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SCULPTURE TAKES ROOT

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Story by Barbara Chavez *Photographs by Paul Bearce Of the Journal

* South Valley welcomes San Ysidro project celebrating agricultural history

The newest piece of artwork in Albuquerque sits on the corner of Isleta and Arenal SW, but this one doesn't involve Chevys on sticks or conquistadors with checkered pasts. In fact, as one man remarked Saturday during a community led cleanup and commemorative brick laying event at the site of the sculpture, Carrusel de San Ysidro, "this one won't be controversial."

The huge sculpture depicts San Ysidro, the patron saint of agriculture. The 27-foot-tall metal and wood display uses a rotor, which turns when there is at least a 5-mile-an-hour wind. Around the rotor is a churning wheel with painted figures that tell the story of San Ysidro, a man who legend says had an angel that took care of his crops while he spent much of his time praying.

The artist, **Evelyn Rosenberg**, said she had hoped to capture one of the most important aspects of the South Valley in her work.

"The people here believe in the richness of their land," she said. "The carvings in the woodwork show crops in the valley chile, squash, beans and corn."

The bricks being laid Saturday were stamped with the names of longtime South Valley families. Names familiar to the area include Rodgers, Armijo, Chavez, Lucero, Metzgar, Dziurzynski and Griegos.

Former New Mexico governor Bruce King and his wife, Alice, also bought a brick to commemorate the sculpture and the South Valley residents.

Irma Ruiz with the Community Development Center said 197 families and businesses from the valley bought bricks. The Rio Grande Community Development Center spearheaded the art project, and is a nonprofit organization that supports economic and community development in the South Valley.

"It's a project that has been about 11 years in the making," she said. "I think our goal (Saturday) was to bring the community out and take ownership for something beautiful and that gives meaning to their neighborhood. The South Valley should take pride in this work."

Students from the Rio Grande High School honor society, as well as youths from the Bernalillo County Detention Center's community monitoring program worked to rake leaves and clean up around the statue.

"I don't have to come out to do this work, but I like doing it," said Margarito Baca, 15, who is in the monitoring program. "I got into some trouble, but this is how I can make up for it, by doing stuff in the community."

Betty Wilkes, who has lived in the South Valley for more than 50 years, said she supports everything good in the South Valley.

"I bought four bricks," she said. "They have my family's names on them. It's my way of saying I'm still rooting for the South Valley."

PHOTO: Color

HELPING HAND: Frankie Padilla rakes leaves during a community cleanup and brick laying at the new sculpture called Carrusel de San Ysidro.

PHOTO: Color

COMMUNITY EFFORT: Jake Gutierrez, a volunteer from Kinney Brick Company, sets bricks in place under the sculpture called Carrusel de San Ysidro on Saturday.

PHOTO BY: PAUL BEARCE/JOURNAL

PHOTO: b/w

PART OF PLAN: Ben Hoffman, 12, a community volunteer, carries bricks to be placed under the sculpture Carrusel de San Ysidro.

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