

Press Release

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CONTACT:
Frieda Arth, Rag Rug Festival Producer
New Mexico Women's Foundation
551 Cordova Road #411 Santa Fe NM 87505
(505) 995-8926 frieda@nmwf.org
www.nmwf.org

Robidoux Baskets Will Be Featured At *Rag Rug Festival & Design Collective Santa Fe*

Barbara Robidoux chooses her words carefully. She says she doesn't like talking about herself, and this is followed by a long pause.

This is a telephone interview, so we can both hear each other breathing while we wait. Robidoux breaks the silence. "I make baskets, traditional baskets out of ash and sweet grass. I use a traditional Cherokee way of making baskets, and I am from the Eastern band of Cherokee," she says. "Oh, and I also make pine needle baskets, and sometimes I make them from willow and pine."

There's another pause as she collects her thoughts. "Both the willows and pine needles come from here (Santa Fe)," she says, adding, "I only use natural materials, which I gather by myself."

During the day, Robidoux is hardly by herself. She is quite a busy woman. For the past 15 years, she has worked in the counselor's office at the Santa Fe Indian School. While she would never say so, this job is an important one. Counseling young children and youth and introducing them to important options in their lives is clearly important work.

She quickly shifts the interview back to basket making. "I learned how to make baskets (on the) Passamaquoddy (reservation) in Maine," Robidoux says. "We always sat and made baskets as a group. The designs I use are traditional, but some are melded Cherokee and Passamaquoddy designs.

"Using these designs together has been my teacher. I also do some contemporary work using ash and sweet grass.

"The main thing is that my baskets are to be used. They are made to be taken into the garden. To carry things. I'm a utilitarian. These baskets are not meant to sit on the shelf. They get lonely. They need to be touched and made use of."

Robidoux explains that there is a basket-making group at the Poeh Center in Pojoaque NM. "We call ourselves the Rio Grande Native American Basket Makers Association. We have a gathering once a year, but mostly we meet informally.

“Making baskets is not lonely,” she says. “It settles me down. I try to let my mind relax. The baskets have a way of making themselves.

“I’m a really active person. Like today, I’m going to put a floor in my hen house to help keep the baby chicks warm. And, I’m also a bee-keeper. And a poet. I have a book called “Waiting for Rain.”

“Basket-making was given to me by an elder and it has been in my life to help me. I was told, ‘Now you’ll never be hungry and you’ll always be able to get what you need.’” So far, the prophecy has come true. Robidoux weaves her baskets in a number of different shapes, including boxes and trays.

Her work, which usually sells out quickly, will be on view and for sale at the upcoming Rag Rug Festival & Design Collective August 15-17 at the Stewart Udall Center for Museum Resources, 725 Camino Lejo on Museum Hill in Santa Fe.

The festival will feature handmade products of nearly 100 women artisans in 35 booths. It is sponsored by the New Mexico Women’s Foundation and is one of four such events held throughout the state aimed at creating marketplaces to help women sell their handmade products. In addition to stunning rag rugs and other home furnishings, the Festival will feature fashions and adornments, fun and fine art, and gifts of every description. Plus THREADS: a boutique of vintage and new textiles and other offerings, to benefit *Women’s Cottage Industries*, a program of New Mexico Women’s Foundation, helping to create a more abundant life for New Mexico’s women and girls.

“Artisans are not charged a commission,” said Christian Leahy, executive director of the foundation. “They keep all of the money they make. New Mexico Women’s Foundation supports organizations and programs that create economic opportunities for New Mexico’s women and girls. Women artisans who are interested in participating in festivals held in Las Cruces, Farmington, Albuquerque or Santa Fe, should contact Frieda Arth at (505) 995-8926 or eMail her at [frieda @ nmwf.org](mailto:frieda@nmwf.org).

Here’s what’s going on the weekend before Indian Market in Santa Fe:

Rag Rug Festival & Design Collective

Friday, August 15, 4-7pm: Preview Reception and Sale. Tickets are \$50.

For reservations call New Mexico Women’s Foundation at 983-6155 in Santa Fe.

Saturday and Sunday, August 16 and 17, Festival is open from 10am - 4pm.

Free Admission. Free parking.

Additional information may be obtained by calling Frieda Arth, (505) 995-8926.