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New Mexico
STATE EMPLOYEES' NEWSPAPER

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December 9 to January 12, 2025



Governor's Holiday Message, pg 3

SPOTLIGHT
On New Mexico Leadership
New Mexico State Library, Pg 17



College Enrollment Increase
pg 30

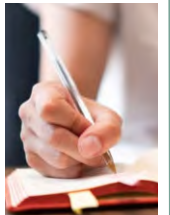
Where is Cooper?
pg 27



LORILEI CHAVEZ
Native American Studies
Bernalillo High School
pg 9

Certification of Election
pg 12

Benefits of Writing
pg 22



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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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Message from the Governor

Dear New Mexico State Employees,

As 2024 winds to a close and we anticipate relaxing with family and friends over the holidays, I want to express my deep gratitude for the work each of you do to make our state a better place for all New Mexicans.

Your dedication and hard work comprise the backbone of state government and helps create opportunities for everyone to thrive. Together, we've made great strides on behalf of New Mexicans over the past six years, and I look forward to continuing our important work with passion and determination in 2025.



Whether you're celebrating Christmas, Hanukkah, Kwanzaa, or another holiday, I hope this season brings you joy, peace, and good cheer.

Wishing you a happy and healthy holiday season.

Sincerely,

Michelle Lujan Grisham
Governor of New Mexico

Shop Local and Save this Holiday Season

By Charlie Moore

The New Mexico Departments of Economic Development, Tourism, and Taxation and Revenue encourage New Mexicans and visitors to shop at small businesses during the holiday season. During the holiday giving season, it's important to shop and dine at local small businesses first to support business owners, entrepreneurs, artists, growers, and makers who are growing their businesses and the local economy.



To support and encourage shop local efforts throughout New Mexico during the holiday season, the New Mexico Tourism Department (NMTD) recently published its annual New Mexico True Certified holiday gift guide. This year's gift guide features 145 locally grown and produced products from jewelry, fine art, apparel, home décor, snacks and more.

After launching its first-ever New Mexico True Certified shop local campaign last year, NMTD will again run the campaign for the 2024 holiday season. The campaign proved to be wildly successful, generating 12,000 website referrals for participating businesses. The campaign will highlight the craft, care and artistry of New Mexico True certified goods.

<https://www.newmexico.org/new-mexico-true-certified/true-certified-shopping/gift-guide/>

"New Mexico is home to some of the most talented artists and creators out there, but they don't always have the resources to promote their products," said Acting Tourism Secretary Lancing Adams. "This New Mexico True Certified shop local campaign was inspired one year ago through the belief that we can help New Mexicans support our economy by shopping local for the holidays, and we're thrilled to bring this campaign back for another year."

"The SBA reports that 345,000 workers or 53% are employed in New Mexico's small businesses," said Economic Development Secretary-Designate Rob Black.

Shopping locally is important because small businesses create jobs in the community, and they're also more likely to give to community charities. Money spent locally recirculates and strengthens the local tax base, which supports community services. Finally, a vibrant local economy improves the quality of life for the whole community.

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TRD Department Honors Excellence

By Charlie Moore

The Taxation and Revenue Department's Employee Recognition Program highlights the exemplary work being done by many of our employees.

The awards are specifically intended to reward employees who consistently demonstrate accountability, professionalism, integrity, respect and open communication.

"The teamwork demonstrated by this quarter's award winners is phenomenal. Whether it's working together on innovations and solutions for improving our service or simply helping each other, Tax and Rev employees shine. Thank you," said Cabinet Secretary Stephanie Schardin Clarke.

As part of the award, recipients are given eight hours of administrative leave. Team award members receive four hours of administrative leave. Employees can be nominated for the awards by coworkers, supervisors or managers. Nominations are submitted to the employees' immediate supervisors for review and approval and then by the appropriate division directors. All approved nominations are then reviewed by the Department's Employee Recognition Committee.

Below are the recipients for the third quarter of this year. 3rd Quarter 2024 Awards (Nomination citations have been edited for length and clarity)

Employee Excellence Award:

- Larry Brotman
Assignment: ITD
- Nadine Gallegos
Assignment: ASC, Financial Services Bureau
Position: Purchasing Agent Advanced
- Nathan Garcia
Assignment: ACD, Director's Office
Position: Bookkeeping, Accounting and

Audit-O

- Candace Lopez
Assignment: ASD, Financial Services Bureau
Position: Accounts Payable Specialist
- Elinora Martinez
Assignment: RPD, Business Credit Manager Team
Position: Tax Examiner Advanced
- Michael Martinez
Assignment: ITD, Help Desk
Position: IT End User Support III
- Andrew McCarthy
Assignment: RPD, Extractions Unit
Position: Information and Records Clerk
- Carol Miranda
Assignment: ACD, Las Cruces Bureau
Position: Tax Examiner, Collections, Revenue Agent-O
- Richard Reyes
Assignment: ACD, Data Analysis Bureau
Position: Data Analyst II
- Josh Rhodes
Assignment: ASD, Financial Services Bureau
- Randall Rodriguez
Assignment: RPD
Position: Executive secretary/administrative assistant
- Regina Romero
Assignment: MVD
Position: MVD Agent
- Amanda Thomas
Assignment: RPD, Administrative Resolution and Services Bureau
Position: Tax Examiner-O
- Tricia Zhang
Assignment: ACD, Bureau B
Position: Tax Auditor IV

Leadership Excellence Award

- Melanie Clayton
Assignment: MVD, Call Center Bureau
Position: MVD Agent Supervisor
- Amanda Curnow
Assignment: ACD, Call Center Bureau
- Mario Portillo
Assignment: ACD

Position: Deputy Director

Team Excellence Award

- Legal Services Bureau Moving Team

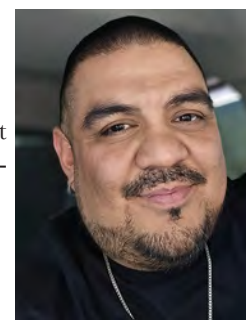
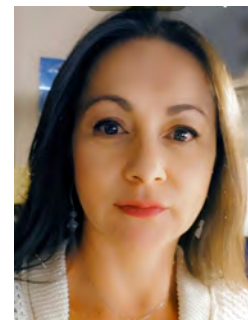
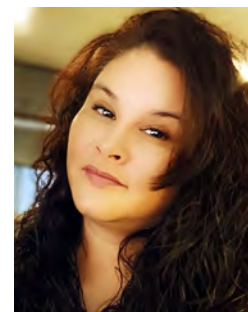
Assignment: Various

Team members: Richard Pener, David Mittle, Chris Orton, Jama Fisk, Timothy Williams, Theresa Cordova, Sylvia Mirabal, Tammy Gordon, Priscilla Castro, Mary Griego, Marie Northam, Nicholas Pacheco, Chandler Johnson, Angelica Rodriguez, Jessica Maes, Luis Rael.

- Cabinet in your Community Teams

Assignment: Various Team Members: Deputy Secretary Aysha Mora; Aurora Lopez, Candace Montoya, DeAn Morales-Velasquez, Susan Garrett, Judith James, Julieta Sims, David Samaniego of MVD; Stephanie Dennis, Celeste Torres of RPD; Gabe Anaya, Shawna Wages, Twila McCreery, Amanda Ware from ACD; Jeff Brown, Aaron Akers, Isaiah Burch and Josh Gallegos of ITD.

- Edit Error Tax Return Help
Assignment: ACD Team Members: Jayesh Singh, Matthew Toupal, Melissa Hernandez, Tawny Nakai, Nicole Lopez, Bradley Lucas, Lynetta Naranjo
- ARSB Special Tax Team
Assignment: RPD Team Members: Theresa Smith, JoLee Saiz, Boris Argueta Claros



Employee Excellence: Top row- Nathan Garcia, Candace Garcia, Richard Reyes Bottom row- Josh Rhodes, Regina Romero, David Samaniego



Leadership Excellence-Amanda Curnow Team Excellence (Right photo) Back row: Elizabeth Sanchez, Jamelia Curry, Parker, Haviza, Ojito Team Front row: Roseanna Stanfield and Loren Rose

- Lisa Wilkens, Claudia Lucero
Assignment: PTD
- Protest Module Gentax Team
Assignment: Various
Team Members: Donnita Wald, Priscilla Castro, Nicholas Pacheco of Legal Services Bureau; Darshana Kanabar, Elizabeth Sanchez, Lisa Armijo of ITD; Parker Haviza, Jamelia Currie, Loren Rose, Ojito Prevatt, Roseanna Stanfield of FAST.
- Questionable Returns Unit Team
Assignment: ACD
Team Members: Patrick Buckley, Kris Montoya, Savanna Merrill, Gabriel Griego, Vincent Salcido, Nicholas Bowling, Lawrence Hernandez, Pauline Lincoln, Dana Momany.

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Dr. Kathleen Romero

Governor Appoints Steve Graham as New Mexico Film Office Director

By Dolores Martinez

Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham has appointed Steve Graham as the new division director of the New Mexico Film Office.

Graham began work on November 12, 2024..

“Steve Graham is a native New Mexican whose deep roots and extensive background in film and television production make him an outstanding choice for this position,” said Gov. Lujan Grisham. “His proven leadership and innovative approach will continue to elevate New Mexico as a premier film destination, creating more opportunities for our talented local workforce and promoting diverse voices.”



Born and raised in New Mexico, Graham has more than 25 years of experience managing film and television productions, with credits that include Black Summer (Netflix), Walker: Independence (CBS Studios), and Z Nation (Syfy). His understanding of New Mexico’s film landscape, industry unions, and local production needs, paired with his national and global perspective, has prepared him to lead and grow the New Mexico film industry.

“I’m honored to lead the New Mexico Film Office and work to strengthen a local industry that has always been close to my heart,” Graham said. “Our state has an extraordinary pool of creative talent, and I am committed to ensuring that we continue to grow, innovate, and provide meaningful opportunities for New Mexicans in film.”

Graham’s involvement extends beyond film sets. He is active in organizations such as the Producers Guild of America and the Directors Guild of America and supports local initiatives, including the Santa Fe Film and New Media Council and the Stagecoach Foundation. Known for his strategic thinking and community engagement, Graham is dedicated to fostering a collaborative environment that benefits both filmmakers and the state.

Patrick Allen Steps Down as Secretary of Health

Gina DeBlassie will serve as interim cabinet secretary

Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham announced on November 20th that Patrick M. Allen, secretary of the New Mexico Department of Health will step down from his position at the end of the day. Allen has served in the administration for approximately two years.

“Pat has been a dedicated public servant, and I’m grateful for his contributions as secretary for the Department of Health. I wish him well in his next endeavor,” said Lujan Grisham.

Gina DeBlassie, the governor’s health policy advisor, will serve as interim cabinet secretary of the New Mexico Department of Health.



DeBlassie brings more than 30 years of health-care expertise. Throughout her career, she has been a driving force behind legislation to improve healthcare access across New Mexico. Her leadership efforts have been instrumental in establishing the Health Care Authority and the Rural Health Care Delivery Fund.

Prior to joining Gov. Lujan Grisham’s administration, DeBlassie served as chief operating officer for a national All-Inclusive Care for the Elderly provider program. There, she managed multi-state operations spearheading the expansion of programs aimed at bettering the lives of seniors.

DeBlassie holds a Bachelor of Business Administration from the University of Phoenix and has contributed her expertise to multiple non-profit boards.

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VOICES FROM THE PAST

By Robert J. Tórréz
Former State Historian
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Organizing the Salt Caravans

The Spanish came to New Mexico in the sixteenth century to seek converts to Christianity and also hoped to find minerals to enrich themselves and fill the coffers of Spanish kings. As Paul Wellman's classic history book noted, they came seeking "God, Glory and Gold." For New Mexico that search for silver, gold, mercury and other valuable minerals eventually proved fruitless but they did find an abundant mineral that proved quite valuable - salt.

Salt is essential to life, and New Mexico is blessed with a plentiful supply of this readily obtainable mineral from the famous saline lakes of the Estancia Valley east of the Manzano Mountains. These salinas, or salt beds, have been a source of this essential mineral for centuries. For centuries these ancient salt lakes attracted native peoples from throughout the Southwest. The Pueblos came from the north and west, the various plains tribes from the east and northeast, and from the south, the Jumanos and others from Mexico. Over the centuries, the salt trade may have served as a catalyst for periodic trade between the groups that traveled there and by the fourteenth century, the Piros of the southern New Mexico Pueblos developed a series of settlements that we have come to identify as the Salinas Pueblos.

These pueblo peoples built a trade network that allowed them to grow and prosper. One source estimated their trade networks extended south as far as present-day Chihuahua and as far north as Taos. By the time the Spanish made their way into the Estancia Valley there were at least ten Salinas pueblos with a population of several thousand.

During the seventeenth century, Spanish Franciscans established six missions among these pueblos. The ruins of three of these, Abo, Gran Quivira, and Quarai, stand as witness to the grand scale of these missionary efforts. Spanish colonization greatly increased the magnitude of the trade, not only for table use, but for livestock and industrial uses, such as the curing of leather. During the later part of the seventeenth century, Spanish governors were sending caravans laden with salt as far as the silver mines of Parral.

The Salinas Pueblos were abandoned during the late 1600s but following the reconquest of 1692 the Spanish government established a system of annual escorted caravans to harvest this valuable resource. One of the earliest documents from our Spanish Archives that describes this process is a 1716 bando (decree) issued by Governor Felix Martínez announcing the departure of a military escort to the

salinas on or about July 20th. Similar orders were probably issued on an annual basis, but certainly when the need arose, as noted in the 1742 decree issued by Governor Gaspar Domingo de Mendoza. Dated May 25, 1742, the bando, or decree reads:

"As I have been notified that the citizens (vecinos) and Indians of some jurisdictions have found themselves lacking salt and it being necessary to attend to this lack, I order the Alcaldes Mayores of the jurisdictions of Rio Arriba (Upper River) and their assistants to make this order known to the individuals of their jurisdictions, Spanish as well as Indians, so that those who need the said salt should be ready on the second of June at the Pueblo of Galisteo where a troop escort will be, so that on the third they may begin their march to the salinas with the said troop escort. Done at this Capital Villa of Santa Fe today, the twenty-fifth of May of 1742. (Signed) Don Gaspar Domingo Mendoza."

The order then specified the various local officials were to certify that publication of the order was carried out at each of the jurisdictions to which it was sent. In the case of the Rio Arriba jurisdictions, the routing, which is typically noted along the left margin of the document, was sent to the alcaldes at Santa Cruz de la Cañada and

Taos. In compliance, the attached certifications specify that on May 25, 1742, Juan Joseph Lovato published the order within all the jurisdictions of Santa Cruz de la Cañada and forwarded it to Taos at two in the afternoon, "more or less." Two days later, May 27, Domingo Vigil certified publication at nine in the morning at Taos (probably Don Fernando de Taos) and forwarded it to the Pueblo of Taos, where, on May 30, Francisco Guerrero noted publication at San Geronimo de los Taos. There is no indication why it took three days for publication to be done at the Pueblo.

Governor Mendoza issued a separate but identical order for the Rio Abajo (lower river) with routing to the jurisdictions of the Queres, Santa Ana, Laguna and the Villa of Albuquerque. However, this separate order is missing the typical full certifications. Notes along the left margin of the rio abajo copy show one-word acknowledgments of "vista" (seen) at Santa Ana and Albuquerque and signatures by and brief notes of obedience by Miguel Albares de Costilla and Salvador Martinez but are not dated.

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NMDVR Holds Statewide Employee Conference *Continued on page 8*

By Jeff Levine

The annual in-person statewide New Mexico Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (NMDVR) conference was held at the Santa Ana Star Hotel in Bernalillo on November 13 and 14. Although it was for all staff, skeleton crews remained behind at all 24 offices around the state to ensure continued operations.

The first day focused on the Vocational Rehabilitation Unit and its work. Day 2 was for the entire agency and included remarks from Jessica Dinsmore, Program Support Specialist with the Public Education Department's Office of Special Education.

Breakout sessions covered a variety of subjects, from information about the different areas of NMDVR's work—SSA Disability Program, Pre-Employment Transition Services, crisis and de-escalation training, working with participants with autism, veterans, rural communities, etc.—to professional development, work/life balance, self-care, and the state employee retirement plan, that will help employees be the most effective in serving our constituency.

Disability Determination Services

Administrator Alan Hamlin also provided an updated on the successes of his area during the past fiscal year.

These two days of focused time will help NMDVR employees pursue the agency's mission of ensuring that all New Mexicans with a disability achieve their employment goals and thrive in their communities.

2024 NMDVR Award Winners
The Statewide Conference included an awards presentation. Both the State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) and NMDVR honored agency employees for their outstanding work this year. The SRC also announced their awards for employer, service provider, and program participant. The award winners:

State Rehabilitation Council Awards:

- Outstanding Staff Member: Kim Archuleta
- Outstanding Supervisor: Lisa Jones
- Outstanding Participant: Levi Heisinger
- Outstanding Employer: Carpenters Local 1319
- Outstanding Nonprofit/Provider: Assistance Dogs of the West



Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor Supervisor Lisa Jones (center) receiving her award as Outstanding NMDVR Supervisor, with NMDVR Director Casey Stone-Romero and SRC member Jen Gelhardt



Recipient Silvia Gurrola

NMDVR Awards:

- Awards of Achievement- Silvia Gurrola, Jessica Roybal & Alix Dean
- Employee Recognition- Irene Sena, Erika Villanueva, Ramona Contreras and Stephanie Alvarez, Antoinette Holmes
- Mentor Award- Casilda Gallegos, Emma Badalian, Alexandria Vargas



Recipient Irene Sena

Recipients (below) Casilda Gallegos, Emma Badalian & Alexandria Vargas





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New Mexico Museum of Art Educator Named Art Educator of the Year by Local Organization By Ashley Espinoza

New Mexico Museum of Art (NMMOA) is thrilled to announce that Sarah Zurik, Museum Educator and Volunteer Coordinator, has received the Museum Education Art Educator of the Year Award from the New Mexico Art Education Association (NMAEA).



The award is given to an educator whose exemplary practices and contributions to the field of museum education are deserving of recognition. The award is one of six given out annually to educators who work in different educational environments.

“We are fortuitous to have talented and dedicated staff such as Sarah at the New Mexico Museum of Art,” said Dr. Mark White, executive director. “Sarah’s hard work, insight, and passion for education is an asset to the museum. It is an honor to see her recognized by peers from across New Mexico.”

Sarah has been with NMMOA for over two years, having previously worked in education for the Georgia O’Keeffe Museum for 12 years. In her time with the museum Sarah has developed a well-earned reputation for enthusiastically serving diverse audiences through outreach programs, public programs in the galleries, and through her extensive work with docents and volunteers. Sarah brings her passion for art and helping people make connections in the galleries to everything she does, much to the benefit of everyone who visits the museum or participates in a program.

“Sarah connects with people, helps them feel safe with art, encourages their exploration and makes them feel welcome in the museum.” said Chris Nail, Head of Education.

NMDVR Award Winners (Continued from page 7)

Special Recognition

Victoria Hernandez, Stephanie Alvarez, Ramona Contreras, and Rene Munoz— Area 3 Vocational Rehabilitation Technicians (VRTs)
Natasha Gutierrez
Dominique Nuñez



Peer Citation- Erik Padilla, Victoria Hernandez & Anita Sanchez

Disability Determination Services Mile High Award-

Karen Krauser
Pedro Del Solar
Priscilla Rodriguez



Individual Performance Recognition-
Martha Castaneda
Crystal Peña

NMDVR Production Recognition
Linda Fisher and VRT Stephanie Alvarez
Juliana Lujan and VRT Ann Rendon
Patricia Sainz and VRT Cristie Montoya
Ellen Carpenter and VRT Cristie Montoya

Recipients: (top photo) Ramona Contreras, Stephanie Alvarez, Rene Munoz (Bottom photo) Dominique Nunez



Recipients: Erik Padilla (left photo), Anita Sanchez (right photo)



Recipient: Pedro Del Solar



Recipient: (top photo) Martha Castaneda (bottom photo) Crystal Pena

Recipient: (top left photo) Ellen Fisher and Stephanie Alvarez (bottom photos) Juliana Lujan, Ellen Carpenter & Cristie Montoya



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New Mexico Department of Agriculture Hires New Deputy Director/Secretary

By Jenny Green

The New Mexico Department of Agriculture (NMDA) has hired Les Owen to serve as its new Deputy Director/Secretary. Owen returns to NMDA – where he previously worked in natural resources policy planning – after serving as the Conservation Services Division Director at the Colorado Department of Agriculture for eight years.



Over the course of his career, Owen has held positions as a 4-H agricultural extension agent and as a research associate in what is now New Mexico State University's Department of Animal and Range Sciences. Owen has dedicated much of his career to effective agricultural land use and range management, energy development, soil and water conservation, wildlife habitat and endangered species conservation, as well as the management of natural resources in support of agriculture through communication, coordination and collaboration with federal, state and local government agencies and organizations.

Owen was raised on his family's ranch near Corona, New Mexico.

"We're glad to welcome Les back to the New Mexico Department of Agriculture," said New Mexico Secretary of Agriculture Jeff Witte. "Les brings a deep understanding of the agriculture industry here in New Mexico and across the region. His experience providing oversight and coordination of a multitude of agricultural efforts at the local, state and federal levels sets a solid foundation for his work as Deputy Director/Secretary of NMDA."

"I'm proud to have served the New Mexico Department of Agriculture in natural resource management and now be able to return in a different capacity, at the head of the agency's leadership," said Owen. "It's an honor to lead NMDA alongside Secretary Witte and ensure that the agency fulfills its mission in the best interest of New Mexico's agriculture industry and all of its constituents."

Owen joined NMDA Oct. 1 at its Las Cruces main office.

2025 New Mexico Teacher of the Year: Lorilei Chavez

By Janelle Garcia

During a surprise announcement at Bernalillo High School (BHS), Public Education Secretary-Designate Mariana Padilla announced today that educator Lorilei Chavez is the 2025 New Mexico Teacher of the Year.

Chavez teaches Native American Studies at BHS. She is from Kewa Pueblo, also known as Santo Domingo Pueblo, and is the first Native American educator to be selected as New Mexico Teacher of the Year.

"Congratulations to Lorilei Chavez on this incredible achievement," said Public Education Secretary-Designate Mariana Padilla. "Lorilei's dedication not only inspires her students but honors the rich traditions and wisdom of Native culture in every lesson she shares."

Chavez has been working in education for over 10 years. She previously served as an Indigenous curriculum instructional coach at Santo Domingo School under a \$200,000 Indigenous Education Initiative (IEI) grant. Chavez utilized IEI funds to host culturally and linguistically responsive workshops for staff and develop Pueblo-specific educator pipelines to help educational assistants pursue degrees and certifications. Chavez also taught middle school history at Santo Domingo School from July 2022 to June 2024.

From 2013 to January 2020, Chavez was the school Native American liaison for BHS. In that role, Chavez implemented Native American-based extracurricular programs and collaborated with different Pueblo representatives to support Native American student populations.

Chavez graduated from the University of New Mexico in 2018 with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Native American studies and a minor in history. She participated in the New Mexico Public Education Department's Alternative Teacher Licensure Program from 2018 to 2020.

The New Mexico Oil and Gas Association is the sponsor for the New Mexico Teacher of the Year program and will support the travel needs and professional development opportunities of the winner.

The New Mexico Teacher of the Year award was established in 1963. Each year, all New Mexico school districts and charter schools are invited to nominate an outstanding teacher to become New Mexico's Teacher of the Year and to represent New Mexico in the National Teacher of the Year competition. New Mexico's Teacher of the Year also acts as the spokesperson for the state's teaching profession.



LORILEI CHAVEZ
Native American Studies
Bernalillo High School

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New Mexico Agencies Announce \$4.7M in Beautification Grants

State pushes 'Breaking Bad Habits' and showcase natural beauty

By Michael Coleman

Three state agencies—the Departments of Transportation, Tourism, and Environment—have collectively awarded \$4.7 million in grants to 97 local entities, funding projects that aim to make New Mexico cleaner, greener and more beautiful.

The funding initiative is part of a state-wide #BreakingBadHabits campaign that encourages residents to preserve New Mexico's unparalleled landscape.

"New Mexico is the most beautiful state in the nation and it's time for all of us to commit to 'Breaking Bad Habits' of littering and trashing our state," said Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham. "These grants will play a vital role in our push to eliminate litter and protecting our state's spectacular beauty."

Grant breakdown:

- Department of Transportation (\$2M) - Beautification Initiative: Fourteen local governments were awarded grants ranging from \$95,000 to \$200,000 to launch beautification programs. These efforts will cover litter reduction, community cleanups, and educational campaigns, with funding for a full-time program coordinator to oversee the initiatives.

- Tourism Department (\$1M) – Clean and Beautiful Program: The Tourism Department is distributing \$1 million in grants to 67 entities, setting a department record for both participation and funding. This support will enable widespread beautification efforts, including litter cleanup events and community-led beautification projects across the state. Environment Department (\$800K) – RAID Grants:

The New Mexico Environment Department awarded \$800,000 to 15 local governments, including cities, counties and a Pueblo, for recycling and illegal dumping prevention. Key projects include tackling tire dumping and introducing food waste recycling bins at Las Cruces public schools. Read more: RAID Grant Program.

- 'Breaking Bad Habits' Campaign:

In a unique twist, Gov. Lujan Grisham teamed up with Emmy Award-winning actor Bryan Cranston, reprising his iconic role as Walter White, to raise awareness about litter reduction. The campaign encourages all New Mexicans to 'break bad habits' and keep the state clean.

The campaign's new website, www.breakingbadhabits.nm.gov, provides tools for residents to report litter, sign up for volunteer cleanup events, and get involved in beautification efforts. Additionally, Governor Lujan Grisham plans to advocate for expanded anti-litter and beautification programs in the upcoming 2025 legislative session.

For more information and opportunities to get involved, visit:

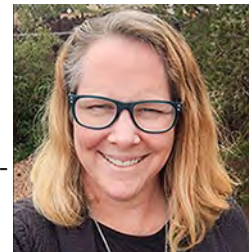
1. ¿Que Linda? | NMDOT <https://www.dot.nm.gov/que-linda/>
2. New Mexico Tourism Department Clean and Beautiful <https://www.newmexico.org/industry/work-together/grants/clean-and-beautiful/>
3. RAID Grant Program <https://www.env.nm.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/FY23-RAID-Recycling-application-fillable.pdf>
4. BreakingBadHabits.nm.gov



NMED Bureau Chief Elected Vice President of ACWA

By Jorge Estrada

New Mexico Environment Department Surface Water Quality Bureau Chief Shelly Lemon was recently elected Vice President of the Association of Clean Water Administrators (ACWA) for the 2024-2025 term.



Lemon's leadership role puts New Mexico at the forefront of surface water protection efforts throughout the nation. She has served on the Association's Board of Directors since 2020, representing EPA Region 6 — encompassing New Mexico, Texas, Oklahoma, Louisiana, and Arkansas.

ACWA is the national voice of State and Interstate clean water programs and stands strong as a national, impartial professional assembly dedicated to protecting and restoring watersheds to achieve clean water everywhere for everyone. Association members include State, Interstate and Territorial officials who are responsible for the implementation of surface water quality protection programs throughout the nation.

At its recent annual meeting in New Orleans, sessions covered updates related to the Clean Water Act Section 303(d) Program, National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System Program, Clean Water State Revolving Fund, and water technical advisor opportunities. Additional pressing topics included cybersecurity for water and wastewater systems, PFAS updates from EPA's Office of Science & Technology, Tribal Reserved Rights Rule, and community engagement driving environmental justice.

Lemon has worked for NMED's Surface Water Quality Bureau for two decades, serving many different roles within the bureau to support its mission of preserving, protecting, and improving New Mexico's surface water quality for present and future generations.

As Bureau Chief, Lemon currently manages and oversees three technical teams that fulfill New Mexico's responsibilities under the federal Clean Water Act and New Mexico Water Quality Act, such as developing and revising water quality standards, collecting water quality data, reducing water pollution, and protecting, restoring, and enhancing the state's wetlands, streams, and its habitats.

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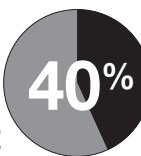
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State Canvass Board Certifies 2024 General Election Results, Orders Automatic Recounts

By Alex Curtas

New Mexico's State Canvass Board met today in Santa Fe and unanimously certified the results of the 2024 General Election. The State Canvass Board is composed of the Governor, Secretary of State, and Chief Justice of the New Mexico Supreme Court.

"The 2024 General Election was run with efficiency and integrity by the state's election administrators and every New Mexican should have the highest level of confidence in these official election results," said Secretary of State Maggie Toulouse Oliver. "I want to thank the members of the State Canvass Board for their work this morning and my staff at the Secretary of State's Office, our county clerks and their staff, the poll workers, our vendors, and our local, state, and federal partners who were the backbone of this successful election."

The official, certified results for the 2024 General Election are available to be viewed on the Secretary of State's website.

During today's meeting, the Board signed the certificate of canvass that makes the results of the 2024 General Election official and also ordered automatic recounts in these contests:

- State Representative District 57 & Los Alamos County Commissioner (At Large)

The next scheduled State Canvass Board meeting to certify the automatic recount results will happen on December 16, 2024.

The Board also shared some key voter turnout data from the 2024 General Election that is of interest to the press and public:

- Total Registered Voters eligible to participate in this election – 1,382,761
- Total Voter Turnout – 928,290 (67.13%)
- Absentee Turnout – 111,403 (12.00%)
- Early Voting Turnout – 556,281 (59.93%)
- Election Day Turnout – 252,515 (27.20%)
- Hand Tally/Provisional – 8,091 (0.87%)
- Use of Same-Day Voter Registration (Early Voting and Election Day) – 52,358
- Election Day SDR transactions – 25,485



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Governor Appoints Heather Jordan as New Workers' Compensation Director

By Nicole Bazzano

Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham has appointed Heather Jordan to serve as the director for the Workers' Compensation Administration (WCA) effective immediately. Jordan brings a wealth of experience and expertise to this critical role.

"I am excited to lead the WCA in its mission to serve New Mexico's workers and employers with dedication and efficiency in my new role." said Jordan.

Jordan has devoted her career to public service. She worked for the City of Albuquerque, Bernalillo County where she had a combined 20 years at the Metropolitan Detention Center. She started at the WCA in 2015 as the Clerk of the Court, was promoted in 2022 to the Court and Programs Administrator, and then as the Executive Deputy Director in May of 2024. Jordan earned her Bachelor of Arts in Criminal Justice in 2014.

The Workers' Compensation Administration would also like to express our heartfelt gratitude to Robert Doucette, who has served as the director of WCA with exceptional leadership and commitment. Under Doucette's leadership, the WCA made significant strides in enhancing services and improving operational effectiveness. Doucette will remain at the General Services Department as cabinet secretary.



DoIT's Budget Prioritizes Secure Digital Networks

By Renee Narvaiz

The Department of Information Technology's (DoIT) proposed budget is focused on protecting the state's digital infrastructure with important cybersecurity measures, expanding the reach and stability of the state's Public Safety Radio System and securing New Mexico's information technology systems. The FY26 \$104 million proposed budget will enable DoIT to safeguard digital privacy of New Mexicans and ensure the availability of the government services.

"Our FY26 budget underscores DoIT's commitment to modernize and transform the state's digital infrastructure," said Cabinet Secretary Designate Manny Barreras. "We recognize the evolving challenges of maintaining a secure network environment and are reinforcing our teams to counter the increasing threat of cyberattacks. By expanding our resources, we're better equipped to defend against malicious actors attempting to infiltrate and compromise our systems."

The FY26 budget request incorporates strategic appropriations designed to enhance cybersecurity programs that defend our schools, the water supply, and all essential government services.

The budget will also enhance the state's growing Public Safety Radio network. Having first responders working on a unified system allows them to respond to emergency situations quickly and efficiently. New Mexicans depend on first responders, and those first responders depend on mission critical emergency communication services provided by DoIT.

Key initiatives in the operating budget proposal:

- \$4.2 million to standardize and improve the Public Safety Radio network allowing first responders from city, county, state, federal and tribal agencies to have interoperability, to improve public safety and to enhance collaboration during emergencies.
- \$6.5 million to develop New Mexico's cybersecurity workforce and strengthen state information technology systems against threats and other malicious actors.
- \$750,000 for Geographical Information Systems to coordinate location-based data and services, improve public service, optimize spending, and provide analytic support for agencies and industry.
- \$822,000 to improve oversight of enterprise information technology projects and achieve cost savings through strategic consolidation and standardization.

First responders, educators, technology workers, cybersecurity specialists and consumers of state services can preserve and expand New Mexico's information technology systems by asking their legislators to support DoIT's FY26 budget proposal to support DoIT's core mission and create progress for all New Mexicans.



From Trails to Jobs: Outdoor Recreation Drives \$3.2 Billion Economic Impact in New Mexico

By Michelle Simon

The U.S. Department of Commerce's Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA) has released new data exhibiting outdoor recreation's powerful and positive economic impact on New Mexico's economy. According to the latest data from the BEA Outdoor Recreation Satellite Account, outdoor recreation created \$3.2 billion in value added for New Mexico, accounting for 2.4% of New Mexico GDP and 29,182 jobs in 2023.

The BEA report indicates that 2023 has seen the largest recorded increase in New Mexico's outdoor recreation gross domestic product (GDP) at 6.6% compared to the previous year. Additionally, the industry has experienced steady growth in employment, with over 1,000 new jobs created. The report also highlights increased participation in activities such as hunting and trapping, kayaking and canoeing, and snow sports. The highest economic contributors to the state's outdoor recreation sector are RVing, boating and fishing, and snow activities.

After assuming office in 2019, Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham identified outdoor recreation as one of nine target industries to grow and diver-

sify New Mexico's economy. In April 2019, the governor signed a bill creating the state's first Office of Outdoor Recreation. Since then, the Outdoor Recreation Division has invested \$22.4 million in trails and infrastructure projects and awarded \$6.4 million in Outdoor Equity Fund grants, getting more than 83,000 youth outside for transformative, educational experiences.

New Mexico Economic Development Department Cabinet Secretary-Designate Rob Black said the governor's commitment to outdoor recreation is paying dividends for the state. "The new data shows that outdoor recreation is vital to New Mexico's economy and the well-being of our communities. This is especially true in our rural areas where it creates jobs, boosts local economies, and enhances health and wellness," Black said.

Key Highlights from the 2023 data on the outdoor recreation economy:

- NM saw a 6.6% increase in 2023 YOY in total outdoor recreation



Fishing is among the top outdoor recreation activities. Canoeing and kayaking in the state has grown in popularity by 13% since 2022. Participation in snow activities increased by 10%.

- activities.
- Top core outdoor recreation activities include RVing, boating/fishing, snow activities, equestrian, and climbing/hiking/tent camping.
- The average annual growth rate since 2013 is 5.5% overall, 6.5% in core OR activities (listed above).
- YOY since 2022 snow activities increased 10%, canoeing/kayaking increased 13%, and hunting/trapping increased 17%.

"The latest BEA data reinforces what we've always known here in New Mexico- outdoor recreation is deeply intertwined with our quality of life and a thriving, sustainable economy," Karina Armijo, director of the New Mexico Outdoor Recreation Division, said. "Investing in outdoor access and stewardship through programs like the Outdoor Equity Fund and Outdoor

Recreation Trails+ Grant fosters a healthier, more connected, and resilient future for all New Mexicans."

At a national level, these new figures show that outdoor recreation generated \$1.2 trillion in economic output, \$639.5 billion in GDP (2.3% of total GDP), comprised 3.1% of U.S. employees, and accounted for 5 million jobs in 2023. This means the outdoor recreation economy contributes more to the U.S. economy than farming, oil and gas extraction, mining, and utilities.

Jessica Turner, president of the Outdoor Recreation Roundtable, "This marks another year of growth for the outdoor recreation economy, underscoring its resilience and importance across the nation."

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Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham Visits New Mexico Counties Assessors Affiliate

By Ivan Barry

On Monday, October 28, 2024, Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham made a visit to the New Mexico Counties Assessors Affiliate Fall Conference to show support for assessors across the state and to engage in discussions about upcoming legislative initiatives that will impact property assessment practices in New Mexico.



During the visit, the Governor met with local assessors to listen to their insights and concerns regarding the challenges they face. The discussion focused on how the state can better support assessors in their efforts to ensure fair and accurate property assessments.

"There's not enough credit given amount of work and effort," says Governor Lujan Grisham. "Take heart in knowing there are folks, like me, all over the state, who see you, recognize the value of your work and your commitment to good public service and, as part of that, your commitment to the communities and families you serve."

The meeting included discussions on important legislative proposals designed to improve the accuracy and efficiency of property assessments.

Affiliate members introduced a proposal for equitable disclosure, which would enable assessors to access non-residential sales information. This change would help appraisal staff with accuracy in the valuation process of non-residential properties. Furthermore, the affiliate discussed raising the head of family exemption. Currently, this exemption provides a \$2,000 reduction in taxable value, resulting in approximately \$50 in tax savings, depending on the tax district. Notably, this exemption has not been updated since 2003.

"Most of us as elected county assessors take on the role of advocates for homeowners," says Bernalillo County Assessor Damian Lara. "We are working towards equitable disclosure and in increasing the head of family exemption in the constitution to benefit those communities and family we serve."



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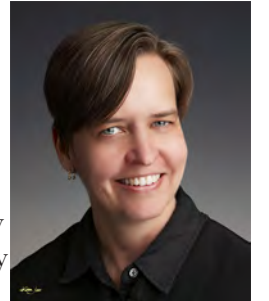
For further information, please contact Terese Vigil by email at terese.vigil@osa.nm.gov

The Honorable Linda S. Rogers to Retire after 18 Years on the Metropolitan Court Bench

By Camille Baca

The Honorable Linda S. Rogers will retire at the end of the month after serving as a Metropolitan Court Judge since 2006.

Appointed by former Governor Bill Richardson and then elected to the bench, Judge Rogers served in the Criminal Division of the court, also presiding over a Felony docket for two years as the court began holding Preliminary Examination Hearings.



"I've heard thousands of cases throughout my career, but the most-rewarding were the cases I oversaw in the Mental Health Court," shared Judge Rogers. "It was equally fulfilling to see someone get the help the desperately needed while in turn making the community a safer place to live. I feel that I made the biggest difference those seven years."

Judge Rogers presided over the previously named Mental Health Court from 2010 to 2017. The program has since been renamed the Behavioral Health Court but remains the same in its mission of improving the quality of life for people with a mental health diagnosis charged with a crime by reducing criminogenic behavior and providing lifelong stability. With a passion for behavioral health issues, Judge Rogers simultaneously presided over the Competency Court for five years.

"Judge Rogers' mark on these programs will be felt for years," said Chief Judge Joshua J. Sánchez, who currently presides over the Behavioral Health Court. "These cases and this population can be challenging, and Judge Rogers' heart and dedication never waned as she helped those in the program achieve stability while ensuring the protection of constitutional rights."

Prior to her tenure on the bench, Judge Rogers worked as an Assistant Public Defender for nine years and as an Assistant District Attorney for four-and-a-half years.

Born and raised in Las Cruces, Judge Rogers received her law degree from the University of Colorado School of Law in 1990 and earned an undergraduate degree in Government and Economics from New Mexico State University in 1987.

The Bernalillo County Metropolitan Court Judicial Nominating Commission will convene early next year to interview applicants vying to fill the vacancy created by Judge Rogers' forthcoming retirement.

Department of Public Safety Seeks \$16.6M for Safety Overhaul

By H. L. Lovato

The New Mexico Department of Public Safety's (DPS) is requesting \$234.1 million for Fiscal Year 2026. The proposed budget allocates \$16.6 million to enhance safety in New Mexico through increased staffing, advanced technology, and modernized emergency infrastructure.



"This budget ensures our officers and staff have the tools they need to safeguard communities and respond decisively to emergencies," said Secretary Jason R. Bowie.

Key funding priorities include:

- Staffing, recruitment and salary alignment: \$7.1 million for new positions for civilian pilots, legal professionals, inspectors to improve service delivery, and attract and retain talent.
- Fleet acquisition: \$3 million to replace high-mileage vehicles with safer, more reliable options for effective emergency response.
- Helicopter maintenance: \$500,000 to ensure the Airbus H-145 remains fully operational for life-saving missions statewide.
- Cybersecurity: \$565,000 to strengthen IT defenses to protect sensitive information and maintain uninterrupted operations.

The budget also addresses inflation-driven challenges, including rising costs for fuel, maintenance, and equipment, ensuring uninterrupted public safety services.

"Our commitment is clear: to make every New Mexican feel safe and secure in their community," said Bowie. "This funding supports that mission."



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SPO Celebrates a Great Year of Learning

By Jaime Phillips



As 2024 comes to a close, the State Personnel Office (SPO) Learning and Development Bureau would like to say thank you to all the state employees who have participated in our learning opportunities this year. It is such an honor that so many of you took time out of your busy workdays to engage in learning and development with the SPO team. The course catalog available to state employees has grown dramatically over the past few years, and the numbers of participants in classes and learning programs have grown right along with it. Did you know that just three years ago, in December 2021, SPO offered only one eLearning course on the Enterprise Learning Management (ELM) system, as compared with approximately 115 eLearning courses today? That first course, the mandatory Civil Rights Awareness training, has been joined by a significant catalog of courses and learning programs designed to help train state employees on valuable skills and competencies, as well as to promote professional development and advancement across a full career in state government. State employees have demonstrated that they value these eLearning opportunities by enrolling in and completing thousands of classes in that time. In FY24 alone, state employees completed over 19,000 eLearning classes, not counting the mandatory Civil Rights class! State employees have also embraced instructor-led classes, as SPO finds that it now consistently sees over 1,000 state employees every quarter in its live, instructor-led classes. All totaled, state employees completed nearly 39,000 classes (eLearning and instructor-led) through SPO in 2024, which averages over 150 class completion certificates for every workday of the year. That represents a significant commitment of time and effort to learning more, growing skills, and advancing careers in state government!

SPO would especially like to celebrate achievements in its two leadership development programs in 2024. First, the Advanced Team Leadership (ATL) Program, which launched in January 2024, graduated its first 39 participants representing 25 different agencies from all over the state this year. The program, which is composed of a curriculum of learning on team leadership followed by design, implementation, and reporting on an individual Capstone project, is intensive and kept intentionally small, with cohorts offered only three times in 2024. These 39 graduates created Capstone projects on topics including: "Weathering Storm Periods in Team Development," "Building a Legacy of Leadership through Supervision and Support," "Building a Positive Team Environment," "Cultivating Resilient Staff," "What Leaders Wish They Knew Before They Got Into Leadership Positions," and "Building a Problem-Solving Culture." They are truly leading the way in their commitment to excellence in team leadership for the benefit of the State of New Mexico.

Additionally, the Essentials of Supervision and Management (ESM) Program, which launched in mid-2022, slightly more than doubled its existing number of graduates in 2024, surpassing 700 total graduates by November 2024. These graduates represent 48 different state agencies plus various judicial branch offices. The ESM Program focuses on foundational competencies to promote success in a supervisory or managerial position and is open to current or aspiring leaders. Feedback received on the ESM Program from its graduates speaks to the value the program offers and its effectiveness in helping to prepare and equip supervisors and managers for success in their role. Recent feedback comments include the following: "Thank you for your expertise and giving me the confidence that I need to go forward" (August 2024 graduate). "I truly appreciate this opportunity, thank you. I had to learn a lot of these lessons on my own and with little guidance when I first became a manager. I feel like this is a very solid investment not only for leadership but, for those that are the recipients of better leadership as a result) (August 2024 graduate). "I am aspiring to become a supervisor and with this class I feel more confident" (September 2024 graduate). "This was a wonderful program and something that I believe should be mandatory for new managers and supervisors" (October 2024 graduate). SPO thanks and congratulates the graduates of the Essentials of Supervision and Management Program, the Advanced Team Leadership Program, and every state employee who made the time to grow professionally in 2024.

Learn more about classes offered by the State Personnel Office on their website at: <https://www.spo.state.nm.us/learning-development/>. Register for classes 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. 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.



SPOTLIGHT

On New Mexico Leadership



I am Eli Guinnee, New Mexico State Librarian. I was born in Truth or Consequences and returned to the state in 2019 after living in Colorado, Scotland, and Western New York. I worked at the Colorado State University Library and the National Library of Scotland before being Director of the Buffalo Science Museum Research Library, Patterson Public Library in Westfield, New York, and Chautauqua Cattaraugus Library System in Jamestown, New York. In the library field I have worked in Reference, Circulation, Interlibrary Loan, Maps, Government Documents, Cataloging, and Administration. My research focus is rural libraries and rural librarians.

What does the State Library do?

New Mexico State Library, online at nmstatelibrary.org, is one of very few state libraries in the country that maintains a commitment to provide library services to every community member in the state. We do that through support for public libraries, rural Bookmobile service, and our Library for the Blind and Print Disabled. We mail books to anyone who cannot access a local library or bookmobile stop through our Books by Mail program, and even provide Interlibrary Loan services to the incarcerated. Our research library in Santa Fe at the Carruthers building is a vast set of resources for researchers, genealogists, state employees, and the general public, and is a depository of state and federal documents.

What library resources are available online?

We have significant databases freely available for New Mexicans in our El Portal statewide database, online at elportalm.org. These include resources and homework help for school students, scholarly research databases, eBooks, newspapers, and the ever-popular Chilton auto-repair manuals.

Free eBooks and downloadable audio books can be found by downloading the Palace Project app, wherever you get your apps, and selecting the New Mexico State Library as your library.

We even maintain a subscription to the digital New York Times, free to all New Mexicans. To access this, you can go to nmstatelibrary.org/nytimes and bookmark the links to redeem a free access code for News, Cooking, and Games.

Who can get a New Mexico State Library card?

Any New Mexican can apply for a library card at our Carruthers Building location, or at their local bookmobile stop. Applications for our Books by Mail and Library for the Blind and Print Disabled service are available on our website.

How many people are employed by the State Library?

We have 44 positions at the state library, the majority working out of our Santa Fe office on Camino Carlos Rey, with four remote offices: Bookmobile East in Tucumcari, Bookmobile West in Los Lunas, Bookmobile Northeast in Cimarron, and our Navajo Nation Outreach Office in Crownpoint.

How do you support public libraries?

We provide funding and services to 103 public libraries in the state—of which 21 are tribal public libraries—and are always supporting a handful of local libraries that do not quite meet our requirements for full funding but aspire to grow and become established public libraries. Our goal is for as many communities as possible to have a public library. They are critical for access-



ing books, internet, information, computer training, social services, job opportunities, youth literacy and more.

They truly serve as a community center, connecting people to each other and the resources they need to improve their lives and strengthen their community.

And our staff is always on hand to

answer questions, provide guidance, and give workshops on a wide variety of library topics. This includes collection development,

cataloging, summer reading programs, board training, and much more.

What grants do you provide to libraries?

A big part of what we do is grant management, providing State Grants in Aid, Tribal Library Grants, Rural Library Endowment Grants, and General Obligation Bond Funding to public libraries every year. Our Rural Library funding includes annual grants for libraries that do not yet meet our eligibility requirements for full funding. These grants can help budding libraries in numerous ways to become state-funded libraries and increase the services and materials they can offer to their community.

New Mexico State Library (Division of DCA)

What are the top 3 things every State Employee should know about the State Library?

1. On top of all of the resources I have listed above, State Employees can access additional research support from our research library. I encourage anyone who has research needs to contact our reference desk at 505-476-9702, submitting a question online at nmstatelibrary.org/about/contact-us, or stopping by between 1pm and 5pm Monday through Thursday.

2. We maintain a delivery service between all of the public libraries statewide, which represents an incredible geographic network for getting information out across the state. What services do you provide that you wish every New Mexican knew about? We can help make sure they do! Contact me directly to get pamphlets, brochures, posters, etc delivered through public libraries bookmobile stops, and books by mail: Eli.Guinnee@dca.nm.gov.

3. In turn, we need your help getting the word out about our free services. If you don't need Books by Mail, Library for the Blind and Print Disabled, online databases, and eBooks, you probably know someone who does. Send them our way!

What is the biggest misconception about the State Library?

Few people realize the wide variety of materials and services we offer, completely for free to all New Mexicans! We are a big and complex operation with several departments, each serving a particular audience. We truly have something for everyone!

Do you have a recommendation for a Spotlight on Leadership focus? Contact Carol Hetzler at rtroundtheroundhouse@gmail.com

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Department Of Game and Fish Employees Receive National Awards

By Darren Vaughan

The New Mexico Department of Game and Fish proudly announces that two of its employees recently received prestigious national awards in their respective fields.

Leland Pierce, the Department's herpetologist, received the Distinguished Service Award for 2024 from The Wildlife Society (TWS), while Desi Ortiz, the Department's Off-Highway Vehicle Program Manager, was named the OHV Program Manager of the Year from the National Off-Highway Vehicle Conservation Council (NOHVCC).



Department herpetologist Leland Pierce and big game program manager Nicole Tatman.

"We extend our heartfelt congratulations to Leland and Desi for their well-deserved awards and look forward to their continued contributions to wildlife conservation and responsible recreation in New Mexico," Department director Mike Sloane said. "Their work helps set the standard for hard-working Department staffers throughout the state."

The award given to Pierce recognizes "individuals who have dedicated their careers to advancing the mission of TWS and exemplify a commitment to serving the organization," according to a release from The Wildlife Society. Pierce was also lauded for his mentorship of students and early-career professionals, as well as his efforts to promote diversity, equity and inclusion in wildlife management.

Pierce's Department colleague, big game program director Nicole Tatman, highlighted Pierce's exceptional contributions. "Leland's leadership and longevity in his service to TWS are invaluable in guiding newcomers to board positions," Tatman said. "His enthusiasm for planning and participating in events that connect wildlife biologists is unmatched. To say Leland is 'always there' to support all levels of TWS is an understatement."



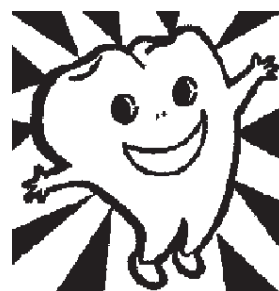
Department OHV program manager Desi Ortiz (second from left).

Ortiz was recognized for his significant contributions to responsible off-highway vehicle recreation at the annual NOHVCC conference last month in Minneapolis. Roger Pattison, president of the New Mexico Off-Highway Vehicle Alliance

(NMOHVA), said Ortiz's eagerness to work together with various organizations has greatly helped improve the OHV landscape in New Mexico.

"Desi and his coworkers frequently attend the NOHVCC conferences to enhance their understanding of OHV recreation and its environmental impacts," Pattison said. "Desi has a unique ability to see the big picture in projects, fostering collaboration to maximize limited grant funding for larger initiatives. His communication and partnership with organizations like the NMOHVA lead to successful project outcomes. We want to give him special recognition for his stellar work and collaborative spirit."

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Workers' Compensation Administration Yearly Awards

By Nicole Bazzano

Each year, the Workers' Compensation Administration honors the outstanding talent within our agency by selecting a Bureau, Manager, and Employee of the Year. While the selection process is always challenging due to the dedication and hard work of our staff, we are pleased to announce the winners for 2024.

Manager of the Year, Alexis Armijo- Alexis manages her Bureau efficiently and professionally. She is a team player and fosters that same environment with staff, ensuring they have the tools and resources needed to be successful. Alexis continuously strives to learn more about the agency and the work comp system and willingly takes on additional duties and projects when asked.



Employee of the Year, Veronica Purcell- Veronica brings knowledge and experience to the position that is invaluable. She is dependable, available, and always willing to help and has been a key source in moving toward finalizing our contracts for our modernization project by reaching out to multiple agencies to find answers to difficult questions. Veronica has gone above and beyond to assist Senior Management in keeping many of the finance functions afloat with a smile and positive attitude.

Bureau of the Year, Facilities- Alicia Tenorio, Mike Gauthier, Robert Gallegos, Freddy Ramirez. (adjacent photo Left to right)

The facilities bureau has coordinated major projects over the last year with tactfulness and efficiency. They coordinated with another agency and vendors to complete the projects, relocated staff to temporary workstations, and worked with IT and senior leadership to facilitate office moves throughout the building. They keep up with building maintenance and always strive to keep our building clean, safe, and operating. The facilities bureau maintains positive attitudes and exemplifies teamwork.



We would also like to honor the employees who have been with the agency for 5, 10, 20, and 25 years.

5 years: Michael Gauthier, Angela Gettler, Rebecca Lucero, Norma Nored

10 years: Catherine Farrell

20 years: Sarah Castro

25 years: Brenda Henderson

New Mexicans can Take Steps to Prevent Diabetes

By Robert Nott

November 14 was World Diabetes Day, a health observance created in 1991 by the World Health Organization and the International Diabetes Federation to raise awareness about diabetes as a public health threat and draw attention to actions people can take to prevent and manage the condition.

Some 12.5% of all New Mexicans were diagnosed with diabetes in 2023. Nearly a quarter of them are 65 years or older. The state's Hispanic/Latino population makes up nearly 15% of all cases. And 8.46% of all cases fall within the age range of 18 to 64.

While the causes of diabetes can vary by type, it can lead to excess sugar in your blood, which can in turn lead to serious health problems.

The New Mexico Department of Health's Diabetes Prevention and Control Program is "working to increase awareness of diabetes, pre-diabetes and the factors that put people at risk," said Lindsey Goodhue, director of the Diabetes and Heart Health Section of the New Mexico Department of Health. "Individuals who have a family history of diabetes, who are overweight, physically active less than three days a week, are 45 years of age and older, and have other chronic conditions, such as high blood pressure, are at higher risk of developing diabetes. It is important for these individuals to work with their medical provider to get screened so they can delay, prevent or manage their diabetes."

There are some steps New Mexicans can take to reduce their chances of becoming diabetic. These include:

- Reduce your total carb intake.
- Exercise regularly.
- Drink water as your primary beverage.
- Quit smoking.
- Try to lose excess weight.
- Reduce portion sizes.

Diabetes is not just a health problem in New Mexico. Nationwide, over 38 million people have been diagnosed with it.

Visit NMHealth online to learn more.





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ALTSD Celebrates the Retirement of Doug Calderwood and Patricia "Tup" Tupper after 20+ Years of Service

By Joey Long

It is with immense gratitude and a touch of bittersweetness that we celebrate the retirement of two extraordinary colleagues, Doug Calderwood and Patricia "Tup" Tupper. Their careers have been defined by unwavering dedication to the well-being of older adults and their tireless efforts to strengthen our communities.



Doug has been a pillar of the New Mexico Aging & Long-Term Services Department since 1995, serving as a steadfast advocate for older New Mexicans. Since 2001, he has overseen both the New Mexico Senior Community Service Employment Program and the New Mexico Senior Employment Program, helping countless seniors access meaningful employment opportunities. Doug's commitment to lifelong learning is evident in his impressive academic achievements, including a Master of Public Administration degree from the University of New Mexico in 2014 and a Master of Divinity from McCormick Theological Seminary in Chicago in 1987. Doug and his husband, Ken Cuthbertson, will remain in Albuquerque, where they plan to enjoy a well-deserved retirement.

"Tup" joined ALTSD in 2003, bringing with her a deep understanding of sociology and gerontology honed during her Master's studies at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. She has dedicated her career to highlighting the invaluable contributions of elders and creating opportunities for their knowledge and experience to benefit all. Since beginning her state service at the Department of Labor in 2000, Tup has been a champion for innovative approaches to aging services. She and her husband, Kurt Reed, plan to continue exploring the wonders of New Mexico together in retirement.

"Having had the privilege of working alongside Doug and Tup for many years—both at the local and state levels—I have witnessed firsthand their incredible commitment to senior participants and the communities they serve," said Denise King, Aging Network Operations Director. "Over the past five years, my admiration for their passion and dedication has only grown. They have inspired not only me but also countless others with their work ethic, compassion, and vision for what aging services can achieve. Doug and Tup leave behind a legacy that will endure for years to come. On behalf of the entire department, I extend my heartfelt thanks to them for their remarkable service and wish them both a retirement filled with joy, exploration, and fulfillment."

We will miss them dearly but celebrate this next chapter in their lives, knowing they have made a lasting difference in the lives of New Mexico's elders. Thank you, Doug and Tup!



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\$1.2M in State Job Training Funds Approved for October

JTIP applicants are hiring and training up to 117 trainees and interns

By Bruce Krasnow

The New Mexico Economic Development Department (EDD) approved Job Training Incentive Program funding in October to six businesses in Albuquerque, Santa Teresa, Sunland Park, and Los Alamos to add employees or train existing workers with modernized skills, EDD Cabinet Secretary-Designate Rob Black announced on October 24th.

The Job Training Incentive Program (JTIP) reimburses companies for training new employees and interns in qualifying jobs and for training current staff wishing to improve their skills for potential promotion through the Step Up Program. JTIP focuses on high-wage jobs and incentivizes hiring employees in rural areas, as well as for veterans and recent New Mexico higher education graduates. To learn more, visit the JTIP webpage at edd.newmexico.gov/JTIP.

Since Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham took office in 2019 the JTIP program has awarded over \$65 million for job training to 225 companies in

25 New Mexico counties.

“The JTIP program is giving businesses more confidence to expand and add employees,” EDD Secretary-Designate Black said. “The October round of funding not only supports new workers but gives existing employees the opportunity to learn new skills and earn a higher wage – and that is how we grow the economy.”

EDD approved seven JTIP awards to six companies in October, for a total of \$1,183,382. Average wages range from \$22 to \$59 per hour for businesses in the manufacturing, handcrafted jewelry, software development, cybersecurity, meat processing, and quantum technology industries.

- Franklin Mountain Packaging LLC, Santa Teresa, 2 trainees through the Step Up Program. Franklin Mountain Packaging (FMP) manufactures corrugated sheets and provides digital printing and die-cutting services for the corrugated box-making industry. Award amount: \$26,250



Photo courtesy of UbiQD, Los Alamos, NM.



Photo courtesy of Franklin Mountain Packaging, Santa Teresa, NM

- Infinity Labs, LLC, Albuquerque, 1 trainee at a wage of \$44.47. Infinity Labs serves the defense industry with software development, modeling and simulation, and general research and development. Amended award amount: \$25,437.
- Securin, Inc., Albuquerque, 10 trainees at an average wage of \$58.97 and 10 interns at an average wage of \$25.62. Securin was also approved for training 3 existing employees through Step Up. Securin provides customers with a comprehensive suite of security solutions such as ASM, VI, Vulnerability Management, and Penetration Testing. JTIP award amount: \$470,467. Step Up awarded: \$9,499
- Stampede Culinary Partners, Inc., Sunland Park, 80 trainees at an average wage of \$15.31. Stampede Culinary Partners is a provider of portion-controlled protein solutions, serving food service, retail channels, home delivery, and industrial channels. Award amount: \$455,830.
- Turquoise Skies, Albuquerque, 6 trainees at an average wage of \$22.33. Turquoise Skies offers authentic handcrafted Southwest jewelry manufacturing, produced by blending traditional handcrafting techniques with lost wax casting. Award amount: \$56,170
- UbiQD, Inc., Los Alamos, 5 trainees at an average wage of \$48.33. UbiQD is powering product innovation in agriculture, clean energy, and security. . Award amount: \$139,730

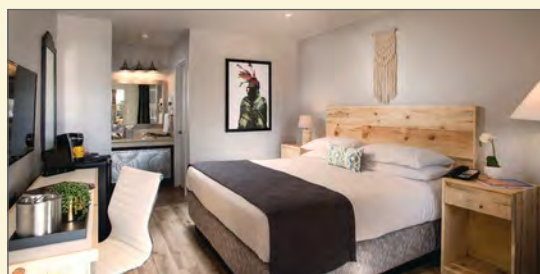
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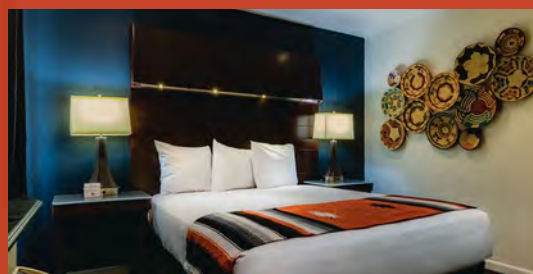


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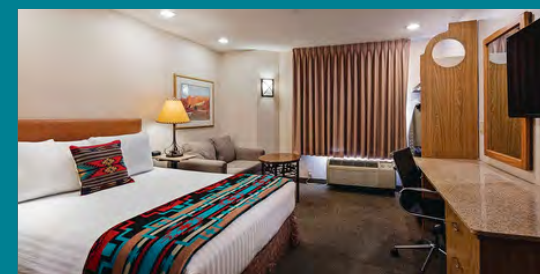


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Writing it Down- The Science Based Benefits

By Nick Mandel



Source, Molly Christian Tyler

Remember when blogging first began to appear in the late nineties? The practice that someone, whether obscure or a public figure, would write on some random topic and share it with whoever had an interest. At the time, many considered it peculiar and quirky, something that was expected to fade away like the pet rock and other oddities of the past. That quirk has mushroomed into approximately 600 million blogs, producing 7.5 million blog posts daily, read by 77 million people regularly in 2024, according to MasterBlogging.com.

While there are several reasons behind the above stats, it can't be

for the money alone. Less than 81% of bloggers make \$100 or more. One factor is the benefit of writing; whether for your industry, your personal interests, or for yourself. Writing on her own blog, Anne-Laure Le Cunff details the science-based benefits of writing. She offers several researched based reasons on why writing it down helps.

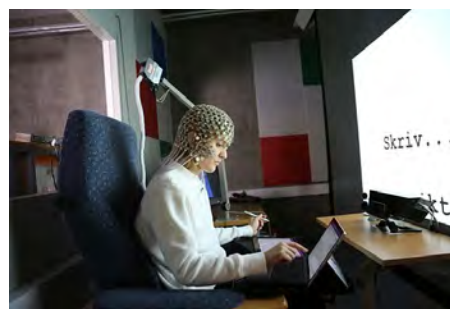
We all go through difficult experiences. One of the most difficult? Being fired. In a study done with engineers who were fired, they were asked to write down feelings, thoughts, and sensations. Those who practiced the act of blogging or you could call it journaling, on a regular basis, found themselves in better places. In eight months, those engineers, or 52% of them, who wrote down their thoughts on a regular basis found themselves reemployed compared to less than 19% of those who wrote their thoughts down. That 52% also

found themselves with less hostility and anger to their former employers, and less alcohol use.

In another study done at the university level, 81 undergraduates were asked to write about one of four topics, including one of their most traumatic life experiences, or about their life goals, with the other two being nonemotional control topics. Weeks later, subjective well-being was significantly better for the life goals group compared to the trauma group. However, months later, both groups found themselves with decreased illness compared to the control groups. The researcher's conclusion was that writing about self-regulatory topics leads to potential health related benefits.

For many, writing is a practice made simple and more convenient through your word processor and the other apps aligned with technology and easily shared. But the research also shows that writing things down with pen and paper provides further benefits than using tech alone.

Writing in Science News, Claudia Lopez Lloreda, describes several of them. Handwriting improves spelling accuracy, memory retention, conceptual understanding. Other benefits include improvements in mental health when journaling, creativity and problem solving, stress reduction and better focus and productivity.



Norwegian University of Science and Technology

In research from the Norwegian University of Science and Technology, professors Audrey van der Meer and Ruud van der Weel stuck electrodes on students' heads to learn if there were differences between handwriting in cursive and the use of a digital pen. Their findings showed a higher level of learning, sensory and motor processing, and possibly memory retention for those writing in cursive.

The researchers go on to espouse adoption of handwriting, even if it is not cursive, in schools and particularly among younger students should be used. They caution that the use of keyboards and other forms of digital learning is misguided and can affect the learning process in a negative way. It concludes the intricate and precisely controlled handwriting movements aid in learning and remembering.

The State of California have adopted a similar position on the value of handwriting. In 2023 it established amendment AB-446 to the education code that student instruction in cursive handwriting for grades 1 to 6 is a requirement for instruction in science, social science, math, English, and other subject areas. It has joined twenty-three other states that require similar instruction in cursive handwriting. Correspondingly, the U.K., Norway, Japan, and other countries have adopted their own standards.

As a Catholic grade school product, I am grateful for those challenging lessons learned in my handwriting journey. While my handwriting is not as precise as my grade school days, I still value it for special writing tasks. While I would not go back to writing this column or other extended essays with manual writing, when I do journaling, goal setting, or personal assessments, as well as writing thank your and condolence notes, handwritten notes have a different and unique meaning of communication compared to digital communication.

Remembering my state government days, especially when in an office setting, December was a particularly slow month of the year. Being such, it was an excellent opportunity to reflect, assess and plan for the upcoming year in words and writing. This might be a time for you to engage in your own professional and personal blogging. From the research provided, the practice of spending time on this activity can provide benefits for you and yours in the year ahead.

Nick Mandel can be reached at promandel@gmail.com

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Our Office does not provide legal advice to private individuals. If you need legal advice or representation, you may want to contact a private attorney. The New Mexico State Bar can help you find an attorney: 505-797-6066.

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.

Giving the Gift of Education is Easy with The Education Plan®

By Carolyn Fittipaldi



Instead of buying toys or clothes this holiday season, consider giving the gift of education. A 529 education savings plan is a unique gift option that will make a lasting, positive impact on the lives of your loved ones. Consider opening an account or making a gift contribution to an existing 529 account.

The Education Plan®, a 529 education savings plan sponsored by the State of New Mexico, is easy to set up and can be started with no minimum contribution required. While regular contributions provide the biggest impact on account growth long-term, any contributions that fit into your budget will make a difference.

The Education Plan makes it easy for friends and family to give a gift contribution directly into your 529 account at any time. Account owners have online access to gifting through Ugift® which provides a unique gift code to account owners to share with friends and family to invite them to give a gift contribution through a one-time gift or recurring

contribution. There is a gifting section on The Education Plan website with downloadable gift coupons for holidays or special occasions as well as suggestions for how parents can broach the conversation with others about gift contributions to a 529 plan and a short video about how to accept gifts into your 529 account. The ReadySave 529 app also makes it easy to invite friends and family to help give savings a boost.

As families look for gift ideas this holiday season, the College Savings Foundation (CSF) has released recent research results showing that families are using, planning for and willing to ask for higher education savings gifts for their children.

65% of parents across the country will ask friends or family to contribute to their child's 529 plan for this holiday season and major events, according to the national non-profit's 2024 State of Higher Education Survey of 1,000 parents across the country. The survey also showed that the majority of parents, 55%, are knowledgeable about gifting, aware

that they can ask anyone for 529 gifts, up from 36% in 2023.

Contributions to a 529 account for a beneficiary are considered gifts for tax purposes. Effective January 1, 2025, the federal annual gift tax exclusion will increase from \$18,000 in 2024 to \$19,000 for a single individual and from \$36,000 to \$38,000 for married couples. For 529 plans, contributions in 2025 of up to \$95,000 for a single contributor (or \$190,000 for married couples) can be made in a single year and applied against the annual gift tax exclusion equally over a five-year period. This is another great way to jumpstart a child's or grandchild's education savings account while utilizing gifting exclusions. With this change, families can invest more for the next generation.

Whether planning for your children, grandchildren, or a loved one, investing in a 529 education savings plan is a meaningful gift that can last a lifetime. By opening a 529 plan and adding money to it as you're able, you're paving the way for a more successful fu-

ture. Every little bit saved can help to cover education costs and can open doors to future career opportunities and financial stability for the beneficiary. Research shows that with just \$500 saved for college, a child is three times more likely to attend college and four times more likely to graduate than those without any savings.

In addition to making a thoughtful holiday gift, contributions are tax-deductible from New Mexico state income taxes and grow tax-free, and withdrawals are tax-free when used for qualified expenses. Savings in the 529 account can be used to pay for tuition, room and board, books, supplies, and computers at community colleges, universities, trade schools, or vocational schools across the United States. Funds can also be used to pay for K-12 tuition and apprenticeship expenses.

To learn more about The Education Plan®, visit www.TheEducationPlan.com.

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North Central Regional Transit District Receives Prestigious GFOA Awards

Honor Marks 9th Consecutive Year to Receive National Accounting Awards

By Rick L'Amie

The North Central Regional Transit District (NCRTD) is proud to announce it has received three esteemed awards from the Government Finance Officers Association of the United States and Canada (GFOA). The District was awarded the Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting and the Distinguished Budget Presentation Award, recognizing its commitment to transparency, excellence, and effective financial management.

The Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting was awarded to NCRTD for its annual comprehensive financial report for the fiscal year ended June 30, 2023. This prestigious recognition is awarded to entities that demonstrate a constructive "spirit of full disclosure," clearly communicating their financial narrative. The report was evaluated by an impartial panel and met the rigorous standards set forth by GFOA, making this honor a significant milestone for the District

and its management team.

The NCRTD has also received the Distinguished Budget Presentation Award, acknowledging its exemplary budget document for the current fiscal year beginning July 1, 2024. This award reflects the dedication of both the governing body and staff to uphold the highest principles of governmental budgeting. To qualify, the budget document must serve as a policy document, a financial plan, an operations guide, and a communications device—all rated "proficient" across fourteen mandatory criteria. The District's successful achievement in these areas illustrates its commitment to effective governance and financial accountability.

In addition, the District has received GFOA's Award for Outstanding Achievement in Popular Annual Financial Reporting (PAFR Award) for its Popular Annual Financial Report for the fiscal year ended June 30, 2023. The Award represents a significant achievement by the entity.

In order to be eligible for the PAFR Award, a government must also submit its annual comprehensive financial report to GFOA's Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting Program and receive the Certificate for the current fiscal year. Each eligible report is reviewed by judges who evaluate the report based on the following categories: reader appeal, understandability, distribution methods, creativity and other elements.

Winning the PAFR award makes the NCRTD eligible to receive the 2023 GFOA Triple Crown Award. To qualify, each entity must meet the high standards of all three separate award programs. Each award program recognizes governments that produce reports which communicate their financial stories in a transparent manner and meet applicable standards.

"We are honored to receive these awards from GFOA for the ninth



Top photo- Michelle Valencia, Finance Specialist; Tim Mildren, CFO, NCRTD
Bottom photo-Laurel Romero, Marketing and Graphic Design Specialist, NCRTD, Tim Mildren, CFO, NCRTD

consecutive year, which recognizes our dedication to transparency and excellence in financial management," said NCRTD Executive Director Anthony Mortillaro. "These achievements reflect the hard work and commitment of our staff and leadership to serve our community effectively."



Community Spotlight

BROUGHT TO YOU BY



Founded in late 1979, Roadrunner Food Bank of New Mexico has been serving New Mexicans experiencing hunger since 1980 thanks to a vision by founder Reverend Titus Scholl. Reverend Scholl started the organization by distributing food to people facing hunger out of the trunk of a car.

From those humble beginnings and more than forty years later, we and our statewide network of hunger-relief partners believe that everyone should have enough to eat. The food bank serves as a distribution hub and provides food to hundreds of affiliated partners around the state including food pantries, soup kitchens, shelters, and regional food banks. Roadrunner also distributes food through its own specialized programs helping children, families, and seniors through food distribution sites at schools, low-income seniors housing sites, senior centers and healthcare locations.

Through this statewide hunger-relief network, we are helping tens of thousands of people experiencing hunger in our state every week.

In addition to being a part of a statewide network of hunger-relief organizations, we are also the local member of Feeding America (a national network of 200 food bank members across the U.S.). Being part of a national network of food banks provides best practices, funding, and secures food donations from national food companies bringing food sources for the benefit of our communities throughout the state.

To get involved, consider giving time, donating food, or contributing funds to help solve hunger. Visit www.rrfb.org/volunteer to learn more about volunteering or giving online at www.rrfb.org. Every \$1 gift allows us to distribute 5 meals in communities throughout New Mexico to acquire healthy and nutritious food for the benefit of the people we serve.

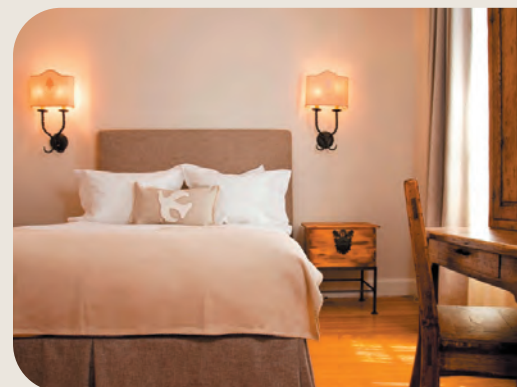


In 2023, HOLMANS USA donated over \$200,000 to local charities. We believe in celebrating organizations that make New Mexico a better place. By shining a light on our local nonprofits, we aim to raise awareness and support for those making a difference in our New Mexico community. To learn more, please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

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Above: Inn and Spa at Loretto. Right: Hotel Chimayó de Santa Fe, Hotel St. Francis, Eldorado Hotel & Spa



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December 12 | 7:00 to 8:15 pm
Plaza Mayor

Join us for a holiday celebration illuminated by the world's tallest 'Luminito,' a 20-foot-tall, steel-reinforced structure inspired by New Mexico's traditional holiday lights. The event will also feature performances by Matachine dancers, holiday refreshments, food trucks, and a flashlight storywalk featuring Rudolfo Anaya's beloved children's book, *The Farolitos of Christmas: A New Mexico Christmas Story*. Free event but please register... <https://my.nmculture.org/42044/42045>



Festival Ballet Albuquerque: Nutcracker in the Land of Enchantment

December 20 - 22 | Albuquerque Journal Theatre
7:00 pm Friday, Saturday & Sunday
2:00 pm Saturday & Sunday

Festival Ballet Albuquerque presents an original production, *Nutcracker in the Land of Enchantment*. The beloved holiday classic is transported to territorial New Mexico in the late 1800s, with added elements of the state's heritage and traditions including Spanish dancers, southwestern snakes, sheep and shepherdesses, a lively fandango, a storyteller doll with children, and lavish western Victorian-era costumes.



For tickets....<https://my.nmculture.org/overview/37524>

New Deputy Director of the New Mexico Museum of Natural History & Science

Shannon Bay brings a wealth of museum experience
By Stephen Hamway

New Mexico Museum of Natural History & Science (NMMNHS) is thrilled to announce that Shannon Bay has been named the museum's Deputy Director, bringing nearly two decades of experience at New Mexico museums to NMMNHS.



"Shannon brings a wealth of experience developing and implementing innovative programs that support the missions of some of New Mexico's best-known museums," said NMMNHS Executive Director Dr. Anthony Fiorillo. "We're very excited to have her join our team."

Bay is a museum professional with 18 years of extensive experience in program and project management, execution, and evaluation. Since February 2022 she has served as the Deputy Director of the New Mexico Museum of Art (NMMA) in Santa Fe, where she has overseen facilities, finances, human resources, and education. Prior to joining NMMA, she worked as the Education Program Manager at the Georgia O'Keeffe Museum, where she began her museum career in 2006 as an intern with the education department. Over the next 16 years, she held various positions at the O'Keeffe Museum developing and implementing public programs, community outreach, school partnerships, and out-of-school time programming for youth.

"I am excited to join the team at the New Mexico Museum of Natural History & Science," Bay said. "I'm looking forward to working alongside the dedicated professionals at the Museum to engage, inspire, and connect visitors of all ages from across the state of New Mexico with the awe-inspiring science that shapes our understanding of life on Earth."

Bay holds a Master of Business Administration degree, with an emphasis on Strategic Leadership, from the University of New Mexico, and a Bachelor of Fine Arts from Wayne State University in Detroit. She grew up in the Detroit area and has called New Mexico home since 2007. She serves as a co-lead of the Santa Fe Community Educators Network, the Membership Chair for the New Mexico Association of Museums, and as a member of the National Leadership Team for her sorority Kappa Delta. Shannon shares a home with her husband Jon, their five-year-old Henry, and two cats, Islay and Kiki.

Bay's first day as Deputy Director of NMMNHS was Tuesday, Nov. 12. There will be a transitional period where she completes various tasks at NMMA.

Department OHV Program Unveils New Website

The New Mexico Department of Game and Fish's Off-Highway Vehicle Program unveiled its new website, RideNM.org, featuring important information for OHV users in a user-friendly format.



The new website features easy-to-navigate drop-down menus, giving the public easy access to important information regarding OHV recreation in New Mexico. The site also includes an educational video that also shows off spectacular scenery from throughout the state while also discussing what it means to be an ethical rider. In addition, the site provides quick and easy links to the Department's hands-on OHV youth safety classes, as well as online youth safety training providers.

The site's Laws and Rules page includes a list of prohibited OHV uses, safety requirements for youth operators and passengers under 18 years of age and links to paved road ordinances and resolutions passed by city and county governments across the state. The Contacts page provides quick links to get in touch with the Department's OHV Program staff as well as partner organizations.

The site will soon feature a downloadable map available for online or offline use. This map will allow OHV operators to access trail information as well as paved-road-use ordinances.

For more information about the Department's OHV Program, contact Program Manager Desi Ortiz at desi.ortiz@dgf.nm.gov or 505-222-4718.

Prepare to Thrive in 2025

By **Karyn Lujan**



Every year, the IRS announces the latest contribution limits for 457b retirement savings accounts. The limits for 2025 have increased, giving you the opportunity to save even more today to help achieve your future goals.

- Maximum Annual Deferral \$23,500
- Maximum Age 50-59 and 64 and older Catch-Up \$31,000
- Maximum Age 60-63 Catch Up \$34,750
- Maximum Three-Year Special 457(b) Catch-Up \$47,000 (must qualify; cannot be combined with other CU options)

How much can you afford to save each paycheck for retirement?

Planning for retirement can seem daunting at times but breaking it down into manageable steps can make the process much more approachable. A new year is a good time to check the status of your progress and determine if you're saving as much as you can for retirement each paycheck. Here are some key considerations to help you make this decision.

Assess your retirement goals

How do you want to live in retirement? Consider the lifestyle you want to maintain in retirement, including your living expenses, travel plans and any other activities you wish to pursue. That will determine if you're saving enough and encourage you to find additional ways to save if you're not.

Understand your current financial situation

You can't look to the future without also considering your current financial situation. That includes your current monthly income, regular expenses, existing debt, and any savings you've already accumulated. This will help you determine how much you can realistically set aside from each paycheck. It's important to strike a balance between saving for retirement and meeting your current financial obligations.

Save as much as you can

Do you update your retirement savings rate in the Plan every time your salary increases? A long-term financial goal could be to save at least 15% of your income for retirement. This may vary depending on your individual circumstances and retirement goals, but you're more likely to accomplish this by gradually increasing your savings over time. You can also set up your account to automatically increase your contributions at a rate and frequency that's right for you. This way, you won't have to rely on willpower alone to save and you'll be less tempted to spend the money elsewhere.

*Source: 4Q24 PERA SmartSave Newsletter

New Mexico State Police Participate in C.A.R.E. Operation over Thanksgiving Weekend

By **Amanda Richards**

During Thanksgiving weekend, the New Mexico State Police participated in the Combined Accident Reduction Effort (C.A.R.E.) operation, which was implemented across all roadways in the state. The initiative aims to enhance motorist safety and decrease the number of crashes by maintaining a strong law enforcement presence.

Due to the increased volume of traffic during the holiday, the New Mexico State Police (NMSP) enhanced patrol presence on roadways across all twelve State Police districts. This initiative took place during the busiest travel days of Thanksgiving weekend, specifically from Wednesday, November 27, 2024, to Sunday, December 1, 2024.

The operation led to State Police officers issuing more than 4,000 traffic citations, including 140 for failure to wear seat belts. Additionally, 22 arrests for impaired driving were made across the state. Officers also investigated 48 crashes, four of which involved alcohol. The Commercial Vehicle Enforcement Bureau issued 64 citations for commercial vehicles and conducted 71 commercial vehicle inspections.

The New Mexico State Police prioritizes motorist safety. Officers will continue to conduct holiday travel operations throughout the year. NMSP encourages the public to drive safely and follow all traffic laws while traveling on New Mexico's roadways.



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 rtroundhouse@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 January 3, 2025. Look in January's 'Round The Roundhouse' for the winning announcement along with another photo contest to enter. Good luck!

Congratulations to the November's winner Lloyd Moiola, EMNRD. His name was selected in the drawing of correct entries. November's photo location was Madrid, the Oscar Huber Memorial Ballpark. Bon Appetit!



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New Mexico Museum of Art to Showcase "The Plain of Smokes"

By Ashley Espinoza

The New Mexico Museum of Art is proud to announce The Plain of Smokes an exhibition showcasing 20 prints from the acclaimed illustrated poetry book of the same name. The exhibition opens Saturday, December 14, 2024, and will remain on view until June 29, 2025.

"We are thrilled to bring The Plain of Smokes to the New Mexico Museum of Art," said Dr. Mark White, Executive Director. "This exhibition not only highlights the remarkable partnership between Harvey Mudd and Ken Price but also offers our visitors an exploration of place, memory, and artistic dialogue. It's a testament to the enduring power of collaboration in art."

In the late 1970s, poet and environmental activist Harvey Mudd teamed up with "surfer-artist" and noted ceramist Ken Price in Taos, New Mexico, to create a vivid tribute to their shared Los Angeles roots. Published by Arabesque Books in 1981, The Plain of Smokes is a 75-page book of poetry by Mudd with bold, provocative illustrations by Price. The collaboration is an evocative neo-noir portrayal of Los Angeles, interpreted through the artists' unique perspectives from the high desert of northern New Mexico.

"This exhibition is a rare opportunity to witness the profound interplay of poetry and visual art," said Katie Doyle, Curator. "Mudd and Price captured the essence of Los Angeles in a way that is both timeless and uniquely personal, creating a body of work that resonates far beyond the original context."

The New Mexico Museum of Art is privileged to own the 62nd edition of 150 copies of The Plain of Smokes printed by SOMA Fine Art Press in San Francisco, under the direction of master printer Gary Lichtenstein. Visitors to the exhibition will have the rare opportunity to experience these extraordinary prints, which represent the profound intersection of poetry and visual art.

The museum invites art lovers, poetry enthusiasts, and those curious about the cultural dialogue between place and memory to explore this compelling exhibition.



Top left-OSA

Top right-Renee Narvaiz, Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham, Shawna Rosales

Left-(EMNRD) Back row, Mike Tompson, Samantha Rynas, Anna Squires, Veihl, Ashley, Livia De Viterbo Barbosa Ramos, Daniela Chacon, kneeling front ..Meghan McDonald, Alaina Osimowicz, and Leeland Murray



Halloween 2024

(Our November edition went to print on 10/31)

Left: DoIT
Bottom: OSA



Bottom 5 top row: left OSA, then SRCA
Middle row: DOT-Chelsie Alba, Lulu Lopez & Bo Laws then NMED-OSHA
Last row: DOT staff pumpkins



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NMDOT D1 Employees of the Month
November 2024

By Ami Evans

Employee of the Month- Doug Damewood 41-28

Doug is being recognized for his exceptional service and professionalism. Doug consistently responds quickly and handles every situation with a positive attitude and a smile. Whether it was assisting with the Las Cruces Fuel Tank Inspections or getting the Solano Yard Gates back in operation, Doug's contributions and the positive influence he brings is invaluable to everyone around him.



Beyond Doug's hands-on support, he also takes the initiative to organize and lead critical safety trainings, including First Aid and CPR. Doug's commitment to safety, combined with his can-do attitude, makes him a key asset to our team.



Supervisor of the Month-Ray Garces 41-43

Ray has over six years of experience as a Patrol Supervisor, he has consistently demonstrated exceptional skills in managing and mentoring his crew. Rays' leadership style goes beyond simply overseeing daily tasks as he actively works to improve crew morale. Rays approachable demeanor and positive attitude create a supportive environment where team members feel valued and are motivated to perform their best. Always ensuring that everyone on his crew has opportunities for growth and development, providing valuable training that has greatly enhanced the team's overall performance and skill set.

Ray responsiveness to call-outs and attentiveness to constituent concerns are also a testament to his dedication. The ability to address issues promptly and efficiently not only ensures smooth operations but also builds trust and confidence with the community. Once again, congratulations on this well-deserved recognition.

Crew of the Month-Socorro Patrol 41-57

The Socorro Maintenance Patrol team has consistently exemplified excellence in their daily work, demonstrating a high level of professionalism and teamwork. They have played a key role in handling both routine roadway maintenance tasks and unexpected challenges with efficiency and expertise. Their dedication to maintaining a safe, efficient, and clean environment for the community has been evident over the past few months.



The team has gone above and beyond by proactively preventing potential hazards, your ability to anticipate and resolve roadway maintenance needs has kept our roadways running smoothly.

Their strong collaboration and clear communication have been instrumental in ensuring all tasks are completed on time. The team's willingness to work together, engage with other departments, and respond to

DHSEM Pushes for Enhanced Disaster Readiness
\$5.6 M budget addresses gaps in emergency management capacity

By Danielle Silva

The New Mexico Department of Homeland Security & Emergency Management and the State Fire Marshal's Office (DHSEM/SFMO) is requesting \$5.6 million for fiscal year 2026 to enhance support New Mexican emergency responders.



"Disasters aren't going to stop happening. And as we've seen in the last few months, they are coming faster than before," said Interim Secretary Maj. Gen. Miguel Aguilar. "Investing in this agency will allow us to properly staff the EOC and better support local, county, and tribal emergency managers, and the citizens of New Mexico."

The State Emergency Operations Center (EOC) run through DHSEM has been activated four times in fiscal year 2024. The activations included wildfire, severe weather, and Election Day support, aiding all New Mexico all counties, including 11 under a federal major disaster declaration.

In addition to providing resources for disaster response, the proposed budget includes:

- \$1 million for improvements to facilities, including the State EOC.
- \$275,000 for upgrades to department IT infrastructure.
- \$480,000 for emergency towers used for backup public safety communication.
- \$220,000 for increase capacity for disaster finance management.

Additionally, SFMO is requesting \$40 million in Capital Outlay funding for updates to facilities and equipment at the State Fire Academy.

"DHSEM is a critical piece of public safety before, during, and after disasters – regardless of cause – and planned large-scale events. Approval of this budget will give DHSEM the ability to continue supporting New Mexico communities, especially during some of their most difficult moments," said Maj. Gen. Aguilar.

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Marisa Romero-marisa.romero@doh.nm.gov (505)946-8250

First-Time College Enrollment in New Mexico Up 9%

By **Tripp Stelnicki**

Freshman college enrollment continues to surge in New Mexico, the Higher Education Department announced November 13th.

First-time enrollment in colleges and universities has risen 9.2 percent statewide, according to data for the fall 2024 semester.

This is yet another year-over-year increase in first-time, full-time college participation in New Mexico; meanwhile, the national trend is heading in the opposite direction.

According to preliminary fall semester data from the National Student Clearinghouse Research Center, freshman enrollment in 2024 is down 5 percent. National data is showing notable declines in enrollment at both public and private non-profit colleges as well as colleges that serve low-income students.

Freshman enrollment in New Mexico has increased each of the last four fall semesters, from 9,810 new students reporting in 2021 to 12,077 this fall, an increase of 23.1 percent over that time period.

"We can safely assert the New Mexico Opportunity Scholarship, with its inclusive and expansive approach to tuition-free higher education, has made a real difference for thousands of New Mexicans," said Higher Education Secretary Stephanie M. Rodriguez. "New Mexico is bucking national trends and spreading more opportunity to more young adults — and we will continue to make every effort to reach more prospective students and provide more career pathways to New Mexicans."

New first-time, full-time college enrollment in New Mexico increased at every category of higher education institution (research universities, comprehensive universities, branch community colleges and independent community colleges).

More broadly, college enrollment overall in New Mexico has risen each of the last three academic years and 9.6 percent in total since 2021.

Each of the categories of higher education institution has seen an increase in enrollment in that time:

- 8.1 percent for enrollment at research universities
- 13.5 percent for comprehensive universities
- 15.1 percent for branch community colleges
- 7.5 percent for independent community colleges

Current and prospective students can learn more about the Opportunity Scholarship at ReachHigherNM.com.

The New Mexico Higher Education Department was established in 2005 and oversees the state's public and tribal colleges, universities and special schools. It also oversees adult education and literacy programs statewide, manages state-funded financial aid programs and capital projects for higher education institutions, provides college readiness services via the GEAR UP program, and grants state authorization to private colleges operating within New Mexico. For more information, visit hed.nm.gov or follow us on X, Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn at @NMHigherEd. To learn more about tuition-free college via New Mexico's Opportunity and Lottery scholarships, visit reachhighernm.com.



Winter Potholes on New Mexico Roads

By **Travis Martinez**

As roadway temperatures begin to fluctuate between warm and cold, and we see the winter roadway freeze-thaw cycle in full effect, travelers unfortunately also see potholes forming in northeastern New Mexico.



Potholes are caused by the expansion and contraction of moisture under asphalt roadway surfaces, and winter weather brings snow and ice which is the main source of this moisture potholes become more prevalent, especially in northern New Mexico. As winter snow and ice begin to melt and pavement contracts, gaps or voids form underneath the surface. This continuous "freeze-thaw" cycle weakens the pavement and allows it to continue cracking, and with weight of passing vehicles weakens the pavement causing it to break and create a pothole.

For the New Mexico Department of Transportation (NMDOT), pothole patching becomes an important operation to preserve the roadway which keeps motorists safe while traveling. Weather conditions also impede the NMDOT as low temperatures prevent the aggregate materials used for pothole patching from properly adhering. Pothole patching is generally performed either as an emergency repair under harsh conditions or as routine maintenance scheduled during warmer and drier periods. Pothole patching can be performed during weather conditions ranging from clear spring days to harsh winter storms.

The NMDOT will perform the Throw and Roll method which consists of placing bagged cold mix material into a pothole (which may or may not be filled with water or debris) and is then quickly compacted and crews move on to the next pothole. Although this method is not considered the best way to patch potholes, it is the most common method during winter because of its high rate of production. The alternative method, which is the semi-permanent method, consists of removing water and debris from the pothole, squaring up the sides of the patch area until vertical sides exist, placement of asphalt mix, followed by compaction with a single-drum vibratory roller.

In Northeastern New Mexico, both pothole repair methods cost over 2 million dollars combined per year. This includes the cost of materials, labor, and equipment usage. Pothole patching is essential in maintaining our roadways as it is key to keeping a safe and reliable roadway system for the traveling public.

As the NMDOT continues to address potholes throughout New Mexico roadways, travelers can help by slowing down on highways affected by storm-related potholes. Reducing speed and staying alert on the roadway is always a must, especially after winter storms. Permanent repairs will continue as the weather permits. The NMDOT is committed to the safety of the traveling public and appreciates your cooperation with all roadway repairs.



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'Round The Roundhouse

ECECD's 'The Early Show with Alax' Wins a Regional Emmy

The puppet show delivers educational content for adults, while also delighting young children

By Julia Sclafani

The Early Childhood Education and Care Department's (ECECD) YouTube series, "The Early Show with Alax," received a prestigious regional Emmy Award from the Rocky Mountain Chapter of the National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences last week.



The show, which engages parents and caregivers on topics relating to early childhood development and raising young children, earned recognition in the education content category at an awards ceremony on Saturday, Nov. 16 in Phoenix.

"I love Alax! It's great that 'The Early Show' has been a hit with New Mexico families," said Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham. "Our Early Childhood Education and Care Department has become a national leader in providing quality early childhood programs since it was established just four years ago. Winning an Emmy is another well-deserved recognition of these efforts."

"At ECECD, we are building a family-centered, high-quality, prenatal-to-5 system focused on innovation," said ECECD Sec. Elizabeth Groginsky. "This Emmy win is a huge honor and recognition of that effort. We are so proud of Alax! The show and its success highlight our work to engage New Mexico families in a fun and judgement-free way about topics and resources relevant to raising our youngest New Mexicans."

"The Early Show with Alax" got its start in 2023, developed by ECECD's partner, MediaDesk, a New Mexico-based creative agency, and with support from Film Nest Studios. The third season of "The Early Show with Alax!" is anticipated next spring.

"This Emmy is an encouraging message to keep going," said Sommer Betlej, creative director at MediaDesk and the show's founder. "Alax always says, 'They say it takes a village, but I say it takes a galaxy!' And that's true— we're glad to keep being that galaxy for New Mexico families."

The show delivers ECECD's educational messaging and early childhood resources to New Mexico families, emphasizing creativity and surprise. The show's host, Alax, an intergalactic ambassador of care, interviews experts and learns alongside parents and caregivers while incorporating humor and showing that it's OK for adults not to have all the answers. The series covers a wide range of topics relevant to adults raising young children including safe sleep, the importance of play, language development and literacy, milestones, fatherhood, pregnancy, and PreK.

Alax is performed in both English and Spanish by Santa Fe-based puppeteer Devon Hawkes Ludlow. In addition to MediaDesk and Film Nest Studios, the show is backed by a research team that includes New Mexico PBS, the University of New Mexico (UNM) Cradle to Career Policy Institute, and the UNM Family Development Program.

All episodes of "The Early Show with Alax," including a series of "Ask Alax" shorts, are available on YouTube: youtube.com/@EarlyShowAlax. For more information visit: TheEarlyShow.org



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- 12.21.24 Hip Hop for the Holidays @ 8:30PM
- 12.27.24 Bill Hearne @ 8PM
- 12.29.24 Swing Soleil @ 1PM

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