

## UNM-Gallup's 'Holiday in New Mexico' makes successful return

Written by By Richard Reyes Senior Public Relations Specialist for UNM-Gallup  
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The University of New Mexico-Gallup hosted more than 800 community members on campus and lit up more than 1,000 luminarias for its eighth "Holiday in New Mexico" event Dec. 1

"Holiday in New Mexico" has become a modern tradition at UNM-Gallup. It started in 2013 as the brainchild of the late Marilee Petranovich, who worked as the senior public relations specialist. The event was put on hold for two years during the COVID-19 pandemic but made its successful return to campus this year.

"This year's event was fun, magical and filled with excitement," Senior Web Designer Carmen Wellborn, who coordinated the event, said. "After only two months of preparation, everything worked so well, and I am really happy that our Gallup community was able to enjoy our event."

About a dozen student clubs and UNM-Gallup departments participated in the event along with more than a dozen community partners.

UNM-Gallup participants included the Student Nursing Association; the Zollinger Library; the Business and Applied Technology, Community Education and Workforce Development Division; the SkillsUSA Chapter; TRIO Student Support Services; TRIO Upward Bound; the Lobos Chess Club; the Multimedia Club; the Asian Culture Club; the Accessibility Resource Center; the Public

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Relations Department; and the Art Student Collective.

"I would like to give a big shout out to all of the wonderful faculty and staff who made last night's event such a big success," UNM-Gallup Interim Chancellor Sabrina Ezzell said the day after the event. "It was very heart-warming to see so many families and community members on our campus enjoying time together. Thank you to everyone who made last night such a memorable and meaningful experience!"

The event also coincided with the UNM-Gallup Art Student Exhibition, which featured several drawings, pottery and jewelry.

"I am proud of all of the fine arts students who volunteered to help with this event," Lecturer Kristi Wilson said. "It was wonderful to share their work with the community in the Art Student Exhibition!"

Clubs and departments hosted games and activities throughout the night. They also helped set up about 1,200 luminarias throughout the campus, making this year's display the largest in UNM-Gallup's history.

The Home Depot store in Gallup also donated about \$600 worth of string lights that were used to illuminate more trees than ever on campus.

The UNM-Gallup facilities and custodial staff were instrumental in decorating the campus and preparing the logistics of the event.

UNM-Gallup leadership — including Ezzell; Dean of Instruction Daniel Primozic; Director of Student Affairs Jayme McMahon; Director of Business Operations Robert Griego; and the four division chairs Ann Jarvis, John Zimmerman, Lewis Gambill and Alok Dhital — also got involved by welcoming and counting guests at the front entrance of Gurley Hall. They tallied a total of 819 attendees.

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"I was amazed at the amount of people that came to the event," Zollinger Library Director Markos Chavez said. "I'm glad we were able to reach so many people and have very positive interactions with the community. I'm thrilled that I was able to be part of this tradition and work with others on campus to see this through. It really brought us together on campus and closer to the community."

Community partners included Strengthening Nations Inc.; Gallup Service Mart; the Octavia Fellin Public Library; GallupARTS/ART123; McKinley County Sheriff's Office; Sexual Assault Services of Northwest New Mexico; Gallup Fire Department; Balanced Health 4 Life; and Four Corners Detox Recovery Center.

Southwest Food Excellence prepared 600 bowls of posole for the event, BombDiggity's prepared 660 biscochitos, and Earl's Restaurant donated more than 30 gallons of hot chocolate – all of which were given out to attendees for free. The Jim Sayers Band and Jean Paul VanDerdys Vidal performed music live.

And, of course, Mr. and Mrs. Claus met with children throughout the evening to hear their holiday wishes and collect their colorful letters.

"Hosting this heartwarming event is an amazing experience," TRIO/Student Support Services Director Kimimila Simms said. "Seeing the people's faces light up for Mr. and Mrs. Santa Clause, all the crafts and games, the lights and the luminarias brings so much Christmas cheer you can't help but feel that too."

"The UNM-Gallup students, faculty and staff that helped organize the event were amazing," Wellborn said. "Everyone wanted to collaborate and contribute with wonderful ideas on how to make this event better than ever."

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