Humane Society Shelter Residents Get A Helping Hand from Construction Tech

On a recent chilly morning at the Gallup McKinley Humane Society, students in Rick Krouth’s Interior Finishing class from UNM-Gallup were on a mission. Wearing hardhats, but minus customary hammers and drills, they listened as Cosy Balok, director of the Humane Society, ticked off a list of the organization’s considerable needs. Krouth and fellow Construction Tech instructor Chris Chavez made notes, and the students, prompted by a photographer, took up some of the numerous kittens and puppies waiting for adoption at the facility and posed for pictures they hope will promote their mission in the local community.

That mission is one that’s already well under way, with the students psyched to assist the Humane Society provide better care for the 5000 homeless cats and dogs that come through its doors every year.

“We take in a lot more animals than other facilities, because we’re surrounded—
Please see HUMANE SOCIETY p. 4

Nate Davis, Construction Tech student, with one of the puppies from the Humane Society.

Credit Hours Up for Spring; Final Tally Due in Late Summer

Student credit hours as of March 1 totaled 24,142, up 2 percent from last spring, for an increase of 486 credits. Headcount is 2628, which is down 4.8 percent from last spring, a decrease of 129 students.

Funding to universities from the state can be reduced if student credit hours drop below 5 percent of an identified baseline. Because student credit hours were up for the fall semester and appear to be up again for spring, the Gallup campus should be spared any cuts in funding based on this formula.

“Official numbers are not available until late summer and involve much more than simply adding up credit hours and comparing them to our baseline year,” said Paul Kraft, director of Student Services. “Some credits are counted, some are not, depending on funding sources. The numbers I have been reporting are only comparing date to date from a year ago.”
One of the things that I find most rewarding about my role at UNM-G is assisting our campus in reaching out to the greater Gallup community to engage in collaborative projects. One such project involves our Construction Technology students, who under the guidance of instructor Rick Krouth, are helping to build interior service areas for the Gallup Humane Society. In our initial visits to the animal shelter it was apparent that this service initiative touched the students deeply after learning about the problems that this region faces regarding abandoned and abused animals. The students were able to meaningfully connect with the need of the animals, which in turn, provided them with a sense of awareness about how valuable this contribution would be, not just to the Humane Society, but to the community as a whole.

The lessons learned from this collaborative project illustrate the importance of establishing community links in the education of our young people.

All too frequently, our educational systems, at all levels, fail to recognize the importance of providing real life experience to the learning process. I believe that one major component in establishing a high level of awareness for students is to not isolate them from the day-to-day world. To make this happen, both “town” and “gown” must reach out to one another in innovative ways to explore mechanisms for enfusing more “life” and “vitality” into our institutions of learning.

Toward that objective UNM-G is continuing to create more and more partnerships within our region. I invite all of our community members to contact me with any ideas you might have about moving these initiatives forward.

### Johnson Scholarship Foundation Awards UNMG $60,000 to Strengthen Entrepreneur Program

Local small business persons can soon avail themselves of new, improved instruction in entrepreneurship from the University of New Mexico-Gallup.

The Johnson Scholarship Foundation of Florida, which typically funds Native American institutions or Native American-serving institutions, recently awarded the college’s entrepreneurship program $60,000. The funds will be dispersed in two payments of $30,000 over two years to pay half the salary of a faculty member, who will spend two-thirds of his or her time teaching and the other third of the time promoting the program.

“They found us, came out and visited with us about our program, and now we have the funds,” said Bill Stenberg, chair of the Business Management and Technology Department. “They are very interested in us, and think our entrepreneurship program is critical to our region.” The college offers a certificate in Entrepreneurism and an Associate of Applied Science degree in General Business with an Entrepreneur concentration. The revised curriculum for the program has been approved and will start in the fall.
Navajo Language Instructor Focuses on A Way of Life

For Joe Kee, UNM-Gallup’s new full-time Navajo language instructor, teaching Navajo isn’t just about words. It also means learning about a way of life.

“I introduce students to where I come from, and engage them in learning by talking about how I came to be the person I am today,” he says. “I stress family, relationships and kinships inside the classroom to make learning fun. I try to help students learn not just words, but to learn through the meaning and context behind the vocabulary.”

Kee, a graduate of NAU with a master’s degree in Navajo literacy, taught for many years at Northern Arizona University in Flagstaff. During a sabbatical in his native Steamboat, Ariz., he pursued “non-academic” research, observing ceremonies, attending chapter meetings and social functions and even herding sheep. He also developed his new approach to teaching Navajo.

Kee grew up in a traditional home, where Navajo was his first language. He picked up English at school at around eight or nine. By the time he got to college he knew he wanted to become literate in Navajo — an endeavor that took four and a half years.

Kee traces the history of Navajo literacy from the 19th century, when linguists traversed Dinétah, listening to the language, writing it down, and eventually standardizing an alphabet.

The introduction of the boarding school system, in which students were forbidden to use Navajo so that they might be more easily assimilated into the dominant culture, slowed down the push for literacy, as did the coming of World War II — when the language was used by the military to transmit secret tactical messages via Navajo Code Talkers in the Pacific Theater.

“The language became classified,” Kee said. “The government wanted care taken about how the language was taught, and to whom it was taught. We had to accommodate these circumstances, although Navajo remained strong inside the home.”

It would be at least 20 years after the war before the government relaxed its strictures against teaching Navajo; but when it did, the effort to spread Navajo literacy began to gather momentum again.

Students in Kee’s classes — which include Navajo 101 and 102, and the literacy course, Navajo 105 — are learning not only how to speak, read and write Navajo, but also learn the stories of the people. Currently, most of those taking the classes have done some work in Navajo; in the future, Kee hopes to design classes to reach out to beginners and non-Navajos.

The instructor is greatly impressed with the reasons his Navajo students want to learn their native language.

“Navajo students want to communicate with their great-grandparents before it’s too late, to show appreciation to their elders,” he says.

Kee sees great potential for UNM-Gallup to grow its Navajo language and studies program.

“I am really excited to be here at UNM-Gallup, in a town I visited as a child,” says Kee, who was born into the Black Streak Wood People Clan for the Mexican People Clan. “I hope to build a program where students will come to Gallup to take the language.”

John Easton: SBDC’s Success Client of the Year

John Easton doesn’t believe in giving up. It’s that attitude that helped his Lewis and Clark Expeditions pilot escort service earn recognition as SBDC’s 2008 Success Client of the year.

Easton, who was disabled for 15 years with multiple injuries and a hearing loss incurred during the Vietnam War, has overcome numerous challenges on the road to establishing a business. Once his injuries healed so he could work, he found he couldn’t afford a hearing aid. Turning to the New Mexico Department of Vocational Rehabilitation, he eventually obtained one and was subsequently able to hear well enough to look for work. He found a job assisting truck pilot/escort drivers. The work suited him and he went on to earn certification in that field. Realizing he’d like to have his own business, he applied to DVR for start-up financing. With the assistance of the SBDC he completed the required business plan that convinced DVR his proposed business was viable. His plan was approved along with funding for a van, equipment and supplies.

Easton has been in business for over a year and growth has increased steadily. He is now looking to purchase another vehicle and hiring another driver to meet the growing demand.

“After all my medical setbacks, it sure feels good to be independent again,” Easton says, adding “I am very grateful for the SBDC’s on-going assistance, caring support, and helping me not only become independent again, but actually owning my own business.”

AROUND THE CAMPUS

UNM-Gallup Professor of Mathematics Florentin Smarandache last year published nine books in the U.S. and China with several co-authors: n-Linear Algebra of Type I and Its Applications, n-Linear Algebra of Type II, Special Classes of Set Codes and Their Applications, Set Linear Algebra and Set Fuzzy Linear Algebra, Super Linear Algebra, Methods in Industrial Biotechnology for Chemical Engineers, Cultural Advantage for Cities. An Alternative for Developing Countries, Cultural Advantages in China: Tale of Six Cities, and Chinese Neutrosophy and Taoist Natural Philosophy (translated from Chinese).
ed by the reservation,” said Balok. It’s a familiar story: too many abandoned dogs and cats, and too little spaying and neutering, despite the availability of low-cost and no-cost veterinary services in the area.

The Humane Society, founded about 20 years ago, is housed in the Animal Control Building on Hwy. 491. Volunteer veterinarians such as Clinton Balok, retired from Cedar Animal Medical Center, and others spay and neuter, give shots, and treat a variety of health problems that trouble neglected animals, such as mange, ringworm and viruses. Volunteers also care for the animals — walking the dogs, cleaning the cages, and feeding and watering.

The Humane Society holds the animals for two weeks in an attempt to find homes for them, rather than allow them to be euthanized. Operating expenses come through various grants and the annual Bow-Wow/Meow fund-raiser. There isn’t a lot left over for the improvements that Balok hopes would make the animals more comfortable during their stay.

The new partnership between the Humane Society and UNM-Gallup’s Construction Tech program may well be a way to make those extras possible. It is the brainchild of Interim Executive Director Barry Cooney, an animal lover who, upon learning about the overpopulation problem on the reservation, looked for a way to get the campus involved by creating a student project. Cooney hopes to donate the students’ labor so that not only will the animals be helped, but the students will get valuable hands-on experience. In turn, he’s hoping the local community will support the college’s efforts by donating materials.

“This project, which allows our Construction Technology students to lend a hand in helping much-needed specialized areas within the Humane Society building, is a real win-win for both the Gallup community and UNM-G’s students,” Cooney said.

On the day the students visited the facility, Balok gave the class a laundry list of projects she would like to have help with. Chief among them is a prep room for surgeries, separate from the surgery room and separate from the Humane Society animals. Krouth and the students have already started work on the surgery room, which they will assemble in a module at the campus and install in the vast steel building located on Hwy. 491.

“We’re looking at how we can do anything and everything they want,” Krouth said. “Besides the surgery prep area, we’re looking at building cabinetry, creating a cat containment area, extending some dog runs, even tightening up the windows and doors for better energy efficiency.”

Krouth described the students in his class as “very excited” about the project, and ready to get down to work — once a source for the materials is identified.

To that end, the college will be making appeals to merchants, individuals and organizations for help underwriting the project. Cooney hopes the effort will be an ongoing one — as is the Construction Tech Department’s association with Habitat for Humanity.

“I urge all animal lovers to support this incredibly worthwhile project,” Cooney said.

**HVAC Rehab Will Require Temporary Moves**

UNM-Gallup will embark on a major heating, ventilation and air-conditioning project in old Calvin Hall this summer that will require the temporary relocation of several departments, classes and faculty members. The work will begin shortly after graduation, scheduled for May 14.

Affected areas will be the Dean’s office, the Middle College High School, the Education Department, Room 152 training lab, the Bachelor and Graduate Programs offices, the Campus Police, the Center for Career Technology Education, some faculty offices and some classrooms. Cost of the project will be funded by $950,000 awarded in G.O. Bond funds last fall, and by $400,000 from the college’s BR&R fund.