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MEETING NOTICE:

The Advisory Council on Workers' Compensation and Occupational Disease Disablement will meet at 2 p.m., Thursday, August 4, 2022, at 2410 Centre SE, Albuquerque, NM 87106 See <https://workerscomp.nm.gov/Advisory-Council> for more information..

Anita Mayberry, Friend and Colleague

Anita Mayberry, New Mexico Workers' Compensation Administration (WCA) receptionist and facilities clerk who was a friend first and a colleague second to none, passed away on July 19, 2022. Anita was the first to greet you at the door, answer the phone and the first to offer help. She thrived in her centralized position, where she got to know agency staff as well as the vendors, workmen, attorneys and others who came to the WCA.

"What comes to mind is her generosity and thoughtfulness," Medical Cost Containment (MCC) Bureau Chief Jessica Sanchez said of her colleague. When the MCC moved to a new area, Anita gave them her small refrigerator,



Anita Mayberry

saying she no longer used it much. When Sanchez mentioned her daughter liked unicorns and sparkles, Anita brought in small bobble necklaces and a purse as gifts. If there

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Scholarship Funds Give Kids a Chance at Educational Opportunities

By Aileen O'Catherine

When a worker is permanently injured or killed on the job, the consequences are tragic, but if there are children in the home, it is especially hard. For the past 27 years, the Workers' Compensation Association of New Mexico (WCA of NM) has helped children affected in such circumstances by providing scholarship funds for higher education.

The association provides educational and networking opportunities for workers' compensation professionals in New Mexico. The association created the Toby Wright Memorial Scholarship in 1995 when then-president of WCA of NM Toby Wright was discussing with fellow member Brock Carter what should happen with the funds raised from the organization's inaugural golf tournament. Wright was a deputy director at the New Mexico Workers' Compensation Administration (NM WCA) at the time, and

Carter, a safety specialist who owns Safety Counselling, Inc. of Albuquerque. The two men agreed that the money should go toward helping kids whose parents were permanently disabled or killed on the job. That first golf tournament raised \$3,000, and to date, a total of \$1.287 million has been raised to help support higher education for the children of these workers.

In 2011, WCA of NM Foundation was formed as a 501(c)(3) to serve and support the scholarship fund. Brock Carter is the current scholarship chair and as a long-standing member of the WCA of NM, can attest to the difference it makes in peoples' lives.

"Without the community support of the foundation, these students would have never had an opportunity to reach their dreams," said Carter in an email. Carter notes some students have gone on to obtain masters and doctoral degrees.

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New Managers in Hobbs, Las Cruces and Las Vegas Field Offices

By Aileen O’Catherine

The WCA has new office managers in three of its six field offices. Two positions were filled through internal promotions, and one position was filled by a candidate from outside the agency.

Les Urioste started work as field office manager in Las Vegas on April 30 after having been the Las Vegas office ombudsman since September of 2020, assisting people in the northeastern region of the state with workers’ compensation questions and concerns.

Valerie Seidl became the Hobbs field office manager on May 14. She started as a business operations specialist in the field office’s prior Lovington location and had

been promoted to the position of ombudsman in October, 2017, assisting people in the southeastern region of the state with workers’ compensation.

“Both Valerie and Les took on additional responsibilities after their field office managers retired,” said Field Office Programs Manager Peggy Tafoya.

Agustin Diaz, Jr., began as the Las Cruces field office manager on June 11. Prior to his position at the WCA, Diaz had been Director of Student Affairs and Employee Relations at New Mexico State University.

“We are fortunate to have Agustin as a member of the field programs team,” Tafoya said.

The WCA’s six field offices are located throughout the state to provide workers and employers better access to services.



Valerie Seidl



Agustin Diaz

WCA Staffers Earn Mediator Training Certification from IAIABC

Several WCA staffers have earned certification on mediation through the International Association of Industrial Accident Boards and Commissions (IAIABC). WCA mediators

Sheila Hurley, Alex Ospino and Miriam Sutherland completed the training, in addition to Santa Fe Field Office Manager Charlene Cde Baca and Ombudsman bureau Chief Samuel Castillo. The multi-week virtual training on workers’ compensation mediation was taught by an experienced faculty and allowed students to practice skills with peers nationwide.

Mediation Bureau Chief Kenneth Owens participated as a trainer/coach in the program. The students “participated at such a high level that individually and as a group, they received high praise from workers’ compensation profession-



als from around the country,” Owens noted in an email. The training serves to deepen mediator understanding and will provide benefits to agency constituents for years to come.

The IAIABC is an association of workers’ compensation jurisdictional agencies from around the world.

NM Workers’ Comp. Adm. Quarterly Bulletin

Robert E. Doucette, Jr., Director
Diana Sandoval-Tapia, Public Information Officer
Aileen O’Catherine, Public Relations Specialist

The Bulletin is electronically published in January, April, July and October by the Public Information Office of the New Mexico Workers’ Compensation Administration. The Bulletin is available free of charge. Send changes of e-mail address and requests to receive the Bulletin to Diana Sandoval-Tapia in the Public Information Office, New Workers’ Compensation Administration, WCA-PIO@state.nm.us.

Suggestions for articles are welcome. Call Diana Sandoval-Tapia at (505) 841-6052.

Recent issues of the Quarterly Bulletin can be viewed on the Internet at <https://workerscomp.nm.gov/NMWCA-Publications>.

What is the Advisory Council?

The Advisory Council on Workers’ Compensation and Occupational Disease Disablement is a task force created by statute, comprised of six members, three representing workers and three representing employers. The primary role of the Council is to advise the governor and legislature on the status of the workers’ compensation system in New Mexico. The Advisory Council is required to meet at least twice annually. Scheduled meetings of the Council are announced on the WCA website, <https://www.workerscomp.nm.gov/Advisory-Council>.

Early Return-to-Work Initiative Update

By Marietta Valdez

Although the program is only a few years old, the WCA's Early Return-to-Work Initiative has created pathways into how New Mexico employers think about getting workers injured on the job back to work. WCA Medical Cost Containment Bureau Chief Jessica Sanchez oversees the program.

"One of our main agency goals, educating on workers' compensation, has evolved as the Early Return-to-Work Initiative (RTW) has progressed," Sanchez said. "Our goal has always been to reach as many stakeholders, especially employers, as possible." In 2021, staff reached 2,140 through outreach at events and informational meetings, many virtually. In the first quarter of 2022, we reached 1,093. Trying to expand the program's reach during the COVID-19 pandemic proved problematic. We continued to provide presentations and attend meetings, but long virtual meetings are so out of touch with the personal connection you make by doing one-on-one outreach.

Instituting a proactive, community-minded approach has proven quite successful in reaching employers who had never before even considered returning injured workers back to the job.

Community outreach has always meant meeting your target audience where they are. In their busy schedules, they may not have time to meet with you to see the benefits of a program, with day-to-day operations overwhelming most employers. Small mom-and-pop businesses typically do not have staff

that know about or even run these programs. Their time can't be wasted in yet another virtual meeting, and after virtual back-to-back meetings, at some point many people start zoning out.

Let's face it, when conducting outreach, you are a salesperson, and the product or service you're selling must have value. At a recent job fair, a natural conversation started with an attendee I ran into in the hallway of the venue, and we were talking about germs on door handles. Then, walking into the job fair I realized she was at the booth next to our table. Their staff were enthusiastic about drawing and interviewing job seekers in their booth, and ecstatic when a candidate accepted the job offer. That exuberance made me excited for them, and soon I was cheering with them. When there was a lull in the interviews, the young lady I spoke with in passing in the hallway came over to my table and we were talking about all their new hires, and how short staffed her organization was.

I began speaking about our RTW services and how they are a benefit to the employer in maintaining and retaining workers who may be on leave while they recover from an injury. It just so happened that she was the new Human Resources Director of a large public employer that has almost 1,000 employees. She liked the idea of a RTW program and referred me to the new administrator they had overseeing their workers' compensation claims. I am excited to say this employer is currently working toward receiving a RTW Champion recognition.



Marietta Valdez talks with employers about the WCA RTW program

(The WCA recognizes employers every year who exemplify the best practices of our RTW initiative.) This major employer had never accommodated RTW in the past and would only allow RTW of an injured worker to full duty. Because of our outreach efforts, they are open to and working on implementing a RTW program.

Community outreach works! Even though COVID-19 impacted our efforts to actively attract employers, it was a slight hiccup. We are back to in-person outreach where we get to meet employers where they are to help them see the value of an active and robust RTW program. We have many avenues for networking, such as email, virtual meetings, LinkedIn, and scheduled visits, but nothing beats personalizing the employers' experience by finding out what their needs are, where they struggle and even celebrating some of their successes. In the interactive process of working one-on-one with the employer, I'm learning too.

Marietta Valdez is the WCA's Return-to-Work Program Specialist, and works out of the Las Cruces office.

NM WCA Job Openings

The NMWCA provides postings for job openings on its agency web page. Current postings include:
Safety Consultant (Albuquerque) (2)

Ombudsman (Albuquerque)
Ombudsman (Las Cruces)
Ombudsman (Las Vegas)
Compliance Officer (Las Vegas)
To learn more about these jobs,

visit <https://workerscomp.nm.gov/WCA-Jobs>.

Applications must be made through the New Mexico State Personnel Office at <https://careers.share.state.nm.us/>.

Alicia Ledger Joins Mediation Bureau

By Aileen O’Catherine

It is said that a wise man will make more opportunities than he finds, which is certainly true in the case of new WCA mediator attorney Alicia Leger. Growing up in Las Vegas, N.M. close to the U.S. campus location for United World Colleges (UWC) in Montezuma, Leger applied for a scholarship to attend the international college and was accepted for her high school senior year. Because the college’s international baccalaureate requires two years of studies, Leger saw the extra year of schooling as an opportunity and chose to study at a UWC campus outside the U.S. so she could see the world. Assigned to study in Singapore, she made the most of those two years in southeast Asia, visiting places such as India, Malaysia and Vietnam.

Upon returning to the states, she spent over a year at Clark University in Massachusetts before realizing she missed New Mexico’s excellent weather and sunny skies and decided to return home. Leger graduated from the University of New Mexico in 2014 with

a degree in business, and continued her studies at UNM Law School, earning her law degree in 2018. Law school allowed her to follow in the footsteps of her father, who practiced in Las Vegas for about 30 years. Her aunt is Theresa Leger Fernandez, current congresswoman for New Mexico’s 3rd congressional district, and her grandfather Ray Leger was a New Mexico state senator for the 8th district in the 1970s. Her grandmother Mela Leger was an educational pioneer who spearheaded bilingual education in New Mexico and the nation. Leger hopes to follow in her family’s footsteps. “It’s about being proud of where you come from and representing your communities and helping those who are less fortunate,” she said.

Having clerked at Valdez & White Law Firm while a law student, Leger continued to work there after graduation, focusing on the areas of guardian ad litem duties, employment discrimination and civil rights. While she found litigation interesting, she looked for



Alicia Leger

ways to explore areas of interest in the law, such as research and work behind the scenes. Mediation seemed a good fit. “I look forward to this position allowing me to learn more about New Mexico’s communities by providing assistance and guidance to those in difficult situations,” she said of her work at the agency.

Passion for her home state and its diverse cultures is evident in the travel she does to discover the best spots for camping, hiking, fishing and skiing. Explorations take place with her husband and their two dogs, Biggie Smalls and Stevie (named after rap lyricist The Notorious B.I.G., and Fleetwood Mac singer Stevie Nicks).

Employee of the Quarter Award

The WCA Employee of the Quarter for the second quarter of 2022 is Human Resources Specialist Pauline Gurule-Sers.

Gurule-Sers worked as a human resource specialist at the WCA from June 2015 until November 2017 and returned to the agency on October 16, 2021. Her nominator noted she was able to immediately work on payroll and recruitment and field any questions or concerns from the start. Since her return to the WCA, she has processed over 41

recruitments, and despite the complex process, has moved applicants through screening and hiring as well as closing the posting.

“She consistently turns recruitments around to the hiring manager within one to two days of their closings,” said her nominator. The WCA is very fortunate to have Pauline back!”

“I am very grateful to the WCA for recognizing my efforts, and I am happy to serve agency employees to the best of my ability at all times,” said Gurule-



Pauline Gurule-Sers

Sers. She has been a state employee since August, 2004.

Anita Mayberry (cont'd.)

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were a birthday or if someone passed away, she made sure there was a card. Once she organized a get-together for the cleaning lady Maria so she wouldn't feel left out of agency potlucks. "She had a heart of gold," said Employer Compliance officer Kellee Gaddis. "She would leave little gifts for people and never wrote her name on them."

Anita loved nature, spending her breaks in the building's back seating area with her friend Legal Secretary Liz Zon, watching the birds, lizards, and while they were still resident, the feral cats who called the agency home. They watched the change of seasons, from spring blossoms to falling acorns from the oak. "Anita had such a love of animals," Self-Insurance auditor Lisa Romero said. "She would tell stories of her dogs which she loved so much, and how wonderful it was to go home to them."

While at the agency, Anita carried the hardship of watching her mother fail from illness, and cared for her until her death. She then dealt with her own serious illness with no complaints, choosing instead to deliver the morning mail with a hello for everyone as she passed by. Her joy was in her two boys,

her grandchildren, and the looked-forward-to times when she would get to see them. "The loss of her mother was hard, but she kept saying her sons were her rock," Romero said. "She just shined when she spoke of them." Romero remembers that Anita also loved sharing stories of her lifelong friends who inspired her during her own hard times.

Although retired from the WCA, Victor Martinez, former agency IT support specialist, remembered Anita as a helpful and kind coworker who he could call on for assistance, whether it was passing along messages or tracking someone down in the building. After he retired from the WCA, Anita contacted Martinez' wife through Facebook to tell her that he was missed at the agency. "I was very touched by that gesture," Martinez said. "She has left behind much that can't be replaced. Her life made an impact and many memories."

Romero recalls that although Anita loved daisies, she reminded her of a sunflower, bright and sunny. "Like a sunflower always pointed to the sun, she would face a positive direction, with a smile and her light," Romero said.

The WCA has lost several colleagues

Anita

*Tender oversized hugs made of never-ending love.
A broad smile brought belly laughs time and time again.
Aching cheeks from a dose of over indulged happiness.
Always larger than life.
Deep set wrinkles from a lifetime of worry.
Never stopping to rest.
Fussing here pampering there.
Your selflessness and determination to enjoy life knew no bounds.
No longer disabled and heaven rejoices at the return of an angel.
Reunited with long lost relatives.
We feel your love Anita
We always have.
We always will.
Till we meet again....*

- Trisha Platt



Photo by Doreen Hamlin

in the past few years. Employer compliance officer Lance Linhares died in July, 2021, just a few months after employer compliance officer Phil Hayes died in October of 2020.

Toby Wright Scholarship (cont'd.)

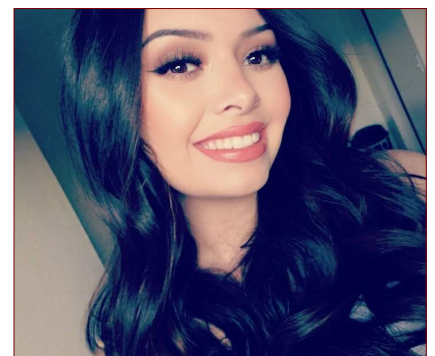
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Scholarship recipient Mariah Gonzales from Pena Blanca, N.M., graduated from Bernalillo High School in 2017 and immediately joined the Army. She was in the Army National Guard for a year until she sustained an injury and underwent a discharge. Because she was not enlisted long enough to qualify for educational benefits, she enrolled at Santa Fe Community College to earn a degree in Medical Assisting, using Kids' Chance scholarship funds. Kids' Chance of America, Inc. was formally incorporated in 2007, and helps states create their own program.

"This scholarship has helped me greatly with school expenses and personal expenses that get me through school," Gonzales, whose father died from a workplace accident, said. "I am forever grateful to be receiving this scholarship and grateful to those who donate."

The scholarship committee is always hoping to identify potential students who can benefit from the funds. Further information, donations to the fund or applications for potential students can be found at

www.wcaofnm.com/wca-foundation.



Scholarship recipient Mariah Gonzales

The next golf tournament to benefit the scholarship takes place September 15, 2022, at the Sandia Casino and Resort, with two opportunities to launch a team, in the morning or afternoon.

Manager of the Quarter Award

Trey Flynt has been named the WCA Manager of the Quarter for the second quarter of 2022. Flynt oversees the Employer Compliance Bureau, which has six compliance officers in the Albuquerque office, and six officers in field offices around the state.

“Trey Flynt is a dedicated WCA employee and manager who without hesitation goes the extra distance in

his role as bureau chief,” wrote his nominator. “He is always willing to take a telephone call regarding WCA matters and will unselfishly give of himself professionally to further the WCA’s interests.”

Flynt has been bureau chief since April of 2016, and had previously served as a compliance officer in the bureau for about a year and a half.

“I’m just very fortunate to work



Trey Flynt

with such a great group that truly makes my job a pleasure,” Flynt said upon learning of the award.

Director and Deputy Director Present at Conferences

While WCA outreach services often involve meeting employers and workers to inform them about workers’ compensation topics, the agency’s senior staff sometime conduct outreach at nationwide conferences.

Director Robert E. Doucette, Jr., just returned from the Southern Association of Workers’ Compensation Administrators’ (SAWCA) annual conference, which was held July 11-15 in Manalpan, Fla., where he addressed an audience of about 180, sharing pandemic lessons learned at the WCA for adjudication.

Deputy Director of Support Services Leigh Martinez spoke at a regulators roundtable panel at the 2022 Colorado Workers’ Compensation Educational Conference that took place March 21-23 in Colorado Springs, CO, providing insights into the New Mexico workers’ compensation system. The Colorado Division of Workers’ Compensation conference is a bi-annual event and provides learning opportunities and insights to professionals in the industry. The conference is part of SAWCA.



HOLIDAY CLOSURE

The Workers’ Compensation offices in Albuquerque and all its field offices will be closed on the following upcoming holidays:

Labor Day, Monday, September 5
Indigenous Peoples’ Day, Monday, October 10

New Mexico Workers’ Compensation Administration Offices:

MAIN OFFICE

Location & Main Mail Address:

2410 Centre Ave. SE
Albuquerque, NM 87106-4190

Alternate Mailing Address:

PO Box 27198
Albuquerque, NM 87125-7198

Phone Numbers:

Phone: (505) 841-6000
In state toll-free phone:
1-800-255-7965
Fax Clerk of the Court:
(505) 841-6060
Director’s Fax: (505) 841-6009

Regional Offices

Farmington:

2700 Farmington Ave., Bldg. E, Ste.2
Farmington, NM 87401
Phone: (505) 599-9746
In state toll-free phone:
1-800-568-7310
Fax: (505) 599-9753

Hobbs:

James M. Murray Building
2120 North Alto, Unit 3
Hobbs, NM 88240
Phone: (575) 397-3425
In state toll-free phone:
1-800-934-2450

Las Cruces:

2407 W. Picacho, Ste. D
Las Cruces, NM 88007
Phone: (575) 524-6246
In state toll-free phone:
1-800-870-6826
Fax: (575) 524-6249

Las Vegas:

32 NM 65
Las Vegas, NM 87701
Phone: (505) 454-9251
In state toll-free phone:
1-800-281-7889
Fax: (505) 454-9248

Roswell:

Penn Plaza Building
400 N. Pennsylvania Ave., Ste. 425
Roswell, NM 88201
Phone: (575) 623-3781
In state toll-free phone:
1-866-311-8587
Fax: (575) 623-0078

Santa Fe:

Aspen Plaza
1596 Pacheco, St. #202
Santa Fe, NM 87505
Phone: (505) 476-7381
Fax: (505) 476-7390

WCA Helpline-Hotline: (toll free in New Mexico)

1-866-WORKOMP 1-866-967-5667

WCA Website:

<https://workerscomp.nm.gov>