

Jennifer Lazarz, Gallup Tourism and Marketing Manager

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This is a quote that sits in a little placard on my desk. It was given to me by a friend and mentor, Pastor Reggie Hansome, when I worked as the director for a Christian summer camp during one summer of college. "Success seems to be largely a matter of hanging on after others have

let go.”- William Feather. There’s a certain strength needed to work in an often misunderstood economic development arena, so having that little sign always reminds me to hang on and keep going.

My first career, before coming to Gallup, was as an opera singer. In late 2020 one of the greatest friends, colleagues, and musicians that I collaborated with, pianist Logan Brown, departed this world after complications from a heart attack. Logan played for some of the biggest names in the opera industry: Sherrill Milnes, Renata Scottò, Mignon Dunn, among others. He also served on the staff of the Broadway Theatre Project as an Assistant Music Director/Arranger for many years, working with so many incredible people, such as Mickey Rooney and his wife Jan, Ben Vereen, Nancy Dussault, Patrick Wilson, Jonathan Groff and more. We met during my tenure as a resident artist with Opera Tampa, where he accompanied all of our traveling concerts. He was witness to some of the funniest blunders in my early singing career, and those laughs became the foundation for a lovely friendship. It was never lost on me that this incredibly funny and humble man was such a pillar of the arts world, and had become a young opera singer’s mentor and friend because of our shared sense of humor and love for storytelling. He is very missed.

Things you are grateful for?

So many! Most notably though, my brother Don Lazarz, is a Major with the Army National Guard. He was stationed in the Ukraine training troops through most of the last year, and returned home in the spring of 2021. I’m incredibly grateful for his service, for the humor and friendship he brought to his fellow deployed, and that he came home healthy and safe. This was his third career deployment, the first were in Iraq and Afghanistan. I especially love that he came home and jumped right into a new position as the principal of the high school where he teaches in Illinois.

His school printed a picture of his face and fastened it to a science classroom skeleton with a school t-shirt and wheeled it around to events during his deployment, taking pictures to prove he was “there.” It was fantastic.

I’m also incredibly grateful that my job has afforded me the opportunity to develop things that will help businesses and the community long into the future. I’m excited that in January I get to unveil a new tourism website and app, both of which have incredibly comprehensive business directories, art listings, walking tours and more. Gallup is a beautiful community and it has been

so enriching working over the past 13 months to collect history, information, and learning more about Gallup's nuances to add to what I've already gathered in my six years here. We are often way too hard on ourselves about what goes "wrong" that we don't spend enough time celebrating what is "right," or great, or incredible strengths and testaments to a very unique community.

I am so tremendously blessed with friends across the community that have become my Gallup family. I'm also grateful for my boyfriend, Jon, aka Mr. Bananashoes, an elementary school PE teacher in the Fort Defiance area. It's been a year and a half of laughs, tears, and learning. He reminds me to eat when I get stressed, never forgets to make me feel beautiful, and finds my cursing endearing. He's a wonderfully sweet and kind man with a profound love for all things soccer, so it's been a treat going to both New Mexico United games and the games he coaches locally, where I'm becoming a soccer super fan.