

# El Diario Sin Nombre

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## Mobile RV Unit Brings ISD to Navajo Reservation

San Juan County ISD Director Roger Burton has spent his entire 24-year career at the Farmington ISD office, starting out as a temp-hire to input data into the new ISD2 computer system. When asked about his office's newest effort to get people living on the Navajo Reservation signed up for benefits, he noted that they made a similar attempt back in the mid-80's, but this time around they are much better equipped to have a meaningful impact on the 22,000 people living on the reservation in San Juan County.

"In those days we went to Chapter Houses," said Burton. "When we arrived, there would be one giant line, there was no confidentiality and we were 'flying blind' because we had no idea what clients wanted or needed. Once we returned to the office we could figure out how to fix their problems, but there were very few telephones so mail was the only way to communicate back to clients living in that part of the county."

That type of well-intended outreach has gone the way of the buggy because now they are pulling up to Chapter Houses in a used clean, white RV that has everything a county office has for getting clients' cases moving.

Inside the RV are two caseworkers in converted cubicles with laptop computers tied into the ISD2 system for instant access to client information and the capability to approve a case right then and there. This also allows staff to inform the client of what amount in benefits they can expect to receive. Line Manager Laura Begay goes along as the RV driver and helps out in any way she can.

Two RVs were acquired from the Dept. of Health, and with a little work they were converted to meet the ISD's requirements for conducting real outreach in rural New Mexico. The Taos ISD office uses the other RV. The Farmington RV come equipped with a generator, so it is truly self sufficient – They don't even have to rely on the Chapter Houses to provide their electricity.

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Laura Begay and Roger Burton are proud to have the RV for outreach.



Barbara Ogborn displays Santa Fe Tortilla Co. products.

## Local Companies Help Feed NM Families

Last month, the Food and Nutrition Services Bureau received the state's share of peanut butter from the economic stimulus package: 38,800 pounds, or 50,000 jars of peanut butter made by Sunland Inc. in Portales.

"It all went out to the food banks this past month," said Barbara Ogborn, Warehouse Manager. "I was really surprised to see a product from New Mexico arrive at the warehouse. We typically get flour from Texas, hamburger from California and green beans from Arkansas."

Portales ISD employee Nina Payen was surprised too when she learned that so many pounds of peanut butter produced by Sunland Inc. were shipped to the department. "I always buy their peanut butter at the grocery store not only because they are a local business but because it's fresher and it does have a richer taste than other store brands."

When Ogborn was asked about the flavor of the NM peanut butter, she said nobody there had sampled it, but their peanuts sure are good!

Payen noted that whenever her office holds outreach events they go out to Sunland Inc. for help. "They are always happy to give us sample packets of their Valencia peanuts," she said.

Ogborn also noted that they have received 1,500 cases of frozen, whole wheat tortillas that were made in Santa Fe by the Santa Fe Tortilla Company. "The tortillas are going to the school districts across the state," she said. "For example, 13 cases are going to the West Las Vegas School District and another 67 cases are headed for Roswell."

# NMWorks Client Finds Her Niche in HSD



**Yvette Garcia, left, is training Veronica Hernandez the unique challenges of working the front desk of HSD's Fair Hearings Bureau.**

**W**hen Yvette Garcia, then a single mother of two, went to the Santa Fe ISD office for help in late 2006 she made sure that she took her resume' with her. "I didn't want to be on TANF; I went because I heard they were offering work experience training," she said.

At the county office, she met with her caseworker, got her case approved and had an appointment made with NMWorks staff arranged for later that same day. (Yvette was in a better situation than some clients due to her experience working in a bank.)

"I met with Tom Gallegos in NMWorks," she said.

"I gave him my resume' and learned that they were very short-handed, so I was hired that same day to do clerical work."

Over the next several months Yvette worked really hard, especially in the cleaning up all of the TANF recertification files. Her hard work was soon noticed by the Santa Fe County ISD Director, and soon she was off of TANF and working full time at the county office at \$7.25 an hour.

"I was so happy to again be receiving a flowing income instead of the flat \$310 a month I was receiving during my work experience time," she said. "When I received my first paycheck I began to catch up on my bills and was able to give my children a better Christmas than stocking stuffers."

Later, however, Yvette heard through the grapevine that HSD might change the contract with NMWorks, so she thought she had better start applying for other jobs within the department. "I enjoyed working in the NMWorks program because I had the chance to help people. I encouraged as many girls as I could to get their work experience by coming to help me because there was so much to do."

Her efforts in looking elsewhere for work paid off because soon Yvette was asked to interview for a clerical position in HSD's Fair Hearings Bureau. She really had no idea what the Fair Hearings Bureau did, but at least it had a nice-sounding name; so it couldn't be all that bad.

When Yvette arrived for the interview, she became nervous when she saw that there were three people on the interview panel, including Assistant Bureau Chief, Louise Schaeffer, who is the supervisor for this position. A couple of weeks later Yvette learned from NMWorks that she had earned the position at Fair Hearings, where she would be earning a respectable wage.

She began working there in June 2007. "My first day was interesting," she said. "It wasn't what I expected at all. I didn't know that clients would sometimes yell at me over the telephone. I was blamed for things like closing their case and taking their benefits away. Today I know much better how to handle these calls and to be more understanding than afraid."

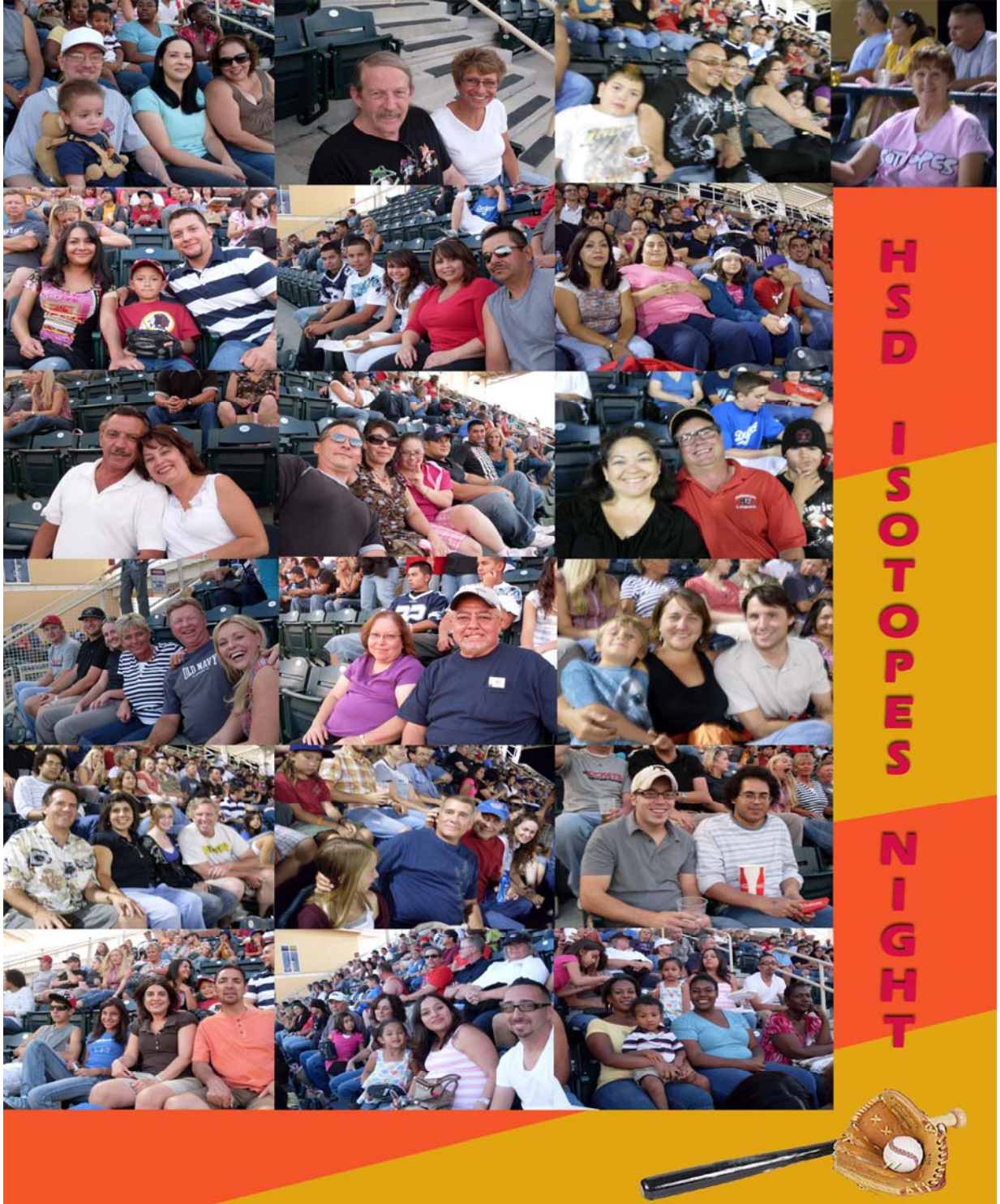
As the front desk person in Fair Hearings, Yvette gets anywhere from 10 to 20 calls a day from clients who have received notices that their benefits have been denied or stopped. Most of the callers are SNAP and TANF clients. The number of calls at the end of the month are much larger. Clients call her because this is the number on the back of their denial notice they are asked to call if they don't agree with the county office's decision and want to request a hearing or talk with someone in Santa Fe about their case.

Even though working in Fair Hearings has its own set of challenges, Yvette said she loves it there, "Not only because I'm thankful to have a job, but because I like everyone I work with, and because I still feel like I'm helping people."

Yvette has been with the bureau for over two-years now. She always has a smile and is eager to learn. "She does an admirable job of serving our clients," said Schaeffer. Agreement echoes from all of the staff of the Fair Hearings Bureau when it comes to Yvette.

*(Continued on page 3)*

About 80 HSD Employees and Friends and Family Watched a Thriller as the Albuquerque Isotopes Held on to Beat the Memphis Cardinals 8 to 7



(Continued from page 2)

Today, Yvette continues to help people, but now in more ways than one: First, in her capacity as a worker in Fair Hearing, second her success story is still used today by staff at the Santa Fe NMWorks office as a reminder to new clients that they too can become self sufficient like Yvette, and third Yvette is training NMWorks client Veronica Hernandez to fill in for her when she takes maternity leave in October (She and her husband Ramon were married in October 2007.).

“Yvette is training me for when she has her baby,” said Hernandez. “I hope I can do as well as her; I hope I’m as calm and in control of this job as she is.”

(Continued from page 1)

The Farmington office's first foray was on August 20, at the Nageezi Chapter House. "It was really nice," said Burton. "They arrived at 10:00 a.m. and there was already a line waiting for them because a Public Services Announcement was sent to the local Navajo radio station KNDN a week before. They broadcast our PSA at least three times a day."

"The best part of this type of outreach is that if a client hasn't brought in all of the required documentation they can actually ask us to wait right there while they run home to get what is needed and return," said Burton. "That's just not possible if they drive into our Farmington office."

Typically, staff leave Farmington in the RV at 8:00 a.m. arrive at the site by 10:00 a.m. and stay until 3:00 p.m. They plan on sending the RV out every two weeks. "It will take time for this to catch on again because we haven't done this for 20 years," said Burton.

### Many HSD Employee Offices are Uniquely Decorated Like Ron Hedquist's Wolf Theme Office in the OIG



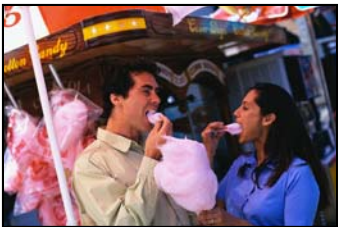
How about you? How is your office decorated? Most people decide to decorate their office showing their support of a favorite professional sports team – For some reason the Oakland Raiders are very popular in HSD offices.

Others, however, like Hedquist have personal interests in mind when it comes to their office décor. "I used to own an animal that was part wolf and part chow," said Hedquist, pictured left. "She was very protective of me when anyone came near, so I had to let her know that this or that person was ok."

"Coworkers have asked me if I have any problems sleeping at night since my office is full of wolves. I let them know that I feel safe knowing that they are around when I need them!"



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*It's time for some fall fun!*