Forum at Calexico’s San Diego State University campus addresses immigrant issues

By SILVIO J. PANTA, Staff Writer

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CALEXICO — The deaths of undocumented immigrants trying to cross the border were addressed Thursday during an emotional forum at the San Diego State University campus here.

Poetry readings, musical performances and a multimedia presentation marked the occasion at the campus’ art gallery, where the plight of undocumented immigrants was discussed.

The grassroots event was a precursor to a planned rally at 9 a.m. today at the border fence near Heffernan Avenue and First Street.

Then a caravan of marchers with the non-profit pro-migrant group Border Angels will head to Park Terrace Cemetery in Holtville for a vigil at the site where a number of fallen migrants are buried in unmarked graves.

About 50 volunteers with the group are expected to participate in today’s events during its fifth annual Marcha Migrante, which protests U.S. border policy.

“The one thing is that people need to be informed,” Rubio said. “A lot of people don’t know what’s going on. There has to be better immigration because a lot of people are dying.”

Border Angels founder Enrique Morones said since Operation Gatekeeper began in October 1994 about 10,000 migrants have died trying to seek a better life.

Operation Gatekeeper is the program geared toward safeguarding the nation’s border but has been the subject of debate and criticism. Morones attended the immigration forum at the local university campus.

“People should not be dying simply because they want a better life,” Morones said.

A highlight during the event was a poetry reading by Los Angeles resident Josefina Lopez, who penned the screenplay to the acclaimed 2002 independent feature film “Real Women Have Curves.”

Lopez said she was inspired to write a play after having met Morones and learning of his efforts to raise awareness about immigrant rights.

“We have a common humanity,” Lopez said following her reading. “It’s an act of conscience to educate
myself and to learn as much as I can."

>> Staff Writer Silvio J. Panta can be reached at 760-337-3442 or at spanta@ivpressonline.com