

Former substitute SHARES THE joy of teaching

Each month, Camille's Sidewalk Cafe in Gallup chooses and recognizes one local teacher within the Gallup area for the Teacher of the Month award.

Teachers are nominated by students, to those who feel they deserve the recognition for their effortless determination to help local students become more than they expect.

Camille's presents teachers with an award for their excellence in teaching. For the month of December, Camille's chose Susan Bongers, a sixth grade teacher at Gallup Middle School, who was pretty ecstatic when told she was chosen for Teacher of the Month.

"I got the call at school and was so excited, I quickly went back to my classroom and told my kids." Bongers said. "They all clapped and hugged me!"

Moving from Florida, Bongers switched careers from working in retail management to working as a substitute teacher here in Gallup. She started working as a substitute in 2010 for a total of

six years and decide to go to college at the University of New Mexico-Gallup, eventually becoming a sixth grade teacher in 2016, as a result of her desire she had earlier in her life.

"I had always wanted to be a teacher," she said. "I started substituting and enjoyed it, so I decided to go back to school and received my degree in Elementary Education. I love teaching the kids and seeing their faces light up when they learn something new."

More than often teachers wonder if they are making an impact on the kids they teach and Bongers reflects on this as being a new teacher.

"Sometimes as teachers we don't know if we are doing a good job and we always don't get to see or hear the good job, even if we are reaching the students," she said. "So obviously I've reached somebody within my 150 kids and done something right," Bongers said. " We face challenges everyday and I would love to give each kid the same experience in life."

As for anyone wanting on becoming a teacher, Bongers gives her sound advice to those interested.

"Anyone wanting to become a teacher … if you are passionate, do it! We need good teachers to help the kids and you have to come in loving your job to love those kids."

Aside from teaching, Bongers spends time with her husband and daughter. Anyone interested in nominating your favorite teacher for Teacher of the Month, visit: Camille's Sidewalk Cafe, 306 S. 2nd Street, NM.

By Dee Velasco
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