ALBUQUERQUE—Five New Mexicans who have spent their lives working on behalf of some of the state's most vulnerable residents will be honored at the Spirit of Hope Awards Gala on November 21, 2015. The annual event is a fundraiser for the child advocacy group New Mexico Voices for Children. The honorees are:

• Kathie Winograd, Ed.D., President of Central New Mexico Community College (CNM)

• Lance Chilton, MD, an Albuquerque pediatrician who taught at University Hospital

• Representative Luciano "Lucky" Varela, who serves Santa Fe County in the state Legislature

• Ted Martinez, who has served on the APS school board, Director of the UNM Student Union, and President of TVI (now CNM)

• Mary Dudley, Ph.D., a long-time early childhood specialist and advocate

Dr. Winograd will receive the Alice King Public Service Award, Dr. Chilton will be honored with the Patty Jennings & Polly Arango Citizen Advocacy Award, Rep. Varela will receive the New Mexico Legislative Advocacy Award, and Mr. Martinez and Dr. Dudley will both be honored with Spirit of Hope Awards.

"Our annual awards celebration is always so inspiring because we honor and talk about the work of such truly dedicated and hard-working individuals," said Veronica C. García, Ed.D., Executive Director of NM Voices. "The awards have a dual purpose, in that they also honor three outstanding New Mexicans who dedicated so much of their own lives to making New Mexico a better place to be a child."

Dr. García is referring, of course, to Alice King, the former First Lady, who is credited with

numerous changes to how the state deals with children in trouble and in crisis; Patty Jennings, the late wife of former Senator Tim Jennings, who worked to get laws passed around disability and health insurance issues; and Polly Arango, who advocated for better support systems for families with special needs children, often working alongside Patty.

This year's celebration is marked by the issuance of a new award—the New Mexico Legislative Advocacy Award. "We've honored numerous legislators in past years, but we decided to make legislative advocacy its own award category this year," said Dr. García. "Our state legislators work tremendously hard for no pay and often little recognition, so we felt that those who are champions for children deserved their own award."

KOAT TV reporter Nancy Laflin and former state Senator Eric Griego will emcee the event, which will include a poetry reading by Jimmy Santiago Baca and a performance by Mariachi San Jose of Washington Middle School. Social mixer and dinner entertainment will be provided by talented pianist Arnold Bodmer.

The Spirit of Hope Awards Gala is Saturday, November 21, at the Sandia Resort and Casino from 6-10 pm. The evening includes live music, dinner, a silent auction, and the awards presentation. Tickets are $100 and all proceeds benefit NM Voices.

***Tickets may be reserved online at: donate.nmvoices.org/2015sohtickets. More information about the Spirit of Hope event is available at: www.nmvoices.org/spiritofhope .***