

Their future is now

October 11, 2007

Dear Editor,

The dictionary defines JUNTOS as “small groups united for a common interest.” In the Spanish language, it means “together.” What better name for the cooperative youth leadership initiative currently working to bring the communities of Española and Los Alamos closer together?

The JUNTOS youth meetings, organized and led by Lori Heimdahl Gibson, are not typical of what one might expect. Like other youth initiatives, it has your typical energetic young adults, eager to help make a positive difference in their community. And there are the supportive adults, many of them important and influential members of the community.

But there’s something else. The JUNTOS meetings go far beyond ordinary expectations of youth leadership. For example, members of JUNTOS and other concerned citizens met on Sunday (Sept. 30) to attend a workshop on racism. This workshop was more typical of what one might expect in a corporate environment for executive managers, and yet, there they were ... young adults of Los Alamos and Española working to tackle one of life’s most difficult and complex problems.

These are not starry-eyed children who think that smiles and songs will solve the problems of the world. These are young men and women, accepting personal responsibility and ownership of very real adult problems. These are future leaders who want a better world for themselves and for their children.

The young members of JUNTOS have been investigating ways to break down barriers between Española and Los Alamos. They know that this will not be accomplished overnight. They know that it may take years to realize significant changes. But they also know that progress is not measured in degrees or feet, but rather in the lasting friendships that come from open communications and the willingness to take risks.

I would like to congratulate the members of JUNTOS, young and old alike, for their continued efforts to promote a better understanding between Los Alamos and Española youth. But moreover, I would like for both communities to become more aware of these efforts, to applaud and support the team’s progress, and if possible, to look into ways of becoming involved with the JUNTOS activities.

You can request information about JUNTOS from Lori at lorihg@swcp.com or go to www.losalamosjjab.com

JUNTOS means many things, but in Española and Los Alamos, it stands for courage and determination.

John Pawlak

Los Alamos