

Muralist FranCisco Vargas, fixture of Fresno's art scene, dies at 64

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Muralist FranCisco Vargas, who painted the iconic Fresno postage stamp mural, died Monday morning. He was 64.

Mr. Vargas, who was a fixture of Fresno's art scene, completed the mural last year at Tuolumne Street and Van Ness Avenue downtown, covering an entire wall of [The Business Journal](#) building. The work was designed in the form of a postage stamp with images of many Fresno icons.

He was also the artist behind the "Welcome to Fresno" mural at 746 Broadway Street and a work-in-progress at Bitwise South Stadium. He painted murals at several Granville Homes sites, including the Dragonfly Blues Lounge mural at Iron Bird Lofts and butterflies at 1612 Fulton.

Serena Vargas, 34, said her father was taken off life support on Saturday. He was diagnosed with stage four Hodgkin's lymphoma cancer on July 22 and had a stroke a week ago.

Serena Vargas drove to Fresno from her home in Campbell on Saturday. The family planned to wait until Tuesday to take Mr. Vargas off life support. But when she saw him at Saint Agnes Medical Center, she knew it was time.

"I felt like his soul was already gone," he said.

Vargas and her sister, Christina Vargas Bertrand, 41, lay with their father Monday morning until he died.

"Not everyone can say that they got to see their father take his last breath," Serena Vargas said.

Mr. Vargas was named artist of the year at the Hispanic Heritage Awards ceremony on Sept. 17, 2014, at Arte Américas. The awards were hosted by Assembly Member Henry T. Perea, D-Fresno, in celebration of Hispanic Heritage Month.

"He truly displayed his passion for the arts by inviting other artists to help on the project to give them an opportunity to improve their skills as mural painters," Perea said at the ceremony. "Not only is Cisco a great artist, but he also cares deeply about the community and understands that art can provide an outlet to at-risk youth."

Mr. Vargas is also survived by his mother, Della Chacon. The family is planning a celebration of his life next month.

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