



# El Diario Sin Nombre

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## New Mexico Human Services Department

### Inside this issue:

HSD Halloween	2, 3
LI HEAP Off to a Hot Start	3
Hunger Summit	4
New Alamogordo I SD Office	4

## How Time Flies!

### A Look Back on My First 10 Months at HSD

It's difficult to believe, but I have served as the Secretary of the Human Services Department for over ten months now. How time flies when you're having fun! When I think about it, it was this time last year that Bill Richardson was elected as New Mexico's next governor. Each week after Election Day he announced new appointments to his Cabinet. It wasn't until mid-December that I found out I too would be part of his Cabinet and the Secretary of this state agency, which touches the lives of one in every three New Mexicans. The appointments of Deputy Secretaries Liz Stefanics and Thomas Romero were announced the same day, and we have been a strong team ever since.

A lot has happened since December 2002. We made it through this administration's first legislative session, a session that created some important legislation for each division in HSD. I was proud to be the first HSD Secretary in five years to be confirmed by the Senate, and honored to become a member of the Lieutenant Governor's Children's Cabinet.

Following the session, we sponsored the first Native American dialogue, which included the 21 pueblos and tribes and the state's Health and Human Services Departments (HHS). We looked at ways to work more closely together in the delivery of social services to all American Indians.

Internally, we started to redesign the organizational structure of HSD, putting more emphasis on the *Accountability* part of our vision – Access, Quality and Accountability, or 'AQuA'. The Administrative Services Division is working to be an example for how to "do things right." ASD has led the effort to finalize FY 2002's audit, close the books on FY 2003 and begin that year's audit on time, catalogue and track all HSD contracts, and identify over \$60 million in prior year encumbrances we are no longer able to use. These funds are being reverted to the General Fund. ASD along with the Office of General Counsel has also

developed policies and procedures to guide our contracting process in the future. The Office of Inspector General has also done fine work to clear long-standing external audit findings, which will provide an excellent foundation on which to base future audit plans.

The new Division of Information Technology (DoIT) has also begun to move the department forward. One example is their leadership in helping HSD comply with the requirements of the new HIPAA law. ASD and DoIT together helped identify funding for almost 900 new computers for HSD employees in central office and in field offices throughout New Mexico.

In the spring, the Medical Assistance Division and I took our Medicaid redesign ideas on the road. We were not alone on this 20-city tour. We learned that "working well with others" is very fruitful. The HHS Departments (HSD, DOH, CYFD and the new Aging and Long-term Care Department) are joined at the hip in so many ways. This only makes sense because we all work together to serve many of the same New Mexicans. The HHS Spring/Summer Tour gave us input from many New Mexicans that we are now using to make important changes in Medicaid, behavioral health and long-term care, and to create a comprehensive health plan for the state.

The tour also gave me an opportunity to meet many of you who live and work in



Secretary Pam Hyde



Betina and Robyn enjoy the Halloween festivities at Ark Plaza

(Continued on page 2)

## How Time Flies

*(Continued from page 1)*

locations other than Santa Fe. Several ISD field office staff attended the community meetings in the cities we visited. And, so far, I've visited 40 HSD field offices with 15 to go. Meeting and talking directly with you has been invaluable to me. I am proud of the work you do and the helpful presence you represent in New Mexico's diverse communities. When I say HSD touches the lives of one in three New Mexicans, you are the ones doing that important work in your communities. You are the front door to dozens of services so very important to New Mexico residents. Thank you, and KEEP UP THE GOOD WORK!

As the Spring/Summer Tour was winding down, another big project began and took our Medicaid redesign efforts to a higher level. Secretary of Health Patricia Montoya and I, along with Jim Hinton of Presbyterian Healthcare Services and Ellen Leitzer of the Senior Citizens Law Office, led the Governor's Health Care Coverage and Access Task Force. From July to October, over 80 leaders agreed on ideas to move our state forward in offering health care insurance to all New Mexicans. On October 15, 2003 the governor accepted the report and determined to address health care in the January 2004 legislative

session. Medicaid staff has done outstanding work during this turbulent period, and I applaud your ability to remain focused during this time.

This fall, the governor also announced a change in the way behavioral health services in New Mexico will be designed and purchased, using a cross-departmental purchasing collaborative approach. The governor asked me to lead this effort, which will take at least 18 months to accomplish.

The Income Support Division continues to do great work as well. They took the lead in planning the Governor's Hunger Summit, which was well attended in mid-October by business and provider leaders throughout New Mexico.

In addition to the Hunger Summit, ISD is working to address the needs of employees by requesting more staff to help decrease caseloads and improve customer service. They have implemented an assessment of potential barriers to employment for all TANF applicants, increased food stamp outreach to immigrants, and are reviewing the General Assistance program to make it a more accessible safety net to those it serves.

The Child Support Enforcement Division has begun working more closely with our ISD offices, the Department of

Labor, Department of Corrections and utility companies to improve locate activities and outreach efforts. They have stepped up collections, decreased customer service complaints, started a fatherhood initiative, worked to get children on their parents' insurance plans and worked to even out caseloads throughout the state. They also worked with local judges to obtain funding for additional hearing officers for local courts to assist in dealing with the backlog of cases pending the establishment of court orders. The "25 Most Wanted List" for owing child support is receiving unprecedented media attention, which can only improve the overall performance of this program and ISD programs as well.

Let's not forget Human Resources. They do so much for all of us. Right now, HR is pulling together to make sure that all 1,500 closeout PADs are entered into the system.

So here we are, almost at the end of 2003 and looking to the beginning of 2004. I look forward to year two at HSD. With the help and input of all of you, I believe the work we have begun will progress as we move forward and HSD becomes the best state agency in New Mexico.

Thank you for a very productive year at HSD and Happy Holidays!



Consuelo Gonzales (left), a legal secretary in Albuquerque's Region VII CSED, decorated her office in the Halloween spirit. Consuelo's friend Carla Trujillo, also a legal secretary, can only stare in frozen astonishment.



Albuquerque's Northwest ISD office hosted a Halloween get-together for the other Albuquerque offices. Monique Padilla (left), Monica Cortez and Dawn Edwards of the Northwest office were among the many who gave out goodies to kids from their doorways.



### What a difference ten months makes!

Pull out your dog-eared January 2003 El Diario Sin Nombre introducing the new HSD administration and compare those photos with this one. From left are Secretary Pam Hyde, MAD Director Carolyn Ingram, Deputy Secretary Liz Stefanics, Communications Director Betina Gonzales-McCracken and ASD Director Daryl Schwebach at the Santa Fe Halloween/State Employee Charity Campaign kick-off event.



## Hunger Summit Brims Over with Ideas



ISD Food Stamp policy expert Michael Rogers and ISD Director Katie Falls discuss strategies to fight hunger. Rogers said of the summit, "I was impressed by the number of resources we can draw from to put a real dent in the hunger problem here."

"New Mexico may be number one in food insecurity, but it is also number one in trying to do something about it." That was the message from the keynote speaker of the Governor's First Hunger Summit held in Albuquerque October 16 and 17. Loretta Schwartz-Nobel, author of *Starving in the Shadows of Plenty*, spoke about her experiences with people across the nation.

"Not many people realize the extent of hunger because they don't see it," said Schwartz-Nobel to the 300-plus summit audience. Her recommendation was to paint a truer picture of the hunger situation here in New Mexico. Others agreed that it is not just the panhandlers who are hungry. The elderly and children, particularly in rural parts of the state, experience a great amount of hunger as well.

Those working in ISD field offices know hunger more than most. Last month alone, 3,464 expedited food stamp cases were approved and many more people were referred to homeless shelters and soup kitchens. Expedited food stamps are issued to people who are or are near destitute, allowing them to access benefits much faster than the normal 30-day waiting period.

Also speaking was Mark Winne, executive director of the Hartford Food System in Connecticut. He said, "Today

we have hunger of the overfed as well as the underfed." He also warned the group that duplication of efforts often hinders food programs; and he urged the group to keep in mind the importance of measuring outcomes to enable program adjustments.

Some of the other summit recommendations were:

- Increase efforts to de stigmatize food programs;
- Look at ways to get more food to remote parts of the state;
- Public awareness campaigns to make more people aware of hunger in NM;
- Improve nutrition outreach efforts;
- Better coordinate private/public food programs.

ISD Director Katie Falls said, "The Hunger Summit was well planned and attended, and we accomplished what we wanted. Now we must follow up on what was agreed upon and make real progress in ending hunger in New Mexico."

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Secretary Pam Hyde and Refugia Baldonado display a *Ten-year Service Award* at the Alamogordo ISD office on Oct. 8. Secretary Hyde presented Baldonado the award after visiting the new office and talking with staff.



**Almost done**  
Carpenters add the finishing touches to the newest ISD office in Alamogordo. Staff moved into the new office Oct. 1.

