Written by By Dee Velasco For the Sun
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Indian Hills Elementary teacher honored as Camille's Teacher of the Month

Camille's Sidewalk Café announced Stephani Fabela, fourth grade teacher of Indian Hills Elementary, as Teacher of the Month for October

"I'm very surprised. I'm really shocked, it's an honor," she said. "It's really nice to hear that, it's really awesome!"

Born and raised in Gallup, Fabela has been teaching for a total of 17 years to which 11 of it has been at Indian Hills. She started out as a third-grade teacher, now she teaches fourth grade and she loves her job.

"It's the first time I've been told that I was teacher of the month …. of being honored that way," she said. "It's surprising and it's nice, the recognition that you really don't see a lot of as a teacher. And it's not for being married to some scores that your students got. I like being recognized for not having the best scores in the district."

The thought of becoming a teacher came to her while attending the UNM-Gallup campus. Fabela, at the time, was striving to get her Bachelor's degree in Business, having come from a family that is in the restaurant business. Currently, her family owns local eatery Earl's Restaurant.

"I really enjoyed the company of these students who wanted to be teachers, and the idea

started to grow on me," she said.

Along the way she changed her major to teaching. Her family didn't seem receptive of the idea at first, but now they believe in her, in helping kids to strive to do their best.

"The more I learned about the lessons and started working with students towards the end of my last year in college, it eventually grew on me," she said. "I love teaching. I love learning, and as a teacher you are forever learning. I really love this job."

Fabela said if teaching was not in her blood she would want to be an astronaut. But she says, jokingly, that she has asthma.

"I couldn't fly a plane, so I gave up that idea," she said. "And then I wanted to own Earl's when I got older so that is why I was going to school for business, and now I found what I really love."

Fabela says what keeps her motivated is motivating her students to trust themselves, and believe in themselves, no matter how hard things may get, and despite the many obstacles that may be on their path.

"I want students to learn standards ... to be able to score well on their tests, but I want them to acquire life skills, and to learn to love themselves – to believe in themselves and never give up."

Asked what downfalls Fabela faces as a teacher, she simply said having to teach students to take tests so they score well.

"Standards are different from teaching, to the tests," she said. "And I find fault in teaching to the tests so that your scores will be high. When this started, I was saying that teachers will now be accountable to whatever is happening in the classroom. I don't feel test scores are the way teachers should be held accountable. I'm more about if you want to know what I'm teaching, come to my classroom and watch, and that is how you know. You don't how I'm teaching

because a kid did very well or very poorly on a test one day … that drives me nuts."

Have a teacher you think should be recognized as Teacher of the Month? Stop by Camille's Sidewalk Café, 306 S. 2nd St., and fill out a form.

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