



David J Anzaldúa Pierce
Creator/Executive Director
Denton's Day of the Dead Festival
PO Box 157
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Omar Siddiqi
Administrative Analyst
City of Denton Parks and Recreation
215 E McKinney St.
Denton TX 76201

Dear Mr. Siddiqi and members of the Original Denton District,

Denton's Day of the Dead Festival is an annual, community-driven celebration of art, culture, and heritage that honors the beauty of fall, the traditions of Día de los Muertos, and the spirited fun of Halloween. Held in Denton's officially designated Downtown Cultural District, the festival brings together thousands of residents and visitors for a weekend of immersive programming featuring visual art, live music, original theater, dance, culinary offerings, and culturally rich traditions.

In 2026, the festival will take place October 23, 24, and 25 on E. Hickory Street, E. Oak Street, Industrial Street, and at the Patterson-Appleton Arts Center, all in the heart of downtown Denton.

Since its inception in 2011, Denton's Day of the Dead Festival has grown from a grassroots community event into a regional destination, now attracting more than 30,000 attendees annually. The festival also serves as the cornerstone event of Denton's city-wide "31 Days of Denton Halloween" initiative, developed in partnership with the City of Denton and the downtown business community.

In just three years, the "31 Days" initiative has significantly expanded October tourism and economic activity in Denton's Downtown District, helping drive more than 883,000 visitors in 2025, an increase of more than 368,000 visitors over prior years. This growth has translated into measurable economic impact, including substantial increases in retail food, big box retail, and mixed beverage sales tax collections. Overall sales were up 86% from 2024, helping establish October as one of the most economically impactful months of the year for downtown businesses and the broader Denton community.

Denton's Day of the Dead Festival is proud to anchor this remarkable month. As the most highly attended event during the 31 Days campaign, the festival serves as a

catalyst for creative placemaking, tourism, and economic development in the Cultural District. Our programming includes beloved community events such as the Twilight Lantern Parade, Pine Box Derby and Coffin Races, the Community Ofrenda and “Flight of Souls” blessing, children’s activities in the Pumpkin Patch Theatre, a district-wide art project with students from Denton ISD, and *Cirque du Horror*, our original Halloween musical performed in a vintage big top circus tent. The festival showcases artists, performers, vendors, and musicians from across the state and nation, and consistently draws visitors from throughout Texas and beyond, including Oklahoma, Kansas, Colorado, and California.

We are seeking support from the TCA Cultural District Grant to strengthen the economic and cultural impact of this event through the following initiatives:

High-Quality Arts Programming That Drives Tourism and Revenue

We will expand festival programming with new installations, regional performance premieres, and family-friendly arts experiences designed to attract visitors and encourage overnight stays. By deepening the festival’s artistic offerings, we create increased opportunities for lodging, dining, retail activity, and local spending, all rooted in cultural tourism.

Strategic Branding and Marketing of the Cultural District

We will promote Denton as a cultural destination through regional advertising campaigns, refreshed branding, and digital content that highlights the Cultural District’s role in arts-based economic development.

Improved Signage and Digital Wayfinding

A coordinated system of maps, directional signage, and mobile guides will help visitors better navigate festival activities, discover local businesses, and extend their time in the district.

Denton’s Day of the Dead Festival also maintains a strong philanthropic mission. A portion of proceeds supports Cumberland Youth and Family Services, Serve Denton, and G.O.A.L. Our commitment to youth engagement includes robust participation from Denton ISD schools through music, dance, and student art showcases. This community impact is reflected in personal stories as well. One G.O.A.L. grant recipient wrote that Denton’s Day of the Dead Twilight Lantern Parade was one of the most memorable ways she connected with the Denton community, underscoring the festival’s ability to create a lasting sense of belonging through arts, culture, and shared public celebration.

Support from the TCA Cultural District Grant will allow us to continue scaling the event responsibly, meet the demands of growing attendance, and ensure that Denton remains a leader in using the arts to diversify the local economy, attract visitors, and drive cultural investment.

2026 Funding Request and Allocation

For 2026, Denton's Day of the Dead Festival is respectfully requesting **\$75,000** in funding from the TCA Cultural District Grant. These funds will support key initiatives that strengthen arts-based tourism, enhance cultural programming, and promote the vitality of Denton's Downtown Cultural District. Funding will be allocated as follows:

Total Marketing: \$10,000

Printed promotional materials, including banners, signage, and flyers, along with online and print advertising and ongoing website maintenance. These efforts are designed to increase regional visibility, attract out-of-town visitors, and reinforce Denton as a premier cultural tourism destination.

Marketing Team and Digital Content Creation: \$20,000

A dedicated marketing team will provide year-round services including SEO, content creation, social media management, newsletters, and promotional videos. These campaigns will spotlight festival events, Cultural District businesses, and related community programming, ensuring strong engagement before, during, and after the event weekend.

Live Stream Coverage of Festival Events: \$7,500

A professional video team will provide live coverage of the Coffin Races and other Saturday events, with broadcasts available to participating businesses and online viewers. The stream will feature promotional segments highlighting local businesses, the festival schedule, and related "31 Days of Denton Halloween" programming.

Production Enhancements for *Cirque du Horror*: \$7,500

Funding will support the technical and visual production needs of *Cirque du Horror*, Denton's original Halloween musical and one of the festival's signature arts experiences. Support will help cover immersive digital backgrounds, PA rental and operation, trussing, lighting equipment, and other essential production elements that contribute to a more professional, theatrical, and engaging audience experience. These enhancements will elevate the overall production value of the show, expand its creative possibilities, and further spotlight the local artists, musicians, technicians, and performers who bring this homegrown Denton production to life each year.

Artistic Talent: \$30,000

Denton's Day of the Dead Festival now features five stages: the Main Stage, the Community Stage, the Pumpkin Patch Theatre, the *Cirque du Horror* Big Top Tent stage, and the GDAC Trunk or Treat stage. Across these venues, the festival presents high-quality live music and performance programming that draws large, diverse crowds throughout the weekend.

From Grammy Award-winning local legends like Cenobio "Bubba" Hernandez of Denton's own Brave Combo, to high-energy Austin favorites like Grupo Fantasma, and crowd-pleasing tribute acts such as *Dreaming of You: The Selena Experience*, Denton

has a strong history of producing and attracting exceptional talent. Our musical lineup showcases the best of Texas' rich and eclectic sound while celebrating cultural diversity and serving as a major tourism and economic draw.

Together, these initiatives will deepen the cultural and economic impact of Denton's Day of the Dead Festival, helping it continue to serve as a flagship event in the state's creative tourism landscape.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of stylized, overlapping loops and lines that form the initials 'DJP'.

David J Anzaldúa Pierce
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