New Mexico Association of Educational Retirees

NEWSLETTER

Promoting the professional, economic, intellectual, social and physical well-being of NMAER members

Volume 48, Number 3 **Autumn 2025**

REFLECTIONS OF MY TERM IN OFFICE 2025

Being president of NMAER has been a privilege as well as an honor to work with you, the membership of this organization. I am also in awe that this organization was founded in 1942, the year I was born. Yes, I am as old as NMAER but that is the point... by serving in any capacity, as an officer or as an active member, NMAER keeps you young – don't you agree?

A key part of being an active member is to be an advocate for the welfare of the organization, as well as supporting the interests and well-being of you, the members. NMAER works very hard to provide information and communicate on your behalf. Each year during the legislative session, members spend many hours attending meetings and speaking to legislators advocating for an increase in our pensions and health benefits.

One of NMAER'S major accomplishments is providing scholarships. In 2025 we were able to support five students who are attending three New Mexico universities: Eastern, Western and New Mexico State. This endeavor not only benefits the students but enhances NMAER'S standing in the educational community by demonstrating that we are an organization that believes in "talking the talk and walking the walk."

Today, our membership numbers are approximately 6500 and are doing well. Currently NMAER has fourteen outstanding units this year that provided community service amounting to eight million dollars. Unfortunately, Espanola Education Association (EEA) lost many of its members and made the decision to close. Although we are sorry to see them go, we are grateful that they decided to "give back" to our organization by donating their unspent funds, totaling $107,000 for scholarships. A generous gift and making NMAER much stronger.

If you are fifty years or older and are connected to the Educational Retirement System, you are eligible to become a member, as well as your spouse. Dues are $30 a year and remember that you can have it deducted from your pension check at $2.50 a month. NMAER works hard to protect your pension and your health care benefits. This is one of the main advantages of being a member and one of the main reasons we exist. So, won't you join us and make 2026 even stronger?

Pauline Rindone, President

CONGRATULATIONS TO THE INCOMING 2026 OFFICERS, HEADED BY PRESIDENT JOELYN PAFFORD!

THE LATEST HAPPENINGS WITH THE EDUCATIONAL RETIREMENT BOARD...

The Investment Report for the month of August 31, 2025, showed the following:

- One-year return of 9.7%, a three-year return of 8.6%, a five-year return of 9.7%, a ten- year return of 8.5% and 9.0% since inception.
- The total assets were reported as $18,821,770,302 on August 31, 2025. (new high)
- The Investment Report for the month of September 2025 was not available as of this writing.

The BIG NEWS is that the new ERB Building is nearing completion. Final inspections are taking place and water is expected to flow shortly. The City of Santa Fe has allowed ERB to begin installing its network equipment before receiving the certification of occupancy. We are hopeful for a November move.

On Friday, October 24, 2025, the ERB Board of Trustees held its meeting at the APS Office Complex in Albuquerque.

Here is a summary of board actions at that meeting.

- The ERB Board of Trustees heard a transition update from a Custody Bank representative for Northern Trust.
- The ERB Board of Trustees heard an update on the Pension Administration System Modernization Project.
- The ERB Board of Trustees heard and approved updates on Disability Retirements and Age and Service Retirements.
- The ERB Board of Trustees heard an update from the Audit Committee.
- The ERB Board of Trustees heard a report on the Asset Liability Study for our Investments.
- The ERB Board of Trustees approved Board Meeting dates for 2026.
- The ERB Board of Trustees heard Board Committee Appointments for 2026.
- The ERB Board of Trustees approved Return to Work rule changes.

The next meeting is tentatively scheduled for Friday, December 5, 2025, in the new Board Room in Santa Fe.

In closing, thank you for continuing to monitor your retirement benefits.

H Russell Goff, NMERB Representative

REMINDER:
BE SURE TO CHECK ON YOUR AMBA BENEFITS AT

GETAMBA.COM

AAL REPORT

I asked AI to create a speech on lobbying to use at the NMAER State Conference. Since many of you were not able to attend the Conference, I am putting it in the Newsletter. I think it gives succinct reasons to lobby for issues important to retired educators. I hope all of you will help with NMAER and Adopt a Legislator group during the upcoming session.

Ladies and gentlemen, when people hear the word lobbying, they often think of corruption or hidden deals. But in truth, lobbying, when practiced responsibly, is one of the pillars of democracy. Lobbying ensures that lawmakers hear from all voices, not just their own advisors. It gives doctors a chance to advo-

AAL Report *continued on page 5*

SMILE... IT'S HOLIDAY SEASON!



Yes. It is already that time of year! The holidays are quickly approaching, and this is the season to begin the thoughtful process of being thankful and trying to buy gifts that are needed as well as wanted!! I would just like for each of us to reflect on all the blessings we enjoy each and every day… our freedom, our families, to be able to openly practice our religious freedom, for our dear friends, and for our health (even if ours is not perfect, there is always someone worse).

I am thankful for each of these along with the amazing NMAER staff, NMAER Board, NMAER units, and those working with NMAER to make our futures much brighter by fighting to bring us the best insurance and pensions! I pray this season brings you hope, health, and memorable occasions! I would like to end this message with some adages that I hope will bring a chuckle or smile to your face: It's not how old you are but how you are old.

"Wrinkles will only go where the smiles have been."

– Mark Twain

Like fine wines, some things get better with age. If this is so, I am approaching magnificent!!

"The secret of staying young is to live honestly, eat slowly, and lie about your age."

– Lucille Ball

"You know you are getting old when the candles cost more than the cake."

– Bob Hope

HAPPY HOLIDAYS!!!

Linda Carr/Past NMAER President

FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

On September 24th, the 82nd Annual NMAER State Convention came to a close. I want to take a minute to thank all those involved in this year's event. There are many to thank. Certainly, thanks go out to Cheri Dotson, Convention Chair, her husband Bill, and the CDREA Planning Committee Members who did a wonderful job with this year's Convention. There are many others to thank, but far too many in this brief article. Thanks to everyone for a great job.

One of the highlights of the Convention is the announcement of the Community Service Award winners for their efforts to provide service to others during the year as well as the Outstanding Unit Members. (Please note the Community Service Winners and Outstanding Unit Members found in this issue). We also want to congratulate Artesia AER and Colfax County AER for receiving the top membership awards in 2025.

Over the last couple of years there has been much discussion in the Interim Investment and Pension Oversight Committee (IPOC) with the Cost-of-Living Adjustment (COLA). Last year, legislation was introduced to provide a 13th check to help offset the loss from inflation for PERA and ERB retirees. However, this legislation failed.

Once again, in 2025, the Investments and Pension Committee discussed this issue. I anticipate that we may hear more discussion on the COLA issue in the upcoming legislative session. I urge you to keep informed on this issue.

Let me close with best wishes for a Happy Thanksgiving to you and your families.

H Russell Goff, Executive Director

Like us on Facebook!

2024-2025 COMMUNITY SERVICE AWARDS

The 82nd NMAER Convention in Santa Fe NM was indeed the place to be to Ditch the Gloom! Thank you, City Different Retired Educators Association, for your hard work in planning and hosting a wonderful convention.

For most of us, retirement does not mean stopping; it simply means having something new to do during retirement. We have filled our days with hobbies, travel, and the well-deserved luxury of deciding how to spend our days without a bell schedule or a lesson plan in sight. Working on the community service awards has given me a new appreciation of how NMAER members spend their days. Across our state, NMAER members have unselfishly volunteered their time and effort to improve the quality of life of others and to make a positive impact on their communities.

One of the many worthwhile convention activities is the recognition of the community service hours accumulated by the members of NMAER. In this newsletter, we are honored to recognize the unit with the highest number of combined community service hours, the top five individual members that accumulated the most service hours, and the top five members of each unit that submitted their members' community service hours.

Unit with the Highest Number of Community Service Hours:
Alamogordo/Otero County AER –
57,235 Total Hours

Top Five Individual Members with the Highest Number of Community Service Hours:

1. Dora Duran – Las Vegas AER – 8760 Hours
2. David Chester – Las Vegas AER – 8080 Hours
3. Pat McFarland – Otero County AER – 6120 Hours
4. Sharon Kirkpatrick – Otero County AER – 6,000 Hours
5. Ursala Martinez – City Different ERA – 5,475 Hours

Community Service Hours Participating Units and Their Top Five Members:

Alamogordo/Otero County AER –
57,235 Total Hours

1. Pat McFarland
2. Sharon Kirkpatrick
3. Alice Money
4. Mike McMurry
5. Art Lopez

City Different REA – 49,827.5 Total Hours

1. Ursula Martinez
2. Dolores (Dolly) Vigil
3. Sr Patrick Marie Dempsey
4. Barbara Alba
5. Glenda Dickey

Clovis/Curry County AER – 46,979 Total Hours

1. Leslie Scroggins
2. Esther Steinle
3. Beth Thornton
4. La Nell Leatherwood
5. Sharon Epps

Las Vegas Area AER – 38,051 Total Hours

1. Dora Duran
2. David Chester
3. Anna Kueffer
4. Alberta Vigil
5. Emily Maestas

Gallup - McKinley County AER –
14,343.5 Total Hours

1. Diann Yoder
2. Joyce Graves
3. Kathy Farmer
4. Mary Cullen
5. Cynthia Fairrow

Raton/Colfax County AER – 8839.5 Total Hours

1. Barbara Bonahoom
2. Thelma Coker
3. Joelyn Pafford
4. Deborah Pfeiffer
5. Carmen Valerio

Las Cruces AER – 6,185 Total Hours
1. Maria Pearce
2. Dean Lively
3. Paula Stuart
4. Judy Henderson
5. Teresa Valenzuela

Artesia AER – 4,928 Total Hours
1. Marcella Montano
2. Ronnie Null
3. Sandy Schuetz
4. Kathy Taylor
5. Joe Schiel

Farmington/San Juan AER – 4,890 Total Hours
1. Debbie Klein
2. Marilyn Montoya
3. Kathy Martin
4. Karen Morrison
5. Trish Murphy

Taos/Taos County AER – 4,807 Total Hours
1. Antonette Gonzales
2. Sylvia Torres
3. Michael Torres
4. Randie Gonzales
5. Diane Waltz

Albuquerque AER – 4,107 Total Hours
1. Jeanne Collins-Smith
2. Hope Sikes
3. Cathy Gaardner
4. Linda Shute
5. Michelle Buchanan

Grants/Cibola County AER – 2,882 Total Hours
1. Ginny Hill
2. B.J. Johnson
3. Ina Jean Barnes
4. Martina Marquez
5. Dolly Bassett

Congratulations to each unit that participated in the 2024-2025 Community Service Project. And congratulations to every unit member who gave of yourself willingly and selflessly to others. You numbered 307 volunteers, for a total of 243,074.5 hours, resulting in a value of $8,456,561.86 poured back into your communities and the state of New Mexico overall. That is an increase of $541,719.45 over last year!

Joelyn Pafford, First Vice-President

TREASURER'S REPORT

This covers the period of January 1, 2025 through September 30, 2025:

Regular Checking Account	**$**	**167,072.94**
Investments	**$**	**245,161.62**
Total Assets	**$**	**412,234.56**
Income to Date	$	156,352.05
Expenses to Date	$	152,115.14
Net Income to Date	**$**	**4,736.91**
Political Development	**$**	**5,342.37**

Janice Sells, NMAER Treasurer

AAL Report *continued from page 2*

cate for better healthcare, teachers a voice in shaping education, and environmental groups the ability to push for sustainability. Without lobbying, many of these perspectives would never reach policymakers. It also brings expertise to the table. No government can know everything about every issue. Lobbyists provide research, real-world experiences, and solutions that help leaders make informed decisions. Most importantly, lobbying keeps democracy alive between elections. Citizens don't just vote every few years; they continue to influence the laws that shape their daily lives. So, instead of seeing lobbying as a problem, we should see it as an opportunity for representation, for accountability, and for stronger, more responsive government. Thank you.

The above was written by AI, on ChatGBT.com

Evalynne Hunemuller, AAL Coordinator

NEW MEXICO RETIREE HEALTH CARE AUTHORITY UPDATE

NMRHCA held the 2025 Annual Board Meeting on July 24th and 25th. The following items were covered (See NMRHCA Newsletter / September 2025):

- Election of Board Officers and Committee Assignments;
- Investment Updates;
- Review of Vendor Presentations;
- Actuarial Presentations;
- Plan Changes and Recommendations for Calendar Year 2026;
  - > Self-Insured Plan Rate Increases
    - ✓ Pre-Medicare (Premier and Value) - FY26 2% retiree/spouse, 3% dependents, copays for Rx
    - ✓ Medicare Supplement – FY26 no increase, deductible and copays for Rx
  - > Medicare Advantage Rates – FY26 zero dollar increase up to 76% increase
- Board of Directors Meetings;
  - > 1st Tuesday of each month unless otherwise specified
  - > Committees meet prior to board meetings and/or as needed
- Fall Switch Enrollment;
  - > September 30 – November 14

The following include the benefits offered for 2026:

- Pre-Medicare Medical (pre-65/non-disabled)
  - > 2 – Value HMO Plans
    - ✓ Choice between Presbyterian Health Plan and Blue Cross Blue Shield
  - > 2 – PPO Plans
    - ✓ Choice between Presbyterian Health Plan and Blue Cross Blue Shield
- Medicare Medical (65+/disabled)
  - > 1 – Supplement Plan
    - ✓ Blue Cross Blue Shield
  - > 5 – Medicare Advantage Plans
    - ✓ Choice between United Healthcare, Humana, Presbyterian Health Plan, Blue Cross Blue Shield HMO and Blue Cross Blue Shield PPO
- Voluntary Benefits
  - > Dental
    - ✓ Choice between Delta and Blue Cross Blue Shield
      - Choice between Basic and Comprehensive
  - > Vision
    - ✓ Davis
  - > Supplemental Term Life Insurance
    - ✓ Standard Insurance Company

The following upward plan pressures are predicted:

- Prescription Drug Cost Cap – Inflation Reduction Act (Federal Mandate to Medicare Part D)
  - > Reduced member cost sharing by capping out-of-pocket spend on prescriptions to no more than $2,000 (FY25) and $2,100 (FY26)
  - > Higher premium increases – some Medicare Advantage plans rising over 40%. In many cases due to increased cost of prescriptions paid by plan and reduction of patient cost sharing and Medicare shared financial liability
- Medicare Advantage Star Ratings from Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services
  - > Lower reimbursement from Medicare, leads health plans asking for higher premiums to make up difference and rising costs
- Statewide shortage of medical professionals/pharmacies leading to higher reimbursement rates paid to providers to maintain network adequacy
  - > New Mexico is one of the states facing a high rate of physician shortages
  - > Physician and hospital consolidations removing competition and resulting in higher reimbursement rates
  - > Pharmacies' negotiations for new structured payments leading to higher reimbursements to maintain operations
- Increase in prescription drug costs
  - > New cell and gene therapies capable of curing illnesses but lead to costly drugs

NMRHCA Update *continued on page 7*

SUMMARY OF MINUTES

In-Person Meeting of the NMAER Executive Board September 22, 2025

The Executive Board met in person on September 22, 2025, between 1:00 and 3:30 p.m. Seven of nine voting members and four of seven non-voting members were present.

After opening ceremonies, the following actions were taken by the Executive Board: Approved the Agenda; Approved the Minutes from the June 30, 2025, Executive Board Meeting; Approved the Financial Report as of August 31, 2025; and Approved the Membership Report as of September 1, 2025. The Profit and Loss report for the period of January 1, 2025, through August 31, 2025, showed Total Ordinary Income of $130,258.86 and Total Expenses of $115,208.89 for a Net Ordinary Income of $15,049.97.

Also Approved Actions for submission to the Delegate Assembly: Approved the proposed 2026 Budget and the 2025 Highlights. Additionally, the Board received reports from officers and committees.

Cynthia Fusco, Secretary

Secretary's Note: Copies of the approved minutes are available upon written request to the NMAER Office at 3900 Juan Tabo Blvd., NE, Suite 7, Albuquerque, NM 87111

NMRHCA Update *continued from page 6*

> Specialty drugs driving higher costs, especially with accelerated approvals and limited competition
> GLP-1 medications are both a breakthrough and a budgetary strain
> Increase in pricing of existing drugs

Finally, regarding NMRHCA Trust Fund Balance History (July 2015 – 2025)

- 10 Year High - $1,836,053,731 (September 2025)
- 10 Year Low - $414,375,146 (August 2015)
- 10 Year Change - $1,421,678,585

Tomas E. Salazar, NMRHCA Representative

MEMBERSHIP REPORT

Please find below a current count of your membership.

Associate 2024	97
Associate 2025	200
Associate 2026	4
Auto	4,104
Life	166
Paid 2024	268
Paid 2025	1,209
Paid 2026	35
RAMP	81
Total Membership	**6,164**
Additional Mailings	251
Total Database Entries	**6,415**
Deceased since 1/1/25	93
Deleted since 1/1/25	3

Debbie Garrison, Database Manager

AARP NEWS

In August, AARP New Mexico helped to celebrate Social Security's 90th anniversary with a family fun event in Albuquerque. There were games, food trucks, information booths and guest speakers.

We are currently in the midst of our state planning process for our local activities and goals for 2026.

Additionally, AARP New Mexico is looking for folks especially from Santa Fe and Carlsbad that would be interested in serving on our Executive Committee. The EC works with the State President and State Director and staff to further the work of AARP within the state. For details on what this might involve, please contact me as the AARP State President, Christian Halstead, at chalstead@aarp.org for an overview.

Christian Halstead, AARP State President

2025 OUTSTANDING UNIT MEMBERS



Nancy Arcangeli
Colfax County Association of Educational Retirees

Nancy Arcangeli was born in Memphis, Tennessee, but grew up in the Texas Panhandle and graduated from high school in Dalhart, Texas. She attended Oklahoma Panhandle State College and graduated with a Bachelor of Science Degree in elementary education in 1972. She taught a total of 29 years, starting with 2nd Grade in Raton, New Mexico. Nancy enjoyed the diversity and challenging changes that her teaching license allowed. Nancy and her husband Everni of 58 years raised two children and enjoyed many activities that included her four grandchildren ranging in age from 14 to 33. Throughout the years, she has been involved with various professional associations, many community programs, and extracurricular school activities. Some of her many honors received include: induction into the NEA-New Mexico State Hall of Fame by the North East and North Central districts; state finalist for the Raton School District 2001 Teacher of the Year; nominated for the VFW's Americanism Award in 1999; Beta Sigma Phi, Kappa Nu Chapter Woman of the Year in 1982; and honorary Member Award in Family, Career, and Community, Leaders of America. After retiring in 2008, Nancy has remained active in education as a member of P.E.O. whose goals include providing scholarships to women to further their educational goals. She is currently treasurer of her local unit and visiting with others and helping whenever needed. Her hobbies include beading, reading, and a variety of paper crafts.



Bill Henchar
Alamogordo Association of Educational Retirees

William (Bill) Henchar began his educational pursuit at a young age; as a Boy Scout he would often work with younger scouts helping them to learn the skills necessary to advance through the ranks. Bill himself obtained the rank of Eagle Scout in 1970. Bill enlisted in the United States Air Force in 1972 as an aircraft mechanic. It was while stationed at McGuire AFB, NJ, that Bill met his wife Kathy, whom he has been married to for more than 50 years. After leaving the Air Force, he worked on horse farms in New Jersey and cattle ranches in Florida. Bill's wife stayed in the military, which often meant reassignments, taking him to many states and overseas. When Kathy was sent to Holloman AFB, New Mexico, Bill continued his education as a carpenter for several years. After his wife retired from the service, Bill wanted to change his work direction and decided to enter the field of teaching. In 1999, Bill began his 15-year career as an educator at Chaparral Middle School in Alamogordo working with the Chaparral Helping Adolescents Preform Successfully (CHAPS). After his retirement in 2014, Bill continued his education through volunteering to help others. He is currently the manager at St. John's Community Kitchen and is also the treasurer for the Otero County Association of Educational Retirees.



Karen Morrison
San Juan Area Association of Educational Retirees

Karen Morrison was born in Long Beach, California to Phyllis Mae Christensen and JD Morrison. Her mother worked at Leach Relay in Los Angeles and later at Rockwell McDonnell Douglas making parts for airplane and rocket engines. Her dad served in the Navy and was in the Pacific on patrol when she was born and was not aware of her birth for six months, a story he frequently told. At Utah State University, Karen received a B.S. in English and Journalism. Her first teaching experience was at Salida, CO High School where she taught English and speech and coached volleyball, basketball, and boys' tennis. She added a position at Pueblo Community College Salida Campus as the Adolescent Academic Remediation Tutor preparing school "drop outs" for the GED

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Outstanding Unit Members *continued from page 8*

exam. Later, at Adams State College, she earned Master of Arts degrees in Secondary Education, School Guidance and Counseling and Community Mental Health. Karen worked for three years as a counselor at Montezuma Cortez High School before moving to Shiprock, NM as a counselor. She later moved south to work with Navajo students and their families. It was during this time she learned to love and appreciate Navajo language and culture. Karen then worked in Farmington at Tibbetts Junior High for 16 years, then at Rocinante High School for the last 9 years of her teaching career. Karen has served as president and other positions on the local board of SJAER. Her love of music led her to sing with Caliente Community Chorus for 15 years and includes singing and concerts in Carnegie Hall and the Lincoln Center, Avery Fisher Hall, and was also on tour in Ireland, Scotland, Italy, Spain, Greece, Turkey, Austria, Germany, Switzerland, Hungary, Czech Republic and Slovakia.



Steve Baldock
Curry County Association of Educational Retirees

When he was in the seventh grade, Steve's life goal was to be a band director. He began by teaching private flute lessons when he was a junior in high school. He continued teaching private lessons while in college at Eastern New Mexico Univ. After graduation, he began his professional career as the junior high band director in Morton, Texas, followed by bands at Mountainview Middle School in Roswell and Marshall Junior High in Clovis. He took a break from teaching to open Baddock's Music Note. In 1990 Steve went back to teaching in an elementary school in Clovis while also earning his administration certification. He spent a year and a half as the administrator of the 21st Century After School Program in Clovis and then as principal at James Bickley Elementary. In 2008 he returned to teaching music until retiring in 2010. Steve and his wife Linda have been married for 54 years and have two married sons. He has been the pastor of the Fairview Primitive Baptist Church in Clovis for 24 years and the director of the Clovis Community Band for ten years. In October of 2024, he was honored to be inducted into the ENMU Educator Hall of Honor. Steve has been an active member of CCAER for the last few years and now serves as Vice President. He is passionate about membership development and looks forward to supporting CCAER in its continued growth.



Martha Lytle
Grants Cibola County Association of Educational Retirees

Martha Lytle grew up on a farm east of Tucumcari, NM along with her five sisters and brothers. She grew up learning how to work, problem solve and mostly having fun. She learned to drive around the farm at an early age, driving farm equipment as well as vehicles. It was a great life. She attended the Tucumcari Public Schools, graduating in 1971. Education was highly valued in the family and good grades were always expected. While in school she decided she would become a teacher, following in the footsteps of her aunts. She belonged to the Future Teachers of America from junior high school through high school. She attended Highlands University for two years then went on to attend the University of New Mexico and Eastern New Mexico University where she graduated in 1975. In the fall of 1975, she moved to Grants to begin her teaching career at Bluewater Elementary in kindergarten. She met her life partner, Don, during this time. They were married in 1978, and she continued teaching until 1981. At that time, she took some time off to stay home with their two daughters. She always felt fortunate to have that time with her daughters. She returned to teaching in the fall of 1985 at Milan Elementary in third grade. After three years there she moved to Mt. Taylor Elementary where she finished her career in 2008. Early Childhood Education was always her passion. Growing up her family always traveled around the west and mid-western states. They camped or stayed with friends and family along the way. It was always a great adventure. Since retiring, she and her husband have continued to travel. She has almost reached her

Outstanding Unit Members *continued on page 10*

Outstanding Unit Members *continued from page 9*

goal to visit all 50 states. Now with all three grandchildren grown it looks like it might just be a possibility. She enjoys exercising and meeting with friends. Helping whenever needed by a family member or the community always brings joy to her heart.



Paula Stuart
Las Cruces Association of Educational Retirees

I was born in Lubbock, Texas, but my family moved to Carlsbad, New Mexico when I was ten months old, so I consider myself a native New Mexican. As a child considering my adult life, I first aspired to be a mother with 24 children. Fortunately, I revised that goal before I started my adult life. At about ten, I thought a job in auto mechanics was the ticket, but the fact that the workings of an automobile engine were a mystery to me deterred that decision. As I reached graduation, I had firmly decided to have a career as an elementary school teacher. I received my BA in Elementary Education with a minor in Music Education and my MA in Curriculum and Instruction from NMSU. My career spanned 40 years teaching students ranging from DD-Pre/HeadStart to adult education through on-line classes with the University of Phoenix. Most of my years were spent in fifth grade, an age that I thoroughly enjoyed teaching. I have had the honor of having a few students contact me in their adult life, letting me know I had been a direct influence on their career and life choices. This is the greatest complement a teacher can receive, validating my efforts as a teacher.



Sandra Coca
Las Vegas Area Association of Educational Retirees

After my graduation from Colorado State University in 1971, I traveled to the Four Corners area of New Mexico to apply for jobs. It always was my intention to work on the Navajo Reservation and I was fortunate to be offered a job and a place to live on the very first day I visited Central Consolidated Schools. For the next 22 years, I stayed there and served in different positions from a fifth-grade teacher to Director of Elementary Instruction. There was an opportunity to learn about Navajo Culture and language, and I embraced it wholeheartedly. In addition, my professional skills were expanded due to the demands of the various jobs – from classroom instruction to developing grant proposals for the individual schools and district programs to developing culturally rich curriculum materials for the Title IV Indian Education program. I will forever remember those years with fondness and gratitude.

In 1993, I moved to Las Vegas and began a new chapter in another culturally and linguistically rich area. As the Director of Instruction in Pecos Schools, the Special Education Director at Las Vegas City Schools and a professor at New Mexico Highlands University, I had the opportunity to serve students and staff members, while expanding my own learning as well. Due to health concerns, I officially retired in June of 2007. After retiring, I continued to work for various agencies on a contract basis. The job responsibilities have varied from helping districts settle Special Education lawsuits, to performing Instructional Audits and school site visits. I have also created and managed on-line book studies and mentored school principals. It has all been interesting and brought new learning, new people to meet and places to explore. I am blessed indeed.



Patrick Moore
Gallup, McKinley County Association of Educational Retirees

Patrick Moore was born in Denver, CO, on June 11, 1960. He discovered an early love for theatre and storytelling, and by the time he graduated from Englewood High School in 1978, he had been in several productions. After graduation, Patrick attended the University of Colorado in Denver and graduated Cum Laude with a BA in theatre and communications. From 1983-1985, he attended Arizona State University in pursuit of a Master's Degree. While there he performed in a number of plays including the premier reading

Outstanding Unit Members *continued on page 11*

2025-2026 SCHOLARSHIP WINNERS



NAVELY AGUILAR lives in Carlsbad, New Mexico. She is working on her bachelor's degree in early childhood education at Eastern New Mexico University and expects to graduate in May 2026. She has spent the last two years balancing full-time work in Carlsbad and Portales Public Schools with her studies. She "actively participates in classroom projects that promote literacy, language development and family engagement." She carries a GPA of 3.7.



LACY LESLY lives in Melrose, New Mexico. She is working on her bachelor's degree in Elementary Education/Special Education degree at Eastern New Mexico University and her expected graduation date is in December 2026. "Her plan is to be what she calls a legacy teacher and make an impact on her students. She also wants to follow the footsteps set by her mother and become a principal." She has worked as a substitute teacher in the Clovis Christian Schools. She carries a GPA of 3.83.



ELSA MEENACH lives in Albuquerque, New Mexico. She is working on her bachelor's degree in Elementary Education at New Mexico State University and her expected graduation date is in May 2028. This past year she did a work study position in the America Reads, Las Cruces Academy where she worked as a tutor. As a child her favorite game was playing "teacher." She comes from a single-parent household which has taught her the challenges of having to earn funding to attend college. She carries a GPA of 4.0.



JESSICA SAENZ lives in Las Cruces, New Mexico. She is working on a bachelor's degree in education to become a high school social studies teacher while attending Western New Mexico University entirely online. Her expected graduation date is 2028. "She said attending virtually allows her to pursue a degree while maintaining her career." "She goes on to say that returning to school after so many years has come with many challenges from adjusting to academic life to balancing coursework with my full-time job and being a single mother to a teenage son." She has worked full-time for the Las Cruces Public Schools for the past eleven years as the librarian and as an educational assistant at the Rio Grande Preparatory Institute. She carries a GPA of 3.4.



ANN SCOTT lives in Tularosa, New Mexico. She is working on a master's degree at Eastern NM University in TESOL, English as a Second Language, while working full-time at Mescalero High School as a Special Education teacher. Her expected graduation date is December 2025. "Her primary objective in earning her graduate degree is to enhance her ability to deliver meaningful differentiated instruction to English as a Second language learners." She carries a GPA of 4.0.

Outstanding Unit Members *continued from page 10*

of Gus Edward's play "Ages of Douglas," and "The Last Baron of Arizona" by Johanna Kraus. Later, Patrick worked for two years for Missoula Children's Theatre touring the Western US and Canada. In 1990, he moved to Gallup, NM, and began teaching fifth grade at David Skeet Elementary. In 1996, he left teaching to be a disc jockey on morning radio, but in 1999, he returned to teaching and taught at Gallup Central, Gallup High and Miyamura High Schools in succession, retiring after 23 years. Mr. Moore is the proud father of three children and one grandchild. Currently he is working for UNM Gallup, teaching theatre subjects. Volunteer projects are working with the theatre company, playing with Desert Highlanders band, working on ATD-4th World and secretary of the GMCAER.

Ray Vincent, Second Vice-President

NEW MEXICO ASSOCIATION OF EDUCATIONAL RETIREES
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IN MEMORIAM

The following New Mexico educational employees have passed away and their names have not been previously provided in the Newsletter. Henceforth, if you know of any deceased educational retirees in your area and would like to have their name included in this Memoriam, please send that information to Glenda Dickey, 2327 Camino Pintores, Santa Fe, NM 87505, or email them to dickeyglenda@gmail.com

Albuquerque

Philip M Callow
Jean Cowie Hollenbach
Stella Lopez
Tom Arthur Montoya
Harriet Pearl Holmquist Neal
Keith Suazo
Laura Ann White

Clovis

Jackye Alexander
Rita Bradley
Betty Douglas
Loma Hendricks
Barbara Higdon
Elaine Howell
Kathy Hsi
Roberta Lansford
Suzy Matlock
Charlie Stockton
Arthur Tunnel
Irene Watkins
Patsy Welsh
Connie Williams

Deming

Allie Bryant
Freddie Rodriguez
David Smith

Gadsden

Robert Saavedra

Las Cruces

Mary M Sadler

Remember, “there is strength in numbers.”

We encourage you to reach out to all educational employees and current retirees and URGE them to join NMAER as we focus on ADVOCATING for our retirement benefits.