Written by By Duane Haven Sun Correspondent
Friday, 29 September 2017 02:42



Rachel Ortega, a kindergarten teacher at Lincoln Elementary School, has been named the Camille's Sidewalk Café Teacher of the Month for September. Each month, folks write down the name of their favorite teacher, and say why they have the best teacher. They then put into a jar that is established at the café.

In recognition of this tribute, Ortega was presented with a gift basket from Camille's Manager Tisha Boyd. Boyd was content with their first Teacher of the Month award that was gifted to Ortega.

"I am happy that she received this prize," Boyd said. "Ortega was my son's kindergarten teacher a few years ago, and it is wonderful to see her commit to her students as they grow older."

Ortega earned her Bachelor of Education from the University of New Mexico in Albuquerque.

A graduate from Gallup High School, she says that her religious faith has blessed her with the patience to work with youth. She worked as a bookkeeper at Lincoln Elementary for 17 years, and has taught kindergarten for six years.

Ortega said she was granted the opportunity to further her education with the support of staff from Lincoln Elementary.

She made the choice to teach because of the children and to make a difference in the children's lives.

"It's not all about the learning piece, but it's also about the caring part for our kids," she said.

Her students motivate her to teach. She wants them to be safe and feel comfortable in their atmosphere. She enjoys showing up to work and viewing the smiles on their faces every morning.

Ortega's front office co-workers have positive remarks to say about her.

"She's very caring for her kids, they all have place in here heart," Carole Saucedo said.

Lincoln Elementary School Principal Mary Washburn was proud to learn of Ortega's recent accolade.

"She is concerned for her students. She is in contact with her students' families constantly. Ortega is very committed to her job as a teacher and to be able to teach everyday," she said.

Recently, Lincoln Elementary received an "A" grade from the New Mexico Public Education Department for improving and excelling in multiple areas. "I am very proud of our students and teachers for working together and improving every year and individually," Washburn said.

A new campus is in the works, part of a multi-million dollar federal program to replace aging schools.

Established in 1996, Camille's will be running this program through the end of the school year, profiling each teacher every month. To place your ballot, stop by Camille's at 306 S. Second St.,

Gallup.

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