



**Cub Scout Cameron Ramirez plants a flag at the grave of a veteran Friday afternoon at Evergreen Cemetery in El Centro.** ELIZABETH VARIN PHOTO

## HONOR

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“It’s nice,” Troop 4070 scout Dominic Fiorenza said. “I like to help support fallen soldiers to show they made a difference.”

He said it makes him sad to think of all the fallen soldiers, but he feels pride and a sense of duty to help place the flags.

The visual of a field of flags can have a big impact on a scout, said Ross Simmons with Troop 4070. Simmons remembers placing the flags at the cemetery when he was

a scout, and as a scout it’s humbling to be in a cemetery remembering the passing of a veteran.

“For a young man there’s no more powerful way to instill patriotism than looking over a field of flags and reflecting on their service,” Simmons said.

Friday was the first time in recent years Troop 4070 participated, but Simmons said he plans to work closely with the American Legion and continue the tradition.

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**A Boy Scout makes his way through headstones at Evergreen Cemetery in El Centro.** ELIZABETH VARIN PHOTO

**COVER: Eagle Scout Ryan Ramirez plants a flag at the grave of a veteran Friday afternoon at Evergreen Cemetery in El Centro.** ELIZABETH VARIN PHOTO

## SAVAPA DONATES TO MUSEUM



**Beth Benevent, SAVAPA Art teacher, and Jacqueline Diaz de Leon pose with the painting that has been donated to the Imperial Valley Desert Museum.** PHOTO COURTESY OF NEAL V. HITCH

## SAVAPA students donate art to Desert Museum

**BY NEAL V. HITCH**  
Special to this Newspaper/Imperial Valley

For the last three years, the advanced students in the Southwest Academy for the Visual and Performing Arts art program at Southwest High School have been working on a painting. But the painting just never seemed to get finished. Every year a new group of students would pick up the challenge, and little-by-little a local story of desert mythology emerged on the canvas.

Through a grant from the Imperial Valley Community Foundation in 2012, the Imperial Valley Desert Museum was able to take artifacts into the art classroom at Southwest High School and work with

them to produce a number of paintings and drawings. Many of these paintings hung in the Jimmie Cannon Theater for the Performing Arts during the 2013 season.

At that time, the advanced art students began working on a large painting based on local mythology. “The work was begun in class, but not quite finished,” said Beth Benevent, the SAVAPA art instructor at Southwest. “Students began to come in after school and during lunch time.”

“The canvas was very large,” Benevent continued. “Nearly 4 feet by 5 feet. When the first group of students to work on it, Lucas Hitch and Yaretzi Soto, graduated, the new

senior art students picked up the work. Sophia Garcia even worked on the painting over the summer.”

This past year Jacqueline Diaz de Leon finished the painting. “I have been interested in art since I was very small,” Jacqueline said. “When I was in the third grade I was always drawing on my school papers, so my mom bought me materials and paint.”

Last year Jacqueline became involved in the SAVAPA arts program. This year she has served as Benevent’s student aid. “By serving as an aid in the art class this year, I had extra time to work and thought that finishing this painting would be a great end to my senior year of high school,” she said.

“Working on a painting in a classroom for three years is pretty unusual,” Benevent said. “With so many hands on it, it does not really belong to any one student. It is really part of our community. The painting started with a Desert Museum program, and I thought the museum would be the perfect place for the painting to end up.”

Though the painting was presented to the museum this week, it will be available for viewing in the upcoming Southwest High School Art Show on Tuesday and Wednesday at the Jimmie Cannon Theater foyer. The art show is free and will precede the Southwest band concert Tuesday and the SAVAPA Showcase on Wednesday.