



El Diario Sin Nombre

The Newsletter Without a Name

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Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Not Uncommon in HSD



Debra Taylor (left) and Ellen Maestas-Waller discuss how each will help get their grandchildren ready for the fall school year.

What do Ellen Maestas-Waller of Santa Fe, Rose Beauregard of Farmington, Debra Taylor of Albuquerque and Clela Padilla of Las Cruces all have in common? Not much when it comes to the types of work each do for the department – but when the workday ends, each goes home to her grandchildren, whom they are either raising alone or with their own children as part of an extended household.

These four middle-aged department employees aren't alone, as an estimated 41,000 children in the state are being raised by grandparents, while other relatives are raising an additional 10,000 children. Among the list of reasons given for this relatively new societal trend are substance abuse, mental illness, incarceration, divorce, death of a parent, neglect, teen pregnancy, unemployment and domestic violence situations in which young parents find themselves. And these four people, along with many of their co-workers, have selflessly stepped in to help.

So how do Ellen, Rose, Debra and Ellen feel about these unplanned, yet important responsibilities that they have taken on in this stage in their lives? Well, they all love it! MAD's Ellen said this about her nine-year-old granddaughter she is helping her daughter raise, "Looking at the world through the eyes of a grandchild is like you are living for the first time in your life ... by her side, I now have the opportunity to see the beauty all around me and enjoy a simpler life."

"I love the excitement of seeing them when I pick them up after work," said ISD's Rose about the three grandchildren, ages four, two and 16

months, she is raising. "As soon as I get them home they kick off their shoes and lie down on the carpet because they know it's their home too."

"I actually love it," said CSED's Debra Taylor. She is raising her six-year-old granddaughter with her daughter. "I was looking forward to being done with kids and then along she comes – it keeps me young and it is good clean fun, better than TV"

Finally, Clela, who is also a CSED employee, has been taking care of her 21-year-old granddaughter since she was 13, and has had custody of her granddaughter since she was 16. Her comments are similar, "For the first three years she was boy crazy, but then she settled down and made it her goal to get an education. She always wanted a puppy and now we have two puppies, so we are both into making them good adult dogs. Desiree is not into drugs, doesn't smoke and is working towards getting into a nursing program, so she is not difficult to live with. I just have to watch her spending habits. Her outlook on life is good, and she helps me a lot, so it's just the two of us and she's great company to me."

In Clela's situation, Desiree's mother and stepfather divorced and her mother moved to Albuquerque. Desiree did not want to move, so she asked to stay with Clela. At first it was a challenge, as she had not had children in the home for some time, but if she hadn't done it she would not have had any real chance of influencing her granddaughter's development.

Rose has custody of her oldest grandchild, but not of the younger two children, even though all three have

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Senate President Pro Tem Ben D. Altamirano Praises HSD (see page 3)

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Until the Next Case, Kathy

One of the employees who has served the longest in the department's Income Support Division is calling it quits after 31 years with the department. Yes, KK, or Kathryn Karnowsky, the steely-eyed head honcho of one of the busiest ISD offices in the state, is finally saying goodbye. And unlike many long-serving employees – who for sanity's sake move in and out of the department over the course of a long career – she has been on the front lines in ISD for all but one-and-half-years, when she worked for Medicaid.

"Most current staff weren't even born when I started working for HSD!" said Karnowsky. "Starting out, I remember being in the first formal caseworker training class. It was three weeks of food stamp and cash assistance training in Santa Fe." Her first caseload was 80 cases, each receiving food stamps, cash and Medicaid. Back then, however, everything was calculated by hand using worksheets, and home visits were still being done. This was on \$600 a month, recalled Kathy.

"I've had a marvelous time," said Karnowsky. "I was a worker for eight years, a supervisor for eight years, a trainer for eight years and a county director for six-plus years. "I have had the opportunity to travel around the state I love and have visited most of the offices. Everywhere I traveled I saw dedicated employees, most doing everything they could to be courteous to clients and timely and accurate in their work." "These jobs are not for everyone," she said. "Policy is complicated and procedural requirements can be obscure. Clients often need the best customer service skills we can develop. But I believe the Human Services Department is very fortunate to have so many fine employees."

Very few others understand our daily efforts to provide the basic essentials of life. I am proud to have worked for the department and with so many fine people.

KK

"Occasionally, a few employees have behaved in unacceptable ways. These incidents can make us feel bad and diminish our pride, but don't let these few be more important than the majority of us," said Karnowsky. "I have always been proud to work for the state, glad to have meaningful work to do, and most of the time, enough skill to do it well. Very few others understand our daily efforts to provide the basic essentials of life. I am proud to have worked for the department and with so many fine people.

Among the people Kathy remembers influencing her the most were Bruce Weidemyer, who was director of MAD for many years. "He had a vision of healthy children and communicated that to the legislature, making New Mexico Medicaid one of the most progressive programs for age and income eligibility and one of the most comprehensive in terms of covered services in the country," she said.

"Dorian Dodson (an ISD bureau chief) spoke to the Southeast ISD staff 16 years ago describing homeless children as having to have their inoculations several times over because 'it's hard to hang on to shot records when you are homeless.' Heart wrenching. And I've never forgotten it," said Karnowsky. "I believe this year the Department of Health is trying to keep comprehensive records." And Vi Gomez, who is a former Southeast ISD office supervisor said, "There has always

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Late last month, Kathryn Karnowsky reflected on her 31-years with HSD.

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lived with her since birth because of her daughter's mental disability. Her biggest challenge is disciplining the children. "Grandparents are supposed to spoil their grandkids and then send them home," she said. "My heart goes out to them, but I want them to grow up to be responsible. Fortunately, my husband is better than I in this area." As a caseworker, Rose also has a few clients in the same situation. "I tell them is to hang in there and take care of the babies, show them the right way."

Debra said she knows of at least ten other people in the department who are either raising their grandchildren or helping to raise them, as she is. "At one division-level meeting, this phenomena was discussed and it was recommended that a grandparent support group be formed among staff, most of whom are now in middle or upper management." Ellen agreed, saying she knows of five or six others in her division who are helping to raise their grandchildren. Debra's daughter moved in with her soon after she became pregnant more than six years ago. "She had morning sickness and everything made her sick," said Debra. "After Skylar was born it became a matter of doing what was best for her."

"One of hardest thing for a mother is to see your child (my daughter) lose her youth," said Ellen. "Because of the circumstances and my daughter's decision (becoming a teen parent), she had to grow up early and didn't have an opportunity to go through life's cycles." Ellen told her daughter, however, that she would not raise her grandchild, but would help her daughter raise her child. She knew even then that she would have to commit her life to this for so many years. "Me, personally," said Ellen, "I have grown tremendously and have sacrificed by giving a part of my life. Would I do it again? In a heartbeat!"

(Please see page 4 for where grandparents raising grandkids can get help or find resources.)

Schwebach Takes Reins as Department Deputy Secretary of Finance

Human Services Department Deputy Secretary for Finance Thomas Romero moved to the state Department of Finance and Administration (DFA) on August 1 to join a project management team that is developing a new initiative called the Statewide Human Resources, Accounting and Management Reporting System, or *SHARE*. It will eventually be used by all 114 state departments and agencies. "I am happy Tom has agreed to join the management of this immensely important and complicated project," said James Jimenez, DFA Secretary. The *SHARE* project will help streamline the personnel and payroll processes across state government and increase efficiency, reduce waste and duplication, and create a more cost-effective system.

Replacing Romero as deputy secretary is Daryl Schwebach. Schwebach served as the director of the department's Administrative Services Division and has been instrumental in fixing many of the accounting, financial and information technology systems' problems that plagued the department. "My goal is to make all the administrative functions of this office as efficient, effective and customer service-oriented as possible to support the programs of the department," he said.



Daryl Schwebach is new HSD Deputy Secretary. The department shouldn't miss a beat, since he was also the ASD Director and responsible for many of the changes that have made the department more financially accountable to the Governor, Legislators and to tax payers.



Senator Ben D. Altamirano

In a recent letter to Secretary Pam Hyde, Senate President Pro Tem Ben D. Altamirano praised HSD for a "remarkable turnaround."



New Mexico State Senate

State Capitol
Santa Fe

COMMITTEES:
CHAIRMAN:
• Committees' Committee
MEMBER:
• Conservation
• Rules

SENATOR BEN D. ALTAMIRANO
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June 21, 2005

Ms. Pam Hyde
Cabinet Secretary
Human Services Department
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Santa Fe, NM 87504-2348

Dear Secretary Hyde,

I wanted to take a moment to thank you and your staff for what I consider a remarkable turn-around at the Human Services Department. HSD underwent what appeared to be several years of bumpy and steadily declining performance.

Overall, it seemed things were at their lowest ebb when you arrived. Without hesitation you confronted the problems and long standing unresolved issues and immediately began changing failures into successes. I understand the inherent difficulty in such a turn-around and commend you for exemplary service.

Of course this could not have been accomplished without an equally outstanding staff complimenting and enhancing your efforts.

Thank you again and I look forward to working with you and your staff in the future.

Sincerely,

Senator Ben D. Altamirano
President Pro Tem

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been an error rate, there always will be, and it will always be due to earned income.” Finally, former ISD director Marise McFadden said, “If you don’t have adequate budget, you don’t have a program.”

“ISD Director Katie Falls developed the case management model as a problem-solving tool. This is where you look at other areas of assistance that need to be addressed, such as transportation and weatherization services. This was a revelation and Katie connected the dots,” said Karnowsky.

As is the Southeast ISD office tradition, staff presented Kathy a memory book with pictures, letters and well wishes from her current and former co-workers. She received the book at a luncheon attended by 50 people last Friday. “The whole community will miss Kathy,” said Maria Trujillo of the Southeast office. “She always made sure our office was active in other ways to help the low-income and large homeless population that we serve.”

“Many of you remember my car trunk stuffed with training materials, my office filled with combustibles. In fact, my very first evaluation referred to boxes of case records lying on the floor,” said Karnowsky. “Well, after 31 years, it’s time to clean up my house. I have great memories, and I shall miss my fellow employees, the clients and the work itself. My very best wishes to all of you in continuing the mission.”

MAD Employee May Be a Little Bit Mad!



MAD’s Sherry Montoya will run a 26-mile marathon.

Standing less than five-feet tall with her shoes on Sherry Montoya (age 38), who does not consider herself a long-distance runner, may have lost her marbles but for a great cause: beating cancer. She is one of 40 Santa Feans who have volunteered to complete a marathon this October 23 in San Francisco to benefit the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society. A marathon is 26.2 miles and for Sherry it will be more like 50 miles, since she will have to take lot more steps than everyone else.

Montoya has worked in Medicaid’s Benefits Bureau more than a year as a fee-for-service pharmacist. Here again she may be a little bit mad, as she left a lucrative-paying retail pharmacist job for a state job. She apparently likes the work however, “Instead of standing all day and listening to people yell at me to my face, now I can sit all day and listen to people yelling at me over the telephone,” said Montoya.

Her goal is to raise \$3,700 in pledges for the marathon. Those wanting to help can do so through a website: www.active.com/donate/tntnmep/tntnmepSMontoy or by calling her at 670-5570.

Best of luck to you Sherry—we hope you regain your sanity soon!



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We’re on the web: www.state.nm.us/hsd/home.html

The Department of Aging and Long-term Services has taken the lead in providing or funding activities targeted toward grandparents raising grandchildren. Below are some of its efforts:

- A grandparent center in southern New Mexico that provides intergenerational programs for grandparents and kin raising at-risk (grand) children, such as support groups, special education programs, legal forums and respite trips.
- A training and research project to help reduce the disparity in services between grandparents and their at-risk grandchildren that currently exists in the foster care system.
- A bilingual 2-1-1 Intergenerational helpline to assist grandparents with information and referral services in legal, financial, health, behavioral health issues for at-risk grandchildren.
- A Healthy Intergenerational Resource Directory, accessible on line and in printed version.
- A training and technical assistance manual to help intergenerational families deal with at-risk youth behaviors, custodial transfers, and traumas related to family disconnection.
- An emergency fund to provide assistance with food, rent, utilities, clothing, blankets, furniture, medical care, children’s school supplies, and other financial crisis situations that grandparents face when integrating their grandchildren) into the household.

For more information, go to <http://www.nmaging.state.nm.us/>