



RAM COUNTRY NEWS

CUBA INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT

MARCH 2021

Denyale Sandoval accepted to “dream school” Gonzaga University

March 15, 2021

CUBA, N.M. — Denyale Sandoval was recently notified of her acceptance to her “dream school” Gonzaga University and she has been excited ever since. If that wasn’t enough excitement, she was also notified of her acceptance to the University of Connecticut as well.

Sandoval, a 17-year-old senior at Cuba High School is a Navajo tribal member from Ojo Encino. By fall, she may just have a new address in Spokane, Washington, if she accepts the Gonzaga offer or her second choice at the University of Connecticut.

She said she was notified about the Gonzaga acceptance about a month ago and she was super excited because it was one of her reach schools, which simply means it is one of the most selective schools to get into with extremely low acceptance rates.

“When I [received] the email and looked at my portal, I was nervous and once I opened my portal and seen that I was accepted — I was so happy,” she said.

“Gonzaga has a good business school, so I want to major in market-

ing or accounting and Gonzaga has a good business school,” she said.

Sandoval’s acceptance to the University of Connecticut, popularly known as UConn, was mainly drawn by her interest in their basketball program. But after some research, she realized they also had a very good business

school and that really opened her eyes to the school.

Sandoval said she has a lot to ponder from now until she has to decide where to go and she hasn’t really narrowed down her focus just yet but will very soon. At this point, she only knows she wants to major in business.

She said she feels like this entire process of concluding high school and moving off to college is going quickly. She said she

is excited but a little worried and sad at the same time.

“It’s hard because the more I get to going... [out of high school] and onto [college], the more I realize I won’t be a kid anymore. So, it really [has] opened my eyes to growing up,” she said.

Sandoval said she has three younger siblings ages 7, 11 and 12. She feels a strong obligation to be a role model



“ Anyone and everyone can do what they want, they just need to be focused on achieving their dreams. ”

— Denyale Sandoval



Denyale Sandoval, senior at Cuba High School

for them.

“Ever since I was young, my dad really pushed me with school,” she said.

With her father’s encouragement, she did her best and got good grades. Little did she know, her siblings were watching and observing, which helps because they aspire to do just as well in school today.

“Anyone and everyone can do what they want, they just need to be focused on achieving their dreams,” she said.



FIND US ONLINE



@cuba.schools



@cubaisd



www.cuba.k12.nm.us

IN THIS ISSUE



Jake wins Best of Show... Page 4



Daniel L. Delgado Remembered... Page 5



Cuba FFA virtual competitions... Page 9



Motivational Mondays encouraging students

March 14, 2021

CUBA, N.M. — If you're seeking some motivation, check out one of the upcoming Motivational Monday speaker series where speakers talk about overcoming struggles and reaching success.

The speaker series was developed last year by Victoria Dominguez, the community school director and coordinator of Cuba CARES. Dominguez started Motivational Mondays before the COVID-19 pandemic restricted many in-person interactions and large gatherings. Luckily, they were able to have one successful in-person session last year right before everything was shut down.

The speaker series took a brief pause during the school shut down but was swiftly brought back out of necessity. Dominguez explained while on some of her home visits to check on students, she found many students appeared unmotivated and some unhappy. She usually makes her rounds to conduct home visits to check on students, to ensure they have food, clothing and personal hygiene products. If they are in need, she does what she can to help them so they can focus their attention on school.

Dominguez realized the students desperately needed some kind of motivation beyond the encouragement she often provides to them. She regularly tells students, "I believe in you, I know you can do it!"

She said she probably sounded like a broken record at this point? She knew she had to act quickly to come up with a plan to help the students who were exhausted and disconnected because of remote learning and some struggling to find their way through the unknowns of the pandemic.

"They weren't excited about what the future held," she said. "I think COVID has been very stressful on a lot of students and a lot of families? They're just trying to survive this period."

She devised a plan to bring motivational speakers to them despite the limitations of public gatherings and social distancing. She wanted speakers to echo the consistent message, "It doesn't matter where you're from, you can do it!"

With this in mind, Dominguez solicited speaker recommendations from staff and teachers. With this feedback, she devised a list of 12 speakers and so for 12 weeks, she has a speaker via Zoom. Her speakers range from a former college track coach to world-renowned author Christian Moore and tons of Cuba alumni.

"The goal is to have students see

them and be able to see themselves and think, 'Oh my gosh! He went to Cuba... she went to Cuba and went out and did this really cool thing? That means that maybe I can do it too?'" said Dominguez. "It was [designed] to show the kids that they can do it, it doesn't matter where you're from, it doesn't matter what the circumstances are, if you're willing to work hard and you have a dream, put a plan together and make that dream come true."

"[Our students need to realize] they can go out there and be successful, and understand success is very different for a lot of different people," she said. "There's so many different fields [and career paths] to make your life better."

One of the last Motivational Monday speakers will be Def-i, who is a rapper from Santo Domingo Pueblo, and he will close out the speaker series at the end of the school year. Between now and then, Dominguez said she has a bunch of alumni speakers scheduled. Many of the Cuba High School alumni are successful people and range from a lawyer, an architect, a mechanical engineer and many other fields of work.

"It's really just a way to motivate the kids," she explained. "I want them to know that they can do it and there's so much great potential here that we want to see it carried out."

Dominguez said the speaker series has been a big success and she's super pumped about it all. She said they've been having close to a hundred participants online and they do a live recording of the Zoom session and then convert it to a YouTube video that is posted on the Cuba CARES website. The videos are then archived there for viewing if someone missed a session.

The remaining schedule for Motivational Monday includes the following: Dr. Danny Jacques, educator and space entrepreneur March 29; Anselmo Gallegos, engineer for General Motors Corp. and Cuba alumni April 6; Randy Chavez, lawyer and Cuba alumni April 12; Dr. Leola Tsinnajinnie Paquin, UNM professor who grew up in Torreon April 19; Daniel Barboa, architect and Cuba alumni April 27; Tim Ramirez, mechanical engineer and Cuba alumni May 3; Alisha Jordan, senior director of accounting and Cuba alumni May 15; and Def-i, motivational speaker and rapper from Santo Domingo Pueblo May 17. 🐏

Cuba Cares Presents

MOTIVATIONAL MONDAYS

The road of life is always filled with possibilities and opportunities, but what path you take is up to you. Please join us on the following dates below at 1:30p.m. All students, parents, and community members are welcome to attend.

Join Zoom Meeting
Meeting ID: 993 1219 0260
Passcode: 764429

GUEST SPEAKERS

- FEBRUARY 22- CHRISTIAN MOORE (WORLDLY KNOWN MOTIVATIONAL SPEAKER)
- MARCH 1- BOB DEVRIES (NMHU HEAD TRACK AND FIELD/ CROSS COUNTRY COACH)
- MARCH 8- JENNIFER RAMO (EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR NM APPLESEED)
- MARCH 15- ANITA WATSON (RN, CUBA HIGH ALUMNI)
- MARCH 29- DR. DANNY JACQUES (EDUCATOR AND SPACE ENTREPRENEUR)
- APRIL 6- ANSELMO GALLEGOS (ENGINEER FOR GM, CUBA HIGH ALUMNI)
- APRIL 12- RANDY CHAVEZ (LAWYER, CUBA HIGH ALUMNI)
- APRIL 19- DR. LEOLA TSINNAJINNIE PAQUIN (UNM PROFESSOR, GREW UP IN TORREON)
- APRIL 27- DANIEL BARBOA (ARCHITECT, CUBA HIGH ALUMNI)
- MAY 3- TIM RAMIREZ (MECHANICAL ENGINEER, CUBA HIGH ALUMNI)
- MAY 10- ALISHA JORDAN (SENIOR DIRECTOR OF ACCOUNTING, CUBA HIGH ALUMNI)
- MAY 17- DEF-I (MOTIVATIONAL SPEAKER/ RAPPER, SANTO DOMINGO PUEBLO)



CUBA MOTIVATIONAL MONDAYS

MARCH 9 • MARCH 30 • APRIL 20 • MAY 4

We Celebrate Our Students, Our Alumni, and Our Diverse Cultures

MARCH 9

ELEMENTARY SCHOOL PRESENTATIONS

- ★ KRAV KIDS (STRANGER DANGER)
- ★ CUBA Fire Department
- ★ CUBA EMS
- ★ Coyote Forest Service
- ★ Sheriff's Office
- ★ CUBA Police Department
- ★ NM State Police

MIDDLE SCHOOL PRESENTATIONS

- ★ Mike Kilroy
Landscape Architect/Planner
- ★ Jose "Loles" Garcia
Convention Center General Manager
- ★ William "Jimmy" Eaton
Range Staff - SF National Forest - Cuba Range Dist.
- ★ Jerusha Ignacio
Ojo Pre-K Master Level Teacher

HIGH SCHOOL PRESENTATIONS

- ★ Samantha Ramirez
Chemical Engineer
- ★ Valerie Antone
Teacher at Feeder School, ELA
- ★ Zach Chavez
PED Director of Community Outreach
- ★ Camille Velarde
Communication Instructor

MARCH 30

DISTRICT WIDE PRESENTATIONS

- ★ Correy Herrera
DARE Comedian
- ★ Kee Etsitty
Navajo Story Telling
- ★ James and Ernie
Navajo Comedians

APRIL 20

DISTRICT WIDE PRESENTATIONS

- ★ Pow Wow
- ★ Baila Baila
- ★ DEF-I
Rapper

MAY 4

DISTRICT WIDE STUDENT PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

- ★ Lyla June
Guest Speaker
- ★ Music DJ
Local Talent
- ★ Local Businesses
- ★ Colleges
- ★ Military Branches
- ★ Trade Reps
- ★ NM Attorney General's Office
- ★ Mission Graduate
- ★ Mock Interviews

Returning to in-person school, students Herrera and Cordova are glad to be back in the classroom

March 15, 2021

CUBA, N.M. — Cuba Independent School District is gradually transitioning back to in-person learning but is also allowing some students the opportunity to continue with remote learning.

Victoria Dominguez, the community school director and coordinator of Cuba CARES, said Cuba Schools has some students that opted to return to in-person and on-site learning a few weeks ago with parent request and permission.

Dominguez said the school district is still in remote learning for the time being but it is optional to send students back to in-person which is offered on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays. Parents also have the option to keep their students in 100% remote learning as well.

The move to in-person learning has some parents relieved.

Shelrene Beliditto, mother to third grader Jacob Herrera, is happy the school is offering students the option to return to on-site learning.

“I love it!” she said.

She explained her son Jacob has been struggling with remote learning, and she feels like he learns more and better in the classroom with a physical teacher present opposed to being at home learning.

Beliditto said remote learning worked good for a while but she often had other things to do like chores and other household duties, so she couldn’t devote enough time to sufficiently monitor his school time. She also had difficulty helping him understand some concepts or in explaining assignments to him when needed.

Although they had enough internet access, she said the jetpack would not work sometimes, especially during the winter months but said it’s working fine now.

Herrera, 10, is in Mr. Nuguit’s class and he said he liked remote learning because he got to see his teacher and friends daily via video conferencing.

Although he liked remote learning, he likes being in-person and on-site much better.

“I get to learn more,” he said.

Herrera said he is excited to see his friends in-person at school and he really likes his teacher. His favorite subject is math.



Stock photos of students back in the classrooms

Justin Cordova, 11, is also happy to be back at school for in-person learning. The fifth grader said he did not like remote learning because of the constant distractions at home.

“I really didn’t like it because my teacher was not there in-person to help me,” he said. “It’s much better when there is a teacher around to help us and there is less distractions.”

With in-person school, Cordova gets to see his friends and he seeks help directly from his math teacher, Mr. Ortega, and his reading teacher, Ms. Herrera.

Cordova said his favorite subject is math. He enjoys playing basketball but his time to do so is limited because of social distancing requirements. He said he can’t wait to return back to some level of normalcy so he can play basketball with his friends again. 🏀





Cuba High School freshman wins Best of Show at art contest

March 15, 2021

CUBA, N.M. — Aliyah Leah Jake, a freshman at Cuba High School, made her debut as an award-winning artist by winning Best of Show at the S.T.E.A.M. Art Contest sponsored by New Mexico Energy Manufacturing.

Jake, a 14-year-old Navajo tribal member from Tinian, New Mexico said she didn't think she would win but she did. Her intent was to join the art contest for fun and to let people know that she cares about green energy and about the earth.

"[I was] shocked because this is my first time winning something besides sports," she said.

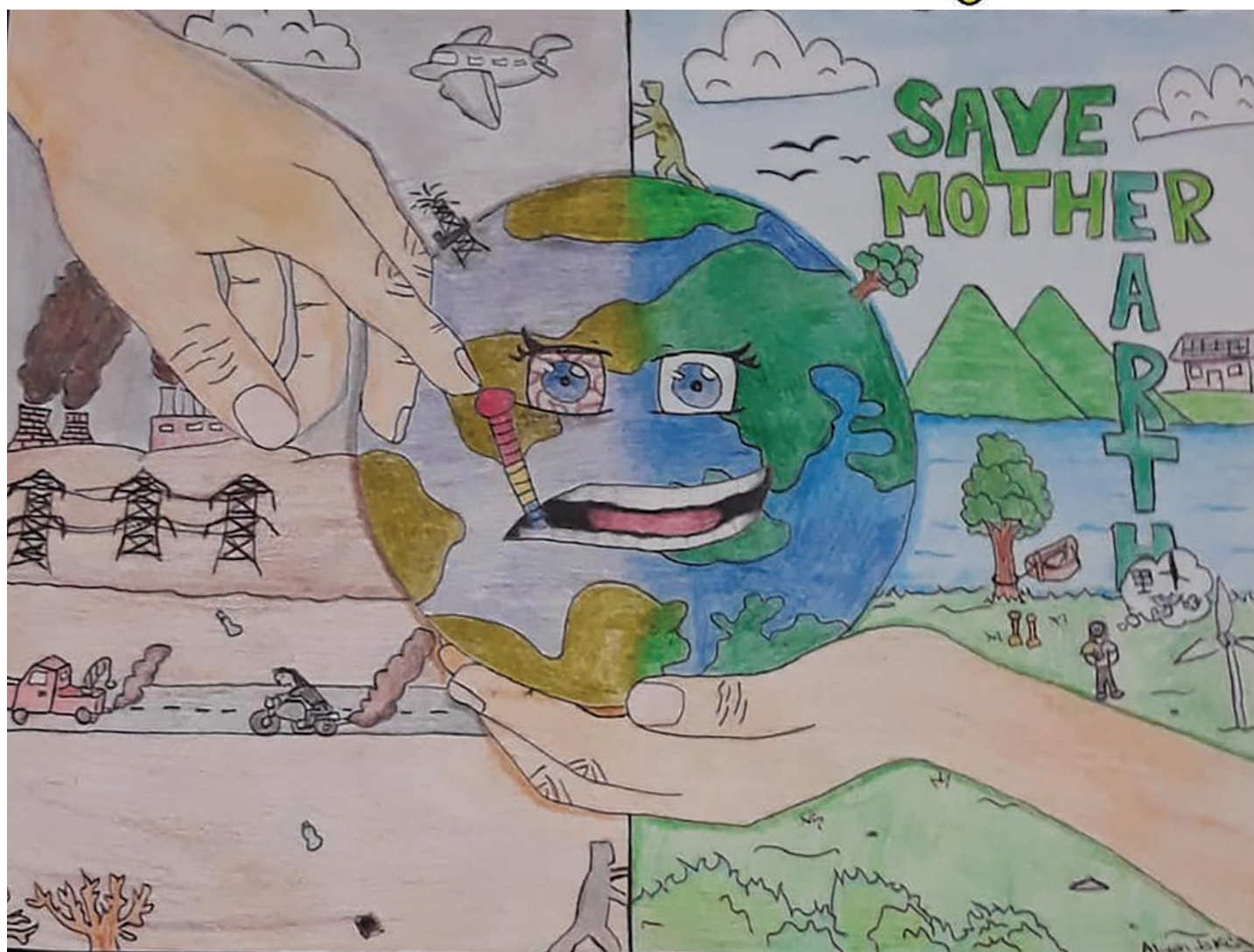
Her winning art entry depicted her hand holding up the world, one side of the earth is uncleaned and the other side is green energy and healthy. She said that image was her immediate thought when she started the art piece she made using colored pencils.

Renee Armentrout, art teacher, explained at the beginning of January, high school students participated in a base learning assignment and they had to write a minimum of a paragraph on how they envision a greener New Mexico. From there, they had the option to enter their artwork into the art contest along with their statement.

"We had amazing submissions," she said. "[High School] students also competed against college student entries as well."

"[Our students] shared their vision of a greener New Mexico, [they] included things like solar panels, any type of greener energy," she said. "[Some] did drawings of riding courses and bikes versus cars or if they did cars, they were electric cars or vehicles."

"It was a great, great projects for them to start visualizing what we can do in New Mexico to use less fossil fuels and less everything that would [create] a greener New Mexico," she added. "They're starting to see some of [these projects] on the reservation. I believe they started to put solar panels up and wind turbines are going in



Top: Image of the Best of Show artwork by Aliyah Leah Jake, a freshman at Cuba High School. Bottom: Some other artwork featured at the S.T.E.A.M. Art Contest, the artists are unknown.

next. We talked about careers in that as well, so it was a great project and the work they created was amazing."

Armentrout explained S.T.E.A.M. is the acronym for science, technology, engineering, art and math. She said there is a gradual transition to S.T.E.A.M from the commonly known STEM in many areas, STEM represents science, technology, engineering and math.

"You still see a lot of STEM but now they've added the art component," she said.

Armentrout said the art contest was all done virtually.

"The students had to email their artwork and their paragraph for submission and the contest was a YouTube video," she said.

Armentrout is proud of the student participants and she congratulates Jake for her strong showing at the art contest. 🐏



Longtime educator, business owner Daniel L. Delgado remembered

March 11, 2021

CUBA, N.M. — The community of Cuba recently lost Daniel L. Delgado, a dedicated educator and a champion of education who spent 27 years of his 40-year career in education working for Cuba Independent School District.

Delgado, better known as Danny, passed Feb. 4 at the UNM-Sandoval County Regional Hospital in Rio Rancho at the age of 73 following a brief illness.

According to the Communicator who printed his obituary Feb. 11, Danny was born Sept. 11, 1947, in Santa Rosa and he grew up in Borger, Texas, through the early 1950s. He attended St. Rose and Santa Rosa schools while working and helping to manage his family's Shamrock and Texaco service stations and their Skyline Drive-In Café along Route 66.

In 1965, he graduated from Santa Rosa High School where he was active in school and dance bands. From 1966 to 1969, he served as a U.S. Army helicopter crew chief in South Vietnam and later as an aviation instructor.

After the U.S. Army, he attended and graduated from New Mexico Highlands University where he obtained a B.A. and M.A. In 1972, he married Cecilia Flores and they were married for 49 years.

He led a 40-year career in the field of education at Cuba Independent School District, Jemez Mountain School District and Bureau of Indian Education schools. He served as football coach, a club sponsor, teacher, school counselor and a school administrator.

Diane Martinez, Danny's daughter, fondly remembers going to his classroom after school and patiently waiting for him to finish up his workday.

"He was just always a teacher, always a counselor, always wanting to help kids," she said.

Martinez said her father had a huge impact on all his children going into the field of education and the path they each took in their careers.

"Me and both of my brothers are in education," she said in referring to herself and her two brothers Daniel and Adan. "He is the reason I became a teacher."

Adan Delgado, the oldest of Danny's children, explained his father wore many hats.

"He also served as a club sponsor and activity sponsor often overseeing and assisting with mock trials and with the Close-Up Program where he often accompanied students to Washington, D.C.," said Adan. "As an administrator, he oversaw the Johnson O'Malley Program and ran the school dormitories back when Cuba Schools had dormitories."

Adan also said his father was his influence for entering the field of education as well and Adan served as school superintendent for Cuba Schools at one time. Adan's brother Daniel Delgado also works for Cuba Schools as a teacher.

"[My father] was a longtime fixture here in the educational community in the area, [he] was very devoted to the [school] district, [he] put his life into educating students and supporting students here in the Cuba area," Adan said.

Aside from being an educator, Danny and his wife also operated and managed a Shamrock service station and CC's Paisano Pizzeria. His obituary also states he was also a licensed Realtor, served as a state officer for the American Federation of Teachers NM, founded the Cuba Chamber of Commerce, served on the Sandoval County Planning and Zoning Committee and he was active in local, county and state politics.

Adan explained his father also served as a leader in economic devel-



Daniel L. Delgado, longtime educator at Cuba Schools passed Feb. 4, 2021.

opment for the area.

"He and my mother ran businesses here in Cuba—pretty much the whole time they lived here in Cuba," said Adan. "They've been really active in the community and have lots of friends and people who know them for working in the community as business owners."

Survivors include Danny's wife Cecilia F. Delgado, son Adan, daughter Diana Martinez, son Daniel and 10 grandchildren. 🐏

ADMINISTRATION

Dr. Karen Sanchez-Griego, Ed.D
Superintendent

Arsenio Jacquez
Principal, Cuba Middle School

Amy K. Romero
Principal, Cuba Elementary School

Dr. Donna Navarrete
Executive Director, Data & Accountability/Federal Programs

Dr. Matthew Williams, Ph.D
Director of High School Turn-Around

SCHOOL BOARD

Dianna Maestas
President
District 4

Vivian Keetso
Secretary
District 1

Taylor Pinto
Vice President
District 2

Elizabeth Martin
Member
District 3

James D. Casaus
Member
District 5

CONTACT

Cuba Independent School District
50 County Road 13 | P.O. Box 70
Cuba, N.M. 87013

(575) 289-3211 | Fax (575) 289-3314





Peter Nuguit is happy to be teaching at Cuba Schools

March 11, 2021

CUBA, N.M. — Peter Anthony Nuguit is one of the newest teachers at Cuba Elementary School teaching third graders and he has been in Cuba for a little over a month.

Nuguit comes to Cuba from Carlsbad, N.M. and he came to the U.S. from the Philippines in 2019. He has been working as a teacher and school principal for 13 years. He taught for 11 years in the Philippines, three years as a classroom teacher and three years as a specialist for school management, monitoring and evaluation, and five years as a school principal.

He also taught for two years in Carlsbad teaching Algebra 1 at Carlsbad High School and a little over a year as a fifth grade teacher at Desert Willow Elementary School.

He said he loves living in Cuba and referred to it as a “serene place.”

“It’s quiet here, I love the mountains and I feel at home here,” he said. “I [also] love the people here—they’re so accommodating.”

When Nuguit is not at work, he enjoys several hobbies and activities.

He said he likes to sing and dance, he likes to paint because it gives him a glimpse of the world from a different perspective, he loves to cook Filipino dishes and experiment other dishes as well, and he also considers himself to be a nature geek.

“I feel so happy when people like the foods I prepared,” he said.

There are no sandy beaches nearby but Nuguit said he enjoys being on the beach, especially in the summers, and that’s where he spent a lot of time when he was living in the Philippines.

“I would go to the beach every weekend,” he said. “I love staying on the beach during the day and during the night with the moon over [head]. I love the beach.”

He also enjoys most sports but he especially enjoys watching basketball. He also said he is a huge Superman fan.

He graduated high school from Loyola Academy in the Philippines and attended college through scholarships at Eastern Samar State University, also in the Philippines.

He has several accomplishments this school year that he is proud of, aside



Peter Anthony Nuguit, teacher at Cuba Elementary School

from being hired with Cuba Independent School District. He was recognized for being the Fifth-Grade Leader at Desert Willow Elementary School in Carlsbad, he was the PLC Facilitator at Desert Willow Elementary, he was

trained as a WestEd Facilitator, and he was recognized by ANet—Achievement Network—for the knowledge base brought to every meeting and professional development. 🐏



Rizalyn Fontanilla, teacher at Cuba Elementary School

Rizalyn Fontanilla is enjoying her time at Cuba Elementary School

March 10, 2021

CUBA, N.M. — Rizalyn Fontanilla has only been teaching at Cuba Elementary School since Jan. 4 and she is enjoying every moment.

Fontanilla is one of the newest teachers at Cuba Schools and she is teaching second graders. She recently moved from the Philippines to U.S. and she said she is excited to share her knowledge, expertise and culture with Cuba students.

She previously taught elementary school students in the Philippines for 12 years, mainly second, third and fifth grade students. In December, she said she also passed the principals test examination in the Philippines and it is an accomplishment she is proud of.

She said the Cuba Schools com-

munity has been so welcoming and supportive.

“I have been enjoying the environment in Cuba, especially the support of my principal and the other teachers in the whole [school] district,” she said. “[I am thankful] for the support they have given me.”

Fontanilla explained she is from the Province of La Union in the northern part of the Philippines, which is located in the Luzon area and in the town of Sudipen. She has three children, ages 10, 7 and 4 and she plans to bring them to Cuba soon.

Aside from loving her job, Fontanilla said she enjoys reading books and also doing research online studying different teaching strategies applicable in the U.S. 🐏

Video contest open to fifth to 12th grade students at Cuba Schools, thanks to NB3 Foundation's Active Schools campaign

March 13, 2021

CUBA, N.M. — Cuba Independent School District recently teamed up with the Notah Begay III Foundation, popularly known as NB3, to bring the Active Native Youth 2021 campaign to Cuba.

Raphaelita Phillips, the Native American Student Support Program and Indian Education director at Cuba Schools, explained she applied for and was awarded a \$2,000 grant from NB3 to organize an event that focuses on the core areas of physical activity, health nutrition, youth development and cultural connection.

The NB3 Foundation is a national award-winning Native-led nonprofit that leads the way to improve Native American children's health, they state their campaign is aimed at supporting schools in their efforts to promote the health and fitness of their students during the pandemic. They acknowledge the importance of health is at an all-time high and especially in communities of color.

The Foundation reported on their website Feb. 5 that they selected eight schools in New Mexico to join the Active Schools campaign. The grant recipients included: Cuba Independent School District, Native American Community Academy, Dream Diné Charter School, Dził Dít'ooí School of Empowerment Action and Perseverance (DEAP), Laguna Elementary School, Santa Fe Indian School, Mescalero Apache School and Vista Grande High School.

Jon Driskell, NB3 Foundation's chief operations officer, acknowledged in a statement on their website that this school year has been immensely challenging for schools, educators and

students everywhere.

"Educators have unique opportunities to promote healthy behaviors for their students which is why the Foundation will support schools across the state serving our Native students," said Driskell. "Providing this modest funding and training opportunity is one way we can enhance the work schools are doing to make positive impacts in their communities."

"The Active Schools campaign supports schools with a high enrollment of Native American students," the website states.

Phillips said when the NB3 Foundation contacted her about this opportunity, she immediately

knew it was something Cuba Schools could participate in.

"I knew this was an opportunity that could benefit our Native [American] students," she said. "It was a great opportunity to do something fun after being cooped up for almost a year and missing out on physical activity and being social at school."

Phillips wasted no time, she immediately wrote an action plan to allow students to submit videos of themselves being physically active, either dancing or working out, similar to content you see on the popular social media app Tik Tok. The video contest was designed to promote physical activity, self-esteem and confidence.

She explained students are free to incorporate friends, family and pets into their video submissions.

"The goal of this campaign is to allow students to have fun and not be shy," she said. "We've all had such a rough year so we all deserve a little outlet and I am hoping that this could provide that for our students."

Grant funding was used to purchase incentives for participating students



Top: NB3FIT coaches from the Notah Begay III (NB3) Foundation traveled to Little Wound School in Kyle, S.D. to help host a soccer camp for local youth in 2018. Bottom: NB3FIT Coach Demetrius Payne teaches a leadership activity to youth at Laguna Elementary School in Laguna, N.M. NB3FIT is NB3 Foundation's direct youth leadership and development program currently serving Native Americans and tribal communities primarily in New Mexico. (Photos courtesy of NB3)

who submit their videos. The contest is currently open to students from fifth to 12th grades at Cuba Schools. If more participants are needed, Phillips said they may open it up to lower grades later this month.

"The campaign is only open until April 9, so don't wait. Hurry and get those videos submitted," Phillips said.

Videos can be uploaded to Google

Classroom and Phillips said she is the only one watching the videos to ensure contest rules are followed. The Google Classroom link is <https://classroom.google.com/c/Mjc1MjU5M-TY3NDMz?cjc=7on3cv3>. 🐾



Clara's Trading Post, catering to Cuba and outlying Navajo communities for three generations

Cuba High School alumnus Jacob Johnson serving the community

March 15, 2021

CUBA, N.M. — For 45 years, Clara's Trading Post has been providing locals within the Cuba-area and outlying Navajo communities with staples of all kinds to sustain their way of life and to maintain their livestock.

Jacob Johnson, 28, a 2011 alumnus of Cuba High School, is the third generation Johnson that is helping to run the family business located 9 miles west of Cuba.

Trading posts are located throughout the southwest and are popular amongst older Navajos who frequent them for groceries, supplies, livestock feed and to just socialize with neighbors, family and friends. Today, most trading posts serve as quick stops for fuel or a snack for younger people because most trading posts are situated in remote areas catering to the rural communities.

Clara's Trading Post sits as a fixture in the community and serves as a main trading and commerce hub. Jacob explained the trading post still does some trading today, and they also buy wool and mohair, sell livestock feed, all types of grain, hay and protein tablets. They also provide some groceries and they used to sell fuel but not at the moment. The trading post also buys and sells traditional and contemporary Navajo jewelry year-round.

The trading post was founded by Jacob's paternal grandparents, Clara and Eugene Johnson. Eventually, Jacob's parents, Timothy and Charla Johnson, took over and ran the business. As time went on, Jacob said the next generation got involved and started helping to run the business like his brother Lee, and Jacob and his wife Mariah.

Navajos from the communities of Torreon, Ojo Encino and Pueblo Pintado are familiar with Clara's Trading Post. Jacob said they also get frequent regulars from communities like Galina, Coyote and some from the south like San Luis, San Isidro and Bernalillo.

Jacob acknowledges the importance of livestock and animals in Navajo culture. For this reason, they cater to the need for such supplies.

"We provide all types of items to feed livestock," he said. "We also buy and sell sheep and goats and all classes of livestock."

Jacob explained spring season is upon us and birthing season is approaching. The other big season approaching in a couple of months is the buying and selling of wool and mohair which is huge in this area.

Jacob said lambing usually occurs during the fall season when lambs are weaned off their moms and that's when trading occurs. At the moment, they are selling a lot of Uni milk and different milk supplements for the lambs and other babies. The trading post has plenty of milk formulas in stock for various species.

"If we don't have a grain or feed that someone wants, we'll try to get it for them," he said.

Jacob said 9 miles may not seem far from Cuba but that is far when you may not have transportation, so providing much-needed items closer to the rural communities is a huge benefit for customers. Aside from Clara's Trading Post, the next store is some miles down the road in Torreon.

Being a people person and knowing how to interact with your customers is valuable in this business and Jacob said he credits this to growing up in Cuba. Jacob is a product of Cuba Schools and because of this, he knows almost everyone in the community of Cuba and the outlying areas and this helps with customer traffic.

As an alumnus, he is also thankful for the investment of time, energy and effort of his teachers at Cuba Schools. He said they prepared him academically to function in his current occupation.

"There's many customers that I actually went to school with and had classes with," he said. "Some of our customers, I've known for a long time."

He also said many of their customers are employees of Cuba Schools and he appreciates them stopping by as well. Jacob enjoys working in his community and he said, "Cuba is home—it's the only place I've lived and I like where I am." 🐏



Cuba FFA Club participates in virtual competitions

March 11, 2021

CUBA, N.M. — The COVID-19 pandemic did not slow down FFA district and state competitions this school year but it was tweaked a bit to abide by Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) standards while still allowing FFA members to participate via the use of technology.

Mariah Johnson, FFA advisor who also teaches environmental science, introduction to agriculture and animal science at Cuba High School, explained Cuba's FFA Club fared well at this year's virtual competitions.

Johnson explained the state organization wanted to offer the contest for the students and to allow them the opportunity to still participate and compete as they would normally, and they did with the help of Zoom.

"We had a virtual public speaking competition and we had one student participate in that, her name is Adriana Casaus and she did extemporaneous speaking," said Johnson. "A topic [is pulled] that morning on the Zoom call and [Adriana] had 15 to 20 minutes to write a speech and present that speech to the judges."

Johnson said Casaus, a 16-year-old junior, won at the district level but she did not place at the state level but she did great overall and she is very proud of her accomplishments.

Casaus explained her speech was four to six minutes long. She said the competition was interesting because it was all done virtually through Zoom. She had to go to a Zoom breakout room to ensure competitors weren't using any unapproved devices and then she was sent to another breakout room with judges for review.

"[My] first topic was about climate change and the legislation that comes with it and how that's going to affect agriculture," said Casaus. "My topic for the state competition was how can agriculturalists use social media."

Casaus said she loves participating in her local FFA group and she has been participating in the group since she was a sophomore.

"I can hang out with friends and be around people that have the same interests as me," she said. "I get to meet



FFA Club members pose for a photo after their Chapter Officer Leadership Training in 2020 inside the Cuba High School gym in Cuba, N.M. Left to right: Reyna Duran, Lisette Sanchez, Eliyana Sanchez, CoyLynn Adams and Adrianna Casaus. (File Photo)

new people all over the state and it also opens a lot of opportunities in regards to colleges, scholarships [and] networking. I really like that and it's also right in our backyard, so we have the forestry competitions, we have our milk, cheese, all the competitions that we are hopefully going to get to do this year. It's all in our backyard, so it's really easy access for us."

Eliyana Sanchez, 16, is a junior at Cuba High School, she serves as the president of FFA at Cuba High School. She explained she did not place in the recent competitions but she enjoyed her participation in the category of career development workshops focused on improving job interview skills.

Sanchez said FFA helps its members with career interests and valuable skills.

"I have always wanted to be a veterinarian, so participating in FFA [gives] me an insight to what I would be doing," said Sanchez. "The competitions also help push me toward my goal, everything that I do within FFA helps with what I want to do."

Formerly known as Future Farmers of America, the FFA is now known as the National FFA Organization and it has evolved in recent

years to include more subjects and specialty areas beyond just agriculture and farming. Johnson explained FFA focuses its work in the field of agri-

culture in the community but is now encouraging students to embrace agriculture while also embracing processes beyond just animals and plants. One such focus is incorporating agribusiness.

"[The organization] really tried to upgrade, that way it includes all forms of agriculture," she said. "It [now] includes science areas and the business perspectives as well."

FFA at Cuba Schools is year-round and Johnson said they participate in various activities for different seasons just like sports. The Cuba Schools FFA group has 19 students.

The school year is not over yet, so that means more virtual competitions for FFA. Johnson said they will participate in the virtual judging competition soon and the state organization is considering a one-time state competition tentatively scheduled at the beginning of April.

"I'm always really proud of our students for getting out and trying something new," she said. "FFA has something to offer for everybody." 🐔

“I’m always really proud of our students for getting out and trying something new. FFA has something to offer for everybody.”

— Mariah Johnson



Cuba boys' finish third, girls finish fourth at Bosque Meet but have many "firsts"

March 14, 2021

CUBA, N.M. — The Cuba High School's Cross-Country teams recently competed in the Bosque School's Cross-Country Invitational meet in Albuquerque Feb. 7, the boys' team placed third and the girls' team placed fourth.

Despite the finishes, the Cuba teams had plenty to brag about. They were the first teams to travel in the brand-new Cuba Rams Bus, the first student-athletes out of Cuba to compete during this pandemic era, and the first to dawn the new track/cross-country uniforms.

Bruce Hatch, athletic director, said the cross-country teams had many firsts recently despite the final results of the Bosque Meet.

"It wasn't about how they finished, they did very well but that's not what it was about," he said.

Hatch explained it has been a year since the school shut down March 15, 2020.

"They're running a cross-country race almost a year later and it was just really cool and emotional for those kids to get out there and be able to compete, not only as individuals but as a team and represent their family, their community and Cuba Schools," Hatch said. "It was just good to see those kids get out there and run."



Cuba High School Cross-Country team were the first ones to use the brand-new Cuba Rams Bus Feb. 7 when they traveled to the Bosque School's Cross Country Invitational.

Hatch also said the course was longer than usual, a half mile longer to be exact. He said despite that, the kids just got out there, ran and took care of business.

As encouragement, Hatch explained the Cuba teams would have won both categories if they used the normal method of scoring. He said the scoring changed a bit this year because of the fewer schools competing at the meets, which is a direct result of schools adhering to social distancing requirements and the encouraging of fewer

people gathering in one place.

"Typically, in cross-country, you have seven runners and you score five, and under that scoring system we would have won both the boys' and girls' cross-country [divisions]," he said. "This year in an effort to limit things, you're only allowed to score your top three runners and that changes the dynamic of cross-country quite a bit."

"There's a huge difference between a team's first runner and fifth runner," he added. "Our coaches really empha-

size running as a pack, so our first, second, third, fourth and fifth runners all finish pretty close to one another which is good when you score the old way—team scoring wise."

In the boys' race, Cuba had seven runners place in the top 15. The final results were Sandia Prep with 8, Bosque with 19 and Cuba 20. In the girls' race, Cuba had seven runners place in the top 20. The girls' results were Sandia Prep with 15, Bosque 19, Menaul 23 and Cuba 34. 🐏

Cuba Schools receives new Ram Bus

March 14, 2021

CUBA, N.M. — The new pride and joy rolled onto the campus of Cuba Schools a month ago, the new 65-passenger Ram Bus was finally delivered and sits waiting to transport students safely on their trips and athletic events.

The new bus is a 2021 Blue Bird Special complete with all amenities including air conditioning, Wi-Fi, phone charging ports, reading lights and seat belts.

Diana Martinez, transportation director at Cuba Independent School District, explained it was time for a new activity bus since their old bus was more than 15 years old. The efforts to purchase a new bus started when Superintendent Dr. Karen Sanchez-Griego found out about the age of the previous activity bus and she got the ball rolling for the new purchase.

Martinez said the students and com-

munity helped select the overall design and graphics for the new activity bus. Three designs were created by Edgar San Juan, the school district's technology specialist, and they were presented to students and the community in a survey.

"It's a beautiful bus and it is here for all the students to use for field trips and athletic events," Martinez said.

Martinez explained the response to the new Ram Bus has been wonderful.

"Everything has been very positive, the kids love it, the community members love it, the staff loves it," she said.

Bruce Hatch, athletic director at Cuba Schools, said the high school cross-country team was the first ones to use the new Ram Bus a couple of weeks ago.

"I think it's very cool and it's very well-branded. You see it coming, you know that's the Cuba Rams Bus," he said. "The logo is huge and everything



looks really good. It gives the kids a sense of pride, it's one of those things where if you look good... you feel good... and if you feel good... you

play good."

Hatch said the bus gives students and the community pride. 🐏

Sports resume at Cuba Schools, three sports seasons crammed into a few months

March 14, 2021

CUBA, N.M. — If 2020 was not odd enough with the pandemic, remote learning and the postponement of high school sports, 2021 is working out to be just as strange with all sports seasons crammed into a few months leading to the end of the school year.

Recently, the New Mexico Activities Association (NMAA) announced high school sports can resume with limitations.

Bruce Hatch, athletic director at Cuba Schools, is not complaining but is instead excited for the student-athletes that patiently waited all year to compete in sports. Schools started official full practices with contact and scrimmages Feb. 22. Competitions for Cuba Schools started March 1.

“Every kid gets to play some fall [sports], winter [sports] and they get to play some spring [sports],” he said. “Essentially, we’re going from March 1 until June 16 trying to play a fall season, a winter season and a spring season, so they’re going to be on top of each other.”

Hatch explained Cuba High School participates in some sports but not all sports offered by the NMAA. In the

fall, they participate in football, volleyball and cross-country. In the winter, they participate in basketball only and in the spring, it’s only track-and-field.

Because of the abbreviated and shortened sports year, Cuba Schools started its fall sports season a few months later than usual and they are right in the midst of the fall season now.

“Our volleyball team has played three games, our football team has played one [game], they play again here on Saturday and our cross-country team is running two cross-country meets. So, we’re in full swing,” he said.

Come March 22, the winter sports season begins and Hatch said they are getting ready for basketball season right now. Just as winter season gets started, the spring sports practices begin April 5, exactly two weeks after the start of winter season.

Hatch said although school ends in May and graduation occurs, the spring sports season will still be going on for a few weeks beyond the end of the school year. He said this could mean some graduating seniors on the track-and-field team may still have the opportunity to compete even after they have graduated.

“It will be interesting,” he said. “It will be fun [and] it will definitely be something the kids will remember.”

Sandoval County is still not allowing fans into indoor facilities but Hatch said they had fans attend their last home football game and that was outdoors.

“We had about a hundred total [fans] between the two teams, so a lot of parents got to come out and watch their kids play,” he said. “We really didn’t think it would happen?”

To accommodate other sporting events, such as indoor events, Hatch said the athletics department works with information technology to livestream home games.

“Anybody can get on our YouTube channel and watch the game for free that way,” he said. “So, it’s been nice for those people who feel like they want to come out and be around people. Since nobody is allowed inside, it gives everybody access to watch the game.”

To access the livestream of home games, fans can access it by going to the website for Cuba Independent School District at cuba.k12.nm.us, click on athletics and the link should appear at the bottom of the page. The website is updated with the current

game.

Hatch is hoping Sandoval County will be able to move into what they call the green category and be able to allow fans inside facilities in a couple of weeks.

“Yesterday, they just released the county colors and Sandoval County was still yellow, so that means no fans for inside sports,” he said.

Hatch is also hoping things return back to normal next school year.

“That is the hope but all I can say is that I’m glad that the kids are getting the opportunity to do something now. We’ll worry about next year—next year. I’ll worry about that when this year is over but so far, so good this year,” he said. “Right now, we’re focused on 2021 and the kids we have. It’s the old saying, hope for the best, prepare for the worst.”

“We’re ready, we’re doing everything the right way. We’re social distancing, we’re mask-wearing, we’re sanitizing, we’re following all the state and federal guidelines,” he said. “The kids have responded, the parents understand, and the parents are glad that we are doing that kind of stuff. Everyone has been supportive.” 🙌

Cuba Rams football team off to a great start

March 15, 2021

CUBA, N.M. — The Cuba High School Rams football team got off to a great start defeating Crownpoint 14-0 at home March 6.

Gilbert Dominguez, head football coach, said the season started Feb. 22 and the 18-member team has been working hard since and he said the season is going good so far.

“We got off to a good start,” said Dominguez. “Our boys played their best against Crownpoint and we came home with the W.”

Dominguez explained the season is comprised of only four games. The remaining schedule includes an away game March 13 at Thoreau, a home game March 19 versus Shiprock and an away game March 26 against Newcomb.

This year, the team captains are seniors Joseph Jacquez and Montel Castillo, and junior Davian Lechuga.

Jacquez said the season is going pretty good so far.

“I’m pretty happy with who showed up this year,” said Jacquez. “I didn’t think anybody would really show up because of the quarantine and pandemic. But now, I think we’re going to have a great season especially since we have a very good defense.”

“As for my teammates, we have some good young guys that are showing up and putting in the work. I just know that they’re going to do good going through the years,” added Jacquez. “We’re going to have a good season.”

Castillo, who serves as a tailback

and safety, agrees and said the season is going great so far.

“I’m glad everybody came out,” he said. “[It’s good that] we stay together and help each other.”

For Lechuga, who plays tight end on offense and as an outside linebacker on defense, he believes there’s a lot of room for improvement. He hopes the team continues the good momentum they established.

“Everybody is getting into shape, everybody’s coming together as a team and we’re starting to realize what everybody is good at,” he said. “Hopefully we come out with the win and we [continue]

playing as a team.”

Lechuga said this year’s team is a lot younger than last year’s team.

“The team is just happy to finally be playing football again and actually having a season despite it being several months later,” he said.

Coach Dominguez is happy the team is out there playing football and having fun.

“We’re fortunate enough that we stuck together [and] we kept our positivity,” said Dominguez. “It’s great to see these seniors get part of the season in and play. The motto of this team is to play hard, play smart and play together.”

Coach Dominguez said he also has a great coaching staff. The staff includes Epi Atencio who serves as the defensive coordinator, Isaac Montoya serves as the skills position coordinator, and he has two position coaches, Kee Bishara and Chris Cavazos. 🙌

“
The motto of this
team is to play
hard, play smart
and play together.”

— Coach Gilbert Dominguez



CUBA INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT

50 County Road 13 | P.O. Box 70
Cuba, N.M. 87013

(575) 289-3211 | Fax (575) 289-3314

www.cuba.k12.nm.us



CORONAVIRUS PREVENTION



WASH YOUR HANDS
AT LEAST 20 SECONDS



USE SOAP



WEAR MASK



AVOID CROWDS



AVOID HANDSHAKE



DISINFECT CONTACT ELEMENTS

**Spring
BREAK**

MARCH 22-26, 2021

