

UNM-G groundskeeper starts Bike For Life

Written by By Marilee Petranovich UNM-Gallup
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Andy Martinez is a groundskeeper at UNM-Gallup who has a passion for making children happy. Andy lives in a Gallup trailer park and noticed kids walking the neighborhood and wondered why they weren't on bikes. Andy fondly recalled his own youth where he always had a bicycle, although it was often a hand-me-down version requiring repairs. When Andy realized that many of the neighborhood families could not afford to buy bikes for their children, he set out to collect used bicycles, renovate and repair them and distribute them around the neighborhood. "I was one of five children in our family so if I wanted a bike of my own, it usually meant getting a broken one from a sibling and having to fix it," Andy reminisced.

Andy also recognizes the health benefits of being a bike owner. "I'm interested in getting kids off the couch and putting them on a bike. It's like giving them back their childhood and also getting them to exercise. All I was seeing were kids on their phones who didn't even know what it meant to be on a bike. I feel good about getting them riding and healthy."

Andy has been relying on donations and his own personal funds to finance his bike repair undertaking. At a recent UNM-Gallup staff retreat, Andy shared his hobby with fellow employees and at the suggestion of Executive Director, Dr. Christopher Dyer, staff were asked to contribute whatever they could towards the Bike For Life program. With a lead donation of \$200.00 from Dr. Dyer, staff pitched in another \$200.00. Andy was able to purchase 5 new bikes, and restore 2 used ones which were presented to 7 local children at a campus event on Friday. Andy maintains a Bike For Life Facebook page where families can apply for a bicycle. Andy monitors the site and looks for children in need who cannot afford a bike and who express their desire to own, maintain and use a bicycle of their own.

Andy sums up his passion for Bikes for Life simply. "I've got a talent to fix bikes and it is worth it all when you see the smiles on the kids' faces."

Visit <https://www.facebook.com/bike4life> for more information. To make a donation of a gently

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used bike, a financial contribution or volunteer time to restore the bikes, contact Any directly through the Facebook page, or at (505) 290-1729.