

Press Release-5/8/07

Española, Los Alamos Youth Leadership Initiative

Los Alamos, NM: Addressing feelings of discomfort and fear shared by Española and Los Alamos youth for each other's community was the driving force behind two recent meetings attended by youth workers and city, county and school officials from both areas. Five Española youth attending the second meeting agreed that discussions and actions should continue toward a joint youth leadership initiative. A meeting of youth from both communities is planned for later in May at CESDP (Center for the Education and Study of Diverse Populations), a division of NMHU in Española. The initiative hopes to attract adult and youth participation from all north-central New Mexico communities.

Lori Heimdahl Gibson initiated the first meeting of adult leaders on April 16 at Northern New Mexico College. Gibson has worked with youth in both communities. She said discussion with adult leaders from both towns prompted the idea to pursue a program where youth leaders from both communities could get to know and trust each other by working on projects that would benefit both. Ideas and outcomes for this initiative from Los Alamos youth leaders were presented at the April 16th meeting.

A second meeting of the adult leaders, who are forming a support system for the youth, was held on May 7 at UNM-LA hosted by Cedric Page, Dean of Instruction. Española Valley High School (EVHS) Principal, Bruce Hopmeier, ensured the presence of youth voices by bringing five students from EVHS. EVHS Student Council President Marcos Archuleta suggested the creation of a planning team that could be made up of 7 to 10 youth from each school. He said student councils have a major voice in the schools and could be used to help find representation from different segments of the student population. Marcos proposed a workshop of a limited group to focus on what is going to happen and what can be achieved. He also said that continued adult support would be needed.

The meeting concluded with the formation of subcommittees for the adults that included funding, logistics, coaching, and a committee to research long-term, educational leadership courses and credit incentives for youth.

Española youth interested in attending the meeting later in May may contact Marcia Brenden at CESDP, 747-7238. Los Alamos youth may contact Lori Heimdahl Gibson at 662-3159. Other area leaders and youth may also contact Gibson.

Another planning meeting of the adult leaders will be held from 8:30-10:30 AM on Monday, June 4, at Northern New Mexico College.

Representatives from the Española area attending one or both of the initial meetings included: Ron Martinez, Marcia Brenden, and Paul Romero, ENLACE/GEAR-UP representatives; Joseph Maestas, Mayor of Española ; Bruce Hopmeier, EVHS Principal; Sandra Roney, Voc Rehab Counselor, EPS; Jack Ortega, Española Juvenile Justice Advisory Board (JJAB); Leonard Valerio, Española Board of Education; Frank Orona and Maurice de Segovia, NNMC Recruiting; Erwin Rivera, SFCC ENLACE; and students Marcos Archuleta, Ivy Romero, Maria Tapia, Chris Shamy, and Jeremy Maestas.

Los Alamos representatives include Min Park, LANL; Allen Kirk, Municipal Judge; Wayne Torpy, LA Police Chief; Jim Anderson, Superintendent of Schools; Lynne Saccaro, Principal of LAHS; Sharon Stover, LA JJAB; Robert Gibson, County Councilor; Diana Martinez, YMCA; Janelle Vigil-Maestas, LANL; Cedric Page, UNM-LA; Donna Schroeder, NNM United Way; Bob Scott, LAHS; Joy Freymiller, Monitor; and John Pawlak, UNM-LA.

Sean Hall from *On the Edge Productions*, who has been facilitating the LA Youth Leadership program since 2005, also facilitated the first two adult planning meetings.

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