



# El Diario Sin Nombre

The Newsletter Without a Name

Volume 3, Issue 8

August, 2003

## Northeast ISD Office Open for Business

### New Mexico Human Services Department

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The large Albuquerque Northeast ISD office opened its very own doors, for the first time ever, last month. Located on Cutler, near Washington and Menaul, the new office's 43 employees are already observing an increase in the number of clients. Olivia Angus, director of the office said, "Between 500 and 800 people are signing in each day." She is not sure if it's because of the new office's location, its closeness to the Social Security office or the overall economic conditions that are bringing in clients.

Caseworker Andrea Contreras, who has been with ISD for six months, was more practical in her response to the larger volume of people visiting the new building, "I have a bigger office for bigger caseloads."

"I recently met with Mr. Leonor Romero, my counterpart at the Social Security office," said Angus. "I pointed to our new office and told him that we were open for business." Many who get Social Security benefits also qualify for food stamps and Medicaid, so the closeness of the two offices may in fact cause more people to stop by the new ISD office.

Angus is more than happy with the new building. She said, "It's wonderful! It's spacious, pleasant, and it's nice to have a quality building – the employees deserve it." Angus said moving into the building was her last project, as she retires at the end of the month. She does, however, hope to have a ribbon-cutting ceremony for the new

building before she leaves.

Caseworker Cherie Iorio, who has been with ISD for less than a year, said, "My old office had an unpleasant smell, and I always had a headache. Now, I don't anymore." She also likes the offices proximity to the Pavilions Mall for shopping and says she is next in line for an office with a window.

Prior to 1995, Albuquerque's ISD offices cut the city into three slices: the southeast, southwest and north. The north office basically took care of clients north of I-40. After 1995, the north office split into the northeast and northwest offices, but both remained in the same building, at times confusing for clients and employees.



Smiling faces. Andrea Contreras (left) and Laura Fielding are taking on more cases in their new office.

Northeast ISD employees Olivia Angus (left), Laura Fieldings, Cherie Iorio, Andrea Contreras, Sal Gavaldoz (sitting), Tina Baldonado and Marcial Sanchez enjoy their spacious new kitchen, replete with stove, microwave, refrigerator and sink.



## Medicaid Personal Care Options on Secretary's Desk

The MAD may soon be implementing important changes to the three-year-old, but very popular Personal Care Option (PCO). The majority of Medicaid's 7,082 clients using PCO are elderly and/or disabled adults on SSI Medicaid categories 001, 003 or 004. The program

helps them meet basic non-medical daily needs and avoid more expensive nursing homes. But the program quickly became too well liked, and its cost ballooned to \$150 million per year.

A PCO Committee appointed by Secretary Pam Hyde recently provided

recommendations on how to hold down the soaring costs of the program, yet try to preserve the hours of care clients receive each month. Among the recommendations:

*(Continued on page 2)*

## Governor Richardson Challenges Health Care Task Force To Find Coverage and Access for all New Mexicans

Governor Bill Richardson has asked 86 people to be part of a task force to provide recommendations for bringing affordable health care to all New Mexicans. It will be led by Secretary Pamela Hyde and Department of Health Secretary Patricia Montoya, and co-chaired by Mr. James Hinton, President/CEO of Presbyterian Healthcare Services, and Ms. Ellen Leitzer, founder and co-director of the Senior Citizens Law Office, Inc. and Vice President and founder of Health Action New Mexico. Other members include health care providers, business leaders, advocates, legislators, insurers and consumers. "We have a lot to accomplish before we report back to the Governor October 1<sup>st</sup>," said Hyde.

Many of the same people who have been participating in meetings focusing on the uninsured, which is a subject-specific item in the overall Spring/Summer tour initiative launched in May, have also been appointed to the task force. This group reviewed and discussed a report, *A Proposed Health Care Agenda for New Mexico*, created from the Spring/Summer tour meetings, now almost complete. A great deal of work has already been done, so the task force can incorporate these efforts into the process to find workable solutions.

The task force is scheduled to meet for three full days before the governor's reporting deadline of October 1<sup>st</sup>. The first meeting is scheduled for July 31, the second August 28 and the third September 25, all at the Albuquerque Convention Center, 401 Second St., NW.

Long-debated recommendations for changes to the Medicaid program may finally start to come into focus once the governor receives his report. In a letter to task members Richardson said,

*We live in extraordinary times, with extraordinary opportunities. Our people are disproportionately poor and uninsured. Our children are disproportionately reliant on Medicaid for their health care needs.*



Secretary Hyde and PRC Insurance Commission Superintendent Eric Serna talk with stakeholder representatives during a recent health care and access meeting.

*Our employers are disproportionately unable to afford health care for their employees, and our economy is increasingly dependent on the business of health care. Working low-income individuals in our state cannot afford the health insurance or the health care they need to keep themselves and their families healthy and productive ... I am looking for your best thinking about how to address these issues. I want to call a special session of the legislature when the time is right.*

## Personal Care Options



(Continued from page 1)

- Have someone other than providers determine hours of care to reduce incentives to offer unnecessary care;
- Increase number of MAD staff monitoring the program;
- Establish higher standards of certification for providers (now they only need a general business license to qualify);
- Establish advertising/marketing guidelines for providers;
- Look at provider reimbursement rates

for potential savings; and

- Encourage clients to elect the consumer-directed option instead of the consumer-delegated option. (6,946 use the more expensive consumer-delegated option and only 136 consumers have elected the directed option)

Crystal Mata, who manages the PCO program for MAD, said, "To me, one of the most important recommendations is having a separate organization conduct client needs assessments. That alone could significantly reduce costs in the program. It will also bring about standardization, ensuring all clients are assessed equally."

Secretary Hyde is reviewing the committee's recommendations and is working with MAD and the Aging and Long-term Care Department to decide which options to accept. "The PCO is a wonderful service that allows individuals with disabilities to remain in their communities, and it helps local economies," Hyde said. "Changes that bring proper oversight and consistency in how the service is provided will help keep it in New Mexico." She commended the committee members for their hard work. The committee consisted of PCO providers, service recipients, and advocates.

## With Deep Sympathy

**Dave Buczek**, who started working for HSD around 1986 in the Southwest Albuquerque ISD Office as a maintenance worker, passed away on Friday, July 25th.

In 1987, the Information Systems Bureau (ISB) of HSD hired him as a Teleprocessing Analyst I. Over the years, he was instrumental in setting up networks like ISD2, COLTS, Project Forward and SSALSA. Dave was an important part of all the changes in HSD's networks, from moving offices to changing the infrastructure with the installation of networks and new computers and printers. If an office was down due to a network problem, Dave was the first to help get it back up.

Ed Phinney, Dave's co-worker and close friend said, "Dave has been an HSD Icon, and he will be sorely missed. He was an important part of the new Division of Information Technology, working in the Communications Bureau. Dave has always been there for HSD and it will be difficult, if not impossible, to replace him. He was proud that he never missed a move date for a new office. HSD would like to thank Dave Buczek and his family for his dedication."

Dave Buczek – He was always there for us, and all of us who knew him will miss him.

Condolences may be sent to Dave's wife, Marie Buczek, and the family,  
6509 Rosalind Dr. NE, Albuquerque, NM 87109-3607.



Dave and unidentified co-worker

**CIO Conny Maki's mother, Angela V. Martinez**, passed away on Sunday evening after suffering a stroke a few weeks ago. The rosary will be held in Santa Fe at McGee Memorial Chapel on Thursday, August 7th, at 7:00 p.m. Services will be held at St. Francis Cathedral at 11:00 a.m. on Friday.

**Our deepest condolences to both families.**

## We Invite You to Submit an Op-Ed Piece

During the recent leadership meeting in Santa Fe, we asked for—and received—many suggestions for letting HSD employees know about department-wide accomplishments, and for getting a wider variety of news. Some of the suggestions are listed below. While we'd like all of you to consider the suggestions and respond accordingly, this month we would especially like submissions of an Op-Ed piece for the September *Sin Nombre*.

- Barbara Gay to produce quarterly reports and one annual report, by division or HSD as a whole, to be placed on HSD's web site (we had already planned to produce an annual report for calendar year 2003).
- Monthly newsletter to stakeholders and other interested parties.
- Barbara Gay to organize a casual, socially-engineered gathering with legislative staff and advocates

during the legislation session—"HSD Day."

- Bureau chiefs to provide accomplishments to division directors, who will get information to Barbara Gay.
- HSD employees to define "big" or "small" accomplishments for newsletter and email to Barbara Gay.

**It's your newsletter.  
Let us hear from you!**

## Retired ISD Supervisor Offers Her Thoughts



Lola Blackwell

Lola Blackwell has finally left the department and for good – maybe! She started with HSD in 1979, at mid-career, as an ISD caseworker at the SE Albuquerque office, retiring 20 years later in 1999. Soon after retirement however,

she was coaxed into coming back part time. Finally, last December, she hung up her handy-dandy income standards chart for good. Now she offers some observations about her career at one of the more challenging offices.

Of course, every field office has its unique challenges, especially when frustrated clients get upset, like in Deming when someone used an automobile to punch a hole into the building, or in Tierra Amarilla when another person blocked off the building's only exit with a truck so that no one could leave.

The SE ISD office serves neighborhoods that have some of the highest pockets of hunger, homelessness and poverty in the state. "After a short time, I realized that whole neighborhoods were receiving aid, and oftentimes it was

generational," said Blackwell. One of her most challenging moments came when a middle-aged male client – frustrated – took off his clothes in the lobby. "He was truly upset, but he was also kind enough to make sure that when he threw off his clothes he didn't hit any bystanders with them," she said. "There was pandemonium in the lobby for awhile, but things settled down after the police came. I picked up all of his clothes, put them in a bag and gave them to him as they were taking him away."

Another memorable moment there was related by SE County Director Kathryn Karnowsky, "One time our office was robbed at knife-point back when we held cash for the food stamp program."

For a while, Blackwell witnessed more interesting human events than others because the window of her office looked out into the parking lot. "I saw a lot of bizarre things and reported them whenever I could. One time, I ran outside to try and help someone who was being stuffed into the trunk of a car," she said. "The car got away, but was later chased down by police. Finally, they decided to move me to a quieter part of the office," she said.

When asked what differences she sees between older caseworkers and the newer ones, she said, "The new people seem to be a cohesive group. Very few of us from the old

group were left. Of course, the SE office has always had camaraderie – kind of like a family," she said. "Workers would come here from other offices and say, 'Hey, this office is different.'"

Blackwell was also amazed at how well the younger workers grasped using computers. "They even write their client narratives on computers!" she said. "I had a heck of a time learning the new programs initiated as a result of welfare reform. I'm really impressed with the new generation of ISD workers. They have great organizational and work skills."

Blackwell is also fondly remembered as a poem writer. Over the years, she wrote over 30 poems to commemorate promotions, marriages, births and retirements at the SE office. The poem she likes best is *Boo Hoo, Poor Sue, With Nothing to Do*. It ribs an employee named Sue who was promoted to supervisor.

When asked if she will miss the SE ISD office, Blackwell said, "Friends would always ask me, 'Isn't it depressing working at welfare offices'?" I responded, "Yes, some situations are heart-wrenching; but no, it's not depressing – it's really fascinating work."

Karnowsky's thoughts about Blackwell, her friend and long-time co-worker, "She's a good egg!"

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## Governor's Staff Visits CSED Call Center

Claudia Macias, Ramona Martinez, and Becky Gear listen in on a call to one of the call center's workers concerning a child support case. Duane Thorp (standing) is the trainer for new call center employees. Each month the CSED



call center takes thousands of telephone calls from around the country. Over 93 percent of all callers have their questions answered by the call center, freeing up child support caseworkers to deal with locate, collection and enforcement duties.