



2031 De La Vina Street, Santa Barbara, California 93105

Telephone (805) 682-6222 Fax (805) 687-6141

[www.brailleinstitute.org](http://www.brailleinstitute.org)

*For Immediate Release*

**Date:** May 5, 2006

**Contact:** Courtney Goines, Media Relations Manager, (323) 663-1111, Ext. 3176

## **Art From The Heart:**

### **Local Blind Artists Share Their Inspired Work At Unique Art Exhibit**

(Santa Barbara)—On **May 17**, from **10 a.m. to 2 p.m.**, Braille Institute’s Santa Barbara Center will be hosting the opening of a special exhibit called *Art from the Heart*, designed to showcase the work of more than 20 blind and visually impaired artists from throughout Santa Barbara and Ventura counties. The artists will be displaying a variety of artwork, from watercolor and oil paintings to clay sculptures and hand-woven baskets. Adelaida Ortega, whose family has been living in the Santa Barbara region since the early 1700s, will have a variety of her pieces on display. The influence of her Chumash Indian heritage is apparent in her artwork—a collection of intricately woven baskets, clay pottery and sculptures. What isn’t apparent is the fact that Adelaida has been totally blind for nearly 20 years, due to a rare eye disease caused by an airborne bacterial infection. “When I first lost my sight I was devastated,” she said. “I came to Braille Institute because my family worried that I was slipping into a depression, but after taking classes on independent living skills, I realized that I didn’t have to give up my independent lifestyle—and I even found some new hobbies.”

Adelaida, who now volunteers at the center, teaching an art class once a week, has been a student at Braille Institute’s Santa Barbara Center for 18 years. She has taken a variety of classes designed to help her regain her independence, but it was an enrichment class in the art of basket weaving that gave her a new purpose in life. She went from a shy, quiet student with no prior interest in art, to one of the most talented amateur blind artists in Santa Barbara. “It feels wonderful to create art for other people to enjoy, even though I can’t see it,” she said. “The joy is in the creation and knowing that even if you don’t have sight, you can still create a visually engaging piece of work.”

Along with Adelaida’s work, there will be more than 40 pieces of art on display in the center’s main auditorium. The exhibit will run until Wednesday, May 31, 2006, and is open to the public from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. The opening of the art showcase will provide visitors with an inside look at how blind people learn to create in such a visual medium. On the day of the opening, visitors will be able to tour the exhibit and also take a look inside the various art classrooms and sit in on demonstrations. The artists will be on hand to discuss the work that went into creating the pieces, as well as their inspiration behind them. Braille Institute offers more than 20 art classes at its center in Santa Barbara and through outreach centers located throughout the community as well. If you would like additional information about Adelaida Ortega or any of the other local artists featured in the *Art from the Heart* exhibit, please contact Courtney Goines, media relations manager, at (323) 663-1111, Ext. 3176.