



'ROUND THE ROUNDHOUSE



New Mexico
STATE EMPLOYEES' NEWSPAPER

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'Round the Roundhouse is a local, family owned company that publishes a monthly newspaper for and about State and other government employees in New Mexico. We strive to be the most relevant source of information. Opinions expressed by some contributors do not necessarily reflect those of 'Round the Roundhouse. Send your stories and photos to us at the address above or submit to your PIO for their consideration in future issues. Enjoy!

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Governor Appoints Mariana Padilla as Secretary of the Public Education Department

By Jodi McGinnis Porter



Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham today announced the appointment of Mariana Padilla as Cabinet Secretary for the New Mexico Public Education Department.

Padilla has served as the Director of the New Mexico Children's Cabinet since the start of the administration, leading the Governor's child and family well-being agenda. She also serves as the Governor's senior education policy advisor, overseeing early childhood, K-12, and higher education. In this role, Padilla has shaped program, policy, and budget priorities, and worked across state agencies to implement key initiatives and system-wide improvements. Her accomplishments include establishing the New Mexico Early Childhood Education and Care Department, launching a statewide literacy initiative, and driving the Governor's Cradle to Career education agenda supporting students from birth through college and career readiness.

"Mariana's deep roots in New Mexico and her lifelong commitment to children and families make her the right leader for this moment," Gov. Lujan Grisham said. "Her work has been instrumental in shaping our state's education system, and I am confident that she will continue to bring positive change for New Mexico's students."

Padilla has stepped in as acting cabinet secretary for both the Public Education Department and the Children, Youth and Families Department, and has served on numerous boards and councils, including the Public School Capital Outlay Council, which oversees and awards capital projects for schools statewide.

As Secretary, Padilla will prioritize improving academic achievement, increasing student attendance and engagement, ensuring on-time graduation, and creating pathways to college and career. She is committed to building school communities where all students feel supported and can thrive.

"I am incredibly honored to be appointed by Gov. Lujan Grisham to lead the New Mexico Public Education Department," Padilla said. "My career has been focused on serving the communities and families of our state. I am committed to working collaboratively with students, families, educators, and community partners to achieve the outcomes we all want to see. As a parent of grade school students, I share the sense of urgency to deliver for our kids."

Padilla began her career as an elementary school teacher in her hometown of Albuquerque's South Valley. She later earned dual master's degrees in community and regional planning and water resources from the University of New Mexico. Before becoming the Director of the Children's Cabinet, she served as the state director for then-Congresswoman Michelle Lujan Grisham for six years, overseeing New Mexico policy and constituent services.

A native New Mexican, Padilla was raised in Albuquerque's South Valley, where she attended Albuquerque Public Schools alongside her three siblings. Inspired by her parents, both retired educators, she has dedicated her career to education and public service. She and her husband are proud parents of three daughters, all of whom attend public schools in Santa Fe.

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Secretary-Designate Kenderdine Recognized for Exemplary Leadership

North Star Award recognizes professionals who advance energy efficiency

By Sidney Hill

New Mexico Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources Secretary Designate Melanie Kenderdine received the prestigious North Star Award from the Alliance to Save Energy.

The North Star Award honors professionals who have made significant impacts in their careers, serving as guiding lights for others and advancing the field of energy efficiency in profound ways.



Secretary Designate Kenderdine was selected for the 2024 North Star Award for demonstrating exemplary leadership throughout a distinguished career, according to Paula Glover, president of the Alliance to Save Energy, a Washington, D.C.-based nonprofit coalition of business, government, environmental, and consumer leaders advocating for the advancement of federal energy efficiency policy.

“Whether in your role as director of the U.S. DOE’s Office of Energy Policy and Systems Analysis, or your work as co-founder of the Energy Futures Initiative, your contributions have consistently driven innovation and inspired others to follow in your footsteps,” Glover said of Secretary Designate Kenderdine. “It is with immense pleasure that I announce that that the Alliance to Save Energy has selected you as the recipient of our prestigious North Star Award.”

Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham appointed Kenderdine as Cabinet Secretary of the New Mexico Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources Department (EMNRD) in May 2024.

Before joining EMNRD, Kenderdine was co-founder, Principal and Executive Vice President of the Energy Futures Initiative, a Washington, D.C.-based nonprofit dedicated to harnessing the power of technology and policy innovation to accelerate the clean energy transition.

Prior to co-founding the Energy Futures Initiative, Kenderdine held high-level positions at the U.S. Department of Energy in both the Obama and Clinton administrations.

In the Obama administration, Kenderdine helped create Mission Innovation, now a 26-country initiative that supports transformational clean energy research, development, and demonstration; North American grid integration and security; and the modernization of the Strategic Petroleum Reserve. Kenderdine’s DOE office led the management and analysis for the Quadrennial Energy Review, a multi-year, 22-agency roadmap for U.S. energy policy.

The award was presented at the 32nd annual Stars of Energy Efficiency Awards Dinner at the International Spy Museum in Washington, D.C. on Wednesday, September 18, 2024.

“This is an honor I never expected to receive, but is one I will cherish because it comes from an organization that I know is truly committed to helping us grow our national economy while simultaneously protecting our planet,” Secretary Designate Kenderdine said. “The Alliance to Save Energy has worked for decades to mitigate climate change, enhance our energy security, and ensure energy equity. Energy efficiency and conservation are critical for addressing these challenges and the Alliance has played a pivotal role in addressing key goals. I share these goals and again, I am deeply honored by this award.”

LeAnn Behrens Named Deputy Secretary for NMHealth

By David Barre

On September 18th, New Mexico Department of Health (NMHealth) Secretary Patrick Allen announced he has named LeAnn Behrens to the position of Deputy Secretary.

Behrens started at NMHealth in April of this year as the department’s Director of Operations. In this role, she has been deeply engaged in the implementation of the enterprise performance management system focusing on hiring processes, operational performance and the development of health programs to drive improved health among New Mexicans.

In addition, she has worked on the preparation of the DOH budget proposal for FY26, the procurement of consulting services to streamline financial operations within the agencies and partnerships with Medicaid Managed Care organizations to cooperate on things like nicotine reduction programs. Her expertise in process improvement and business efficiency models have been foundational to her work at DOH.

“I am very excited to have LeAnn in this new role,” said Sec. Allen. “In her short time here at NMHealth she has proven to be an invaluable asset in helping me steer the organization toward our goal of making New Mexico the healthiest state by 2040.”

Behrens has extensive experience in the healthcare arena, having worked in a number of roles for Anthem Health for more than 20 years. From 2015-2019, she served as President of Anthem’s West Region Medicaid, where she was responsible for all health plan operations and financial performance. She spent a significant part of her time at Anthem in roles, including president and chief operating officer, focusing on the Texas Medicaid Health Plan.

Prior to her time at Anthem, Behrens served as the Assistant Director of Education and Research at the Women’s Center of Tarrant County in Fort Worth, Texas. There she developed and implemented education and training programs focusing on sexual abuse, sexual harassment and partner violence.

Behrens retired from Anthem in 2019 but returned to the workforce to help respond to the teacher shortage that followed the pandemic. From 2022-2023, she served as a Special Education Teacher for Capitol High School in Santa Fe where she was responsible for a small self-contained classroom of eight students.

Behrens, a Santa Fe resident since 2020, where she lives with her husband, David, and their four cats. She volunteers at the International Folk Art Museum’s annual market and continues to be engaged, at the board level, with several organizations that provide services to women and children dealing with housing instability.



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Governor Appoints Rob Black as Secretary of Economic Development

By Michael Coleman



On September 6th, Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham appointed Rob Black as Cabinet Secretary of the

Economic Development Department, ushering in a bold new era of leadership at the agency charged with spurring private investment and growing new jobs New Mexico.

Black, a seasoned public policy and community relations expert with extensive experience in the private and public sectors, will assume the role September 16.

With more than 25 years of professional experience in New Mexico and California, Black has a demonstrated track record of driving economic growth, building coalitions, and managing large-scale projects. Most recently, he served as the president & CEO of the New Mexico Chamber of Commerce, where he led a statewide business leadership and advocacy organization of more

than 500 members. During his tenure at the New Mexico Chamber, Black launched the NMCEO, a foundation that partners with the New Mexico Department of Workforce Solutions to run Be Pro Be Proud, a statewide Career and Technical Education engagement program.

Black, who was born and raised in Lovington, New Mexico, also created and managed the New Mexico Organized Retail Crime Association, which develops strategies to address the growing problem of organized retail theft.

"Rob Black's leadership and vision have been instrumental in fostering economic development across New Mexico," said Gov. Lujan Grisham. "His deep understanding of our state's economic landscape and his proven track record of collaboration make him the ideal choice to lead our Economic Development Department. Under his leadership, we will continue to strengthen New Mexico's economy and create even more opportunities

for residents of our state."

Before returning to his home state of New Mexico, Black was senior director of community relations at Pacific Gas and Electric Company in San Francisco, where he managed the company's environmental and climate resilience community investments. He also played a key role in supporting emergency response efforts during natural disasters and oversaw significant sponsorships with major sports teams and events, such as the San Francisco Giants and Super Bowl 50.

Black also has an extensive background in public policy, having worked as a legislative aide in San Francisco and as an attorney specializing in campaign, lobby, and ethics laws. His global experience includes working with The Carter Center in Liberia and directing a USAID grant to support electoral processes in Zambia.

"I am excited to be appointed as Secretary of Economic Development and am honored to have

the chance to serve the people of New Mexico," said Black. "I look forward to working with Gov. Lujan Grisham, legislative leaders, the business community and stakeholders from all over the state to build a more vibrant, inclusive and prosperous economy for all New Mexicans."

Black holds a Juris Doctor degree from the University of California, College of the Law, San Francisco (formerly Hastings) and a Bachelor of Arts degree in Political Science from the University of New Mexico, where he graduated summa cum laude. He is actively involved in various organizations, including New Mexico First, the Sustainable Economy Advisory Council, and the US Chamber of Commerce's Committee of 100.

As Secretary of Economic Development, Black will oversee the state's efforts to foster economic growth, support businesses, and create jobs across New Mexico.

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VOICES FROM THE PAST

By Robert J. Tórréz
Former State Historian
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“Stretched” A Multiple Lynching in Albuquerque

During my decades-long, ongoing research on lynchings in New Mexico, of the one hundred fifty or so I have found, at least thirteen claimed multiple victims. Six of these multiple lynchings claimed three victims, and one series of related incidents claimed four victims, three of them brothers. This quadruple lynching involved brothers José María, Gregorio and Juan Miera, and an accomplice, Melitón Cordova. The brothers apparently had long histories of criminal activity in the Albuquerque area although their specific crimes are not reflected in court records or the reports of their lynching. They were all hanged over a two day period during the middle of June 1876. Jose María Miera was the first victim of the vigilante justice that soon claimed his brothers. Reports tell us that José Miera was being escorted to jail on unspecified charges when a party of armed men accosted the sheriff, kidnapped José, and proceeded to hang him in the vicinity of Sandia Pueblo. The following day Gregorio Miera and Melitón Cordova were being transported from the Albuquerque jail to Ranchos de Albuquerque for arraignment when they somehow became separated from their escort and were found the following morning hanged from a tree at Los Griegos along with the third brother, Juan.

The scant Albuquerque Review report on the incident added only that “Judge Lynch had evidently been around” that night.

One instance of a multiple lynchings in Albuquerque is particularly well documented in numerous newspaper reports, including one from the Las Vegas Daily Gazette whose headline on the story read, “Stretched.” The reports of this event demonstrate a calm deliberation and purpose not generally associated with mob actions. On Monday, January 31, 1881, Miguel Barreras, Escolastico Perea, and another man known only as “California Joe,” were confined in the Albuquerque jail. They had been arrested for the late 1880 murder of Charles Potter, a member of the United States Geological Survey and public feeling against the suspects was running high. Shortly after 8:00 P. M. that Monday evening, several men called on the Rev. Baldassarre at the nearby San Felipe Neri Church. The men informed Baldassarre that Barreras, Perea, and California Joe had only an hour and a half to live and suggested “it would be judicious for him to administer the sacraments” to them as quickly as possible. The priest immediately proceeded to the jail where a crowd of at least two hundred men had gathered. The good father informing the prisoners that “they were not long

for this world,” heard their confessions and bade them a final farewell.

After the priest left the jail, the vigilantes, most with their faces concealed by masks or handkerchiefs, proceeded to enter the jail and ordered the jailers to surrender the three prisoners. Published reports indicate the whole affair did not have the feeling of a typical unruly lynch mob, but one of “cool determination.” An unidentified witness, who happened to be in the vicinity when the vigilantes were on their way to the jail, provided the following account to The Daily New Mexican of February 4, 1881:

...On arriving at the jail no demonstration was made, everything was conducted quietly and in order. No resistance was met with at the hands of the officials, they doubtless knowing full well that the calm exterior of these men resembled a volcano at rest, the fire within liable to burst forth in fury at any instant, and on slight provocation. One prisoner on being seized struggled, or rather tried to struggle and escape what he saw was his certain fate. But his feeble efforts were as the dashing of waves on a rock-bond shore; the avengers were there and they were pitiless. The three men were brought outside of the jail and under the

condemning eyes of this little multitude, were without any delay launched into eternity. The self appointed executioners then...quietly dispersed, and no token was left save the three ghastly bodies swinging in the cold night air, to tell of the weird scene that had been enacted under the jail walls.

The final chapter to this triple lynching took place early in the morning of February 25, 1881. Faustino Gutierrez, a fourth party to the Charles Potter murder, was being held in the Albuquerque jail awaiting trial for his part in the Potter murder. It is not certain how Gutierrez had escaped the clutches of lynch mob that hanged his accomplices less than a month earlier, but the morning of February 25, when “all law-abiding folks were asleep,” vigilantes broke into the jail, dragged Gutierrez under the same beam that was utilized to hang his partners in crime, placed a rope around his neck and “pulled the living burden off the ground.” Gutierrez was found later that morning with a placard draped to the body bearing the words, “Colonel Potter’s Assassin. Hung by 601.” This was apparently Albuquerque’s last lynching.

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Governor Appoints Manny Barreras as Secretary for the Department of Information Technology

By Michael Coleman

Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham has appointed Manny Barreras as Cabinet Secretary of the Department of Information Technology (DoIT).

With over 26 years of professional experience in sales and business development, including 22 years dedicated to technical sales, marketing management, and public relations, Barreras brings a wealth of expertise to the role.



“Manny Barreras is an exceptional leader with a proven track record in driving innovative solutions and delivering critical communication systems for public safety,” said Gov. Lujan Grisham. “His extensive experience and deep understanding of the challenges facing state and local agencies make him the ideal person to lead the Department of Information Technology. I am confident that under his leadership, New Mexico will continue to advance our technology infrastructure to better serve our communities.”

Barreras has spent the last 19 years at Motorola Solutions Inc., where he held the position of Senior Territory Account Manager for the state of New Mexico and El Paso, Texas. During his tenure, he was responsible for strategically developing and capturing complex opportunities that delivered mission-critical voice, data communications, and video security for state, local, and tribal safety agencies. His work has been instrumental in securing multimillion-dollar contracts, including a \$20 million radio system upgrade for the New Mexico Department of Information Technology in 2023.

“I am honored to be appointed as Secretary of the Department of Information Technology,” said Barreras. “I look forward to working with Gov. Lujan Grisham and the dedicated team at DoIT to enhance New Mexico’s technology infrastructure, ensuring our state is at the forefront of innovation and providing the highest level of service to our residents.”

Barreras holds a Bachelor of Business Administration in Marketing from New Mexico State University. Throughout his career, he has been recognized for his achievements, including being named Territory Sales & Support Professional of the Year multiple times and receiving the prestigious CEO Circle Award.

The appointment of Manny Barreras as Secretary of DoIT was effective Monday, Sept. 9.

MFA has a New Address

By Kristie Garcia

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Museum of Indian Arts & Culture Appoints Danyelle Means (Oglala Lakota) as Executive Director

By Daniel Zillmann

New Mexico Department of Cultural Affairs announced today that Danyelle Means (Oglala Lakota) has been appointed executive director of Museum of Indian Arts & Culture (MIAC) in Santa Fe, NM, after serving a successful eight months as interim director.



"I am excited to welcome Danyelle's ongoing leadership of MIAC as its new executive director," said New Mexico Department of Cultural Affairs Cabinet Secretary Debra Garcia y Griego. "During her tenure as interim director, Danyelle has proven to be an effective and visionary steward. She has been instrumental in creating space where Native artists and their contributions are honored and highlighted. I look forward to seeing where her continued leadership takes the museum."

Previously, Means worked for the First Peoples Fund (in association with the National Opinion Research Center), Southwestern Association for Indian Arts, Inc., and was the first person of Indigenous heritage to lead Center for Contemporary Arts. She also served as the Director of Advancement at the Institute of American Indian Arts and the Executive Director of the Institute of American Indian Arts Foundation. She holds a Master of Arts in Museum Studies from Marist College/Instituto Lorenzo de' Medici, Florence, Italy (ABT), and a Bachelor of Arts in Anthropology and French from University of South Dakota.

"I am deeply honored to take on the role of executive director at MIAC," said Means. "I am committed to serving all New Mexicans by ensuring that the voices of Native artists and community members are celebrated and integrated into the narrative of our cultural heritage. Together, we will continue to uplift Indigenous stories and art, fostering a deeper understanding of our rich traditions and contemporary expressions."

Means' appointment was effective September 14, 2024.

EMNRD Presents 2024 Excellence in Reclamation Award

Former coal mining site near Raton is restored to thriving natural ecosystem



By Sidney Hill

The New Mexico Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources Department is proud to recognize the winner of its 2024 Excellence in Reclamation Award.

Instituted in 1996, the Excellence in Reclamation Award recognizes excellence and innovation in coal, hard rock and aggregate mine reclamation and abandoned mine land reclamation projects. The award also aims to raise public awareness of mining issues through outreach projects conducted around the state. EMNRD presents the awards at the annual New Mexico Mining Association Convention, which this year took place August 29 at the Sandia Resort and Casino in Albuquerque.

Flagstaff, Ariz.-based Oxbow Engineering and Sweatt Construction of Artesia, N.M., earned the 2024 Excellence in Reclamation Award for their combined efforts on the Dutchman Canyon Restoration Project, which reclaimed an abandoned mine site approximately 4.5 miles west of Raton, N.M.



"I commend Oxbow Engineering and Sweatt Construction for their outstanding work in restoring this precious landscape," said EMNRD Secretary-Designate Melanie Kenderdine, who presented the award to the project team. "A vibrant, sustainable mining industry cannot exist without a commitment to restoring these areas to productive use post mining. That is why I was honored to present the New Mexico 2024 Excellence in Mine Reclamation Award."

The Dutchman Canyon site produced coal from the 1860s into the 1950s and was initially reclaimed in 2012. That work involved burying large piles of coal waste that set next to a stream channel, threatening to pollute water that flows in the Canadian River.

However, a significant rainstorm began to undo that work a mere year later.

The storm damaged newly planted seedlings before they could take root and prevent soil erosion. As time went by, the soil was eroded to the point that the coal waste was again visible and threatening the stream channel. In 2019, Oxbow Engineering was hired to step in and design a long-term solution.

Sweatt Construction was hired to implement the design, which called for both slowing the stream's flow and redirecting it away from its eroding banks. That allowed vegetation to grow in the area without suffering damage from storms that would cause the stream's water level to rise.

Construction crews planted numerous types of vegetation in the area, including willows and cottonwood cuttings as well wetland and riparian plant seedlings from the Santa Ana Pueblo's Native Plant and Tree Nursery. Today, Dutchman Canyon is the picture of a thriving natural ecosystem, which no visible traces of its coal-producing past.

Full details on the award-winning project are available on the Mining and Minerals Division's website.



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Jen Paul Schroer Steps Down as Aging Department Secretary

By Jodi McGinnis Porter



Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham announced on September 13th that Jen Paul Schroer, Secretary of the Aging and Long-Term Services Department (ALTSD) will step down from her position at the end of the day. Schroer has served in the administration since 2019.

“Jen has been a strong, dedicated leader, stepping up for New Mexicans from her time at the Tourism Department through her work at ALTSD,” said Gov. Lujan Grisham. “Her leadership was crucial during the COVID-19 crisis, and I deeply appreciate her service. I wish her success in her next chapter.”

As ALTSD Secretary, Schroer spearheaded a reorganization to streamline services and expanded home and community-based resources for older adults and caregivers. Previously, she drove record tourism growth as Secretary of the Tourism Department and was appointed by President Biden to the U.S. Route 66 Centennial Commission.

“I am grateful to Gov. Lujan Grisham for the opportunity to serve and to work alongside dedicated professionals improving the lives of New Mexicans,” said Paul Schroer. “My thanks to Deputy Secretary Antoinette Vigil and the entire ALTSD team for their support and commitment. I’m proud of what we’ve accomplished together and confident the department will thrive under their leadership.”

Governor Appoints Emily Kaltenbach Secretary of Aging and Long-Term Services Department

On September 24, 2024, Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham announced her appointment of Emily Kaltenbach as Cabinet Secretary of the Aging and Long-Term Services Department (ALTSD).

Kaltenbach brings more than two decades of leadership in public policy, health care reform, and advocacy, as well as a strong track-record of advancing services for older adults, individuals with disabilities, and communities across New Mexico. Kaltenbach will join the administration on November 4, 2024.



Previously, Kaltenbach was senior director of state advocacy for the Drug Policy Alliance, where she led statewide efforts to shift policy focus from punitive measures to health-centered solutions. Her extensive background also includes leadership positions at ALTSD and in the New Mexico Office of Health Care Reform, where she contributed to significant policy reforms benefiting older adults and people of all ages with disabilities.

“We welcome Emily Kaltenbach back to the Aging and Long-Term Services Department,” said Gov. Lujan Grisham. “Her depth of experience in public health, aging services, and policy development will enable her to make an immediate impact as the department continues to improve the care and resources provided to New Mexico’s seniors and those with disabilities.”

“I am honored to return to ALTSD and serve New Mexico’s elders and families,” said Kaltenbach. “I look forward to collaborating with stakeholders statewide to ensure all New Mexicans have access to the care and services they need to live with dignity and independence.”

Kaltenbach holds a master’s in health care administration from the University of Washington and has served on multiple boards dedicated to public health, cannabis regulation, and community safety. Her leadership in health care reform and social justice issues makes her uniquely positioned to lead ALTSD as it navigates the challenges facing the state’s growing aging population.

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Celebrating the 2024 Fall Internship Kick-Off

By Madison Torrez

On September 11, the fall session of the State-wide Internship Program commenced with a virtual Kick-Off event for interns from around New Mexico. The Kick-Off outlined the experience interns should gain throughout the program as well as expectations, and program benefits that support with career pathways.



The internship program is designed to provide students with experience in state government and public service within various agencies. The State Personnel Office aims to offer valuable learning opportunities that will help students develop skills and prepare for their future careers. Completion of the program enables interns to earn equivalent work experience to help them meet minimum qualifications for future permanent positions in the State.

Fall interns are preparing for the Capstone Summit, where they will present their capstone project at the conclusion of the program. The Capstone project is a reflection of what the interns learned and what projects they worked on throughout their internship. The Summit is a time for interns to celebrate and demonstrate on all their hard work and what they learned at their agencies.

SPO is excited to see what these amazing interns will do this fall. If you are interested in joining our spring or summer internship program sessions, please complete the Microsoft Form available on the SPO Internship Program webpage, or by using the following link: <https://forms.office.com/g/rbG6j8RRqe>.

If you or someone you know is interested in mentoring or hosting an intern for spring or summer sessions, please contact program coordinator, Alyssa Flores, Alyssa.Flores@spo.nm.gov.”

NCRTD Blue Bus™ Celebrates 20 Years

By Rick L'Amie

The North Central Regional Transit District's (NCRTD) iconic Blue Bus™ celebrated its 20th birthday Sept. 6 in Española with invited officials from the federal and New Mexico governments along with elected officials from the four counties and tribal organizations the District serves. Blue Bus employees were also in attendance to enjoy entertainment and a luncheon. Since its inception in 2004, the organization has grown to provide millions of passenger trips within a 10,000-square-mile service area. The Blue Bus™ connects communities in Taos, Rio Arriba, Santa Fe and Los Alamos counties as well as the northern pueblos of Ohkay Owingeh, San Ildefonso, Tesuque, Pojoaque, Santa Clara, Nambe, Picuris, Taos and the Jicarilla Apache Nation. Additional services connect communities in San Juan, Mora and San Miguel Counties. The District operates 29 routes, with a mix of fixed-routes, flex routes, on-demand MyBlue™ ridesharing service, and paratransit/ADA services.



The North Central Regional Transit District was signed into law by Governor Bill Richardson and began service in 2007. In 2008, the public in the four-county region approved a regional gross receipts tax of 1/8 of one percent that provides the funding for services.

Today, the Blue Bus™ operates 29 routes, with a mix of fixed-routes and paratransit/ADA services. The District also offers MyBlue app-based ride sharing services in Taos, Española and Pojoaque/Nambé. Since service began, there have been more than 9.5 million passenger trips provided and funded.

The Blue Bus was honored to receive the 2024 Small Community Transit System of the Year Award from the Community Transportation Association of America, a milestone achievement in the District's 20th year of operation.

“We are so proud of everyone who contributed to our success over the years,” said Anthony Mortillaro, NCRTD Executive Director. “We have provided needed transportation to a variety of customers – from the elderly, to veterans, to students, to people wanting to take public transit instead of driving. It is a true community service, and we are looking forward to what will evolve in the next 20 years.”

“The NCRTD is leading the state with its commitment to minimizing our carbon footprint,” said NCRTD Board Chair Lee Garcia. “We recently received federal funding to add a fleet of 16 electric buses and vans as part of our plan to have a zero-emission fleet.”



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District 1 H.E.A. Scholarship Winners

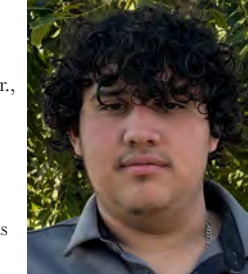
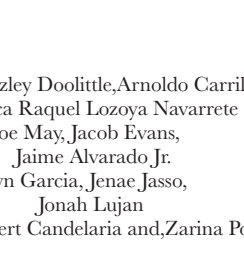
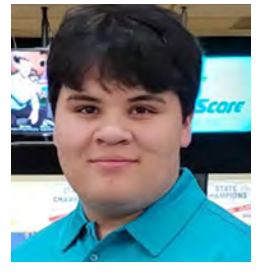
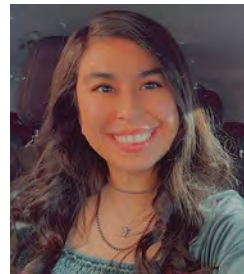
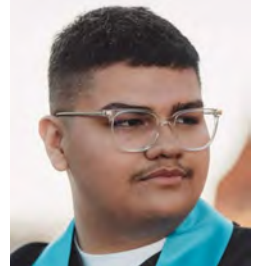
By Ami Evans

District 1 Highway Employees Association (H.E.A.) Committee was able to give out 11 scholarships for the 2024-2025 school year. Winners were awarded with a \$250.00 scholarship and will be awarded another \$250.00 at the beginning of the 2025 school year given that they are enrolled in college with a minimum of 12 credit hours and maintain a 2.5 or higher GPA. This is a wonderful opportunity for our members and a great way to give back.

Congratulations to the following:

- Ainzley Doolittle
Daughter of Trent Doolittle
Enrolled at New Mexico State University
Study: Chemistry/Biochemistry
- Arnoldo Carrillo Jr.
Son of Arnoldo Carrillo
Enrolled at New Mexico State University
Study: Geomatics
- Bianca Raquel Lozoya Navarrete
Daughter of Eric Navarrete
Enrolled at New Mexico State University
Study: Nursing
- Chloe May
Daughter of Shelly and Scott May
Enrolled at University of New Mexico
Study: Nursing

- Jacob Evans
Son of Ami Evans
Enrolled at Wyo-Tech
Study: Automotive
- Jaime Alvarado Jr.
Son of Jaime Alvarado
Enrolled at Central New Mexico Community College
Study: Accounting
- Jazlyn Garcia
Daughter of Charlotte and Joseph Garcia
Enrolled at New Mexico State University
Study: General Business
- Jenae Jasso
Daughter of Lila Jasso
Enrolled at New Mexico State University
Study: Kinesiology
- Jonah Lujan
Son of Tisha Clark
Enrolled at New Mexico State University
Study: Hospitality, Restaurant/Tourism Management
- Robert Candelaria
Son of Ray Candelaria
Enrolled at New Mexico State University
Dona Ana Branch
Study: Cyber Security
- Zarina Porras
Daughter of Jose Porras
Enrolled at New Mexico State University
Study: Accounting



Top row: Ainzley Doolittle,Arnoldo Carrillo Jr., Bianca Raquel Lozoya Navarrete
2nd row: Chloe May, Jacob Evans, Jaime Alvarado Jr.
3rd row: Jazlyn Garcia, Jenae Jasso, Jonah Lujan
4th row: Robert Candelaria and,Zarina Porras



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Governor Issues Executive Order Expanding and Investing in Climate-Ready and Infrastructure Workforce for New Mexico

By Michael Coleman

On September 23rd, Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham announced an Executive Order to expedite New Mexico's transition to a clean energy economy and address the critical need for infrastructure development across the state.

The Executive Order reflects pressing needs of New Mexico communities such as Ruidoso and the Mes-calero Apache Nation, which suffered extensive fire and flooding damage which the governor discussed with residents during town halls last week.

Gov. Lujan Grisham's Executive Order will enable the state to leverage billions of federal and state dollars to ensure that New Mexico's workforce is prepared for the work of modernizing transportation, telecommunications, water, and energy systems. The Executive Order also dovetails with Lujan Grisham's role as co-chair of the U.S. Climate Alliance and her leadership of the organization's upcoming Climate-Ready Workforce Initiative.

"Communities that have been devastated by natural disasters are wisely demanding that we sustainably

manage the forests, build bridges that withstand flooding, and harden our telecommunications infrastructure against the threat of fire," said Gov. Lujan Grisham. "In short, they are demanding climate-ready infrastructure."

Lujan Grisham said record investments in public infrastructure and the clean energy transition have spiked demand for labor, necessitating a coordinated approach to training workers from all backgrounds to fill these high-quality jobs.

"New Mexico is ready to get to work on implementation of the U.S. Climate Alliance Climate-Ready Workforce Initiative, and this Executive Order provides the blueprint for doing so," the governor said.

So far, New Mexico is investing nearly \$2.5 billion through the American Rescue Plan, \$5.3 billion from the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, and over \$217 million from the Inflation Reduction Act. These historic investments, combined with \$2.5 billion allocated by the state in the 2024

legislative session, will help the state strengthen infrastructure and climate resilience.

Federal initiatives, including the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, Inflation Reduction Act, and CHIPS and Science Act, are expected to create nearly 3 million jobs nationwide, with approximately 70% of these jobs accessible to workers without a college degree. In addition, the state's new Office of Housing is tackling the statewide housing shortage of 40,000 units, while working across sectors to ensure we meet the range of public infrastructure needs associated with new housing.

The increasing risks of heat, fire, floods, and other severe weather also demand investments in infrastructure that is designed, built and maintained to withstand climate impacts and meet the needs of communities for decades to come. For example, the Ruidoso wastewater treatment plant is investing in solar power to provide more resilient services when disaster occurs.

As New Mexico embarks on large-

scale infrastructure projects such as roads, bridges, dams, water systems, broadband, and affordable housing, the collaborative work outlined in the Executive Order will help mitigate rising construction costs and address workforce shortages in many high-demand sectors.

"Achieving the ambitious goals that Gov. Lujan Grisham has set out in this Executive Order will require participating agencies to establish innovative new partnerships with industry, trade unions, apprenticeship programs, educational institutions and other partners," said Department of Workforce Solutions Cabinet Secretary Sarita Nair. "Recent natural disasters in New Mexico demonstrate the need to build an energy sector that can help prevent and mitigate the impacts of climate change. Together, we can overcome gaps in New Mexico's workforce and fulfill the promise of federal and state climate-ready infrastructure investments."

Continued on page 13

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Executive Order on Climate-Ready and Infrastructure Workforce

Continued from page 12

The Executive Order sets the framework for a strategic and unified approach to enhance infrastructure and clean energy workforce training, including:

- **Collaborative Effort Across 11 State Agencies and Offices:** Key state agencies—including the Departments of Workforce Solutions, Transportation, Environment, Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources, Public Education, and Higher Education—will coordinate efforts to plan, develop, and track infrastructure and climate-ready workforce training.
- **Equity and Inclusion:** Workforce policies and programs will prioritize equity and expand opportunities for workers from rural, underrepresented, and underserved communities.
- **Infrastructure and Climate-Ready Workforce Goals:** New Mexico will train 2,000 workers in climate-ready professions by 2026.
- **Support for Workers and Communities:** Innovative strategies, including wraparound services such as childcare and transportation, will help ensure that workers can successfully enter and advance in clean energy careers. The order also calls for strong collaboration with Tribes, pueblos, nations, and other local communities.

In coordination with federal, state, and private entities, the state has already embarked on the following climate-ready and infrastructure workforce development initiatives:

- **Industry Credential Pipeline Program:** Led by the New Mexico Department of Transportation in coordination with the Department of Workforce Solutions, this program addresses worker shortages in the transportation sector through targeted credentialing.
- **Workforce Training & Apprenticeship Fund:** A \$30 million state investment to support registered apprenticeship programs in key sectors, ensuring pathways to high-paying jobs.
- **Higher Education Programs:** The New Mexico Higher Education Department has secured \$20 million per year for the next three years to fund students pursuing non-credit certifications and industry-recognized credentials, with additional funding for expanding Integrated Education & Training programs.
- **State Apprenticeship Expansion Grant:** Earlier this year, the state was awarded a \$5.9 million grant from the U.S. Department of Labor to expand apprenticeship programs in infrastructure and clean energy sectors. A list of current apprenticeship career pathways is available here: <https://www.dws.state.nm.us/en-us/Job-Seekers/Explore-Career-Options/Apprenticeship/Current-Career-Pathway-Programs>.
- **Residential and Commercial Electrification and Energy Efficiency:** The Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources Department is managing over \$2 million across three grant programs to train workers on the newest building codes, train and certify contractors for residential energy projects, and train workers to conduct energy audits of commercial and residential buildings.
- **Technical Assistance:** The Department of Workforce Solutions recently received a \$1.5 million technical assistance grant from the Families and Workers Fund to develop plans and convene key partners to expand the state's qualified infrastructure and clean energy workforce capacity.

The Executive Order connects to several Lujan Grisham administration initiatives that direct climate readiness into all aspects of infrastructure development. For example, the 2024-2027 Statewide Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Plan identified infrastructure, climate resilience, and clean energy as priority sectors for the state.

The order also directs state agencies to appoint a liaison to work with the Department of Workforce Solutions to track progress and ensure alignment with the state's broader workforce, infrastructure, and climate goals. Additionally, the order encourages collaboration across sectors to foster climate-ready skills and credentials that support economic mobility.

The Department of Workforce Solutions will publish an annual Infrastructure and Climate-Ready Workforce Report starting in 2025, providing comprehensive data on workforce outcomes, investments, and areas for improvement.



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Environment Department Signs Consent Order with DOE for LANL Legacy Waste Clean-Up

By Michael Coleman



Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham's administration and the U.S. Department of Energy have executed a Settlement Agreement to clean-up legacy radioactive wastes at Los Alamos National Laboratory, marking a historic moment in the fight to hold the federal government accountable for the toxic waste it left behind in the wake of nuclear weapons testing in New Mexico.

The Settlement Agreement, executed on Aug. 30, and associated Compliance Order on Consent supersedes the contested 2016 agreement that failed to deliver meaningful clean-up of legacy radioactive waste.

"Los Alamos National Laboratory is now fully accountable for cleaning up the radioactive waste legacy stemming from the Oppenheimer days," said Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham. "This settlement agreement holds the U.S. Department of Energy accountable to both New Mexicans and Tribal communities who have every right to expect full and timely remediation of the site."

As part of the settlement, the new Compliance Order on Consent

outlines the strategies for prioritized clean-up of historical operational waste at LANL, which includes nuclear weapons design and testing, as well as high explosives research and development.

The settlement is the outcome of extensive negotiations conducted over several years between New Mexico Environment Department (NMED) and the DOE. In 2021, NMED initiated a civil lawsuit against DOE for failing to make progress on the contamination clean-up at LANL stipulated in the prior 2016 Compliance Order on Consent. At that time, NMED sought termination of the 2016 Compliance Order on Consent, court-supervised negotiations for a new Compliance Order on Consent, and a civil penalty of \$333,000 for alleged violations.

"This is the culmination of years of effort by the Environment Department, with this consent order being one more step in holding the Department of Energy accountable," said NMED Secretary James Kenney. "Los Alamos National Laboratory must

now immediately get to work and fill the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant with legacy waste. All excuses have been voided."

The new agreement offers necessary revisions regarding public participation, an improved and faster dispute resolution process, and broadened enforcement of deadlines conforming to a new five-year plan. NMED anticipates these provisions will ensure preference is given to legacy waste clean-up by making the U.S. DOE responsible for transparently spending their Congressionally appropriated funds towards achieving clean-up of the site.

"The new Consent Order sets critical deadlines for cleanup progress milestones, forcing the DOE to take accountability in a timelier manner," said JD Nance, NMED Hazardous Waste Bureau Chief. "This includes scheduled deadlines for monitoring well installations, allowing NMED to better define the chromium plume's boundary and ensure contamination doesn't affect surrounding resources."

The Biden-Harris Administration

identified the legacy waste remediation at LANL as a priority for its Justice40 Initiative. The Justice40 Initiative is a federal government effort to deliver at least 40% of the overall benefits from certain federal investments to disadvantaged communities. LANL was chosen by the Administration as one of five U.S. Department of Energy Justice40 Pilot Programs and it is the only Justice40 Pilot Program under the U.S. Department of Energy's Environmental Management program.

NMED is planning to conduct public stakeholder and Tribal meetings in the coming months to explain the terms of the settlement and opportunities for engagement per the Compliance Order on Consent. NMED will share these opportunities on its public calendar and through social media.

Pursuant to state law, the \$333,000 civil penalty reverts to the State of New Mexico's Hazardous Waste Emergency fund. This is the primary state fund from which NMED addresses releases of hazardous materials.



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Disability Employment Awareness Month Inaugural Symposium and Hiring Event

By Jeff Levine

More than a dozen state agencies and organizations that support New Mexicans with disabilities are joining together to host a first-ever Disability Employment Awareness Month Conference in Albuquerque on Thursday, October 17. The event will be held in the University of New Mexico Continuing Education building, 1634 University Blvd NE, from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. It is free and open to the public.



Highlights include a job fair for employers to recruit persons with disabilities, an awards ceremony recognizing New Mexico businesses and non-profit organizations that prioritize diversity in their workforce, and roundtable discussions. The event kicks off with the reading of an official proclamation from Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham and a keynote address promoting the value and importance of including people with disabilities in the workplace.

This daylong event coincides with National Disability Employment Awareness Month, held each October to celebrate the contributions of workers with disabilities and showcase supportive, inclusive policies and practices that benefit both employees and employers.

Persons with disabilities are a huge untapped resource, as national statistics show a sizeable gap in the rate of workforce participation for persons with disabilities. Only about 25% of persons with disabilities participate in the labor force, compared to nearly two-thirds of those without disabilities.

“We are working hard to reduce that gap,” says Lisa McNiven, Deputy Director of the New Mexico Governor's Commission on Disability. “People with disabilities add value and talent to every workplace and community, and we are committed to increasing access and opportunities to all.”

Awards will be presented at 10 a.m., following the keynote address. The job fair begins at 1:30 p.m. For a full schedule and to register for the conference and/or the hiring event, visit <https://bit.ly/4cRjoHV>.

New Mexico Tourism Department's Employee of the Quarter is Randy Torres

By Tammy Martinez

Mr. Randy Torres was recognized as Employee of the Quarter for the third quarter of 2024, for his commitment and outstanding contributions to the New Mexico Tourism Department (NMTD). Mr. Torres has demonstrated dedication, commitment and a superior work ethic on behalf of the NMTD, as well as his remarkable customer service in all relations. Mr. Torres was described as being a dedicated professional who is always up for a challenge. He is consistently coming up with creative solutions to assist the department and the industry we serve. Mr. Torres works hard and gets the job done quickly and effectively while exhibiting a unique ability as an exceptional member and team player of the New Mexico Tourism Department, as was demonstrated by his numerous nominations for this quarterly recognition. Mr. Torres was also described as the ultimate team player who exemplifies the New Mexico Tourism Department's core value of Unity. He is always willing to do whatever it takes to help the Department. He embodies our core value of Curiosity. He is constantly researching topics and pursuing professional development to be a better asset to the NMTD. The New Mexico Tourism Department's Team True thanks Mr. Torres for his enthusiasm and outstanding commitment to always getting the job done.



Manuel Luna Named Pillar of Hope for the American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network's Lights of Hope Event

By David Pena

The New Mexico Office of the State Auditor (OSA) would like to inform you that the American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network (ACS CAN) has named Manuel Luna Small, Local Public Body Coordinator for the OSA, as a Pillar of Hope for this year's Lights of Hope event. Manuel is the ACS CAN State Lead Ambassador for New Mexico and was recognized during ACS CAN's Annual Leadership Summit and Lobby Day, held in Washington, D.C.



The Lights of Hope ceremony brings together cancer advocates from all 50 states, Guam, and Puerto Rico to honor those touched by cancer. Pillars of Hope are individuals who have demonstrated commitment to the fight against cancer and have worked tirelessly to advocate for policies that benefit cancer patients and survivors.

Manuel Luna was selected as a Pillar of Hope for his commitment to improving health equity and care accessibility for New Mexico's Hispanic and Latino communities. As a founding member of ACS CAN's ACSí Se Puede Hispanic/Latino Advocacy Alliance, Manuel has aided in bridging the gap in access to health care, ensuring that underserved populations receive the support they need to combat cancer. In his role as Vice State Lead Ambassador, Manuel aims to amplify marginalized voices, working to dismantle barriers to treatment and promote early detection.

Recognizing Leadership at the Annual Summit

The Annual Leadership Summit and Lobby Day gather hundreds of advocates from across the United States, Guam, and Puerto Rico to meet with lawmakers, share personal stories, and call for legislative actions to improve cancer care, research funding, and prevention efforts.

About Lights of Hope

Lights of Hope is an annual event featuring more decorated Luminaries in Washington, D.C., each representing a life touched by cancer. The display is a visual reminder of the ongoing fight to end cancer and a call to action for lawmakers to support policies that will help eliminate the disease.

About ACS CAN

The American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network (ACS CAN) is a nonprofit, nonpartisan advocacy affiliate of the American Cancer Society. ACS CAN is dedicated to ensuring that cancer remains a national priority and that elected officials at all levels of government pass laws and implement policies that help those affected by cancer. Through grassroots campaigns and direct advocacy, ACS CAN empowers volunteers to make a difference in the fight against cancer.

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The New Mexico MFCU receives 75 percent of its funding from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services under a grant award totaling \$3,039,464.57 for Federal fiscal year 2023. The remaining 25 percent, totaling \$1,013,154.86 for fiscal year 2023, is funded by the State of New Mexico.

Secretary Kenney elected Vice President for the Environmental Council of the States

By **Drew Goretzka**

New Mexico Environment Department Cabinet Secretary James Kenney was elected to the national position of Vice President of the Environmental Council of the States (ECOS) during their fall meeting in Newport, Rhode Island.

The ECOS Officers for the 2024-2025 term are as follows:

- ECOS President, Jon Niermann, Chairman, Texas Commission on Environmental Quality
- ECOS Vice President, James Kenney, Secretary, New Mexico Environment Department
- ECOS Secretary-Treasurer, Brian Rockensuess, Commissioner, Indiana Department of Environmental Management

ECOS is the national nonprofit, nonpartisan association of state and territorial environmental agency leaders. The purpose of ECOS is to improve the capability of state environmental agencies and their leaders to protect and improve human health and the environment of the United States of America. ECOS provides leadership on environmental issues of national importance and plays a critical role in facilitating a quality relationship among and between federal and state agencies. ECOS implements its mission by:

- Articulating, advocating, preserving and championing the role of the states in environmental management.
- Providing for the exchange of ideas, views and experiences among states and with others.
- Fostering cooperation and coordination in environmental management.
- Articulating state positions to Congress, federal agencies and the public on environmental issues.

"From strengthening PFAS regulations and enforcement to building a resilient workforce, New Mexico is a recognized leader in protecting public health and the environment," said Environment Secretary Kenney. "I am honored to serve as an officer for the Environmental Council of the States and contribute to the national policy dialogue on issues facing our state and other states."

"ECOS is delighted to benefit from the energy and leadership of Secretary Kenney as Vice President," said ECOS Executive Director Ben Grumbles. "He brings a host of innovative ideas from the State of New Mexico and significant expertise in the areas of air, water, land and materials, compliance, cross-media and oil and gas."

As an ECOS Officer, Kenney will assist with the overall leadership and day-to-day decision making, coordination of committees and conferences, secretarial relations, development of policy proposals for consideration by the membership, holding regular meetings with EPA leadership and co-chairing e-enterprise for the environment (<https://e-enterprisefortheenvironment.net/>).

Kenney also serves as the ECOS co-chair of the Oil and Gas Caucus and formerly served as the Secretary-Treasurer of ECOS and chair of the ECOS Cross Media Committee.



Significant Increase in the Use of 529

Plans Across the Country



By **Carolyn Fittipaldi**

The College Savings Foundation's recently released 18th Annual State of Higher Ed Savings Survey reveals a significant increase in the use of 529 plans by parents across the United States. The survey, which gathered insights from over 1,000 parents across the country, reveals that more than half are now using 529 plans as their primary savings tool. The Education Plan®, a 529 education savings program sponsored by the State of New Mexico, offers a flexible, tax-advantaged option to support a range of qualified education expenses.

Key Survey Findings:

- **Surge in 529 Plan Utilization:** Across the U.S., 94% of parents are now actively funding their children's higher education, with 48% identifying savings as their primary strategy—up from 28% in the previous year. Over half of parents saving for college for their children nationwide now use 529 plans as their main education savings tool.
- **Broadening Educational Horizons:** The versatility of 529 plans allows families to use them for more than just traditional four-year college expenses. These plans can be used for career and technical education, community college, and K-12 tuition. Additionally, up to \$10,000 of 529 plan funds can be used for repayment of student loans, offering further financial flexibility.
- **Supporting Lifelong Learning:** The survey highlights that 43% of parents who are saving for themselves are using 529 plans to fund their own education. This trend reflects a broader understanding that education and skills development are lifelong pursuits, critical for both personal and professional growth.
- **Commitment to Savings:** Parents are saving more aggressively, with 71% setting aside over \$5,000, 55% more than \$10,000, and 36% exceeding \$25,000 per child in educational savings—demonstrating a robust commitment to future educational needs.

"We are thrilled to see an increase in national commitment to education savings, especially through the use of 529 plans," said Natalie Cordova, Executive Director of the New Mexico Education Trust Board, the state agency that administers The Education Plan®. "We encourage families to consider the benefits of saving for future education costs with The Education Plan®, which offers a flexible plan to prepare for a variety of paths for their child's future."

In addition to savings, 529 plans also offer significant tax advantages. Contributions to these plans grow tax-free, and withdrawals used for qualified education expenses are tax-free. This means that parents can maximize their savings without worrying about taxes on their earnings or withdrawals. Additionally, many states, including New Mexico, offer state tax deductions or credits for contributions to 529 plans, providing further financial incentives for families to invest in their children's education.

"The future is bright with many education options, and we are dedicated to empowering families with the tools and information needed to navigate their educational savings journey." Continues Cordova, "The increasing adoption of 529 plans is a testament to the growing awareness and importance of proactive financial planning for education."

For more information about The Education Plan® and the benefits of 529 plans, visit TheEducationPlan.com

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Dr. Kathleen Romero



NMDOT Office of Special Projects



Executive Director Jerry Valdez brings over 30 years of diverse experience in public and private sector management, with a distinguished 14-year tenure at the State of New Mexico. Currently serving as a Senior Executive with the New Mexico Department of Transportation (NMDOT)/Office of the Secretary. Director Valdez plays a pivotal role as the primary point-of-contact for transportation-related Special Projects that encompass a wide array of work.

In his capacity as Executive Director of the Office of Special Projects, Director Valdez oversees the administration and implementation of specialized initiatives as directed by the Secretary of the Department of Transportation. His responsibilities span a broad spectrum of transportation-related areas, including but not limited to electrification, grid modernization, autonomous vehicles, and hydrogen technologies. Under his leadership, the Office of Special Projects ensures compliance with all pertinent State and Federal regulations while advancing innovative solutions that extend beyond traditional engineering and construction.

Director Valdez also facilitates Capital Improvement projects for the Statewide Facilities Bureau and Building and Grounds for NMDOT, coordinating funding through a multi-year Infrastructure Capital Improvement Program (ICIP). His commitment to creating a safe, clean, and supportive work environment reflects his dedication to the hardworking employees of the department, enabling them to excel in their service to the public.

In response to the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, Director Valdez and his team are at the forefront of deploying electric vehicle (EV) infrastructure across New Mexico. They are actively engaged in gathering insights and guidance from industry leaders, manufacturers, and stakeholders to achieve the ambitious goal of constructing over 500,000 new charging stations nationwide by 2030. Currently, the Office of Special Projects is managing over \$125 million to enhance EV infrastructure within the state, with plans to add more than 40 stations and 80+ charging ports to the network over the next five years.

Beyond infrastructure, Jerry is passionate about workforce development and employee engagement. He has been appointed to the Statewide Career and Technical Education (CTE) Advisory Board, where he supports educators, students, and industry partners in developing robust CTE programs in New Mexico. Representing Transportation, Distribution, and Logistics, Director Valdez is focused on establishing a workforce pipeline that connects students to post-secondary education, workforce opportunities, and community leadership roles. His initiatives include fostering industry credentialing and apprenticeship opportunities that cultivate a positive work culture where employees feel valued and appreciated.

Additionally, Director Valdez oversees the Constituent Services unit within the Office of Special Projects, ensuring that individual complaints, concerns, and requests for assistance are addressed efficiently and effectively in coordination with the Office of the Secretary and the Governor's Office

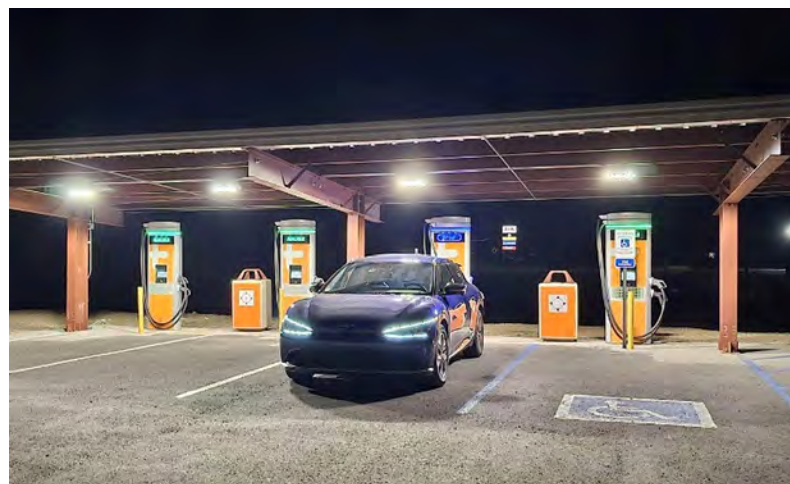
1. What is the mission and vision of your work unit?

Mission Statement: The New Mexico Department of Transportation (NMDOT) is committed to providing a safe, efficient, and sustainable transportation system that enhances the quality of life for all New Mexicans. Our mission is to plan, build, and maintain a high-quality state transportation network that supports mobility, economic growth, and community well-being.

Vision: NMDOT envisions a future where New Mexico's transportation system is a model of excellence, known for its safety, innovation, and efficiency. We strive to be a leader in sustainable transportation, fostering economic development and improving the quality of life for our residents.

2. Where are your offices and/or field offices located?

6 District Offices, 82 Patrols and 3 Seasonal Patrols
NMDOT facility footprint-648



Buildings totaling 1,548,950 Sq. ft., which is equal to 21% of the total FMD-owned sq. ft.

3. How many employees do you oversee?

The Office of Special Projects and Statewide Facilities Division help support the more than 2,500 NMDOT employees as they actively work on over 90 projects totaling more than \$1.2 billion.

4. How long has the project(s) been in place?

With the signing of the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law in No-

vember of 2021, the Department of Transportation has been on the forefront of deploying electric vehicle (EV) infrastructure across New Mexico. The Office of Special Projects is actively engaged in planning, constructing, and commissioning EV charging infrastructure to meet the ambitious goal of over 500,000 new charging stations nationwide by 2030. The department has already made over \$10 million of investments across the state adding more than 40 stations and 80+ charging ports to the network of New Mexico stations with hundreds more to come over the

next five years.. A \$63.8M federal grant was also awarded to the New Mexico Department of Transportation in February of 2024 for two Medium/Heavy Vehicle charging locations along I-10. These charging locations will be built out in Vado, NM and Lordsburg, NM. These two strategically placed sites between Long Beach/Los Angeles and Houston/El Paso are to advance the viability of electrified long-haul routes along this critical freight corridor to address transportation decarbonization goals.

4. What is the budget and/ or where is funding coming from?

The total Department of Transportation budget for FY25 is estimated at \$1.8 billion. This budget includes federal funding as well as funds provided by state appropriation and other recurring funds established statutorily. The Office of Special Projects is managing over \$120 million in electric vehicle charging infrastructure projects to enhance EV infrastructure within the state.

2025 State of New Mexico Open Enrollment is Here

October 1st - 31st

By Alex Castillo Smith

Open Enrollment for medical, pharmaceutical, dental, vision, life, disability, and flexible spending plans is here. This is your annual opportunity to review your current plans, make changes, and add or drop eligible dependents.

New Online, Document Upload Feature!

You can now upload documents directly online during enrollment. No more faxing or emailing! Just upload your PDFs or images (JPG, PNG) as you complete your enrollment.

MEDICAL PLANS

- Blue Cross Blue Shield of New Mexico: Offers PPO (nation-wide) and HMO (New Mexico network, except emergencies) plans. Programs include:
 - o Virta: Diabetes management and weight loss.
 - o Hinge Health: Virtual physical therapy for joint & muscle pain.

- o Wondr: Skills for lasting weight loss habits.
- o Catapult Health: Simple at-home testing combined with face-to-face video consultations with licensed healthcare providers,
 - Presbyterian Health Plan: HMO with 2-tier network of providers that includes coverage outside of New Mexico. Programs include:
 - o Virta: Diabetes management and weight loss.
 - o Sword: Digital physical therapy for back, joint, and muscle pain.

If you're currently enrolled with Presbyterian or Blue Cross Blue Shield and don't make changes, you'll be automatically re-enrolled.

Cigna will not be an available coverage option in 2025. If you are currently enrolled with Cigna you will be assigned to another closely equivalent plan that mirrors Cigna, ensuring a seamless transition.

PHARMACY

- CVS Caremark: Available at almost all pharmacies in New Mexico.

DENTAL & VISION

- Dental: Delta Dental remains your carrier. No changes in benefits.
- Vision: EyeMed remains your carrier. No changes in benefits.

LIFE/AD&D/SUPPLEMENTAL LIFE INSURANCE

- The Hartford: Remains your carrier. You can increase your supplemental life insurance by \$10,000 without Evidence of Insurability (EOI), up to the guaranteed issue amount. Updates to your beneficiary designation are recommended.

FLEXIBLE SPENDING ACCOUNT (FSA)

- Types: Health, Dependent Care, Transit, and Parking.
- Health and Dependent Care: Use-It-or-Lose-It—does not roll over. Dependent care only covers non-medical childcare for children under 13.
- Transit and Parking: These roll over and can be updated any time.

PREMIUM ONLY PLAN

- Tax Savings: Allows pre-tax deductions for medical, dental, and vision plans. Must be renewed annually.

NEXT STEPS:

- Attend an Open Enrollment Meeting: Review the schedule below to choose a time that works for you.
- Enroll Online: Use the



HEALTH CARE AUTHORITY

online form and remember to upload any required documents directly.

- o If you are unable to upload your documents online, please email (SONM@casitpa.com) or fax (505-244-6009) to ERISA

KEY DATES

- Open Enrollment Period: October 1–31, 2024
- Deadline to Enroll: October 31, 2024, 11:59 PM
- Benefits Effective Date: January 1, 2025
- First Payroll Deduction for Benefits: January 10, 2025

Open Enrollment Virtual Meeting dates:

- Thursday, 10/10/2024: 2:00 PM–4:00 PM
- Tuesday, 10/15/2024 (ASL Interpreter): 9:00 AM–11:00 AM
- Thursday, 10/24/2024: 9:00 AM–11:00 AM
- Tuesday, 10/29/2024: 2:00 PM–4:00 PM

Kind reminder: After Open Enrollment, changes to your coverage can only be made if you experience a qualifying life event (e.g. marriage/divorce/separation, birth/adoption, loss or gain of coverage).

QUESTIONS: For questions, contact ERISA Administrative Services at (505) 244-6000 or toll-free at (855) 618-1800.



MEETING the
2ND THURSDAY
of the month
5:30-7:00pm
Upcoming Gatherings:
9/12/2024, 10/10/2024, &
11/14/2024

Paralegals of Santa Fe Networking Group

In conjunction with Santa Fe Community College's Paralegal Studies program, all Paralegal Studies Students, Northern New Mexico paralegals, legal assistants, and legal secretaries are invited to gather.

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- Connect with legal professionals
- Learn and share tips
- Find support for our members
- Have fun!

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andrea.sassa@sfcc.edu



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Governor Breaks Ground on New Reproductive Health Clinic in Doña Ana County

By Michael Coleman

Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham joined state and local leaders to break ground on a new reproductive health clinic in Doña Ana County in southern New Mexico, reaffirming her administration's commitment to protecting and expanding access to essential healthcare services, including abortion.



The Center for Reproductive Health, funded in part by \$10 million in capital improvement money secured by Lujan Grisham in 2022, will help meet a sharply increased demand for reproductive services following the Supreme Court's Dobbs decision. The new facility is a crucial component of New Mexico's commitment to providing safe, comprehensive care to state residents and those who travel to New Mexico from other states, including neighboring Texas and Oklahoma, where abortion access is severely restricted.

"Access to reproductive healthcare should be a fundamental human right," said Gov. Lujan Grisham. "Once completed, this clinic will stand as a testament to our state's commitment to reproductive freedom for residents of New Mexico, and also those who travel here from out-of-state in need of this care."

"Without access to reproductive healthcare, women face life-threatening risks, such as untreated ectopic pregnancies. We are here to prevent such tragedies and ensure that every woman has access to the care she needs," Gov. Lujan Grisham added.

When opened, the center will provide the following services:

- Medication and procedural abortion.
- Miscarriage management.
- Range of contraception options including IUDs implants, emergency contraception, and hormonal and barrier contraception options.
- Pregnancy loss support and management.
- Lactation support.
- Women's Preventative care, sexually transmitted infection, and cancer screenings.
- Adoption education and resources.
- Limited Primary Care including: STI screenings, cervical cancer screenings, checkups for sexual health care.
- Doula Support.

September 5th's groundbreaking represented the latest effort by Lujan Grisham to protect reproductive rights in New Mexico. Others include: Repeal of 1969 law:

- In 2021, she repealed a dormant law that would have criminalized abortion providers when Roe v. Wade was overturned.
- Executive Order: Issued in 2022, ensuring New Mexico will not assist other states in prosecuting legal abortion services provided within the state.
- Reproductive Health Care Access Act: Signed in 2023, this act protects both patients and providers from legal consequences arising from other states' abortion bans.

The Governor encouraged those in need of reproductive health services to use the NMHealth Helpline, a confidential, multilingual resource available to all without questions about citizenship. The hotline can be reached at 1-833-796-8773 (1-833-SWNURSE).



Broadband Office Launches Computer Donation Campaign

By Mike Curtis



Today, the Office of Broadband Access and Expansion (OBAE) announced the kickoff for a statewide campaign to help get refurbished computers to community members and organizations in need.


As part of the state's commitment to supporting digital equity and inclusion, OBAE will be working with Digitunity, a national nonprofit organization focused on advancing digital equity through computer ownership. OBAE and Digitunity will connect individual and corporate donors with regional nonprofits that can help get donated computers refurbished and distributed to New Mexicans.

"Thousands of New Mexicans face barriers because they don't have a computer, and we are very excited to start this campaign, especially for families and organizations in areas recovering from fires and floods," said Jennifer Nevarez, a member of OBAE's Broadband and Digital Equity Support Team. "We are reaching out to companies and others willing to donate usable technology. This is a wonderful way to get computers to people who really need them."

OBAE and Digitunity began the effort last weekend at the Governor's Cabinet in Your Community events in Mescalero and Ruidoso, where residents—hard-hit by the South Fork and Salt Fires—were able to apply for a free, refurbished desktop computer. Distribution of the devices in Ruidoso will begin next month during National Digital Inclusion Week.

Access to computer and other hardware is a key barrier identified in New Mexico's Digital Equity Plan, which outlines a range of goals and initiatives to ensure that all New Mexicans and communities have the technology, skills and capacity needed to benefit in the digital world.

If you want to donate a computer, visit <https://connect.nm.gov/computers>. If you have any questions about the donation campaign, you can contact Jennifer Nevarez at Jennifer.nevarez@connect.nm.gov



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Governor Announces \$46 Million In New Funding For Rural Health Care Providers

By Jodi McGinnis Porter

On September 9th, Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham announced today that \$46 million is available for rural health care providers in New Mexico through the Rural Health Care Delivery Fund (RHCDF) to support vital services in underserved areas.

This funding reinforces the state's ongoing commitment to expanding access to high-quality health care in rural communities, ensuring that all New Mexicans, regardless of where they live, have access to critical health services.

"This \$46 million investment demonstrates our dedication to improving health care access in rural areas while providing critical support to health care providers," said Governor Lujan Grisham. "We encourage all eligible providers to take advantage of this opportunity to strengthen the services they offer in their communities."

This announcement builds on the success of the initial \$80 million investment made through the RHCDF last year. That funding provided crucial support to rural health care providers across the state, helping to offset operational costs and expand services. This new round of funding will continue this progress, further strengthening primary care, behavioral health, and maternal child health initiatives, improving health outcomes and increasing access to care in some of the most underserved areas of New Mexico.

To help potential applicants better understand the funding opportunity, the state is hosting a webinar titled "FY25-27 Rural Health Care Delivery Fund: Overview and Application Guidance," designed to provide detailed information on how to apply for these funds.

For more information on the FY25-27 Rural Health Care Delivery Fund and how to apply, please visit the Health Care Authority website at <https://www.hca.nm.gov/primary-care-council/>.



PED Awarded \$60M Federal Grant to Improve Literacy Outcomes

By Janelle García

On September 9th, the New Mexico Public Education Department (PED) announced that it will receive nearly \$60 million in federal grant funds over the next five years to develop and implement evidence-based literacy interventions and supports to help students achieve key literacy milestones.

The funding will be allocated annually at \$11.99 million per year, contingent upon appropriations from Congress and substantial progress of the PED toward performance targets outlined in the grant application. The funds were awarded through the U.S. Department of Education's Comprehensive Literacy State Development (CLSD) Grant.

"This vital funding will enable us to enhance the literacy efforts we have been implementing across the state, reach more learners and provide the resources necessary to foster a lifelong love of reading and learning," said PED Deputy Secretary Candice Castillo.

The PED, in collaboration with the Early Childhood Education and Care Department and the Department of Higher Education, will use grant funds to improve the preliteracy skills of children under age five and increase the percentage of elementary, middle and high school students who meet the state's language and literacy proficiency standards.

The PED will distribute 95 percent of grant funds to district and regional education cooperative (REC) subgrantees for local infrastructure supports, materials, coaching and other activities to improve literacy outcomes of the most disadvantaged children in the state.

The remaining five percent of grant funds will support salary and benefits for three full-time employees to monitor the progress of subgrantees and support the implementation of subgrantees' literacy plans.

Students reading on grade level by third grade is critical to their future academic success.



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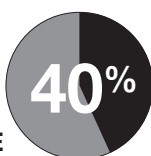
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SPO Launches Class on Navigating Workplace Change

By Jaime Phillips

One version of a famous quote says, "You can't change the direction of the wind, but you can adjust your sails to always reach your destination." You could interpret this quote to mean that you can't be in control of every condition or change that comes your way, but you can respond in a way that helps you survive and thrive through it. This principle underlies a new class offered through the State Personnel Office Learning and Development Bureau, titled "Navigating Change in the Workplace." We all experience change, whether it be a new job, new manager, a process change, or a more significant disruption to our expectations and daily routine. By learning and applying strategies for "adjusting your sails," you can be resilient in the face of workplace changes.

The new course borrows loosely from basic principles of change management, which can be thought of as process for implementing change from beginning to end, along with a plan to support people through the change process, with the goal of minimizing disruptions and successfully navigating the transition. The short Navigating Change in the Workplace course is intended to help all levels of employees, supervisors, and managers to work together productively through expected and unexpected changes that may arise. The class can be offered in-person to specific agencies or workgroups upon agency request. For a deeper dive into change management, the State Personnel Office also offers a mini eLearning series consisting of three eLearning courses followed by a final assessment, all available as eLearning on the ELM system, with a series completion certificate available.

"Navigating Change in the Workplace" (ELM course code SoNM-2023) is currently scheduled to be held on Friday, October 18 from 10-11:30 AM over Zoom. Register directly using the Enterprise Learning Management (ELM) system at <https://elm.share.nm.gov/> or email the SPO Learning and Development Bureau for assistance at Learning.Development@spo.nm.gov. Learn more about classes offered by the State Personnel Office on their website at: <https://www.spo.state.nm.us/learning-development/>. Employees who do not have ELM access may still be registered for and participate in any instructor-led or eLearning class by emailing Learning.Development@spo.nm.gov to request non-ELM access to the class.





2024 General Election

Important Dates

Tuesday, Oct 8th

Voting Starts / Ballots Mailed

- You have until Oct. 22nd to request a mailed ballot at NMVote.org*
- Voting in-person at 240 Grant Ave

Saturday, Oct 19th

Expanded Early Voting Begins

- Check for locations at SantaFe.Vote
- Expanded sites open Sat 10am - 6pm, Tu- Fr 11am - 7pm

Saturday, Nov 2nd

Last Day to Early Vote

- No voting Sunday and Monday before Election Day
- Drop, don't mail ballots, we have several drive-up drop boxes

Tuesday, Nov 5th

Election Day

- Polls are open 7am - 7pm at 30+ locations
- Mailed ballots must be at Clerk's office or drop box by 7pm

***NEW FROM THIS YEAR & ONWARD: You now have the option to join the permanent list on your absentee application!**

VISIT SANTAFE.VOTE FOR MORE INFO



For questions or comments, contact us:
505-986-6280 or clerk@santafecountynm.gov

Santa Fe County Clerk | Katharine E. Clark

Make 2024 Count

By Nick Mandel

It is like turning on a light switch when the September days of autumn arrive in Northern New Mexico. The days are pleasant, calm, not too hot, and fading in length. The inviting aroma of green chili roasting is in the air. Balloons, football, and other unique events of the fall season are engaging. They serve as a reminder that the months of 2024 have arrived. A period of winding-up the year of personal and professional activities before 2025 arrives.

My preoccupation with planning, particularly on a quarterly timeline, is the experience of how quickly time passes and recognition that the weeks, months, or years ahead are assured to no one, but especially to those of us aging in life.

With that premise, here are curated tools and resources to make the final months of 2024 one of progress and accomplishment for yourself and those of importance to you.

As we begin our day, many of us have a daily to do list, which can be overwhelming with activities and tasks to complete. Michael Hyatt, using the Full Focus method for success to win at work and succeed at life, advocates



for a less is better approach in our daily list. The approach is a Daily Big Three, that being the three most important items to do, whether work or personal, that need to take place for the day. By taking this approach, you are going piecemeal and not trying to eat the whole enterprise of your life at one time.

Previously, instead of using the Big Three approach, I would list a multitude of activities on my daily list, with a mixed order of importance. While checking off a task produced a mild rush, how substantial it was to complete compared to other tasks on the list was an after thought. The Daily Big Three prioritizes tasks and activities most important for the day. It aids you in framing and focusing on the work most aligned with success for the day. But of all the activities and things to do for a day, how do you select only three?

It is an understandably, challenging question. It is related to the bigger

frame of our week, the work to do, the many activities that will take place and the results we want to obtain. For many of us, weekend space is time to catch up and plan. A lazy Sunday afternoon or perhaps even Monday morning allows space to assess and plan for the week ahead and what needs to be carried out. By using a bigger frame of the entire week, it can provide a reference point to direct us to those daily big three items to complete. Perhaps you must finish a summary report on client use of your public portal. While it is due at the end of week, by planning for it on Sunday, presumably you will not wait until Friday to complete. By placing it on your your Big Three listing, you will get to it earlier rather than procrastinate.

+	-	→
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Podcast with Courtland Allen for Indie Hackers 2 new contracts New sponsor Made progress on course 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Missed 3 gym sessions Still super late on accounting ●●●●● list their grandpa 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Go to gym 3 times Work on course 1h each day Block 3 hours for accounting Book train ticket to go visit ●●●●●

Source Plus Minus Next journaling - Ness Labs

Support to assess how well your week went comes from Ness Labs founder Anne-Laure Le Cunff, called the +Plus-Minus= Next tool.

The pluses for the week are the results and accomplishments that took place. Whether it is the successful project(s) completed, new hires, parent-teacher meetings or gym workouts, it is reflection and acknowledgment of progress made.

Next comes the Minus side. What did not happen or maybe progress was painfully slow? That stalled home repair project. That Amazon book received but still unopened in packaging. The family event you promised your kids all would attend but didn't take place for whatever reason. Whatever the minuses, there is also the reflection and acknowledgment of missed important opportunities.

Now, what is Next? You know what did and did not work, but why? Did unintended events derail the missed opportunities or was it something on your part that prevented things from happening? Could you have reasonably planned or expected a better approach to the events that did or did not occur, or was it plain lack of discipline that led you existing results?

Le Cunff says in her use of Plus, Minus, Next, she does not take more than five minutes to complete it, and most of that time is spent on the "next" category to focus on what activities to carry out in the week ahead.

Our weekly planning leads to the building the bigger picture, the remaining three months of the year.

12 week year

Gabby Moran's Goals and Plan

12 Week Goals

Get my life and home organized over the next 12 weeks

Goal: Get my life and home organized over the next 12 weeks

Tactics	Due	Begin in	End in	Completed
Pick a day each week and plan the meals for the week	each wk	week 1	week 13	
At the start of each month check for birthdays & special occasions	each wk	week 1	week 13	
Organize one drawer in your house each week	each wk	week 1	week 13	
Pick one room to clean and organize each week	each wk	week 1	week 13	
Create a file system for the bills	week 3			
Decide on a day and time each week to do laundry	each wk	week 1	week 13	
Create or check your emergency kit	week 4			
Clean out your car & organize the trunk/bovyage	week 6			

Source: 12 Week Year

Many teams, organizations and individuals use the 12 Week Year model to approach the calendar year on a more incremental or piecemeal basis. Consultants also find, particularly at the end of the year, when project completion and other elements of life have more urgency to complete, that this model offers value, ROI and is easy to implement.

So, using this approach, what Big Three goals must be completed by the end of your year? Where you must and absolutely want competition or results. A health issue, a family matter, a professional goal, or other element of your life. What are the big three that at the end of 2024 you can say you have accomplished or are ready for the next stage of the journey? Using the rituals of daily, weekly, and now quarterly planning, the prospect of success is more likely. Consider the illustration from the 12 Week Year web site.

Here, a goal is identified around an organized life and home. A worthy objective. Now within the big goal are a series of tasks identified as contributing to an organized life and home. Some of the tasks or activities need to be done weekly, others done during a particular week, some beginning week 1 and others in the weeks ahead but all within the 12-week time frame, concluding in week 13. The process allows the identification of tasks needed to be completed for a goal within the quarterly time frame.

Consider in three short months, we will be saying goodbye to the old and welcome to the new. In using a quarterly or 12 Week Year process, it provide different approach to getting the most important tasks and goals in our life done.

What could you do and accomplish in the three short months ahead? What is on your unfinished to do list or been on your mind and is now more pronounced with the end of the year approaching? Give the Big Three, plus, minus next weekly schedule model and 12 Week Year process effort and work. I bet you will see a positive difference by the end of the year.

What is your experience in daily, weekly and long-term planning? Send me a note about your experiences and results. promandel@gmail.com.

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NMDOT D1 Employees of the Month September 2024

By Ami Evans



Employee of the Month- Joseph Jaramillo 41-64

Joseph is being recognized for his outstanding professionalism and exceptional customer service. Joseph consistently demonstrates a high level of courtesy and respect for our time when servicing the department vehicles. The attention to detail Joseph gives ensures that every vehicle is not only safe but also meticulously cleaned and washed to

the highest standards.

Joseph's dedication and proactive approach truly makes him deserving of this recognition. Joseph's efforts have not gone unnoticed, and we are grateful for his exceptional contributions.

Supervisor of the Month-Jose Martinez 41-17

As the leader of the 41-17 team, Jose offers outstanding guidance and support, creating a productive and cohesive team dynamic. Jose's strong professional relationships with contractors and his proactive approach to addressing questions and finding solutions highlight his skills in managing external partnerships effectively. Jose consistently shows his exceptional ability to stay on top of tasks and complete them promptly, ensuring that projects progress smoothly without delays. Jose's positive attitude and cheerful demeanor significantly enhance our work environment.



Crew of the Month-Traffic Section 41-31



This section consistently excels at managing roadway signage and striping, permitting, and constituent information. This team never hesitates to thoroughly investigate to find the necessary details, whether it involves old or outdated driveway permits or new and existing utility placements.

Making sure to scheduling timely with vendors for roadway restriping and promptly address missing, broken, or outdated signage. When in-house sign fabrication is required, the sign shop is exceptional in delivering high-priority signage with a quick turnaround.

Santa Fe County Clerk's Office Receives 2024 Guardian Award

The Santa Fe County Clerk's Office has been awarded the 2024 Guardian Award for its Tabulator Security Program: Project Bruno at the 39th Annual National Election Center Conference in Detroit, Michigan. This recognition is particularly significant as Santa Fe County is the only county in New Mexico to receive an award from this organization, which is granted by fellow election administrators—making it a meaningful honor within the field of election administration.



Clerk Clark and Deputy Ortiz Receive Guardian Award

Project Bruno is a first-of-its-kind pilot program designed to protect election tabulators from physical theft, tampering, and unforeseen disruptions. It incorporates advanced technology such as GPS tracking, geo-fencing, accelerometer sensors, and uninterruptible power supplies (UPS) to ensure continuous security for tabulators left unattended at polling sites.

"Election integrity is one of our highest priorities," said Santa Fe County Clerk Katharine E. Clark. "Project Bruno is a testament to our strive for excellence: maintaining secure, transparent, and accountable elections. Being recognized with the Guardian Award by our peers is an incredible honor and a reflection of the hard work we've done to protect the voting process."

The office won several awards from the National Association of Counties (NACo), including the Civic Education and Public Information Award, County Resiliency Award, and Information Technology Award, as well as a 'Clearie' Award and two honorable mentions from the Election Assistance Commission (EAC). These honors highlight the office's dedication to excellence in election security and accessibility. Additionally, Katharine E. Clark was appointed Vice Chair of NACo's Elections Subcommittee, and Rosangela Ortiz became Chair of the New Mexico Association of Counties Clerk's Affiliate, showcasing Santa Fe County's leadership in the field.



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Beneficiary Basics: How your Assets get Passed to Loved Ones After you Pass Away

By Karyn Lujan

If you have financial assets and loved ones, this is for you. What you don't know — can hurt them. Understanding what a beneficiary is and why it is essential is key to making sure you leave your legacy as you intended.

What is a beneficiary?

A beneficiary is a person(s) (or entity such as a trust) who is legally named in documents relating to specific financial assets belonging to you — to be transferred to them as inheritance upon your death. It's important you deliberately name either a primary and/or secondary (contingent) beneficiary for your current financial assets such as any life insurance, annuities, retirement savings accounts, brokerage, Health Savings Accounts (HSAs) and other bank accounts.

Primary beneficiary: This first choice — primary person(s) you assign will be first in line to receive the benefits. A primary beneficiary can be one person or multiple people. The percentage interests

for each person must equal in total 100%. For married couples with a 401(k) or similar workplace retirement pension plan, their spouse is automatically the primary beneficiary by default, unless a special signed waiver is in place. This can also apply to HSAs.

Contingent beneficiary: Secondary or contingent beneficiaries will likely receive death benefits, retirement or HAS funds if the primary beneficiary doesn't qualify under the policy or have passed away. The percentage interests for each person must also equal in total 100%.

It is not enough to have just a will and here's why.

Wills still go through probate court and even then, the state will make sure all your debts and taxes are settled first and the inheritance may have income tax implications for the individual(s) further reducing the intended amount you wish to share. This may leave your loved ones with less overall. When

you name someone directly as a beneficiary, they will receive the full balance amounts and may bypass a potential tax liability. Consult a tax professional with questions.

Consider this ...

If you wish to name a minor child as a beneficiary: Most insurance companies won't pay proceeds to minors. Money could go into a state-owned trust until the child becomes an adult or a custodian is named. Even if naming a minor is allowed, there will be more legal red tape to access benefit payments.

Retirement accounts and HSAs have similar restrictions. Neither allows minors to be named beneficiaries; instead, the plan custodian can appoint a guardian to hold and manage the funds until named child becomes an adult.

Consider consulting with a legal professional to navigate the complexities.

If you wish to name someone

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with special needs as a beneficiary: Receiving added income for a death benefit, retirement account or HSA can alter the amount of government benefits a person with special needs may be collecting.

Consider consulting with a legal professional to navigate this issue with a special needs trust to protect them over their lifetime.

Life happens and when it does, you will want to review your beneficiaries.

If you think naming beneficiaries is just set it and forget it, think again. It's a good idea to periodically check your designations, especially after major life events such as: marriage or divorce, childbirth or adoption, and/or loss of a loved one (that was named).

Remember to leave your legacy as you intended and be sure to assign beneficiaries to all your accounts — so your assets will pass onto your loved ones when they need it most.

Source: Voya Financial CN3218176_1125



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Joseph M. Maestas, PE, CFE

Deputy General Counsel

The Office of the State Auditor (OSA) is looking for an attorney to assist in advising senior management and executives on complex and difficult legal and management issues involving agency programs, budgets, legislation, human resource matters, and other legal matters. This position will study and analyze changes in laws and court decisions to determine, anticipate, evaluate, and assess the impact on the OSA. Drafts, reviews, and evaluates legal documents, correspondence, pleadings, rules and regulations, and policies to determine the impact on the OSA. Oversees Inspection of Public Records Act (IPRA) review and responses and works with the Records Custodian on all IPRA matters. The applicant must be licensed as an attorney by the Supreme Court of New Mexico or qualified to apply for limited practice license and have two years of experience as an attorney, preferably in government practice.

For further information, please contact Terese Vigil by email at terese.vigil@osa.nm.gov or go to <https://www.osa.nm.gov/job-opportunities/>

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Enjoy New Mexico's Diverse Culinary Landscape in new 'Forks in the Road' Exhibit at New Mexico History Museum

By Christina Claassen

New Mexico History Museum (NMHM) takes visitors on a culinary adventure through the state's tasty restaurant scene with its newest exhibit, "Forks in the Road: A Diner's Guide to New Mexico." Guest curated by John Vollertsen, known as "Chef Johnny Vee," the exhibit opens Friday, Sept. 20 in Room 15 of the newly rehabilitated Palace of the Governors.



"Forks in the Road" is an immersive exhibit highlighting iconic and historic eateries across the state. Visitors will discover the stories behind these cherished landmarks and meet the families who built these culinary cornerstones, reflecting the unique spirit of their communities.

The museum partnered with Chef Johnny Vee, who brings more than 30 years of experience as a chef, cooking instructor, and food writer, to this important aspect of New Mexico history. The exhibit includes a replica dining booth that is perfect for selfies, a large state map showing restaurants nominated by the public, a listening station with recordings of favorite restaurant experiences, and a smell station with scents like piñon and biscochito. Visitors will be able to contribute their own restaurant memories by recording stories on a call-in telephone. A feature wall explores themes such as "Roots to Routes," "A Taste of Louisiana in Albuquerque," "Roadside Charm," and "Mesilla Destination." Each theme is presented through stories and photos by some of New Mexico's best-known food writers and photographers.

Mexico residents get in free on the first Sunday of the month.

2024 Farm and Ranch Families of the Year

By Jenny Green

The New Mexico Department of Agriculture and the New Mexico State Fair announced the Wagner and Major families as the 2024 New Mexico Farm and Ranch of Families of the Year at the New Mexico State Fairgrounds.



The Wagner family, long established in Corrales, has been named Farm Family of the Year. Augustin Wagner, Sr. started farming in Corrales in 1910, with 55 acres of farmland for growing green chile, alfalfa and a small variety of fruits and vegetables. To add to his farming repertoire, Augustin, Sr. went on to start the first commercial winery in Corrales, the fifth commercial winery in New Mexico. Where the family now operates an apple orchard, Augustin established a 20-acre vineyard, which laid the foundation for the Wagners' reputation as a well-known wine producer in the state.



Wagner family (top) and Major family

Augustin's son Gus operated the farm for nearly 60 years, from 1955 to 2014, proving to be both a careful steward of the land and an inspirational keeper of wisdom among the community in Corrales. Gus passed away in 2020, leaving behind a legacy of one-of-a-kind work ethic and a robust tradition of family farming.

The Wagner family, which today is led by Augustin's grandchildren and great-grandchildren, now farms over 300 acres in Corrales and Socorro, plus runs a farm store, restaurant, corn maze and hay rides, and hosts an annual apple festival.

Randell and Lynn Major, owner-operators of a commercial cattle operation across three ranches in Socorro and Catron counties, have been named Ranch Family of the Year. The Major family has ranching roots that date back to 1886, when Randell's great-grandfather drove a herd of cattle from Colorado to a ranch just north of Magdalena, New Mexico.

Over the years, Randell has served on several committees, including the New Mexico Federal Lands Council, and has served as Southwest Regional Vice President and President of the New Mexico Cattle Growers' Association.



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To ease the burdens on those affected, we offer essential equipment, facilitate home modifications, and provide financial assistance. As a close-knit community, we stand together, offering comfort, strength, and solidarity to all touched by ALS in New Mexico. Our mission is to foster hope and resilience, ensuring that no one faces this journey alone.

Every contribution, big or small, brings us one step closer to a world without ALS. Donate today and be a part of the solution! Together, we can make hope a reality: www.newmexicoals.org



In 2023, **HOLMANS USA** donated over \$200,000 to local charities. We believe in celebrating organizations that make New Mexico a better place. By shining a light on our local nonprofits, we aim to raise awareness and support for those making a difference in our New Mexico community. To learn more, please reach out to community@holmans.com

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New Mexico Suicide Death Rates Remain Relatively Unchanged

September was suicide prevention month

By Robert Nott



New Mexico 2022 suicide death numbers remained relatively the same compared to 2021 with 520 deaths in 2021 and 513 deaths in 2022. Suicide continues to be a serious and persistent public health threat in New Mexico.

In 2022, the most recent data available, New Mexico had the fourth highest suicide rate (24.7 per 100,000 residents) in the United States. In the same year New Mexico's age adjusted suicide rate was 74% higher than the U.S. as a whole. Over the past decade suicide deaths in the state have increased by 18%, from 435 deaths in 2012 to 513 suicide deaths in 2022, according to the New Mexico Department of Health (NMHealth).

"Suicide is a serious public health problem that can have lasting effects on communities" said Dr. Miranda Durham, Chief Medical Officer for NMHealth. "Preventing suicide requires many strategies, but everyone can help by learning the warning signs, promoting prevention and working to foster healthy connections and safe environments."

During National Suicide Prevention month there are ways each of us can take action to help prevent suicide:

- Acknowledging and talking about suicide with others has been proven to reduce suicidal ideation.
- If you or someone you care about is in crisis, call or text the New Mexico 988 Crisis and Access line for free, confidential, non-judgmental support. You can learn more about this program at nmcrisisline.com.
- Veterans can call the U.S. Veterans Crisis Line operated by the Department of Veteran's Services to connect service members and veterans in crisis. Dial 800-273-8255 and press 1 to talk to someone or send a text message to 838255.
- LGBTQ+ support can be found online, by text or phone from GLSEN or the Jason Foundation.
- Storing firearms safely can also help to reduce suicide. In 2022, nearly 58% of suicide deaths in the state involved a firearm. Contact NMHealth to order a free gun lock to prevent firearm injury.

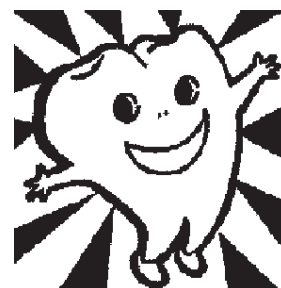
"Preventing suicide deaths in New Mexico is essential to our goal of making New Mexico the healthiest state by 2040," said Patrick Allen, NMHealth Secretary. "NMHealth is committed to continuing all of our work with the Legislature, national organizations, state and local groups and more to turn this problem around."

According to the National Council for Suicide Prevention risk factors are characteristics that make it more likely a person will attempt or die by suicide. They include:

- Alcohol and other substance use disorders.
- Mental illnesses.
- History of trauma or abuse.
- Family health history.
- Easy access to lethal means.
- Stigma or sense of isolation associated with asking for help.

Learn more about NMHealth's work to prevent suicide deaths at NMHealth's Office of Injury and Violence Prevention.

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New Mexico Department of Justice Partners with DEA for Drug Take Back Day, Now Featuring Shred Day Services!

By Lauren Rodriguez

Join the New Mexico Department of Justice (NMDNJ) for another DEA Drug Take Back Day! As always, this event allows you to safely dispose of unwanted prescription medications. If you, a friend or family member have been saving these unwanted medications, now is the time to discard them. In addition to unwanted medications, we have also teamed up with AARP of New Mexico to provide free shredding services on the same day in the same location!



Join us **Saturday, October 26th starting at 10 a.m. at Santa Fe Place Mall.** You can drop off any unwanted medications and bring documents to be shredded from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Benefits of Joining NMDNJ and AARP on October 26th:

1. **Protect:** Improper disposal of medications, such as flushing them down the toilet or throwing them in the trash, can contaminate water sources and harm wildlife. By participating in, you ensure that medications are incinerated safely, and sensitive documents are shredded securely, both of which help protect the environment and your privacy.
2. **Prevent:** Storing unused medications can increase the risk of misuse, especially among teenagers and young adults. By participating, you ensure these medications are safely disposed of, helping prevent potential abuse and overdose.
3. **Ensure:** You alleviate risks by safely disposing of medications and securely shredding personal documents, enhancing the safety of your home and protecting your privacy. By doing so, you can secure protection to your privacy and safeguard both your health and personal information.

Mark your calendars for October 26th and join us at the Santa Fe Place Mall to make a positive impact to our community. Our team will be available to help you safely dispose of your medications and securely shred documents. Each item you bring for disposal and shredding contributes to a safer, healthier, and cleaner environment for New Mexico communities.

For more information about the DEA Drug Take Back Day/AARP Shred Day, contact us at atcommunications@nmdoj.gov.

NMSD's Annual Harvest Day

By Kimm Wiens

Students from early childhood through high school gathered at the orchard to pick apples and press fresh cider. It was a wonderful way to celebrate nature, teamwork, and the joy of learning together!



Where in New Mexico is Cooper?

Can you identify the location of this picture? If so, you may be a winner of \$25 Gift certificate from **Joe's Dining, 2801 Rodeo Rd.**



Please submit the photo location to rroundhouse@gmail.com with the email title of *Photo Contest*. All correct entries will be placed into a drawing to select a winner. Entries must be submitted by October 25, 2024. Look in November's 'Round The Roundhouse' for the winning announcement along with another photo contest to enter. Good luck!

Congratulations to the September's winner, Gregory Chakalian, EMNRD-Oil Conservation Division. His name was selected in the drawing of correct entries. September's photo location of the Don Pedro de Peralta sculpture is downtown Santa Fe, the Grant Park corner of Grant and Paseo de Peralta. Bon Appetit!



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Governor's Awards for Excellence in the Arts at 50: Seven NM Artists And Contributors To Receive Prestigious Award In October

By Christina Claassen

Seven groundbreaking and impactful individuals, ranging from visual artists, a dancer, and stewards of cultural heritage, have been selected for the 2024 Governor's Awards for Excellence in the Arts. For fifty years, the Awards have brought attention to the expansive arts and culture community in New Mexico, highlighting the people who have contributed to it becoming both an economic driver and a matter of state pride.

"I am deeply proud of the creativity and dedication that these artists and contributors bring to the Land of Enchantment," said Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham. "Their work not only enriches our lives but also reflects the vibrant and diverse spirit of New Mexico. Congratulations to the 2024 recipients of the Governor's Awards for Excellence in the Arts—your artistic contributions have touched every corner of our state and beyond."

New Mexico Department of Cultural Affairs (NMDCA), the state arts agency New Mexico Arts (NMA), and the New Mexico Arts Commission (NMAC) are proud to recognize the artists and contributors to the arts who earned the award, all representatives of the rich culture and diversity of New Mexico: John Garrett of Las Cruces, Diana Ingalls Leyba of Silver City, Ross Kagan Marks of Las Cruces, Arlo Namingha (Tewa/Hopi) of Santa Fe, Pamela Shirinne Smith of Abiquiu, Jock Soto (Diné) of Eagle Nest, and Robert and Ellen Vladem of Santa Fe.

2024 Awards recipients:

- John Garrett, Visual Artist, Las Cruces

John Garrett has been working with the application of textile technologies and imagery to various untraditional fiber materials for more than 50 years. The National Endowment for the Arts awarded him fellowships in 1983 and 1995, and in 2010 he was elected a Fellow of the American Craft Council's College of Fellows.

- Diana Ingalls Leyba, Major Contributor to the Arts, Silver City

Diana Ingalls Leyba is a mixed-media artist, gallery owner, and founder/director of the Youth Mural Program (YMP). For 21 years YMP has worked with at-risk youth to produce murals teaching students about the history and culture of their communities. More than 85 projects engaging several thousand area youth have been completed.

- Ross Kagan Marks, Major Contributor to the Arts, Las Cruces

More than 16 of Ross Kagan Marks' films have won awards at international film festivals. He has worked with actors Al Pacino, Brendan Fraser, Faye Dunaway, Edward James Olmos, and George Lopez. Marks is the Executive Director/Founder of the Las Cruces International Film Festival and a professor at New Mexico State University and has been instrumental in elevating the film industry in Southern NM.

- Arlo Namingha (Tewa/Hopi), Visual Artist, Santa Fe

Arlo Namingha is an internationally known sculptor and multi-media artist with a love for his community and cultural upbringing. From an early age, Arlo created art in various mediums ultimately settling on sculpture. He has a passion for teaching and works alongside his father, Dan Namingha,

at the Namingha Institute.

- Pamela Shirinne Smith, Book Arts, Abiquiu

Pamela

Shirinne Smith launched her paper marbling career 50 years ago in tandem with her work as founding director of the Press of the Palace of the Governors. Curator, educator, award-winning book designer/letterpress printer, and proprietress of the widely recognized MarbleSmith Papers, today, at age 80, she continues teaching her skills.

- Jock Soto (Diné), Dancer, Eagle Nest

Diné and Puerto Rican dancer Jock Soto is a former principal dancer with the New York City Ballet (1981-2005) and is celebrated for his powerful technique and artistry. Beyond performing, he has significantly contributed as a choreographer, teacher, and writer, leaving a lasting impact on the dance world.

- Robert and Ellen Vladem, Major Contributors to the Arts, Santa Fe
- Awarded the City of Santa Fe Mayor's Art's award for philanthropy in 2022, Robert and Ellen Vladem are the lead financial donors to the New Mexico Museum of Art, Vladem Contemporary Museum. They created a fund to support productions at the Santa Fe Opera and they serve on various boards and volunteer committees.
- Awards Events

NMA will host a pair of events in October to recognize this year's recipients of the Governor's Awards for Excellence in the Arts. **An**



awards ceremony will be held on Thursday, Oct. 10, 5:00 p.m. at the St. Francis Auditorium at New Mexico Museum of Art. An exhibition of work from the 2024 recipients will be on display in **the Governor's Gallery on the fourth floor of the Roundhouse beginning Friday, Oct. 11 with an opening reception from 2:00 – 3:30 p.m.**

The Governor's Awards for Excellence in the Arts are presented by NMAC and NMA—the state arts agency and a division of NMDCA. This year's Awards are made possible in part by major contributions from the Gale Family Foundation, Catherine Oppenheimer, the Dale and Leslie Chihuly Foundation, Thornburg Investment Management, the New Mexico Music Commission, Lensic 360, and the members of the NMAC.

This year marks the 50th anniversary of the awards which celebrate the diversity of New Mexico's cultural and artistic traditions, in addition to celebrating new and innovative forms of artistic expression. The awards recognize the important work that arts supporters and contributors contribute to the state, and who passionately ensure the arts are available and accessible in their communities.

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