

Teacher utilizes experiences to help her students succeed

Written by Gallupsun Staff
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Tomi Campos is Camille's Sidewalk Café Teacher of the Month

Going out and finding students who have missed school for more than a couple of days is not your ordinary duty as a teacher, but Gallup Central High School teacher Tomi Campos, is not your ordinary teacher.

She does this because she truly cares about her students. Whether it's going to their homes, their jobs, wherever they may be, she does this to make sure they are okay or if they need anything to help them get back into school. It's similar to one of those afterschool television programs about a teacher who has a close knit relationship with her students which helps them make education a high priority in their lives.

"Finishing high school is the battle," she said.

Campos is Camille's Sidewalk Café Teacher of the Month, who was nominated by student Janelle Jones, whom she has taken under her wing to help her finish high school no matter the odds.

"I feel honored that she thought about me with all the people and teachers that she has had, (and) that I impacted her life," Jones said.

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Jones is just one of the group of kids that has dropped out numerous times, that Campos has gone out and brought back to school. In her fifth year, Campos teaches in a program for expecting teen parents called “GRADS” acronym for “Graduate Reality and Dual Role Skills.”

She’s also the daycare director for about 41 students who are teen parents, and who bring their children to school.

Born and raised in Gallup, Campos has been teaching at Gallup Central High School for the past five years. Having received her Bachelor’s Degree in Elementary Education/English at UNM-G in 2006, she taught at the elementary level for six years. She arrived at her current position thanks to the persuasion of another GRADS teacher who sought out Campos to teach the class.

Campos attended the high school as she was a young teen mother herself.

“When she asked me, I felt this was the place that I needed to be,” she said. “This is where I was meant to be in this position, because I have been there and have gone through a lot of things these students have gone through. So, I can understand the trials and tribulations, the stigma that has been put upon them. I love being here with these kids and I kind of have found where my heart is.”

Gallup Central High School is an alternative high school, catering to students who had attended regular high school but have fallen off track. This could range from a death in the family, substance abuse, and anything else that causes students to get off track. The school is there to help them get back on their feet.

“It could be just like myself (laughing) who didn’t want to go to school during my freshman year... who messed around a lot during that year,” she said. “It’s not always delinquency or drugs, sometimes it’s just kids being teenagers.”

Her students, teen parents, come from all over McKinley County. Campos says students learn valuable skills in her case management class – the skills needed for them to be successful in

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their studies and outside of school.

This year the high school will be graduating 98 students and 15 are GRADS students.

“I’m so proud of them, it was a great year for them, and it’s kind of a bittersweet year for me because a lot of these students I have had for a very long time,” she said.

By Dee Velasco
For the Sun