

Cultural Center reset: New creations support new creativity

Written by By Holly J. Wagner Sun Correspondent
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The Gallup Cultural Center is getting a top-to-bottom refresh that will see new programs and classes this summer, along with building repairs and the return of Indian dances three nights a week.

The old Santa Fe Depot that houses the Cultural Center has gotten a major spring cleaning: painting, repairs and the addition of a new arena for Indian dances. The dances will be presented at 7 pm Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays throughout the summer.

“We’re expanding on dances, artwork, history and just public relations to get people to come to our city and the Gallup Cultural Center in a way that showcases us as uniquely Gallup,” Director Teri Fraiser said.

The room that used to house the Big Train Music Shop has been converted to a demonstration space for artisans to show traditional skills like weaving, pottery, and bread-making. Now the Cultural Center offers cultural demonstrations every Friday night.

One new attraction will be a life-size painted pony donated by the Indian Pueblo Cultural Center in Albuquerque. It hasn’t arrived yet, as the center is still working out the logistics of transporting it.

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Exhibits at the Storyteller Museum have been hand-cleaned and reorganized for flow and, in some cases, preservation. The result will follow a bigger-is-better mantra.

“We’ve expanded the gallery part of it [...Everything] that is going to go into that gallery is going to be big,” Fraiser said. “We’ve got some antiquities and some artwork that really fits that bill.”

The museum recharge involved removing all the exhibit enclosure glass for cleaning, which required a special crew to handle the glass.

The city-funded refresh is part of a broader push to bring back and enhance downtown events over an area that stretches from the Cultural Center to the Courthouse Plaza, with the developing Coal Avenue Commons in the middle.

“In some ways it’s creating a full sandwich, two slices of hearty bread and the lunchmeat in the middle. I think there’s a lot of exciting opportunities,” City Marketing Director Jennifer Lazarz said.

The center will be open 10 am to 4 pm Monday through Friday, and by appointment at other times. By adding the new classes and demonstrations, the center will be able to offer paid packages of scheduled classes and demonstrations for tour groups, which will help to make the center more self-sustaining.

“One of the most exciting things to come out of this partnership is that the Cultural Center is now offering classes, demonstrations and programs that group tours can reserve. It’s a revenue stream for the Cultural Center as well as it packages things so that group tours coming to our community have a reason to stay longer,” Lazarz said. “It’s very exciting that this contract has allowed us to create something that offers a solid block of time for groups to hang out downtown.”

A grand reopening is planned for May 31, with details to be announced. The Cultural Center is at 201 E. Hwy. 66.

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