents AIR.
- **WATER** is often provided in a glass for thirsty souls.
- **Flowers** or other plants - but especially marigolds, represent the EARTH.



**Pan de Muerto** ("bread of the dead") is one of the Spanish traditions, representing the Eucharist.

**Crosses** (another Spanish tradition), or other symbols of faith can be used, if appropriate.

**Copal** is a resin burned as incense since PreColumbian times, said to clean and sanctify the environment.

**Petates**, or woven mats of palm leaves, provide the spirit of the departed a place to rest.

West Branch Library Park



Join our Facebook group!  
**Evansville Day of the Dead**



email us at  
[evansvilledayofthedead@gmail.com](mailto:evansvilledayofthedead@gmail.com)