

## Much to discover in San Elizario

If you have not treated yourself to a day in the Mission Valley recently, you are in for a welcome surprise. In addition to the missions, a diverse selection of galleries and restaurants in the San Elizario Historic District now offer dining and year-round events that beckon locals and tourists alike.

Built in the late 1800s, the historic Placita Madrid on Main Street owned by Gloria Madrid Flores is now home to a variety of permanent tenants. Artists Alberto Escamilla and Robert Dozal have side-by-side studios. The House of Positive Karma, run by a mother and daughter offers crafted south of the border such as leather purses, Dia de Muertos figures and religious artwork. A selection of paintings by Miguel Varela is also available. The marshal's office is due to move to another location, and once that happens, Romy Saenz Hawkins will open a gallery there.

Erika Murrill, owner of the Café Arte "Mi Admore," is also an artist. In addition to showcasing her paintings, she also sells handpainted mugs and coasters. Her place is best known for the wonderful coffee she serves. Among her regulars are a German couple who say it is the closest thing to being a European coffee shop in this area. Erika also makes her own ice cream and panini sandwiches.

Most of the galleries and shops are open are open 11 a.m. to 4 p.m., although individual hours vary slightly.

Impressionist artist Escamilla served as the seed for the expansion of the San Elizario area. His wife Rachel shares, "Alberto started showing his art here in 2009 as part of a series of group shows. He and Maria Branch were the first artists to lease space here, and on Jan 18, 2010 he opened his own gallery.

"Our sales have increased since we opened our own gallery because people know that other than online, this is the only place they can purchase his paintings. We also love the historic aspect of the Placita Madrid building. It's an old adobe and the walls are about three feet wide, which keeps it really cool in the summer.

"We get tourists from all over the world – Alaska, Australia, South America, and even South Korea," she added. "Initially, it is the advertising about the Mission Trail which brings tourists in, but once they have toured the missions, they check out the galleries and shop for souvenirs to bring home. The true beauty of the area is its authenticity. We still have that old town atmosphere.

"Once the weather is favorable, we put umbrellas out front and invite guest artists to join us for the special themed events that are featured throughout the year. In addition to tourists, Westsiders and those from Las Cruces, a number of Lower Valley locals have also begun to come by."

"This year Alberto will be celebrating his 40th year as a professional artist.

Rachel continued. "Earlier in the summer, he will have a show at the Women's Club as a preview for a major retrospective exhibition that will be held at the International Museum in October. Art on display will date back to 1970s when he started, and we are hoping that Cormac McCarthy will loan us the original of people walking across the desert, which is our



most popular print, and also the portrait of my grandmother."

Additional artists have also established galleries along Main Street. Bert Saldana, who is best known for authentic portraits of the indigenous peoples of the Southwest, has a gallery at 1501 Main.

The Mission Trail Farmers and Art Market, which opened for the season April 15, is 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. on the third Sunday of the month through November. A variety of artists sell arts and crafts. Outdoor shows are offered at 1 p.m. and 3 p.m., with live music, folklorico and other dancers, and reenactments by the Pistoleros gunfighters.

The San Elizario Historic District also offers the Los Portales Museum and Visitor Center and the San Elizario Veterans Museum.

### Kress Collection reopens

Members of the El Paso Museum of Art are invited to rediscover the beauty of the newly installed Kress Collection, during an invitation-only event 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. Thursday, May 10. The gallery will reopen to the public Friday, May 11.

This is the first major reinstallation of the collection since the museum opened its downtown location more than 20 years ago. All three galleries have undergone significant renovations and works will be presented in new thematic installations.

Kress Fellow Dr. Elizabeth Dwyer explains that the newly installed galleries will display paintings from the Kress gift alongside works from the museum's permanent collection. Since 36 out of the 59 pieces in the Kress Collection focus on Christian subject matter, these works will be displayed using three themes: "Madonna and Child," "Saints and Sacred Stories" and "The Rise of Secular Art," a category that includes portraiture, pastoral, mythical and architectural landscapes.

Hanging works according to theme and chronology is a new approach that allows visitors to trace the evolution of these iconic subjects. The newly accompanying scholarship will offer fresh insights into the continuity and period-specific innovations that defined these popular subjects for centuries across Europe.

Dwyer will give an Art Talk on "The Kress Collection of European Art" 2 to 3 p.m. Saturday, May 19. Visitors can walk alongside as she provides an insider's perspective on the newly renovated and reinstalled European Galleries. No reservations required.

*Myrna Zanetell is a freelance writer specializing in the visual arts.*

## FRIENDS AND FAMILY NIGHT VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL



# Come Ashore!

## JUNE 4-8 6:30-8:30 pm

**Ascension Lutheran Church  
6520 Loma de Cristo Dr. (West Side)**

For **more info** or to **register**, go online at **www.ALConnect.faith** or call the **Church Office** at **(915) 833-1009**.

**Registration starts May 1**



6520 Loma de Cristo Drive • El Paso, Texas 79912 • (915) 833-1009

**"CONNECTING THE COMMUNITY TO CHRIST!"**