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Aggie fans and City of Gallup officials filled Sammy C's Rock N' Sports Pub & Grille as a few of the New Mexico State University's staff made a presentation to discuss all things to do with the college's sports May 22.

Sammy Chioda, owner of Sammy C's, welcomed and introduced the new NMSU Athletic Director Mario Moccia, who also addressed and introduced a few other coaches with the college.

The two-hour event began with a social hour to break the ice, followed by the program.

COORDINATING EVENT

"The caravan is to take some of the leaders of the athletic department and the goal is to get them around the state of New Mexico," Nicole Gomez, NMSU event coordinator, said "We try to get support from Las Cruces because that's where New Mexico State is … but Mario [athletic director] thought it was important to reach the towns like Farmington, Gallup, and Artesia."

Gomez said they've almost hit major cities in the Land of Enchantment to say, "Hey, we appreciate our support from our donors and from alumni across the state."

Being from Las Cruces, Gomez said she has never visited Gallup before, which made the visit extra special. She said Moccia has been amazing and has made it a goal to visit nearly every

city across New Mexico.

"It also lets us bond with our staff more and get to know each other," Gomez said, in reference to traveling with staff.

Even though Gomez said that NMSU has less funding than the University of New Mexico, Moccia always wants to do "better with less," meaning the coaches and Moccia take time off either their vacation time or off-season to travel across the state.

Gomez mentioned Gallup and the community were inviting and welcoming to the group of college officials.

"We have a really good foot forward in the athletic department to make kids want to come here, even if it's not for athletics," she said.

SPORTS STAFF

Chioda introduced Moccia, whom returned as the 23rd Director of Athletics at NMSU on Jan. 5, 2015, after he served nine years at Southern Illinois University as the director of athletics.

Additionally, the 1989 graduate of NMSU, Moccia immediately created an impact during his tenure as director of athletics. Impacts beneath his direction include making it to eight championships, regular season and/or tournament, in 2016-2017.

He became the first athletic director in 58 years to win a bowl game and led NMSU into a multi-million-dollar multimedia rights agreement with Learfield in 2015, a first in history of the university. And followed that up in 2016, where the agreement more than doubled the university's previous agreement.

Moccia spoke on behalf of student athletes as sports are huge in the Gallup community and the Navajo Nation.

"We have 405 student athletes," Moccia said. "We are in the top 10 percent in community service."

He said NMSU encourages student athletes to serve as role models and serve the community.

Of course, being a student first is important. Moccia talked highly about the university continuing to excel in the classroom since he took the reins. He said all athletic teams outshined the "Academic Progress Rate of 930."

In addition, Aggies also registered a 3.0 GPA or better in 25 consecutive semesters through fall semester 2017.

Moccia highlighted the sports NMSU offers, and also his success in raising funds to improve projects to build a new football stadium, a new athletic support building, and to renovate the university's basketball arena.

BEAT THE PAVEMENT

After the event came to conclusion, Chioda, Gomez and other donors "beat the pavement" by raising $5,000 the evening of the event.

Moccia, surprised, gave a few words of appreciation to Chioda and Gomez for making the event possible and especially raising that amount of money in one day.

"The money will be to the student athletes, those 405," Moccia said.

He encourages the community of Gallup and the surrounding areas, "Talk well about New Mexico State," he said. "Send us your kids."

Other speakers from NM State were Oliver Soukup, football coach, Brooke Atkinson, women's basketball coach, and Chris Jans, men's basketball coach.

For more information, visit nmsu.edu

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