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HSD Plays Huge Role at Albuquerque Job Fair

The Human Services Department was asked to participate in a job fair being organized by the City of Albuquerque and KOAT-TV. The department, of course, agreed to participate in what at first seemed to be just another run-of-the-mill job fair. But as planning meetings progressed for the Mar. 21 event, it became evident that this was going to be the “mother of all job fairs.”

The *Project Economy, Economic Solutions* job fair not only had 39 participating organizations taking job applications on Saturday from 9.00 a.m. to 3.00 p.m., several other agencies like the HSD, the Dept. of Workforce Solutions and Presbyterian Medical Services were asked to support a full-press court effort in more ways than one.

For starters, KOAT-TV launched volleys of public service announcements (PSAs) over their airways, including interviews with HSD Deputy Secretary Katie Falls and CSED Director Charissa Saavedra, to let the public know what they could expect at the event. Then they fired up a website for people who missed the PSAs about the event but wanted more information. It is at <http://www.koat.com/money/index.html> and will soon include useful information about HSD’s programs.

Next the sponsors organized a series of five hourly workshops for people attending the job fair. The department was asked to provide speakers to discuss child support enforcement and income support programs at the work shops. Jeremy Toulouse, the Alb-north CSED County Director and ISD supervisors Debbie Roybal from the Northwest office and Shanita Harrison from the Northeast office volunteered to give these briefings throughout the day.

“It was an interesting and fun event,” said Harrison, who volunteered to help even though she’s nine months pregnant. “It was wonderful to see all the different agencies that came out to offer services to the community. The Department of Workforce Solutions and the CSED did a wonderful job offering informa-

tion to people.”

“I agree with Shanita,” said Toulouse.

“I received many questions regarding the modification of child support orders, as well as questions about child support services in general. One good question, reflective of those at the job fair, came from a child support payer who said he

lost his job last month but continued to pay his child support and did not know if he should continue paying or not. I explained to him that yes he did have to continue paying: his court order obligating him to pay child support and could only be modified by another court order filed with the district court reflecting his lower earnings.”

Each briefing was videotaped by KOAT-TV for later posting on their website so others could find out more about child support and income support programs via this video-presented format. Other work shops included resume’ writing, job networking skills development, mental health resources/dealing with stress in tough economic times and financial literacy classes.

The workshops took place in the upper-level rooms of the convention center, while the long rows of job fair tables were located on the lower level. Also on the lower level was a series of information tables offering support services for job seekers. Here too the department played an important role.

“This event was excellent outreach for us,” said Kathy Slater-Huff, Marketing and Outreach Manager for MAD’s New MexiKids and *Insure New Mexico!* programs. “It was busy as heck, and I was wiped out by the end of the day. There were times when we had two lines of people about eight or ten people deep waiting to get information, brochures or applications.”

“I would say that about half of those we talked to were individuals or childless couples looking for information about State Coverage Insurance, and the other half were those with kids

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MAD’s Anisa Goodman, second from left, and Kathy Slater-Huff, far right, were on their feet most of the day providing Medicaid outreach to New Mexicans at the Albuquerque Convention Center.

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Amanda Francia, a Social Community Services Coordinator for the CSED Albuquerque South office, answers child support questions for one of the job fair participants.



ISD's Shanita Harrison and CSED's Jeremy Toulouse share a smile while rehearsing their work shop briefings for the job fair.



ISD's Debbie Roybal helps a lady learn more about ISD's many programs.

More Job Fair Pictures

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looking for coverage for their entire family. I even had a few people who were there to get information because even though they were currently employed, they had been told that lay-offs are coming and were getting information for if and when that happened. It was absolutely heart breaking.”

For everyone from the HSD who attended the event, each seemed extremely happy that they could represent the department at such a large event. Perhaps Slater-Huff summed the day up best, “A lot of the people we helped had never applied for any public assistance and didn't even know what might be available to them. I was happy that we could give them information about child support, health care coverage, food stamps, LIHEAP and cash assistance all at once, and in a place where they might also find new employment opportunities.”

ISD's Nutrition Coordinator Helps SNAP (Food Stamp) Recipients Eat Better

“I am so pleased that we have a Nutrition Coordinator in our department, said Mary Ole-ske, Food and Nutrition Services Bureau Chief. “I'm even more pleased that Candice Hewitt is this person working in this new position. It demonstrates HSD's commitment to nutrition education as a primary way to help our families eat better.” Mary knows what she's talking about because she and Candice each have a Master's Degree in Nutrition.

Hewitt is the first person in the department to be hired as a Nutrition Coordinator. In fact, no other state in our federal region has one assigned on a fulltime basis to encourage low income families to use their nutrition assistance benefits more wisely.

So what does Candice actually do as the Nutrition Coordinator in the Income Support Division? As always, a lot depends on the skills and motivation of the person in the position; Candice is not only motivated, she knows what she's talking about when it comes to food and nutrition options.

Prior to coming to New Mexico, Hewitt ran a Bed and Breakfast Inn in the state of Maine – And like most bed and breakfasts, hers served healthier food than bacon and eggs. After moving to New Mexico to live in a better climate, she quickly found work administering federal grants aimed at improving nutrition for adults on tribal land and among kids in public schools. At the same time, the department decided to hire someone to manage the federally-funded Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Education Plan (SNAP-ED) which is aimed at improving nutrition choices among those receiving food benefits from the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) or the old Food Stamp Program. In October 2008 Hewitt was hired as the best candidate for the job.

“They [the HSD] needed somebody to manage the FSNE or SNAP ED Plan because it really needed someone's full time atten-



Candice Hewitt believes the most important part of nutrition education is understanding the importance of balancing your “calories in” with “your calories” out.

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MAD Gets New Native American Liaison

For ten years, the Native American Liaison in the Medical Assistance Division (MAD) has been a constant. But a promotion for Sharilyn Roanhorse-Aguilar to deputy bureau chief for the Long-Term Services and Support Bureau means there's a new NA Liaison at MAD, and she is Colinda Garcia.

Garcia grew up on the Acoma Pueblo, near Grants, where approximately 5,000 people live in the oldest continuously-occupied pueblo, dating back to the 16th Century.

Her education includes a Masters Degree in Social Work, obtained from New Mexico Highlands University, where she graduated with honors in 2006. Prior to that, she obtained a Bachelor of Arts degree in Criminal Justice from New Mexico State University.

When asked why she wanted this kind work, she said, "I knew that this was something meaningful and something that I could do because I have a strong commitment to the tribes and will work hard to ensure that they are not left out."

Garcia has been on the job for three weeks and is busy learning the sometimes complicated Medicaid Program. Many of her contacts are leaders of the Native American tribes and her goal is to find ways to strengthen relationships between them and the department. Fortunately she has experience in both state and tribal government, which is definitely an asset for someone serving in this capacity.

Garcia began her professional career working with the pueblos in varying capacities for the CYFD, ranging from a domestic violence advocate to a court administrator. "My work with the tribes has been very valuable and instrumental in shaping my professional career," she said. In her role as an investigator, she was directly responsible for ensuring the safety of children in her caseload and providing services to families to improve their functioning in everyday society. She did this by connecting families with providers in the community for programs like Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, Medicaid, well-child, transportation, legal, guardianship, disability, therapy, etc. All in an effort to improve the lives of those she served.

In 2007, Garcia began another social services journey with the DOH as its first Native American contracts monitor. Here she worked on important health priorities like fighting diabetes, obesity, substance abuse, co-occurring disorders and cancer. This work also assisted the tribes with developing planning frameworks to improve their efforts in addressing their health priorities. Her work also helped to strengthen the relationship between the DOH and the tribes.

"In my new capacity at HSD-MAD, I feel that I will have a voice on behalf of the tribes and prove to be an effective advocate," Garcia said. "Since I will be working directly with many tribal leaders, I will continue the work started by Sharilyn. Her shoes will be difficult to fill, but I am confident that I will echo her compassion and commitment to working with our Native American tribes and nations."

We welcome you aboard Colinda, and thank you Sharilyn for your past work and wish you the best in your new job position!



Colinda's Keresean dialect is spoken by the Acoma, Cochiti, Laguna, Santa Ana, Santo Domingo, San Felipe and Zia pueblos.

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tion," said Hewitt. Some of the SNAP ED programs include *Cooking With Kids*, *Kids' Cook*, a nutrition and food safety program administered by the Dept. of Health through their Women's Infants and Children's Program and the Ideas for Cooking and Nutrition (ICAN) program for low-income families receiving SNAP administered by New Mexico State University.

Most of these programs are grants applied for by education institutions and matched at a 50 percent rate by the federal government.

"The real purpose of these outreach efforts is to help families receiving nutritional assistance to learn to spend their benefits on more nutritious food items to get more out of their food dollar," said Hewitt.

With today's economy and the high cost of food – even bananas now are 69 cents a pound – everyone can learn to buy smarter. So what's Candice's advice? "Buy family packs of meat, buy bulk bags of rice or beans, and fresh vegetables are often cheaper than the frozen kind. I don't recommend buying processed food because it can actually be fun for families to plan their week's meals together." She also said there is nothing wrong with drinking water with your meal. Hmmm! Some say that a glass of red wine at dinner is healthy too.

Upcoming Native American Events Involving the Human Services Department

The DHHS Tribal Council meets in Albuquerque on Apr. 22 at the Indian Pueblo Cultural Center. HSD Secretary Pamela Hyde is scheduled to be part of a panel discussion.

Collaboration with Indian Health Services and other providers living in Native American communities to provide training for Medicaid eligibility targeted populations.

Your Lunch Hour Can be Brain Stimulating

Most everyone in HSD does his or her own thing each work day at lunchtime, yet Cheryl Thompson, HSD's OHR Training Director, is just a little different than the rest of us. She has always been an avid believer that professional training classes, with a touch of humor, can help overworked staff learn techniques for dealing with just about anything in our work environments.

Thompson's newest staff development effort, however, has never been done before: About once a week staff supervisors and/or prospective supervisors tote their lunch over to a conference room, meet and greet Thompson, then plug into a speakerphone at the designated time and begin listening – along with thousands of others across the county – to an expert in the fields of leadership, time management and organization, interpersonal skills and other management training processes.

Participants listen to the speaker and then participate in a Q & A following the discourse. Often HSD attendees participate in a short internal discussion of the topic prior to everyone returning to work.

"I'm always looking for good training opportunities to assist HSD personnel in performing their jobs to the best of their ability," said Thompson, who has been one of the department's OHR staff trainers for eight years. "My favorite lunchtime training session so far has been *Handling Emotions Under Pressure*," she said. "Maybe the pressure and anxiety come from major changes at work, someone else's negative attitude, or the anxiety that comes with incredible workloads. Whatever it is, you must have the skills to handle your emotions under pressure. This session offers tools and techniques to help combat the emotions that come from high stress and uncertainty."

Another of the attendees' favorite training seminars was *Leadership – The Disney Way*. This session gave tools to establish and manage a creative climate where people and teams exist in an environment of mutual respect and trust, key elements of Walt Disney's leadership.

"These classes have been great; the information covered is very beneficial for managers or those working to become one," said Lupita Capelli, in CSED. "I must also say that Cheryl is the best when it comes to staff training."

Thompson is always on the lookout for the latest and best professional training for HSD staff. "Don't be surprised at what may come next," she said. "I still have a few more tricks up my sleeve."



OHR's Cheryl Thompson.
You may contact Cheryl for more information about attending a professional development class.



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Happy Easter!

