



'ROUND THE ROUNDHOUSE



New Mexico
STATE EMPLOYEES' NEWSPAPER

Volume 37, Issue Number 4
April 7 to May 4, 2025

Drug take back
and shred day, pg 30



Where is Cooper? pg 28



SLO wins again!
pg 7



Summer Reading
Program
pg 19



Governor signs bills
pgs 5, 19 & 20



pg 24

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Senate Confirms Heather Jordan as New Workers' Compensation Director

By Kellee Wiede

On March 5th, the New Mexico Senate confirmed Heather Jordan as the director for the New Mexico Workers' Compensation Administration (WCA).



"Director Jordan is a dedicated public servant with decades of experience leading teams and prioritizing New Mexico's needs. Her background in the workers' compensation industry ensures a smooth transition as she takes on the leadership of the Workers' Compensation Administration." said Senator Elizabeth "Liz" Stefanics, who sponsored Jordan.

"I am truly honored to lead the Workers' Compensation Administration and to serve the dedicated workers' compensation community. I look forward to fostering collaboration and ensuring fair and efficient processes as New Mexicans work through the workers' compensation system." said Jordan.

Before assuming leadership of the Workers' Compensation Administration, Jordan dedicated over a decade to the agency, steadily advancing through key leadership roles. She was appointed Deputy Director in early 2024 after previously serving as the Court and Programs Administrator and Clerk of the Court. Prior to her tenure with the agency, Jordan spent 20 years serving the City of Albuquerque and Bernalillo County at the Metropolitan Detention Center, where she played a vital role in justice system operations. She holds a Bachelor of Arts in Criminal Justice, providing her with a strong foundation in policy and public administration. Her passion for service continues to drive her leadership in enhancing community outreach and strengthening agency operations.

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New Mexico
STATE EMPLOYEES' NEWSPAPER

A monthly publication for and about
New Mexico's State Employees

'ROUND THE ROUNDHOUSE

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Santa Fe, NM 87501

www.roundtheroundhouse.com

'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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Next publication date is May 5th
Deadline is Friday, April 25th, 2025



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Senate Confirms Rob Black as Economic Development Department Secretary

By Bruce Krasnow

The New Mexico Senate on March 19th unanimously confirmed Rob Black as the cabinet secretary for the Economic Development Department.

“Sec. Black understands that expanding economic security starts with creating high-quality jobs,” Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham said. “Rob is proving that his broad experience and consensus-building skills will grow our economy and expand opportunity in all corners of the state.”



Born and raised in Lovington, Black graduated from the University of New Mexico and the University of California College of the Law, San Francisco.

“For many years, I have worked closely with Rob Black to expand early childhood education, improve access to broadband internet, and grow high-paying jobs in all corners of the state,” Sen. Michael Padilla Majority Whip said. “He has been working tirelessly throughout this session on advancing strategic economic development initiatives that will diversify the economy and further improve the lives of New Mexico families. On behalf of the people of New Mexico and the New Mexico Senate, it was an honor to sponsor this appointment and I congratulate him on confirmation as Cabinet Secretary of the Economic Development Department.”

“I am humbled by the support of the Legislature, Gov. Lujan Grisham, and the people of New Mexico,” Secretary Black said. “It is an honor to lead a team of dedicated professionals whose mission is to create pathways to prosperity for all New Mexico families.”

Most recently, Black served as the president & CEO of the New Mexico Chamber of Commerce, where he led the statewide business leadership and advocacy organization of more than 500 members. During his tenure at the New Mexico Chamber, Black launched the NMCEO, a foundation that partners with the New Mexico Department of Workforce Solutions to run Be Pro Be Proud, a statewide Career and Technical Education engagement program as well as the New Mexico Organized Retail Crime Association.

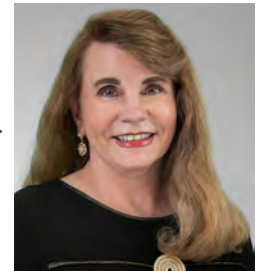
Prior to his work at the chamber, Black was senior director of community relations and managed the foundation for Pacific Gas and Electric Company, one of the largest combined electric and gas utilities in the United States.

Black also has an extensive background in public policy, having worked as a legislative aide in San Francisco and as an attorney specializing in campaign, lobby, and ethics laws. His global experience includes working with The Carter Center in Liberia and directing a USAID grant to support electoral and legislative processes in South Africa, Zambia and Cambodia. He also ran the Special Projects Department for the Screen Actors Guild, assisting with contract negotiations between the Guild and the Motion Picture Association of America.

Senate Confirms Melanie Kenderdine as EMNRD Secretary

By Sidney Hill

On March 10th, the New Mexico Senate confirmed Melanie Kenderdine as cabinet secretary for the Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources Department.



“Sec. Kenderdine has earned a reputation as a global thought leader in energy deployment strategies that promote economic growth and protect the environment,” said Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham. “Her expertise will continue to help my administration leverage the state’s natural resources responsibly for the benefit of all New Mexicans.”

“Over the past 11 months, Secretary Designate Kenderdine has made valuable contributions to boosting economic development in our state through the use of clean-energy technologies,” said Senate President Pro Tem Mimi Stewart. “I was honored to sponsor her confirmation in the Senate and look forward to continue working with her on issues that are important to New Mexico.”

“I want to thank Gov. Lujan Grisham for giving me the opportunity to serve my home state as secretary of the Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources Department,” Kenderdine said. “I am grateful to be part of a team that is playing a central role in helping to shape a bright and prosperous future for New Mexico.”

Since being named EMNRD Sec. Designate, Kenderdine has overseen several successful initiatives including grants for home energy efficiency upgrades for low-income New Mexico households; reducing methane emissions from orphaned wells; and overseeing the cleanup of abandoned mines scattered across the state.

Before joining EMNRD, Kenderdine was co-founder, principal and executive vice president of the Energy Futures Initiative, a Washington, D.C.-based nonprofit dedicated to harnessing the power of technology and policy innovation to accelerate the clean energy transition. She also held high-level positions at the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) in both the Obama and Clinton administrations.

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

During the Clinton administration, she was a primary architect of the Strategic Petroleum Reserve oil exchange of 2000, the creation of the Northeast Home Heating Oil Reserve, and the return of the Naval Oil Shale Reserve No. 2 to the Ute tribe in Utah, the largest land transfer back to Native Americans in the lower 48 in over 100 years.

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Governor Signs Bills Supporting New Mexico Veterans

On March 25th, Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham signed two bills that will provide significant tax relief and recreational opportunities for New Mexico veterans.

The legislation, which expands property tax exemptions and provides free access to state parks, represents New Mexico's commitment to supporting those who have served our country.

"Today marks an important step forward in how we honor and support our veterans in New Mexico," said Gov. Lujan Grisham. "Our veterans deserve meaningful support for their service and sacrifice, and I'm proud to sign legislation that provides tangible benefits to them and their families."

House Bill 47 implements constitutional amendments approved by voters in the 2024 general election that will significantly expand property tax exemptions for veterans. The legislation will raise the standard veteran property tax exemption from \$4,000 to \$10,000 starting this year, with adjustments for inflation in subsequent years. It also establishes a proportional property tax exemption for disabled veterans that matches their federal dis-

ability rating starting in 2026, rather than requiring a 100% disability rating for exemption eligibility.

House Bill 161 provides veterans residing in New Mexico with free access to state parks, including unlimited day-use passes and camping passes for areas operated by the State Parks Division of the Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources Department.

"These new laws represent our state's deep appreciation for the service of our veterans," said Sec. Jamison Herrera, Brigadier General (retired), of the Department of Veterans Services. "The property tax relief will provide meaningful financial support to veterans and their families, while access to our state parks offers opportunities for recreation and healing in New Mexico's beautiful outdoor spaces."

"I'm proud of our Tax Department for helping this legislation reach the finish line by working closely with veterans' groups, the Department of Veterans Services, and county assessors to implement these exemptions," said Sec. Stephanie Schardin Clarke, for Taxation and Revenue Department. "This is our small way of saying

thank you to those who served our country."

"Our state parks system represents some of New Mexico's most beautiful and treasured lands, and we are honored to open these spaces to the men and women who have served our nation," said Sec. Melanie A. Kenderdine, for Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources Department. "Providing veterans with access to our parks and camping areas is a meaningful way to express our gratitude while inviting them to experience the healing power of New Mexico's natural landscapes."

Rep. Luis M. Terrazas, a sponsor of HB 47, said "I think this is a great day for New Mexico and all veterans across the state. They see the goodness of bipartisan work, working with our Governor and having something that's wonderful, not just for generations to come, but as a small way of thanking people for their service to our country."

Rep. Rebecca Dow, a sponsor of HB 161, said, "Providing our veterans with access to New Mexico's state



parks is a meaningful way to honor their service while supporting their health and well-being. Our veterans and our state parks are among New Mexico's greatest treasures, and I'm grateful that we can offer this benefit to those who have given so much to our country."

"I worked with Rep. Eliseo Lee Alcon for seven years, testifying on this bill and showing up in committee rooms, sitting in his office, and eating from his snack basket," said Dorothy Seaton, Army Vietnam Veteran, while holding a memorial card of the representative. "I'm so proud that it has finished and that I could bring him with me in spirit today."

Both bills received strong bipartisan support in the legislature, reflecting a shared commitment to supporting New Mexico's veterans. The state park access provisions take effect July 1, 2025.

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VOICES FROM THE PAST

By Robert J. Tórréz
Former State Historian
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The Taxman Cometh!

Details of how and when taxes were levied and collected in Spanish-era New Mexico is a difficult topic to pin conclusively. New Mexicans were generally exempt from a direct sales tax referred to as the alcabala because of the financial and physical burdens borne by its citizen militia in countless campaigns against hostile frontier tribes. Whenever a sales tax was proposed by superior government, New Mexico's citizens and its leadership protested and regularly received exemptions. The threat of a direct tax, for example, is often noted as one of the major reasons for the "Revolt of 1837" and subsequent assassination of Governor Albino Pérez.

The government and Church, however, had other sources of revenue. The principal ones were diezmos (tithes), obventions (obventions), and primicias (first fruits). Diezmos were theoretically a ten percent tax on agricultural and pastoral industries; obventions were the fees charged by the clergy for services rendered such as baptisms, weddings and burials; and primicias were a portion of agricultural products gathered at first harvest. All of these collections went to support the church and clergy and at first glance it seems to have imposed a heavy burden on New Mexico's citizens. Generally speaking, it is often difficult to tell from

reports of the time how much was collected and from what source.

In the later eighteenth century, the Spanish government began collecting the tithes by contracting with private individuals called diezmeros who collected the tax in exchange for a percentage of the collection. Sources tell us the revenue from diezmos was substantial and during the Mexican-era the government retained all or a substantial portion of that revenue to pay salaries of its employees and support the military garrison in Santa Fe and other outposts. A dependence on diezmos as a source of revenue may explain why its collection was important enough that officials were sent out to find and collect from individuals that had not paid "their fair share."

How the tax was assessed may be gauged by a couple examples from 1821. That year Governor Facundo Melgares responded to an inquiry from the alcalde of Truchas by noting (without specifying the percentage) diezmos were to be charged and collected on the increase of herds and flocks of cuatropeds - four legged livestock such as sheep, goats, cattle and oxen. In October of that same year Miguel Quintana of Abiquiú reportedly paid more than twenty head (probably rams) of his reported flock of 567 to the diezmero.

One of the best examples of the

extent officials would go to collect from those deemed to be evading the taxman involves Francisco Chaves, a citizen of Pajarito in the jurisdiction of the villa of Albuquerque in today's southern Bernalillo County. In April 1819, Joaquín Pino of Laguna complained to Governor Melgares that Chaves had taken horses belonging to the military horseherd without permission or authority and nothing had been done to recover them. Pino commented that Chaves was seldom brought to justice because he was always in the fields and could not be found easily. Melgares responded that Chaves needed to be reported to the alcalde immediately and treated and fined as a common criminal.

The official record does not note if the horses were ever recovered from Chaves at that time but the following June of 1820, Josef Mariano de la Peña, on orders of the diezmero don Pedro Armendaris, relayed a detailed list of instructions to militia officer Salvador García with orders to send sergeant Felix García and seven men to seek and arrest Francisco Chaves for neglecting to pay his diezmos. García and his men were to scout for Chaves' sheep camps, gather sheep he owed and deliver them to Valverde, south of Socorro. García was also to inventory Chaves' horse herd and take them all to Peña

for his inspection and disposition. When they found Chaves, they were to arrest him and deliver him to Peña to be held until Governor Melgares resolved the issue.

Sergeant García's journal notes they began their scout for Chaves on June 4, traveled to the Sierra Moquino and arrived at Francisco Chaves' ranch at the Ojo del Rincon de los Alamos on June 6. While there García gathered fifty-three sheep for the diezmero and sent them to Valverde with two men as he had been instructed. He also recovered twenty-one horses that belonged to the Pueblo of Isleta and although he spoke to Chaves he apparently did not arrest and take him back to Peña before returning to his home at Ranchos de Atrisco (north of Albuquerque) on June 8.

Governor Melgares was apparently not pleased with the failure to arrest and detain Chaves. On June 11, he sent a curt message to Captain (and future governor) Bartolomé Baca ordering him to review the case and develop formal charges against Chaves regarding the stolen livestock. However, the record ends there with no indication of further action.

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State Land Office Wins 2nd Consecutive National Workplace Award

By New Mexico State Land Office Staff

The New Mexico State Land Office has once again been recognized nationally for its workplace culture and high values. USA Today has announced that the agency has won a Top Workplaces USA award for midsize organizations for the second year in a row. Over 2,000 organizations participated via anonymous employee surveys as part of the national challenge.

The State Land Office previously won a 2023 and 2024 Woman-Led Organizations Award as part of the Top Workplaces national awards, given to outstanding organizations whose most senior leader is a woman. The agency was also awarded a 2023 and 2024 Regional Top Workplace by the Albuquerque Journal as part of its annual Top Workplaces Awards.

The agency was recognized for the awards due to the programs and policies implemented by New Mexico Commissioner of Public Lands Stephanie Garcia Richard that invest in employees and sup-

port fairness, including prioritizing diversity in leadership positions and correcting pay equity disparities.

“Over the past several years we have made deliberate investments in our employees with the understanding that they have a life and responsibilities outside of the confines of our building,” said Commissioner Garcia Richard. “We’ve also strived for fairness across the board, rightsizing salaries and making sure employees are fairly compensated for the expertise they bring to the table.”

The Top Workplaces Awards are based solely on employee feedback to an anonymous survey that measures 15 characteristics that are proven to predict high performance and are critical to the success of any organization.

According to the survey, 92% of employees would highly recommend working at the State Land Office. 94% of employees believe the agency operates by strong values, and 92% feel the agency prior-

itizes their well-being.

“Our employees deserve the recognition they’re getting because they do such amazing work on behalf of their fellow New Mexicans every day,” said Commissioner Garcia Richard. “I couldn’t possibly ask for a better staff. They are the reason we’ve been able to continually bring in record revenue for our public institutions. This new award recognizes the culture we’ve built here where we value each other and the lives we lead outside of work. Employees have responded with the utmost professionalism and dedication to service. I am very proud of the fact that State Land Office employees love their jobs and the mission of serving our public schools and other institutions.”

The State Land Office’s mission is to earn money for schools and other public institutions by respon-



sibly leasing state lands for energy production, commercial development, and agriculture, among other uses. The State Land Office continued to earn record-breaking revenue every year since 2019, exceeding \$2.56 billion last year alone, as these cultural changes were implemented.

We are hiring! To learn more about why the State Land Office was voted a Top Workplace, and the great benefits offered by the agency, visit: <https://www.nmstatelands.org/job-opportunities/>

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Loan Repayment for Health Professionals Now Available

Annual application period for qualified workers closes May 1

By Auriella Ortiz

Health care professionals in New Mexico may once again apply for the Health Professional Loan Repayment Program (HPLRP). This program provides up to \$25,000 in student loan forgiveness to health care professionals who commit to working in underserved counties of New Mexico for a minimum of three years. The application window opened March 15 and closes May 1 at 5 p.m.

“We are determined to support members of critical workforces throughout our state, and there is perhaps no more critical workforce than health care professionals,” said Higher Education Secretary Stephanie M. Rodriguez. “With the unwavering support of the governor and the ongoing commitment of the Legislature, we will continue to make New Mexico a more attractive place for workers – while supporting the needs and well-being of communities throughout our state.”

The loan repayment program has grown significantly as the state strengthens its efforts to recruit and retain high-quality health care professionals. Last fall, the Higher Education Department began providing aid to 524 new awardees under the loan repayment program, bringing the total number of current recipients in the state to 1,269.

The New Mexico Higher Education Department, along with public colleges and universities, provides various scholarships for students pursuing degrees and certificates in health-related fields. However, many working professionals still carry significant college debt, particularly those with advanced medical degrees.

The HPLRP supports over 25 health occupations, including fields critical to the well-being of New Mexico communities that include licensed allied health, medical, and dental fields, to expand assistance to certified and licensed behavioral health professionals.

For more information about repayment programs and a list of eligible professions visit, hed.nm.gov or call state’s Financial Aid Help Line at 800-279-9777.



Senate Unanimously Confirms Mariana D. Padilla As Secretary Of Public Education Department

By Janelle Garcia

The New Mexico Senate has unanimously confirmed Mariana D. Padilla as the cabinet secretary for the New Mexico Public Education Department (PED) with a vote of 40-0.

“Mariana Padilla is an outstanding champion for public education in New Mexico,” said Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham.

“Her deep understanding of our state’s unique educational landscape and her work with the Children’s Cabinet will enable her to make meaningful change at PED for the benefit of our entire state.”

The governor appointed Padilla, a former elementary school teacher, as secretary designate in September 2024.

“Mariana Padilla is laser-focused on student improvement and has already implemented initiatives to improve systems and processes at the Public Education Department in her short time as secretary designate,” said Senate President Pro Tempore Mimi Stewart. “Beyond policy and leadership, Mariana understands education from a personal perspective as well—as a parent of school-aged children who wants the very best learning experience, educational and career outcomes for all children of this state. She has been deeply involved in the design and implementation of all cradle-to-career initiatives and has been a strong partner with the Legislature. It was an honor to support her confirmation, and I look forward to continuing our work together.”

Padilla brings extensive experience in child and family advocacy, education policy and government leadership. Prior to her appointment as PED secretary, she served as director of the Children’s Cabinet under Lujan Grisham, focusing on early childhood education, student well-being and cross-agency collaboration to improve outcomes for children and families across New Mexico.

“I am deeply honored to serve as New Mexico’s secretary of public education,” said Padilla. “Education is the foundation of opportunity, and I am committed to working alongside our educators, students and families to ensure every child in our state receives a high-quality education that prepares them for success in school and beyond.”

As secretary, Padilla has prioritized strengthening educational workforce development, expanding student support services, improving school attendance, and advancing cultural and linguistically responsive education practices. She will continue working closely with school districts, tribal leaders, educators and community organizations to implement policies that foster student achievement and well-being.

The New Mexico Public Education Department oversees more than 800 public schools and charters, serving approximately 311,000 students statewide. Under Sec. Padilla’s leadership, the department remains focused on addressing achievement gaps, increasing graduation rates and enhancing access to high-quality educational opportunities for all students.



Sec. Padilla at March 5th confirmation hearing



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Courtroom Dedicated to Magistrate Judge Y.B. Morales

By Angelic Muñoz and Beth Wojahn



The main courtroom in the Grant County Magistrate Court in Bayard has been dedicated to Judge Y.B. Morales, the community's first magistrate judge.

Family, friends, members of the community, active and retired judges, and previous coworkers - nearly 60 people - filled the courtroom during a ceremony earlier this month to honor Judge Morales for his devoted service to the people of New Mexico and enduring contribution to justice.

"Providing quality legal services in our rural communities is essential, and Judge Morales, you met that need with unwavering dedication for over four decades," said Sixth Judicial District Chief Judge Jarod K. Hofacket. "The fact that folks in this room and all over the community still share stories about you says everything about the

honesty, integrity, and heart you brought to the job."

Judge Morales' judicial career started in 1963 when he served as justice of the peace in Bayard. In 1968, the state magistrate court system was created with part-time magistrates, and a court was established in Bayard. Judge Morales was elected in 1968 and worked half-time as a magistrate judge for many years and eventually three-quarter time - all while continuing to work full time at local copper mines. Judge Morales became a full time magistrate judge in 1984, retiring from his mining job the same year. Judge Morales retired from the bench on Dec. 31, 2006.

"It has been my privilege to serve this community for forty-four years," said Judge Morales. "I am grateful for all the experiences and people that taught me to serve with fairness, justice and dignity for everyone."

At the ceremony, Judge Morales recalled his introduction to the justice of the peace system when he returned to Bayard from Ft.

Bliss for his first daughter's baptism in 1950. He and his "compadre" ran out of gasoline one night. He left his friend in the car and walked to Bayard for gas. When he returned, his friend was gone and the car was about to be towed. Judge Morales learned that his friend had been accused of running a deputy's car off the road and had been arrested for DWI. The next day, Judge Morales went to Silver City and tried unsuccessfully before the



Grant County Magistrate Court-Division I (Silver City) Magistrate Judge D. Matthew Runnels, retired District Judge V. Lee Vesely, former District Judge Manuel D.V. Saucedo, District Judge Tom Stewart, retired Magistrate Judge Y.B. Morales, District Judge Jim Foy, District Judge Jennifer E. DeLaney, Chief District Judge Jarod K. Hofacket, and Grant County Magistrate Judge-Division II (Bayard) Magistrate Judge Hector C. Grijalva.
Photo credit: Trial Court Administrative Assistant Katrina Marquez.

judge to secure his friend's release from jail before going back to Ft. Bliss.

"So, 13 years later, in 1963, I was appointed justice of the peace by the Grant County Commissioners. In that moment, I now had the same power as the Silver City judge in 1950," said Judge Morales. "I decided then that if it wasn't fair, it wasn't justice. From that first day on that is the way I treated everyone, equal and fair."

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District Judge Ellen R. Jessen Retiring

By Beth Wojahn

Twelfth Judicial District Court Judge Ellen R. Jessen will retire on March 31, having served as the Domestic Relations and Civil Division Judge for nearly five years.

Judge Jessen has presided over approximately 6,500 cases since taking the bench in July 2020. Her docket includes all case types, other than criminal and abuse and neglect cases. She serves on the judiciary's Domestic Relations Rules Committee and chairs the district's Family Law Bar.

"It has been a privilege to work alongside Judge Jessen," said Twelfth Judicial District Chief Judge Angie K. Schneider. "I thank her for her dedication to the Twelfth Judicial and our communities, and wish her all the best in her next chapter."

Prior to her appointment by Gov. Lujan Grisham, Judge Jessen served in the Twelfth Judicial District as a domestic relations hearing officer, an assistant district attorney, and an attorney in private practice and for the Center of Protective Environment. She received her undergraduate degree from Wheeling Jesuit University and a Juris Doctor degree from the Catholic University Columbus School of Law, where she served as Editorial Assistant on the Catholic University Law Review.

"This job, more so than any other, offers a steady stream of interesting legal questions, made ever more interesting by the excellent attorneys practicing in the Twelfth Judicial District," said Judge Jessen. "Of course, no legal issue, whether interesting or routine, comes before the court without the work of the proficient court staff who file the case documents, issue the summons, set and record the hearings, and coordinate the jury trials. They set in motion the quintessential hallmark of justice: due process."



Senate Confirms Gina DeBlassie as NM

Health Secretary

By David Barre

On March 13th, the New Mexico Senate unanimously confirmed Gina DeBlassie as the cabinet secretary of the New Mexico Department of Health.

"Gina DeBlassie is the architect behind billions of dollars in healthcare investments across New Mexico, particularly in rural healthcare delivery," said Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham. "As Secretary of Health, she's positioned to continue this exceptional work, advancing our goal of making New Mexico number one in the nation for healthcare access, quality, and affordability."

"At a time when many states around the country are abandoning both public health and evidence-based, scientifically proven medical research, Secretary DeBlassie will ensure that public health components remain firmly embedded in our approach," the governor added. "I'm confident Gina's proven expertise will transform how we deliver healthcare services to all New Mexicans."

DeBlassie, who previously served as the governor's health policy advisor, has more than 30 years of healthcare experience and is a longtime advocate for improved healthcare access across the state. Her leadership was instrumental in the establishment of the Health Care Authority and the Rural Health Care Delivery Fund.

"Gina DeBlassie will be an exceptional addition to Governor Lujan Grisham's team. She's well aware of the many pressing health-related issues facing our state, and her vast experience will ensure she can hit a home run as our Secretary for the Department of Health. She's trustworthy, reliable, and dependable, and I am happy to support this appointment," said Sen. George K. Muñoz.

Prior to joining Lujan Grisham's administration, DeBlassie served as chief operating officer for a national all-inclusive care for the elderly provider program, where she spearheaded the expansion of programs to better the lives of seniors.

"I'm deeply honored by the Senate's unanimous confirmation and grateful to Gov. Lujan Grisham for her trust and for this opportunity to serve New Mexico," said DeBlassie. "The dedicated team at DOH has built a strong foundation, and I'm committed to advancing our work. I look forward to collaborating with partners statewide to ensure all New Mexicans receive the quality care they deserve."

DeBlassie holds a Bachelor of Business Administration from the University of Phoenix and has served on multiple non-profit boards.



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New Mexico celebrates Agriculture Trade

Day March 19

By Jenny Green



New Mexico is set to celebrate New Mexico Agriculture Trade Day March 19, recognizing the vital role agricultural trade plays in supporting the state's economy, rural communities and global connections. "Agriculture trade is a powerful engine for New Mexico's economy," said New Mexico Agriculture Sec. Jeff Witte. "It supports over 261,000 good jobs in food, agriculture and related industries, connecting our local producers to global markets and ensuring food security both here and abroad."

Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham issued an official proclamation recognizing March 19 as New Mexico Agriculture Trade Day.

New Mexico Agriculture Trade Day shines a spotlight on the hardworking farmers, ranchers, processors and agricultural businesses that help feed the world while driving economic growth at home. From dairy and beef to onions, cotton and pecans, New Mexico's producers are among the most productive globally, with agricultural exports reaching over 40 countries across Asia, Europe and the Americas.

New Mexico's top agricultural exports—dairy products, cotton and pecans—demonstrate the state's broad reach in the global market. The New Mexico Department of Agriculture's "Local to Global" graphic further illustrates how products grown and raised here impact consumers worldwide.

International trade also drives innovation and job creation in rural communities, supporting not only farmers and ranchers but also scientists, processors, shippers, truckers and retailers throughout the supply chain.

In honor of New Mexico Agriculture Trade Day, residents are encouraged to learn more about the importance of agricultural trade:

- Visit nmdeptag.nmsu.edu to learn more about New Mexico agriculture.
- Explore FeedingTheEconomy.com to see the broader economic impact of agriculture and food industries.
- Check out FarmersforFreeTrade.com to understand how trade supports farmers nationwide.



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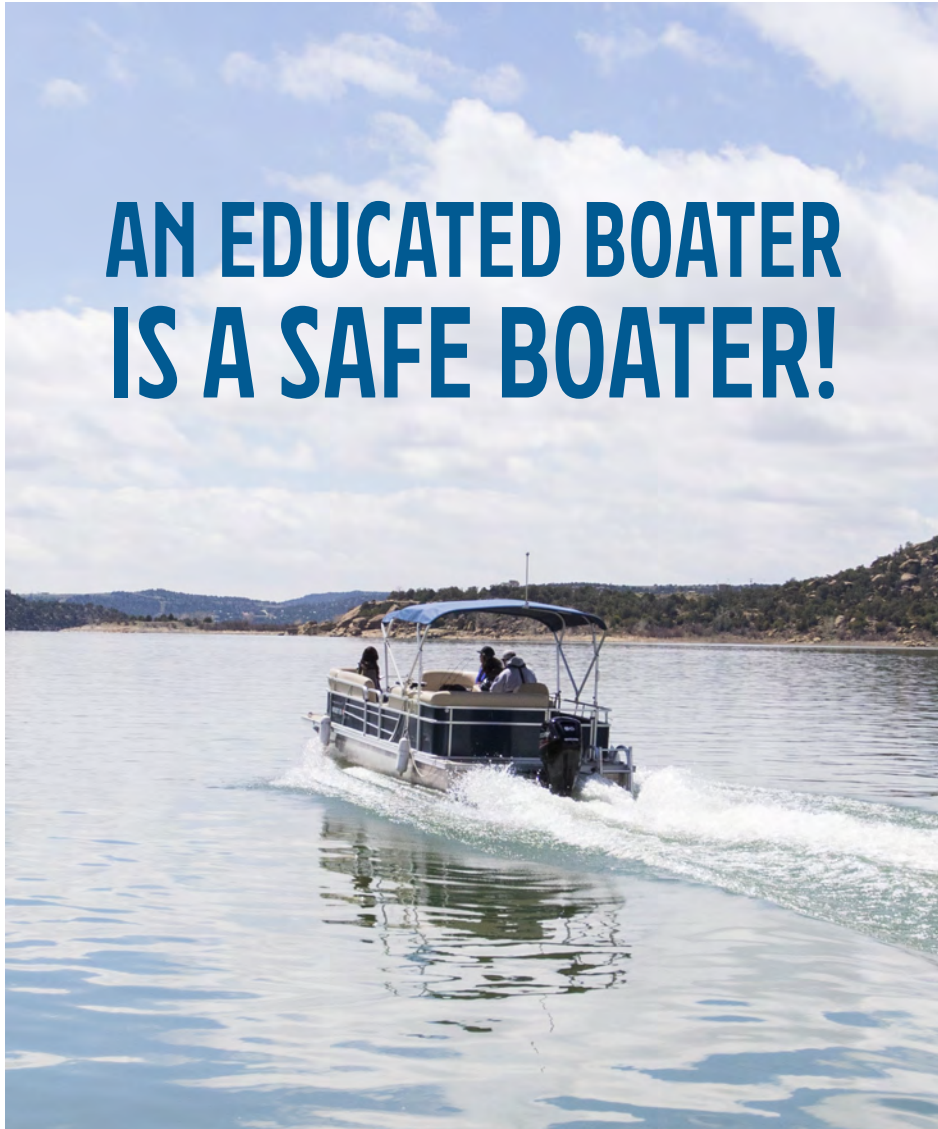


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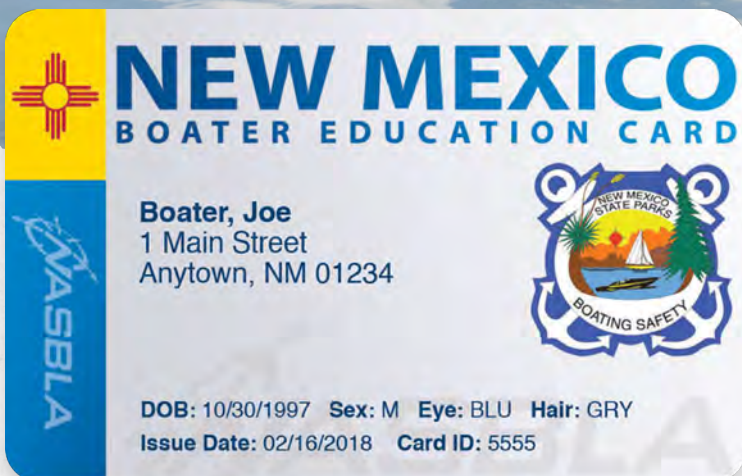
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State Teams Up with Alzheimer's Association for Statewide Community Forums

By Joey Long

This spring, the state is partnering with the Alzheimer's Association to host a series of community forums across New Mexico.

Building on the "Take Action. Talk" initiative, these forums invite New Mexicans to share their experiences with Alzheimer's disease or dementia and get connected with resources from state and community partners.

"No one should have to face Alzheimer's alone," said Emily Kaltentbach, Cabinet Secretary for the Aging and Long-Term Services Department. "Whether they are caregiving for a loved one or facing a diagnosis themselves, we hope that we can start to break the silence around Alzheimer's, promote early detection, and ensure that everyone has the resources they need."

Spring forum schedule:

- Silver City
March 26, 3 to 5 p.m.
Silver City Public Library, 515 W. College Avenue
- Clayton
April 16, 11 a.m. to 1 p.m.
Clayton Civic Center, 124 N. Front Street
- Tucumcari
May 8, 11 a.m. to 1 p.m.
Tucumcari Convention Center, 1500 U.S. Route 66



The forums are free of charge, and will provide a welcoming space for open discussion, resource-sharing, and valuable insights from experts. Community members are encouraged to be present and voice their concerns, ask questions, and learn more about available services.

Light refreshments will be provided. For those wishing to attend, please RSVP by calling 505-404-9857.

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SECURE Act 2.0 Roth Mandate for Certain Age 50+ Deferred Comp Plan Participants

By Karyn Lujan

What is the SECURE Act 2.0 Roth Mandate?



Effective January 1, 2026, the SECURE Act 2.0 requires certain "Age 50+ Catch-Up" contributions to be designated as Roth after-tax contributions. This requirement only applies to participants whose IRC Section 3121(a) FICA wages (if applicable) are more than \$145,000 in the previous year from their employer. Any catch-up contributions made by these participants must be made on a post-tax basis as Roth contributions. For example, if you meet this salary requirement, and the regular 2025 IRS limit is \$23,500 and the Age 50+ Catch-Up limit is \$7,500, and you intend to contribute \$31,000 for the year, then the \$7,500 Catch-Up amount must be made as Roth contributions. This new mandate does not apply to the Three Year Special Catch-up or the Age 60-63 Super Catch-Up.

What is a Roth after-tax 457(b) contribution?

A Roth after-tax contribution is simply another way to put money away in your voluntary 457b retirement Plan. Instead of having all of your contributions deducted from your paycheck before taxes, you may decide to make Roth contributions on an after-tax basis. And, if you meet certain requirements down the road, the Roth money you withdraw at retirement may be federal income tax-free.

What is being done to prepare for this mandate?

NM PERA and Voya, the Plan's administrator, are currently building a system to verify salary data for age 50 participants. It is our intent to automate this process for this population, so the employee does not need to complete any additional forms before the end of the year. More information will be available as the project develops.

If there are any questions about this mandate or the Plan in general, email PERA-SmartSave@state.nm.us.

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NMDVR Around the State

By Jeff Levine

Vocational rehabilitation counselors and technicians, transition counselors, business outreach coordinators, benefits advisors, and program managers from the New Mexico Division of Vocational Rehabilitation have been out-and-about all across New Mexico, interacting with attendees at school events and job fairs. Here are just a few of the places where NMDVR staffers have been spotted in recent weeks:



Grand opening of the America's Job Center New Mexico office in Socorro



Roswell High School Career Fair



Highland H.S. Career Fair in Albuquerque



Las Cruces Public Schools "Mock It 'til You Rock It" mock interview day



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Community Career Fair in Farmington



Jemez Vocational Rehabilitation Job & College Fair in Bernalillo



Las Cruces Public Schools "Plan My Future" Career Expo



"Heroes Hiring Heroes" veterans job fair in Las Cruces



"Spring into Action" Career Fair at Silver High School



NMDVR and Bernalillo County Youth Job Fair in the Albuquerque South Valley



"Eagle Expo" at Belen High School

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Quick Online Test Checks Your Diabetes Risk

Small lifestyle changes can prevent life-altering disease

By David Barre

The New Mexico Department of Health (NMDOH) joined the American Diabetes Association (ADA) in recognizing Diabetes Alert Day on Tuesday, March 25.

Nearly 11% of New Mexicans have been diagnosed with diabetes, and NMDOH encourages all New Mexicans to take a free, quick and easy type 2 diabetes risk test online. The test, available on the ADA website, takes about 60 seconds to complete. <https://diabetes.org/diabetes-risk-test>

Once you get your results, you'll receive helpful prevention tips—and if you are high risk, talk to your health care provider about next steps.

"Type 2 diabetes develops when blood sugar levels are too high," said Lindsey Goodhue, NMDOH Director of Diabetes and Cardiovascular Health. "Over time, unmanaged high blood sugar can lead to serious health problems, including heart disease, nerve damage, vision loss and kidney disease."

As of 2023, 15.4% of New Mexicans have been told by their doctor they have prediabetes. Prediabetes means your blood sugar levels are higher than normal but not high enough for a diabetes diagnosis. Some key risk factors for developing prediabetes or type 2 diabetes include:

- Family history of diabetes.
- Higher body weight.
- Increasing age.
- Smoking.
- Lack of physical activity.
- High blood pressure.
- History of gestational diabetes.

Without intervention, many people with prediabetes will develop type 2 diabetes within five years. However, early detection and lifestyle changes—like losing weight, eating a healthier diet, and getting regular exercise—can help reverse prediabetes and prevent type 2 diabetes altogether.

To learn more, visit the Paths to Health NM webpage, <https://www.paths-tohealthnm.org/> or call the NMHealth Helpline at 1-833-SWNURSE (1-833-796-8773).




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Young Guns 3: Dead or Alive" to film in New Mexico

By Dolores Martinez

Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham and the New Mexico Film Office are proud to announce that "Young Guns 3: Dead or Alive," the highly anticipated next chapter in the iconic Western franchise, will be filmed in New Mexico.

Lujan Grisham, joined by actor and director Emilio Estevez, made the announcement today during Film and Media Day at the State Capitol.

"The original 'Young Guns' films showcased New Mexico's stunning landscapes to the world and helped establish our state as a premier filming destination," said Gov. Lujan Grisham. "'Young Guns 3: Dead or Alive' will add to this legacy, further solidifying New Mexico's place in the national film industry."

Estevez will direct 'Young Guns 3: Dead or Alive' and reprise his role as Billy the Kid, alongside original cast members Lou Diamond Phillips and Christian Slater. The film will introduce a new generation of regulators to the silver screen with New Mexico's unparalleled landscapes and diverse locations as the backdrop for this exciting return to the Wild West.

"This production represents exactly what our film incentives are designed to attract—high-quality projects that create jobs for New Mexicans while showcasing our state's extraordinary beauty," Lujan Grisham added.

Steve Graham, Director of the New Mexico Film Office, emphasized the economic benefits of the production.

"Young Guns 3: Dead or Alive will employ hundreds of local crew members, actors, and support staff and utilize local vendors and businesses, generating significant economic activity throughout our state," Graham said.

The original "Young Guns" films, released in 1988 and 1990, were both filmed in New Mexico and helped establish the state's reputation in the film industry. "Young Guns 3: Dead or Alive" is written by Emilio Estevez and John Fusco, produced by Morgan Creek, and packaged by CAA.



District Judge Mary Marlowe Sommer to Retire from the Bench

By Barry Massey

District Judge Mary Marlowe Sommer will retire at the end of May after serving 15 years on the First Judicial District Court in Santa Fe.

"It has been an honor and privilege to serve the people of New Mexico," said Judge Marlowe Sommer. "However, it is time to step away from the hectic schedule of court business and enjoy retirement. During my time on the bench, I have admired and deeply appreciated those who work so hard each day to ensure the court delivers the fair and timely justice that people are entitled to in our legal system."

Judge Marlowe Sommer served as Chief Judge of the First Judicial District from April 2019 to April 2022, presiding over the court during the COVID-19 pandemic. She was appointed to the district court in 2010 by then Gov. Bill Richardson, was elected in November of that year, and has since been retained by voters, most recently in 2020.

Before becoming a judge, she worked as a domestic relations and child support hearing officer for the district court and practiced law in Santa Fe for more than 20 years, including as a criminal adult and juvenile defense attorney. She also served as an assistant attorney general.

Judge Marlowe Sommer received her law degree from the Antonin Scalia Law School at George Mason University in 1983, and an undergraduate degree from James Madison University in Virginia.

The First Judicial District consists of Santa Fe, Rio Arriba and Los Alamos counties. A judicial nominating commission will screen applicants for the judicial vacancy and recommend nominees to the governor for possible appointment to serve the remainder of Judge Marlowe Sommer's term, which expires Dec. 31, 2028.


"Judge Marlowe Sommer has served the people of the First Judicial District with distinction, integrity and an unwavering commitment to the rule of law," said Chief Judge Bryan Biedscheid.

Judge Marlowe Sommer has presided over about 21,600 cases during her tenure on the bench, starting with a family, abuse and neglect, and juvenile delinquency caseload. Upon the retirement of District Judge Michael Vigil in 2012, she assumed a docket of criminal and treatment court cases.

As part of her criminal caseload, Judge Marlowe Sommer presided over the widely publicized trials of actor Alec Baldwin and movie set armorer Hannah Gutierrez, who were charged in connection with a fatal shooting during the filming of "Rust" in 2020. She also presided over the child molestation cases of former teacher Gary Gregor, and the trial of Jeannine Jaramillo, who was convicted of killing a police officer and retired firefighter during a wrong-way crash on Interstate 25 while attempting to evade law enforcement.



District Judge Mary Marlowe Sommer speaking during the July 2024 trial of actor Alec Baldwin. (Press pool photograph-Santa Fe New Mexican)



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NM State Police Participate in C.A.R.E. Operation for Spring Break and St. Patrick's Day

By Amanda Richards

During the week of Spring Break and St. Patrick's Day 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 traffic volume during the holiday, the New Mexico State Police (NMSP) enhanced patrol presence on roadways across all twelve State Police districts. This initiative took place specifically from Saturday, March 8th to Monday, March 17th, 2025.

The operation led to State Police officers making over 3,900 traffic stops, including 1,800 citations issued for speeding. Additionally, 82 DWI arrests were made across the state. Officers also investigated 100 crashes. The Commercial Vehicle Enforcement Bureau completed over 2,500 commercial vehicle inspection stops.

The New Mexico State Police is dedicated to enhancing roadway safety for all motorists within the state. NMSP will continue to implement holiday travel operations throughout the year and encourage the public to exercise safe driving practices and adhere to all traffic regulations while traveling on New Mexico's roadways.

ERB Bids Farewell to IT Veteran Robert Hampton

By Renee Garcia

After a distinguished career spanning over a decade, Robert Hampton, a key figure in the Educational Retirement Board (ERB) IT department, has retired. His departure marks the end of an era for the organization, as colleagues reflect on his invaluable contributions.

Robert's journey with ERB began as a contractor, assisting with the transition to the Vitech system. He officially joined the team in 2009 as an IT Generalist 2, quickly rising through the ranks to become IT Database Administrator III in 2016, a position he held until his retirement this January.

His expertise was pivotal in managing ERB's complex database systems, including the migration of the V3Browser world to the AWS cloud. He expertly navigated Oracle and Linux environments, ensuring seamless operations. Robert was also the go-to person for generating critical reports for management, directors, and partners like PERA,

RHCA, actuaries, and auditors. His work was instrumental in numerous projects, culminating in his key role in the recent conversion to the new Pension Administration System.

Beyond his technical skills, Robert was a beloved colleague and mentor. His positive attitude and willingness to help were hallmarks of his character. He was known for his exceptional teaching abilities, both within ERB and in his college courses, where he made complex IT concepts accessible to everyone. He is characterized by humor and humility, often sharing self-deprecating stories, such as his experience of being bested by a sixth grader in a chess tournament.

Robert's passions extended beyond the office. He is an avid chess player, participating in tournaments across the country, and a dedicated music enthusiast. He also developed critical internal



Robert Hampton – Center. From left to right; Rick Scroggins, Board Vice Chair Mary Lou Cameron, Board member Renee Ward, Robert Hampton, ERB CIO Kevin Swinson, Board Chairman Russell Goff, Board Secretary Max Baca, and ERB Deputy Director Lawrence Esquibel.

tools, including a web interface for pre-2006 retiree data, which significantly improved ERB's efficiency.

Robert's dedication, expertise, and positive spirit have left an indelible mark on ERB. He has been a true asset, a mentor, a friend, and a valued colleague. We will miss his technical expertise, his infectious enthusiasm, his storytelling, and his willingness to always go the extra mile. ERB wishes Robert a happy and fulfilling retirement, filled with travel, chess, music, and all the things he loves.

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Love and Redemption Ride into New Mexico in "Wild Ride"

By Dolores Martinez

The New Mexico Film Office announced on March 7th that the production of the web series "Wild Ride," which captures the spirit of the American West and the enduring power of love and redemption, has wrapped filming in Santa Fe, Placitas, and Albuquerque.

The story follows Ava, a young woman escaping a troubled past who seeks refuge in the quiet charm of New Mexico. But her life takes an unexpected turn when she meets Hayes, a rugged bull rider whose passion and strength ignite a spark within her. As their connection deepens against the backdrop of the rodeo, Ava must confront her past and embrace the possibility of a future filled with love and healing.

"Wild Ride" is a captivating story that showcases New Mexico's beauty and talent. The production, directed by Kristin Goodman and produced by Keagan Karnes and Kelsey Landon, employed over 40 New Mexicans, including 16 crew members, seven principal actors, and 20 resident background talent.

"As a film director in New Mexico, working with the local cast and local crews has been an incredibly positive experience," Goodman stated. "The professionalism and talent available in New Mexico are on par with Los Angeles and Atlanta."

"'Wild Ride' is a love letter to New Mexico's film industry, made by the very people who are shaping its future. The depth of talent, creativity, and passion here is undeniable," Landon stated. "This is just the beginning. I've worked in film all over, but there's something different about New Mexico. It's the people, the artistry, the grit — it's a place where storytellers thrive."

"'Wild Ride' is a shining example of what can be achieved when talented New Mexicans come together to create something special," Steve Graham, director of the New Mexico Film Office, said. "This fully resident-based production is a testament to our local film community's collaborative spirit and dedication. We're proud to support projects like this that entertain audiences and provide opportunities for New Mexicans to showcase their skills and contribute to the growth of our state's film industry."

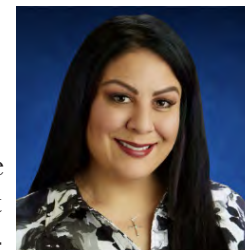
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New Mexico State Treasurer Laura M. Montoya Earns Prestigious Power100 'Icon' Honor

By Bushra Elfarissi

New Mexico State Treasurer Laura M. Montoya earns prestigious honor with a Power100 Award in recognition of her tireless efforts to improve and advance the financial industry. The Power100 initiative 'was created to shine a spotlight on individuals, asset management firms, investors, and non-profit organizations driving performance, impacting the industry, and contributing to narrowing societal gaps related to gender, ethnicity, wealth, health, education, and other areas important to improving the world.'



The Power100 selection process involves extensive research and nominations. Organizers consult with over 300 general partners, limited partners, industry peers, conference organizers, trade organizations, and consultants. They also attend over 35 industry events annually to identify potential candidates.

Award categories include Asset Managers, Allocators and Advisors, Advocates, Angels, Icons, and Asset Gatherers. Treasurer Montoya's recognition is within the 'Icon' category, which honors investment industry mavericks whose career efforts go above and beyond to not only ensure effective financial prowess but also reshape the landscape and direction of the investment industry. This is made evident by Treasurer Montoya's dedication to promoting and advocating for diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) in fund management, financial empowerment for women, financial fitness, and common-sense initiatives, such as pushing financial literacy as a high school graduation requirement across New Mexico public schools and Baby Bonds.

"We honor the Icons for the tireless efforts throughout their career to change the complexion and face of the industry," stated Jacob Walthour, Jr., Chief Executive Officer of Blueprint Capital Advisors (BCA). "Their commitment has been unquestionable, their courage unshakeable, and their legacy lasting."

"It's an honor to be recognized alongside trailblazers who have made noteworthy contributions to the financial industry," expressed Treasurer Montoya. "The data clearly shows that diversity in fund management outperforms traditional benchmarks, which reinforces my belief that diversity isn't just a talking point, but a necessity that will drive both a more inclusive industry and a stronger rate of return."

Treasurer Montoya will be recognized at the 2nd Annual Power100 Summit in May. The goal of this summit is to unite the industry's visionaries and advocates and encourage a renewal of commitments to continuing progress toward a more inclusive industry and equitable society.

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Governor Enacts Comprehensive Flood Recovery and EMS Legislation

New Mexico Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham signed two pieces of legislation on Friday, March 28, addressing municipal flood recovery and emergency medical services funding.

Senate Bill 383, which contains an emergency clause making it effective immediately, allows municipalities to issue flood recovery revenue bonds to rebuild, repair, replace and harden municipal property damaged by floods. The legislation creates a municipal flood recovery gross receipts tax to finance these bonds.

Senate Bill 197 authorizes the state treasurer to redirect money from the Emergency Medical Services Fund to the New Mexico Finance Authority for loans to purchase equipment for emergency medical services system improvement projects.

"These bills provide critical tools for our municipalities to recover from devastating floods and strengthen our emergency medical services across the state," said Gov. Lujan Grisham.

New Mexico Summer Reading Program Registration is Now Open

By **Janelle Garcia**

State education agencies announce that registration is open for the 2025 Summer Reading Program, a free initiative designed to serve 15,000 students from incoming kindergarteners to outgoing eighth graders with focused reading instruction in small groups with trained literacy instructors.

The 2025 Summer Reading Program will run in June and July and is a collaboration between the New Mexico Public Education Department, Higher Education Department and Early Childhood Education and Care Department. Families can sign up for the program on the Summer Reading Program website, <https://www.literacy.nm.gov/>

Focused summer instruction can help students catch up on important reading skills and gain the confidence needed for success in all school subjects. While students typically see a significant loss of reading knowledge over the summer break (third to fifth graders lose an average of 20% of the reading progress they made during the previous school year), students who participated in the 2024 Summer Reading Program showed zero summer reading loss and average gains of 4.92%, according to end-of-year and beginning-of-year assessments.

"When students lose reading skills over the summer, it can make the start of the school year more challenging," said Public Education Sec. Mariana D. Padilla. "The 2025 Summer Reading Program helps students return to school confident and prepared to succeed in the classroom."

"The state's Summer Reading Program is essential for equipping students with vital literacy skills over the summer, ensuring they continue to advance their knowledge," said Higher Education Sec. Stephanie M. Rodriguez. "We invite New Mexican families to take advantage of this program to develop literacy and comprehension skills that will enhance their children's academic success and future."

"Strong early literacy skills lay the foundation for a child's academic success and overall development," said Early Childhood Education and Care Department Sec. Elizabeth Groginsky. "The Summer Reading Program provides an invaluable opportunity for incoming kindergarteners and their families to build confidence, foster a love for reading, and strengthen their kindergarten readiness over the summer."

A list of 2025 program locations is available on the Summer Reading Program website. The list will be updated as more partner sites are added. <https://www.literacy.nm.gov/>



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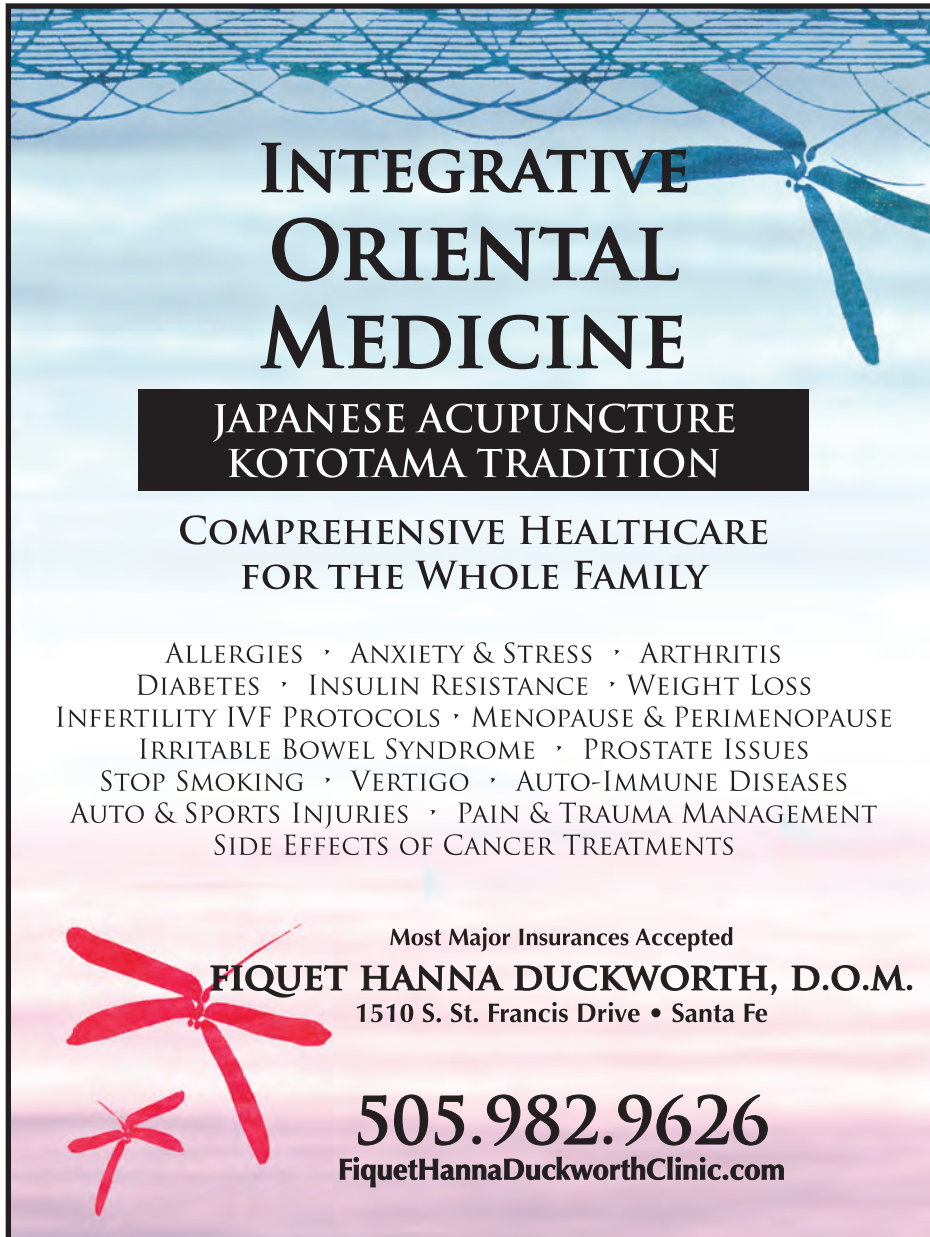
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Economic report: State's Agriculture Industry Shows Growth

NM's food and agriculture sector contributes \$45B to state economy
By Jenny Green

The ninth annual Feeding the Economy report, released today by a coalition of 36 food and agriculture organizations, highlights the significant economic contributions of New Mexico's agricultural sector.



This comprehensive farm-to-fork economic analysis reveals substantial growth in key metrics despite ongoing challenges. According to the 2025 report, New Mexico's food and agriculture industries generated:

- \$45 billion in total economic impact (up 4.4% from \$43.12 billion in 2024).
- \$12.9 billion in wages (up 9.3% from \$11.8 billion in 2024).
- \$4.8 billion in business taxes.
- \$301.8 million in exports (up 22.1% from \$247.1 million in 2024).
- 253,529 jobs statewide.

“Our state’s food and agriculture industry is a thriving, integral component of the local economy, as this latest report shows increases in exports, wages and overall economic impact of the ag industry,” said New Mexico Agriculture Sec. Jeff Witte. “When we sit down to eat a meal, it’s important to remember all the work it took to get that food from the farm to our plates.”

Nationally, the food and agriculture sectors contributed \$9.5 trillion to the U.S. economy in 2025, representing 18.7% of total economic output. The report also notes that since the pandemic, the agriculture industry has demonstrated remarkable resilience, increasing its economic output by nearly 25% despite global supply chain challenges.

The complete 2025 Feeding the Economy report, including detailed state-by-state analysis and additional statements from industry leaders, is available at www.FeedingTheEconomy.com.

Governor Signs Bill Protecting Students' Right to Wear Regalia

By Michael Coleman

On March 19th, Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham signed SB 163 into law, ensuring students across New Mexico can freely express their cultural heritage at school ceremonies.



The legislation, which received unanimous support in both chambers of the state legislature, prohibits school boards and charter schools from preventing Native American students from wearing culturally significant clothing, accessories, and objects during graduation events.

Tribal leaders from across the state attended the signing ceremony in celebration of this meaningful legislation. The law takes effect immediately, ensuring this year’s graduating Native American students can fully express their heritage during upcoming ceremonies.

“This legislation represents our commitment to honoring and respecting the rich cultural heritage of New Mexico’s Native communities,” said Gov. Lujan Grisham. “Every student deserves to celebrate their academic achievements in a way that honors their identity and traditions.”

“This is a powerful law protecting the rights of Native students and their families to celebrate their achievements while honoring their culture and identity,” said Sec. Josett Monette (Turtle Mountain Band of Chipewa Indians), New Mexico Indian Affairs Department. “We are proud to have worked alongside Governor Lujan Grisham, the Public Education Department, and our legislative sponsors to make this a reality. Students’ milestones deserve to be honored without barriers, ensuring that Native students can wear their regalia is a victory for tradition, identity, and resilience.”

“SB 163 is a significant step forward in honoring and respecting the cultural heritage of Native American students across New Mexico,” said Sec. Mariana Padilla New Mexico Public Education Department. “By ensuring their right to wear traditional regalia at school ceremonies, this bill affirms the importance of identity, culture, and self-expression of the nearly 40,000 Native American students enrolled in a public school across the state. Education should uplift and celebrate the rich traditions that make our communities stronger.”

New Mexico joins 18 other states that have enacted similar protections.

“With this legislation, New Mexico joins a growing movement to recognize and protect Indigenous traditions, fostering a more inclusive and respectful future for all students,” Padilla added. “The New Mexico Public Education Department is excited to work with school partners across the state to ensure the implementation of SB 163.”

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119 New Mexico Workers Stand to Benefit From State Job Training Funds

9 companies awarded from Albuquerque, Artesia, Moriarty, Roswell, Santa Teresa

By Chris Chaffin

The New Mexico Economic Development Department (EDD) announced that it approved \$1.6 million in funds to assist nine companies in training up to 119 employees through the Job Training Incentive Program.

The Job Training Incentive Program (JTIP) board approves funds monthly in support of hiring, training, and upskilling New Mexico workers. Companies that applied in March are located in Albuquerque, Artesia, Moriarty, Roswell, and Santa Teresa. JTIP releases funds to the companies as cost reimbursement to cover a minimum of 50% of trainee wages for up to six months.

The nine companies included in this month's applications engage in advanced manufacturing, aerospace, and sustainable technology (including batteries, hydrogen, solar, and cybersecurity).

"We're especially impressed,

but not surprised, by the range of innovative companies looking to hire and expand throughout New Mexico," EDD Cabinet Secretary Rob Black said. "Our state is fast becoming a hub for sustainable energy and advanced technology, which will propel economic growth and create high-paying jobs for years to come."

The nine companies receiving JTIP awards in March are:

- DesignStein LLC (Artesia) is a value-added manufacturing company that sources components and designs complete solutions. 4 trainees; avg wage \$24; award \$59,810.
- Franklin Mountain Packaging (Santa Teresa) designs boxes, containers, and custom packaging tailored to meet the specific needs of its clients. 63 trainees; avg wage \$20; award \$701,117.
- General Airframe Support Inc. (Roswell) provides maintenance, repair, and overhaul (MRO) ser-

vices for aircraft and aerospace components. 32 trainees; avg wage \$19; award \$339,542.

- GridFlow Inc. (Albuquerque) is building a tabletop demo battery for trade shows. 3 trainees; avg wage \$24; 2 interns; intern avg wage \$23; award \$57,290.
- Gridworks Inc. (Albuquerque) is a solar utility company focused on advancing clean energy infrastructure and grid modernization. 2 current employees (Step Up Program); award \$9,438.
- Indica Labs Inc. (Albuquerque) provides solutions that streamline the image analysis workflow for digital pathology, including HALO and HALO AI for fast, quantitative evaluation of images and HALO Link for collaborative image and data management. 6 trainees; avg wage \$46; award \$152,632.
- Pajarito Powder LLC (Albuquerque) develops and commercializes advanced electrocatalysts used in



Photo of lab, courtesy of Pajarito Powder LLC.

fuel cells and electrolyzers and essential for energy conversion technologies. 1 trainee; avg wage \$37; award \$21,038.

- Sceye Inc. (Moriarty) designs and deploys advanced, solar-powered stratospheric airships to provide innovative solutions in connectivity, earth observation, and environmental monitoring. 5 trainees; avg wage \$68; award \$248,656.
- Securin Inc. (Albuquerque) provides customers with a comprehensive suite of security solutions such as ASM, VI, Vulnerability Management, and Penetration Testing. 1 trainee; wage \$60; award \$34,377.

Learn more about JTIP online at EDD.NewMexico.gov/JTIP.



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Employment News Release

By Stacy Johnston

New Mexico's seasonally adjusted unemployment rate was 4.4 percent in February 2025, unchanged from 4.4 percent in January and up from 3.8 percent in the previous year. The national unemployment rate in February was 4.1 percent, up from 4.0 percent in January and up from 3.9 percent in February 2024.

Total nonagricultural payroll employment grew by 13,800 jobs, or 1.6 percent, between February 2024 and February 2025. The majority of gains came from the private sector. The private sector was up 11,800 jobs, or 1.7 percent, while the public sector was up 2,000 jobs, or 1.0 percent. Within the private sector, the private service-providing industries were up 4,300 jobs, or 0.7 percent, while employment in the goods-producing industries was up 7,500 jobs, or 7.2 percent, from the level in January 2024.

For more information visit https://www.dws.state.nm.us/Portals/0/DM/LMI/Monthly_Employment_Release-2-2025.pdf

Nicolasa Chavez Returns to Museum of International Folk Art

By Ashley Espinoza



The Museum of International Folk Art (MOIFA) is thrilled to announce the return of Nicolasa Chávez as the new Curator of Latin American & Nuevomexicano Collections. Nicolasa, a respected historian, curator, and performance artist, brings a wealth of experience and passion to this pivotal role. She previously served as MOIFA's Curator of Nuevomexicano Collections for fourteen years before stepping into the role of Deputy State Historian of New Mexico, a position she held for nearly four years.

Throughout her career, Nicolasa has made invaluable contributions to both the museum and the state's cultural landscape. Her past exhibitions at MOIFA include *New World Cuisine: The Histories of Chocolate, Mate y Más, The Red that Colored the World, Flamenco: From Spain to New Mexico*, and

Música Buena: Hispano Folk Music of New Mexico. In addition, Nicolasa was an invited guest curator at the 21st Century Museum of Contemporary Art in Kanazawa, Japan, where she curated *Possibility of the Crafts: The Third Triennial of Kogei*, showcasing New Mexico's traditional arts on a global stage.



A prolific writer, Nicolasa contributed to the publication *A Red Like No Other: How Cochineal Colored the World* (Skira Rizzoli Press), authored *The Spirit of Flamenco: From Spain to New Mexico* (Museum of New Mexico Press), and penned *A Century of Masters: The NEA National Heritage Fellows of New Mexico* (LPD Press), which won a New Mexico Book Award.

As a fourteenth-generation New Mexican, Nicolasa's work is rooted

in the diverse multicultural heritage of New Mexico, with a special focus on the historical connections between New Mexico and the Spanish-speaking world. Her expertise extends to the rich traditions of Flamenco, Spanish Dance, and Argentine Tango, with numerous performances and lecture-demonstrations to her credit.

"We are excited to welcome Nicolasa back to the MOIFA team," said Charlie Lockwood, Executive Director of MOIFA. "Her deep knowledge of New Mexico's cultural heritage, combined with her outstanding curatorial and academic work, makes her the perfect fit to develop and showcase MOIFA's Latin American & Nuevomexicano Collections and related exhibitions."

Please join us in congratulating Nicolasa Chávez on her return to MOIFA as we look forward to the future of the museum's collections under her expert guidance.



Santa Fe County Treasurer Office

Spring is upon us, and 2nd half Property tax payments are due from April 10th – May 12th . Below is the 2nd half outreach schedule. We hope to see you in the convenience of your community.



Outreach Program Convenience Locations

The outreach program was designed to cover a broad range of Santa Fe County's territory and is available during the two tax seasons which are; November/December and April/May. We offer the following convenience centers where you can pay your taxes from 10:30am – 1:00pm.

Mary Esther Gonzales
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1121 Alto Street

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Eldorado Satellite Office
16 Avenida Torreon

Thursday April 24, 2025

Edgewood Satellite Office
114 Quail Trail (CR-9)

Tuesday April 22, 2025

Pojoaque Satellite Office
5 West Gutierrez, Suite 9

Monday April 28, 2025

Farmington Attorney Becomes First Native American District Court Judge in Eleventh Judicial District

By Barry Massey

Brenna Clani-Washinawatok, a Farmington attorney and enrolled member of the Navajo Nation, will be the first Native American to serve as a district court judge in the Eleventh Judicial District of San Juan and McKinley counties.

Judge Clani-Washinawatok will take the oath of office next month. She has served as a child support hearing officer, domestic violence commissioner and domestic relations hearing officer for the district court since 2022. She was appointed to the bench by Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham to succeed retired District Judge Daylene Marsh.

"It is a great honor and humbling experience to serve the people of San Juan and McKinley counties as a judge. I am guided by the rule of law, and look forward to working with the dedicated employees and judges of the court to provide fair and impartial justice for all," said Judge Clani-Washinawatok.

Chief Judge R. David Pederson said, "It is a privilege to welcome Judge Clani-Washinawatok to the bench. She has served with distinction on the court as a hearing officer and commissioner working on child support, parentage, divorce and custody cases as well as petitions for domestic violence orders of protection."

Judge Clani-Washinawatok was born in Shiprock, and graduated from Gallup High School. She received a bachelor's degree from Stanford University and graduated magna cum laude from the University of New Mexico School of Law in 2005.

She previously has worked as an attorney in the Child Support Services Division of the New Mexico Health Care Authority, an assistant district attorney in Eleventh Judicial District, a staff attorney for the Navajo Nation Department of Justice, and a senior policy analyst for the New Mexico Indian Affairs Department.

Judge Clani-Washinawatok is a fifth generation master Diné/Navajo weaver, born of the Ta'neezahnii clan and born for the Táchii'nii clan.

In addition to Judge Clani-Washinawatok, there currently are six Native Americans serving as judges on district, metropolitan and magistrate courts in New Mexico. That includes four magistrate judges in McKinley and San Juan counties.

District courts are general jurisdiction courts that hear adult and juvenile criminal cases as well as civil matters, including contract disputes, personal injury litigation and domestic relations cases such as divorce, custody and child support enforcement. Magistrate and metropolitan courts have limited jurisdiction and hear misdemeanors, traffic violations and civil actions up to \$10,000, and hold preliminary hearings to determine probable cause on felony charges.



District Judge Brenna Clani-Washinawatok
Photo courtesy of the Eleventh Judicial District Court

"The Way We Carry Water" Flows into Production in Northern New Mexico

By Dolores Martinez

The New Mexico Film Office announced that the production of the short film "The Way We Carry Water" will be filmed in Alcalde through June, showcasing the tranquil beauty of northern New Mexico.

This poignant film, created by Director Makaio Frazier and produced by Diego Joaquin Lopez ("Blaze You Out") and Fred Mady III, will employ 12 New Mexico crew members and four New Mexico principal actors, including Drew Lopez, Marcos Martinez, and Diego Lopez.

Amidst the rolling hills and ancient acequias, this film follows a young man named Marcos as he confronts the sudden loss of his grandfather. The weight of grief mirrors the flowing waters that sustain his family's land. Marcos navigates the complexities of grief while striving to preserve his family's acequia, a lifeline that nourishes their crops and cultural heritage.

Filmed across the changing seasons, "The Way We Carry Water" captures the cyclical beauty of nature, reflecting the themes of loss and renewal that weave through Marcos' journey. Through stunning visuals and an intimate narrative, the film explores the profound connection between family, culture, and the land, painting a portrait of resilience and the enduring legacy of tradition.

"As a filmmaker from northern New Mexico, 'The Way We Carry Water' is a deeply personal story that honors the land, culture, and traditions that have shaped my life," Frazier said. "This film celebrates the acequia heritage that has sustained our communities for generations, showcasing the beauty and resilience of our region on screen."

"The New Mexico Film Office is committed to supporting local filmmakers and fostering a thriving film industry that reflects the diverse voices and stories of our state," Steve Graham, director of the New Mexico Film Office, said. "'The Way We Carry Water' is a beautiful example of the incredible work being created by New Mexico filmmakers. We proudly support projects showcasing our state's talent, creativity, and cultural richness."

For more information, contact chilelinemedia@gmail.com



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Smokey The Bear Gotcha Days in May

By Mary Lavin

The state of New Mexico is home to one of the greatest influencers in American history, whose legendary story is still told around campfires and shared from generation to generation. This icon celebrated his 80th birthday last year and is one of our most recognizable names and faces, second only to the jolly old elf who comes at Christmastime. Who is this famous citizen? None other than Smokey Bear.

Smokey Bear was created in 1944 to encourage the American people to protect the nation's forests and grasslands from careless, unwanted, human-caused wildfires. Known as the Cooperative Forest Fire Prevention program (CFFP), the "Smokey Bear" program is administered by the USDA Forest Service, the Ad Council, and the National Association of State Foresters. The CFFP program is the longest-running and most successful public service ad campaign in history, heralding the familiar message of, "Only YOU can prevent wildfires." From its beginnings in 1944, the Smokey Bear campaign was a huge success; the number of human-caused

wildfires was reduced by 70% the following year. As the CFFP program grew in popularity and impact, Smokey Bear became as familiar to school children nationwide as he was to wildland firefighters.

Then on May 9, 1950, in the Capitan Mountains of south-central New Mexico, a human-caused wildfire burned over 17,000 acres of the Lincoln National Forest. A small, badly burned black bear cub, orphaned by the fire, was rescued from a snag and brought back to fire camp. There he was remanded into the custody of New Mexico Game and Fish warden, Ray Bell. Bell was also a pilot for the Game & Fish Department and flew the injured cub to Santa Fe to be treated by one of the best veterinarians he knew, Dr. Edwin Smith.

Photos and articles about the cub's rescue circulated in newspapers across the country and the little bruin became famous. Ray proposed to the NM State Game and Fish Warden that Smokey's true story could be connected to the national program as the living symbol of wildfire prevention. Before long, it was arranged that the



Above, left) Dr. Edwin Smith examines Smokey's burns at clinic in Santa Fe; (above, right), Smokey walks along the fuselage of Ray Bell's Game and Fish Dept. plane; (below left) Ray Bell gives Smokey a drink from a soda bottle; (below, right) Assistant State Game Warden, Homer Pickens, poses with Smokey before the cross-country flight to his new home ins DC). Photos used courtesy of the Forest History Society.



"real" Smokey Bear's "gottcha day" on the first Friday and Saturday in May.

young cub, now officially named Smokey Bear, would fly to Washington, D.C. and serve as a wildfire prevention ambassador at the Smithsonian National Zoo. Smokey remained at the nation's capital for over 25 years, eventually passing away from old age in 1976. Just as his rescue made national news many years earlier, his passing also hit the headlines across the country. Arrangements had been previously made for him to be returned to his New Mexico home at the time of his passing, and so one cold November night, Smokey Bear was laid to rest in Capitan at the State Park that bears his name.

Since 2004, the Smokey Bear Historical Park's non-profit Friends Group, the Smokey Bear's Hometown Association, has partnered with the Park to host an event celebrating the

The 2025 Smokey Bear Days event will take place at the Park on **Friday, May 2 and Saturday, May 3 from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.** on both days. Friday is Conservation Education Day (still open to the public), and schools and families are encouraged to come and learn more about wildfire prevention, fire suppression, and natural resource conservation. For more information about the event, call the Park at (575) 354-2748, or check out the Park's website at: <https://www.emnrd.nm.gov/sfd/smokey-bear-historical-park/> For more information on the true story of Smokey Bear and the CFFP program, visit: <https://smokeybear.com/en/smokeys-history/about-the-campaign> <https://smokeybear.com/en/smokeys-history/story-of-smokey>

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April is Financial Literacy Month

It's A Great Time to Set up 529 Education Savings Plans

By Carolyn Fittipaldi

April is Financial Literacy Month, the perfect time to learn about and plan for financial stability and success. Established more than two decades ago, Financial Literacy Month promotes financial wellness by promoting financial literacy and education for all Americans. There are many ways to better understand and enhance one's financial situation, from reevaluating or establishing monthly budgets, to tackling debt and evaluating savings options.



According to Standard & Poor's Ratings Services Global Financial Literacy Survey, only 57% of adults in the US are considered financially literate. While most Americans are making decisions with financial impact, roughly half are equipped with financial know-how.

In partnership with Tutor Doctor Albuquerque, The Education Plan® created financial literacy basics materials that include topics like; What is a Bank, Fun with Budgeting Your Money, Checking vs. Savings Accounts, Understanding Paychecks and Saving for College. Each module includes a quiz that users can take to test their knowledge of the topics. All materials are available on The Education Plan website. The Education Plan is a 529 education savings program sponsored by the State of New Mexico and administered by the New Mexico Education Trust Board.

One smart savings option families can incorporate into their financial toolkit is a 529 education savings plan. A 529 education savings plan allows families, friends, and relatives to easily contribute to a loved one's educational future. A 529 plan offers tax-advantaged savings. Funds in 529 education savings plans grow tax-free, and qualified withdrawals are tax-free. Additionally, in New Mexico, there is a state income tax deduction for contributions to a 529 account with The Education Plan. Qualified expenses include tuition and fees, room and board, books and supplies, computers and internet, K-12 tuition, student loans, apprenticeship expenses, and more.

529 plans are easy to set up, as well. Families can open a 529 account with no minimum contribution required and contributions can be made at any time through a one-time gift or regular automatic contributions. Anyone in the US, age 18 with a social security number or tax identification number, can open an account with The Education Plan.

The Education Plan equips families with information and resources to navigate the complexities of education financing, helping them make informed decisions and develop an education savings strategy aligned with their financial goals. The Education Plan website provides online tools such as a glossary of terms, tax benefit information, a detailed FAQ, and a help center that allows people to access information when it's convenient for them.

"During Financial Literacy Month, we believe every family deserves the ability to obtain the knowledge and skills needed to make informed financial decisions," said Natalie Cordova, Executive Director of the New Mexico Education Trust Board, the organization that administers The Education Plan. "We have a wealth of information on our website providing information and education, with focus on 529 savings plans."

For more information about The Education Plan®, visit www.TheEducationPlan.com.

SPO Launches New Classes for State Employees

By Jaime Phillips



Recently, the State Personnel Office Learning and Development Bureau has launched several new instructor-led courses for state employees. Development of all of the new classes was done based on training needs that were identified by or communicated to the State Personnel Office by agency leadership, HR, and feedback received from class participants. One of these classes, titled "Time Management: Power Up Your Productivity," is intended for state employees at any level and in any type of job. In this class, five different time management techniques are discussed, along with how you can apply them to get more out of the time you have available and ease your workload pressures. The class lasts one and a half hours, and is currently being held over Zoom. Registration for the class can be found on the SHARE ELM system under course code SoNM-2061.

The other new classes are intended specifically for supervisory and managerial employees, as they cover topics such as helping employees improve their job performance, utilizing performance development plans, and administering discipline processes. The first of these courses is "Addressing Job Performance Issues" (SoNM-2062). This training will help managers and supervisors address performance issues effectively to support their employees in improving their job performance. At the end of this training, managers and supervisors will be better equipped to describe issues related to poor job performance, recognize causes of poor job performance and their signs, and work with employees to improve performance effectively. The class lasts two hours and there are currently several available classes being held over Zoom. It is strongly recommended that supervisors and managers take another new course titled "Using Performance Development Plans Effectively" in conjunction with the performance issues course, as they complement each other. "Using Performance Development Plans Effectively" (SoNM-2065), which also lasts two hours, will help managers and supervisors effectively utilize Performance Development Plans (PDPs) to address underperformance, provide structured support, and enhance employee performance to drive individual and agency success. Required elements of a PDP and the steps for carrying out a PDP accurately will be discussed. Finally, also recently launched is a course titled "Employee Discipline Processes at the State of New Mexico" (SoNM-2060). This training will help improve the accuracy and effectiveness of the use of employee discipline at the State of New Mexico by increasing familiarity with procedures and requirements. It will help managers and supervisors learn more about how to implement the disciplinary process accurately and appropriately, as well as to ensure that just cause for disciplinary action is established. It lasts three hours and is currently being offered multiple times a month over Zoom.

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.

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Uncertainty and Pivots

By Nick Mandel

One term that has been frequently mentioned since the start of this brief, new year is "Uncertainty." Businesses, small and large, are unsure of what to expect in the year ahead. What number of materials should be ordered, and should we stockpile goods now or wait? Will tariffs be enforced and by what amount? Where are interest rates headed? Economists and experts concur that if there is one thing the market doesn't like, it is uncertainty.

The uncertainty is not limited to business, evidenced by the federal government and executive directives taking place. The dismantling of federal agencies, federal judges and courts being challenged in unconventional manners by the executive branch, and federal funding freezes on programs and services that were once thought to be immune from this kind of action.

Or extend that uncertainty to our own future, professionally and personally. How will AI impact our careers, and climate change affect

your homeowner's insurance? What personal challenges and changes will an uncertain world bring? These conditions create unease and discomfort, leading to further questions.

Understandably, it is convenient to blame or say there is little we can do about these external circumstances or situations, as many are outside of our direct control. An unforeseen medical diagnosis. A loved one's unexpected passing. Or a change in our financial circumstances. Common occurrences that serve as a reminder that uncertainty is not limited to the financial markets.

Columbia Business School Professor Rita McGrath promotes a thinking that says businesses and organizations will be facing a heightened level of uncertainty and disruption in the year ahead. She offers reasoning that might serve us in developing an internal system to address what she calls the "Uncertainty capabilities." That system consists of four proactive ways in which organizations can be better prepared for the uncertainties

that lie ahead.

1. Building organizations that can rapidly reconfigure themselves as assumptions change. Given state government is not quick and nimble and many of you reading this are not able to make those changes to the whole. But if you are a smaller section, bureau or similar unit, do you have the capability and foresight to understand and possibly adjust existing responsibilities? Given the uncertainty of what is occurring at the federal level and the risk your program may be facing if dependent on federal funding, how can you reconfigure responsibilities and actions should a major disruption occur?
2. Developing early warning systems for non-obvious threats and opportunities. The exercise of SWOT, (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats), comes to mind where an organization looks at each, with emphasis on those opportunities and threats that may aid or hinder its future. While the threats related to federal government policy seem to be obvious, what is less clear and present? What other non-obvious threats may exist to the organization and where may there be unexpected opportunities?
3. Creating portfolio strategic options rather than rigid plans. For those old enough to remember the five-year strategic plan, even in year one, it was almost obsolete as it sat on the bookshelf with other dated and rarely read manuals. Options are the ability to pivot, adjust strategically and rapidly to public needs, market forces, and funding done in a disciplined approach as outlined by McGrath. Despite the government's slow response to public needs and markets, is it time to consider how this can be improved?
4. Fostering cultures that see uncertainty as a source of opportunity rather than threats by adopting an entrepreneurial mindset. Again, no surprises that government at all levels fails to adopt



Image: MS Copilot

and adjust to an entrepreneurial mindset, there are success stories. During the previous presidential administration, the IRS was provided with additional funding to hire

additional agents for the sole purpose of conducting more audits. The expectation was it would produce more revenues from actual or potential delinquent taxpayers. The results were clear. For every \$1 in additional spending, the agency recovered almost two dollars in additional revenue. For every dollar invested in audits of the top 1% of wealth, a return of \$6 was produced. Still, Congress reduced the funding from \$80 billion to \$60 and the program has a questionable future.

Proceeding forward with the ambiguous and uncertain questions we are all confronting, the tactic of pivoting emerges. In a recent podcast of, Hidden Brain, host Shankar Vedantam interviews Professor McGrath on how businesses have pivoted during turbulent and uncertain times and what new and innovative models emerged.

One example being Gillette and its dominance as the disposable razor brand for men. Because of its prominent presence on retail shelves and its known name, it commanded premium prices and huge profit margins. But it was also vulnerable to theft and shrinkage, so razors were secured with buyers having to wait for store employees to unlock them prior to purchase. Gillette also had an attitude of ego and smugness because of its dominant technology and felt less concern with competitors.

That was until a couple of entrepreneurs happened to have an excess inventory of razors that were good, but not quite as good, as the Gillette razors. Their pivot was to sell razors not at the retail level, but online, delivered by mail, on a regular basis and at a significantly lower cost and with its success, the Dollar Shave Club became a well-known brand.

Continued on page 27

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Uncertainty and Pivots *Continued from pg 26*

Or consider at the higher education level, how many would be college bound students are now questioning the value of this level of education, particularly at the Ivy League and other elite university levels. A degree that incurs no income during school years, that can result in debt of six figures and college loans over decades, and the question as to how valuable that degree is as the knowledge and information commonly have a half age life that diminishes rapidly in the information age. Many would be students have begun to pivot from this traditional, established rite of education by adopting alternative methods, including AI. In the blog, "The Age of the Autodidact," Nick Halaris, writes that self-learning, particularly in the era of AI will be the dominate format of learning not just for college bound students of the past, but all age groups in the years ahead. Why spend \$100,000 plus for a law degree, MBA or equivalent when you can access AI or even a AI tutor to access the information at much less cost? How will higher education pivot to demonstrate its value in the years ahead?

And how should state and local government pivot in times of such uncertainty? How will government at the local level continue to carry out the programs and services promised when federal funding is questionable and less guaranteed? How do state and local governments adapt to a new federal landscape where assumptions of common practices, processes and a traditional way of doing things are no longer assured? The future is blurred and confusing. Lots of questions and few answers.

History shows that large bureaucracies rarely adapt or innovate quickly when faced with such challenges. The business cases such as Gillette, Blockbuster Video and Kodak and the stories that unfolded with them were slow and clumsy, often ending in defeat. How state and local government will adapt, and pivot given the uncertainty will be a new and interesting chapter in public administration history.

What's on your mind? Contact me at promandel@gmail.com

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New Mexico Poetry Out Loud 2025 Champion Kaitlyn Lubega Headed to National Competition in Washington, DC

By Christina Claassen

The New Mexico Poetry Out Loud champion, Kaitlyn Lubega, a 12th grader attending United World College (UWC-USA) in Montezuma, NM, is headed to the Poetry Out Loud National Finals in Washington, DC, May 5 – 7, 2025.



Celebrating its 20th anniversary this year, this poetry recitation competition for high school students is a partnership of the National Endowment for the Arts, Poetry Foundation, and New Mexico Arts, designed to improve public speaking skills, build confidence, and teach about literary history and contemporary life. Nine high school students from schools throughout New Mexico participated in the Poetry Out Loud state finals, which took place at the Lensic Performing Arts Center on Sunday, March 16.

Lubega, who was the state champion in 2024, is excited to return to the nationals again this year.

"I am incredibly blessed and fortunate to have the opportunity to represent the state once again at the National Finals. This year, I return with an even more profound connection to poetry and the beautiful state of New Mexico," said Lubega. "With a second chance to push myself further in the competition, I am eager to showcase my refined performances, apply the insights I have gained, and let my love for spoken word move audiences on an even larger stage."

Lubega will receive \$200, and UWC-USA will receive a \$500 stipend for the purchase of poetry materials. As the first runner-up, Nakia Thomas, a 12th grader at Carlsbad High School, will receive \$100, with \$200 for her school.

All 55 state and jurisdictional champions, including Lubega, will compete in the national semifinals on Tuesday, May 6, from 9:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. ET, with the top nine students advancing to the finals on Wednesday, May 7, from 7:00 to 9:15 p.m. ET. Both days are free and open to the public and will be available through a one-time-only webcast at arts.gov.

In total, \$50,000 in awards and school/organization stipends, including a \$20,000 cash award for the Poetry Out Loud National Champion, will be presented at the National Finals. The Poetry Foundation provides and administers all aspects of the monetary prizes awarded and travel arrangements to the Poetry Out Loud National Finals.

Poetry Out Loud was started by the National Endowment for the Arts and the Poetry Foundation in 2005. Participating students memorize and recite poems they select from an anthology of more than 1,200 classic and contemporary poems. More than 4.4 million students and 81,000 teachers from 20,000 schools and organizations across the nation have participated since its start. For more information visit PoetryOutLoud.org

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



Please submit the photo location to rroundhouse@gmail.com with the email title of *Photo Contest*. All correct entries will be placed into a drawing to select a winner. Entries must be submitted by April 25, 2025. Look in May's 'Round The Roundhouse for the winning announcement along with another photo contest to enter. Good luck!

Congratulations to the March's winner, Jason Biesecker, DOT. His name was selected in the drawing of correct entries. March's photo location was the City of Santa Fe Municipal Recreational Sports Complex.

Bon Appetit!

Aging Department and Alzheimer's Association Launch Groundbreaking Awareness Campaign

Campaign aims to educate public about Alzheimer's disease

By Joey Long

Take Action. Talk About Alzheimer's.

The New Mexico Aging and Long-Term Services Department (ALTSD) and the Alzheimer's Association of New Mexico have launched a joint campaign to promote early detection and connect families to resources as an estimated 46,000 New Mexicans live with Alzheimer's disease—many undiagnosed.

The "Take Action. Talk." campaign is the first of its kind in the nation, and will feature billboards, digital ads, and online content to educate the public on Alzheimer's warning signs, treatments, and caregiver support services.

"Alzheimer's is a major public health issue that often goes unrecognized until it has progressed to an advanced stage," said Emily Kaltenbach, ALTSD Cabinet Secretary. "By raising awareness of the warning signs and encouraging earlier diagnosis, it increases the treatment options and can help families manage the high costs of care."

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Alzheimer's is the seventh-leading cause of death in the United States. More than seven million Americans are living with Alzheimer's disease, and over 11 million family members provide unpaid care for loved ones with the condition. In New Mexico alone, an estimated 67,000 family members contributed over 118 million hours of unpaid care within the last year.

While there is currently no cure for Alzheimer's, two medications have recently been approved by the Food and Drug Association. These medications have shown effectiveness in slowing the progression of Alzheimer's disease in its earliest stages, making a diagnosis that much more important.

"Research has shown that an estimated 45% of all cases of Alzheimer's can be affected – whether delayed or prevented – through lifestyle factors including diet, exercise, socialization, use of hearing aids, vaccinations for common diseases and other means," said Donald Smithburg, Executive Director of the Alzheimer's Association of New Mexico. "By reaching families earlier, we can help them seek timely treatment and better navigate this devastating disease with much-needed support."

To see the campaign or learn more about the programs and services offered, visit alz.org/talknm or call the Association's free 24/7 Helpline at 800-272-3900. For additional resources regarding aging services in New Mexico for Alzheimer's and beyond, visit aging.nm.gov or call the Aging & Disability Resource Center at 800-432-2080.



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 Andiamo! – D
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 Box Car – L
 Café Fina – B, L
 Cafe Pasqual's – D
 Cowgirl BBQ – L, D
 El Nido – D
 El Nido Sushi – D

Escondido – D
 Fable Restaurant & Market – D
 Hello Sweet Cream*
 High Desert,
 The Mystic Hotel – D
 Horno Restaurant – D
 India House – D
 Izanami – D
 Jambo Café – D
 La Boca – D
 Legal Tender** – L, D

Los Poblanos SF – D
 Marisco's Costa Azul – D
 Mille – B
 Museum Hill Cafe – L
 Palace Prime – D
 Paloma – L
 Pantry Dos – D
 Paper Dosa – D
 Pecos Trail Cafe – L, D
 Piccolino – L, D
 Plaza Café Downtown – B, L, D

Plaza Café Southside – B, L, D
 Posa's Tamale Factory
 & Restaurant – B, L, D
 San Francisco Street
 Bar & Grill – D
 Santa Fe Bite – B, L, D
 SkyFire, Bishop's Lodge – D
 Terra, The Four Seasons – B, L, D
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** Legal Tender will participate with Angels Dine Out on Saturday, April 19. Noon – 7:00 pm.

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Museum of New Mexico Foundation Shop to Open at Albuquerque Sunport

Marshall Retail Group will operate new store in airport retail expansion
By Teresa Curl

Air travelers will find a vibrant array of art, jewelry, books, and other high-quality gift items from New Mexico's state museums when an expanded retail area opens later this year at the Albuquerque Sunport. Through a licensing agreement with Marshall Retail Group (MRG), the Museum of New Mexico Foundation Shop will feature goods representing the New Mexico Museum of Art and Vadem Contemporary, the Museum of Indian Arts and Culture, the Museum of International Folk Art, and the New Mexico History Museum.

The Sunport Shop is modeled after the Museum Shops located inside the four state museums in Santa Fe, and each museum will have a distinct presence in the store. Shoppers can select from diverse goods at a variety of price points—including Pueblo pottery, handmade textiles, artist notecards, history books, and branded water bottles. Information about museum visits and museum membership will also be available.

"We are prepared to meet the city of Albuquerque's desire for a strong local presence while supporting tourism and economic development," says Jamie Clements, President/CEO of Museum of New Mexico Foundation, the non-profit that staffs and operates the Museum Shops. "The Foundation has for years aspired to establish a retail experience at the Albuquerque Sunport in order to promote our state museums and provide visitors with a real sense of place as soon as they arrive."

The Foundation's vice president of retail, Teresa Curl, will assist MRG with curation of stock from local artisans and fairtrade sources. "The Sunport Shop will offer the same fantastic merchandise that people are used to seeing at the Museum of Indian Arts and Culture and the Museum of International Folk Art," Curl says. "Whether or not your travel plans include a stop in Santa Fe, you can have an authentic New Mexico cultural experience at the MNMF Shop."

MRG will operate the MNMF Shop, A Los Poblanos Farm Shop, and travel convenience stores. The anticipated opening is late 2025.

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

By Daniela Millan

The New Mexico Department of Justice (NMDOJ) is partnering once again with the DEA and AARP of New Mexico for Drug Take Back Day and Shred Day—two services at the same event allow for the opportunity to safely dispose of unwanted prescription medications AND shred sensitive documents for free!

Join us on Saturday, April 26th, from 10 a.m. - 2 p.m. at Santa Fe Place Mall to responsibly discard expired or unused medications and securely shred personal documents—all at no cost.

Benefits of Joining NMDOJ and AARP on April 26th:

- **Protect:** Improperly disposing of medications—such as flushing them or tossing them in the trash—can contaminate water sources and harm wildlife. By participating, you ensure safe incineration of medications and secure shredding of sensitive documents, reducing environmental and privacy risks.
- **Prevent:** Keeping unused medications at home increases the risk of misuse, especially among teens and young adults. Similarly, discarded documents with personal information can leave you vulnerable to fraud. Take action now to protect your loved ones and safeguard your identity.
- **Ensure:** By safely disposing of medications and shredding personal documents, you're not just protecting yourself—you're contributing to a healthier, safer community for all New Mexicans.

Mark your calendar for April 26th and take advantage of this free, convenient service! Our team will be on-site to assist with safe medication disposal and secure document shredding. Each item you bring for disposal and shredding contributes to a safer, healthier, and cleaner environment for New Mexico communities.



Note: Syringes, sharps, and illicit drugs cannot be accepted. Liquid medications should remain in their original, sealed containers with lids securely closed to prevent leaks. For document shredding, participants are limited to two bankers' boxes or two 20-gallon garbage bags.

For more information, contact us at communications@nmdoj.gov.



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New Mexico Museum of Natural History & Science Paleontologist Part of International Research Team Naming New Species of Clawed Dinosaur

By Stephen Hamway



A new species of dinosaur notable for its long, distinctive claws has been discovered in Mongolia by an international research team that included New Mexico Museum of Natural History & Science Executive Director Dr. Anthony Fiorillo.

“This work not only opens up new possibilities for research on a little-understood family of dinosaurs, but it also showcases how international partnerships play a key role in our museum’s research,” said Dr. Fiorillo. “Research on a dinosaur discovered in Mongolia, led by researchers in Hokkaido, Japan, has implications for research on this unique group of dinosaurs around the world.”

The research, titled “Didactyl therizinosaur with a preserved keratinous claw from the Late

Cretaceous of Mongolia,” was published in the scientific journal *Science* on March 25. The paper identifies a new species of Therizinosaur – a group of theropod dinosaurs that lived in central and eastern Asia and western North America, including New Mexico, during the Cretaceous period – known as *Duonychus tsogtbaatari*. Popularized by their appearance in the blockbuster *Jurassic World* film franchise, these odd-looking dinosaurs are characterized by long necks, small leaf-shaped teeth, and large hooked claws on their hands. Despite their fearsome appearance, therizinosaurs were largely herbivorous or omnivorous.

Researchers believe *Duonychus* lived around 90 million years ago and weighed approximately 570 pounds. Unlike previously discovered therizinosaurs, *Duonychus* had two clawed fingers instead of three, giving it a hand orientation

more similar to a *Tyrannosaurus rex* than its close relatives. Based on the discovery of the dinosaur’s hand and well-preserved claw sheaths made out of keratin – the same protein that makes up feathers, hair, and animal hooves – the authors propose that *Duonychus* used its claws for grappling and grasping vegetation, like other therizinosaurs. The nearly 90-degree curved claw indicates its ability to grip branches or plant clusters effectively, suggesting that *Duonychus* specialized in gathering vegetation through a hooking and pulling motion.

Along with other families of theropods where some individual species demonstrated a loss of digits, this current study notes that the discovery of *Duonychus* provides new insights into forelimb and hand reduction in theropods. *Duonychus* further illustrates that digit loss evolved independently in



A rendering of *Duonychus tsogtbaatari*

multiple theropod dinosaur lineages. The convergence of digit reduction in these groups underscores the adaptability of theropods to diverse ecological niches.

The lead author of the paper is Yoshitsugu Kobayashi, of Hokkaido University in northern Japan. Other authors include Darla K. Zelenitsky (University of Calgary) and Tsogtbaatar Chinzorig (University of North Carolina / Mongolian Academy of Sciences). To learn more about the museum’s paleontology work, visit nmnaturalhistory.org/science/sections/paleontology.

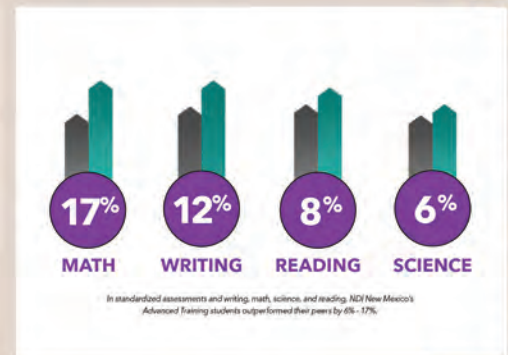


Community Spotlight

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NDI New Mexico is a statewide nonprofit dedicated to youth development, inspiring children to succeed and equipping them with the skills to overcome the challenges they face. Since 1994, we have harnessed the power of dance and music to instill discipline, confidence, and excellence in young people across the state. Our joyful, high-energy programs help students develop lifelong skills that extend far beyond the classroom. Each year, NDI New Mexico partners with over 90 public elementary schools, reaching more than 8,000 children and over 30,000 audience members in 29

communities. Over the last 30 years, we have helped more than 150,000 students improve their health, academics, and self-esteem through movement and mentorship. In standardized assessments in writing, math, science, and reading, NDI New Mexico Advanced Training students outperformed their peers by 6%-17%. At the heart of our programs are the Core Four values: Work Hard, Do Your Best, Never Give Up, and Be Healthy. These guiding principles empower students of all backgrounds to believe in themselves, embrace challenges, and reach their full potential—proving that through effort, perseverance, and inspiration, they can turn their dreams into reality.



In 2023 and 2024 combined, **HOLMANS USA** donated over **\$350,000** 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.



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