

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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**HISPANIC CULTURE CELEBRATED ON POSTAL SERVICE'S
NEW MEXICO RIO GRANDE BLANKET STAMPS ISSUED AT
THE OLDEST AND LARGEST SPANISH MARKET**

SANTA FE, NM - The rich Hispanic culture of Northern New Mexico was celebrated today as the U.S. Postal Service issued the New Mexico Rio Grande Blankets commemorative postage stamps at the 54th Annual Traditional Spanish Market on the Plaza Community Stage. These stamps are fifth in the American Treasures Series and feature the beauty and richness of Spanish American weavers.

As host to the event, Santa Fe holds the unique distinction of being the only city in the nation where the stamps will be available July 30. The stamps will be available at Post Offices and Philatelic Centers nationwide July 31.

"We're very pleased to honor the historic tradition of weaving," said Mary Anne Gibbons, Senior Vice President and General Counsel for the United States Postal Service, who dedicated the stamp. "These colorful blankets, with their beautiful and unique designs, are wonderful additions to our American Treasures Series."

Featuring traditional art, music, dance, pageantry and food, the 54th Annual Traditional Spanish Market provided an opportunity to enjoy a taste of New Mexico's vibrant Spanish culture, both past and present. More than 200 native New Mexican artists-many of them nationally recognized-exhibit and sell their handmade artwork at Spanish Market, which features over 3,500 art objects covering four centuries and five continents. This event is sponsored by the Spanish Art Society and attracts the local community, tourists and collectors from around the world.



"I am pleased the U.S. Postal Service has chosen to recognize New Mexico's rich cultural heritage and will be sharing it with the rest of the country through the Rio Grande Blanket commemorative stamps," said Jeff Bingaman, U.S. Senator (D-NM).

The four Rio Grande Blankets self-adhesive stamps feature photographs of blankets from the collections of the Museum of International Folk Art, and the Museum of Indian Arts & Culture/Laboratory of Anthropology, both in Santa Fe, and the Taylor Museum, Colorado Springs Fine Arts Center in Colorado Springs, CO.

All four blankets depicted on the stamps will be displayed in the lobby of the Museum of Fine Arts, located adjacent to the Plaza Community Stage and will be available for viewing during regular museum hours through tomorrow.

Woven textiles have a long history in the American Southwest and many regional styles developed over time. The textiles produced in Spanish settlements in the northern Rio Grande Valley were influenced by Spanish, Mexican, Pueblo and Navajo designs. Often worn as clothing, Rio Grande blankets also functioned as rugs, bedding and sacking.

Current U.S. stamps and stationery, as well as a free comprehensive catalog, are available by calling 1-800-STAMP-24. A wide selection of stamps and other philatelic items are also available at the Postal Store at www.usps.com/shop, and www.postalartgallery.com offers beautifully framed prints of original stamp art for delivery straight to the home or office.

Since 1775, the U.S. Postal Service has connected friends, families, neighbors and businesses by mail. An independent federal agency, the Postal Service makes deliveries to more than 142 million addresses every day and is the only service provider to deliver to every address in the nation. The Postal Service receives no taxpayer dollars for routine operations, but derives its operating revenues solely from the sale of postage, products and services. With annual revenues of \$69 billion, it is the world's leading provider of mail and delivery services, offering some of the most affordable postage rates in the world. Moreover, today's postage rates will remain stable until at least 2006. The U.S. Postal Service delivers more than 46 percent of the world's mail volume-some 206 billion letters, advertisements, periodicals and packages a year-and serves seven million customers each day at its 37,000 retail locations nationwide.