EL PRÓSPERO

LAS CRUCES HISPANIC CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

LAS CRUCES HISPANIC CHAMBER OF COMMERCE • MAY/JUNE 2021 | VOLUME 14, ISSUE 3

Workplace and work style after Covid -19

BY MARKUS BENTON

The pandemic has forced the adoption of new ways of working. Organizations must re imagine their work and the role of offices in creating safe, productive, and enjoyable jobs and lives for employees.

Changing attitudes on the role of the office

Before the pandemic, the conventional wisdom had been that offices were critical to productivity, culture, and winning the war for talent. Companies competed intensely for prime office space in major urban centers around the world, and many focused on solutions that were seen to promote collaboration.

Four steps to re-imagine work and workplaces

1. Reconstruct how work is done
2. Decide 'people to work' or 'work to people'
   - fully remote (net positive value-creating outcome)
   - hybrid remote (net neutral outcome)
   - hybrid remote by exception (net negative outcome but can be done remotely if needed)
   - on site (not eligible for remote work)
3. Redesign the workplace to support organizational priorities
4. Resize the footprint creatively

Workplace Communities

Before the corona virus hit, employees spent untold hours at the office talking with colleagues in the hallway or around the coffee machine. They discussed solutions to problems, provided advice, and served as sounding boards to their coworkers' challenges. Occasionally, they shot the breeze and chatted about weekend plans. For the time being, this crisis is robbing them of those kinds of social interactions.

9 Future of Work Trends Post-COVID-19

1. Increase in remote working
2. Expanded data collection
3. Contingent worker expansion
4. Expanded employer role as social safety net
5. Separation of critical skills and roles
6. (De-)Humanization of employees
7. Emergence of new top-tier employers
8. Transition from designing for efficiency to designing for resilience
9. Increase in organization complexity

How can we put safety first?

The health and safety of the workforce should be management's top priority as it considers how to bring operations back to some semblance of normal. This is, of course, a moral, ethical and legal concern for all companies. And from a business perspective, safeguarding employees' well-being is paramount because no plan to resume normal operations can succeed without them.

Work-At-Home After Covid-19

- Increased demand for work-from-home from employees
- Reduced fear about work-from-home among managers and executives
- Increased pressure for work-from-home for disaster preparedness
- Increased awareness of cost-saving opportunities in work-from-home
- Increased awareness of the potential impact of work-from-home on sustainability
- Reduced Business Travel

Who do we bring back onsite, and when?

Returning to the workplace could mean recalling

SEE **WORKPLACE,** PAGE **3**

INDEX

FROM THE CHAIRMAN 2
FROM THE PRESIDENT 3
5 SIMPLE TIPS TO SPRING CLEAN YOUR BUSINESS 4
FROM THE LOS AMIGOS CHAIR 5
SEN. HEINRICH 6
APRENDAMOS NEW CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER CELINA WALLER 7
ALMA D'ARTE CHARTER SCHOOL 8

Curtis Rosemond
Final Frontier Tours
President & CEO

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

LORENZO ALBA, JR.
Casa de Peregrinos
Board Chairman

BELIA ALVAREZ
Heritage Hotels & Resorts
Board Vice Chair
Education/Events

ROSA BAÑUELOS
Board Secretary
Marketing / Communications

RICHARD AGUILAR
Families and Youth, Inc.
Past Chairman

MIRIAM ALCALA
The Real Estate Firm
Marketing

ERNESTO URANGA
RE/MAX Classic Realty
Membership

GLORIA E. VAQUERA
New York Life Insurance Co.
Los Amigos/Events

JEFFREY SILVA
BBVA
Government Affairs

SONIA A. WHITE
Doña Ana Community College

FROM THE CHAIRMAN

It's Been an Honor to Serve You

LORENZO ALBA, JR.

My tenure as board chair of the Las Cruces Hispanic Chamber of Commerce has come to an end. It certainly has been a privilege and an honor. Thank you for the opportunity to serve for you and with you. I'm ready to take on other leadership roles in our community. Como Mexicano-Americano, I take great pride in remaining as a board member of this storied chamber and Hispanic institution.

The year 2020 and the beginning of 2021 have certainly been filled with challenges and unknowns for all of us in business, in our careers and, especially, at home with our families. Many have suffered great loss during a pandemic that shuttered our country. I was not immune to that; I suffered the tragic loss of my precious, ama, the matriarch of la familia Alba and a dear friend, Audrey Hartley. At Casa de Peregrinos, we lost 100 percent of our volunteers to the pandemic; they simply did not feel safe. I know many of you suffered great loss and, believe me when I tell you, all of you were in my prayers.

We all saw people we know -- friends, family and co-workers -- suffer great loss as well. We all went into this pandemic blindly. However, we are coming out of it together.

I'll be the first to admit I was not at my best in my community leadership roles during this pandemic. I knew I had to focus on my family and my mission, especially my staff at Casa de Peregrinos. With that, I feel I neglected some of my other leadership positions. I can look back and learn, but I cannot take back my failures.

The realization that many of my goals as chair were not accomplished will not deter me from striving to make our organization better. I will commit to staying involved as past chair and in the future as a member of the chamber. Nosotros los Hispanos must stay united and confront our challenges together. We must continue collaborations with other chambers and the business community as a whole, as well as advocating for issues that affect small business, entrepreneurship and workforce development to our leaders at the municipality, county, state and federal levels.

I am committed to my family, mission and this community. I challenge you to join me. We all must take active roles in improving our city and the communities where we live. As we struggle to restart after a devastating crisis, we must take a look around us and do our part to make things better.

Today's often divisive climate has, at times, made it difficult to maintain friendships and business partnerships. We hear talk of unity, but it is only talk until actions are taken. We hear talk about tolerance, yet we continue the "cancel culture" mentality.

We must celebrate the successes in our community, like economic development, job creation and more. But we must also address joblessness, homelessness, systematic and generational poverty, healthcare and food insecurity. The bottom line, paraphrasing St. Mother Teresa, is that we must lead person to person and not wait for leadership. We must be the leaders.

Thank you, board of directors and members. It's been my pleasure to serve. And a special thank you to the Amigos. You are steadfast in leadership and always make us look good. God bless everyone and your families always.

STL
Sky's The Limit
10 YRS
CLEANING COMPANY LLC.
Largest Cleaning Company in Las Cruces
SPECIALIZING IN:
• RESIDENTIAL CLEANING • OFFICE CLEANING
• CARPET CLEANING • FREE ESTIMATES
575-621-0008

THE LAS CRUCES Bulletin
Check out the entire Bulletin,
its archives and our annual publications in e-edition at
www.lascrucesbulletin.com

FROM THE PRESIDENT

Let's reopen businesses to full capacity

CURTIS ROSEMOND
LAS CRUCES HISPANIC CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

After going through a year and three months of the world's domination from the COVID-19 pandemic, we finally can see a pathway to normalcy. The spread of the corona virus and its variants are slowing down in America and other countries around the world.

Safety guideline restrictions that were put in place to help curve the virus are now being cautiously removed by the CDC. Businesses will soon have the opportunity to reopen with even less restrictions and our children will be able to go back to school full time.

We all miss the ways our lives were a year and a half ago, the ability of going to a restaurant and sitting down to enjoy a nice meal without the fear of contacting the virus. Also, we miss visiting our loved ones in person without needing to wear a mask and risking their health. This virus has halted us from going to restaurants, museums, movie theaters, sporting events, concerts, vacations to theme parks, large gathering celebrations and even attending church.

However, the way we used to attend these events and enjoy so many other activities will once again return in our near future.

How are we finally getting back to a place of normality? Why is the spread of the corona virus slowing down?

The answer is that many more Americans are getting vaccinated. I realize that most of you already know this. However, I am reaching out to the individuals who are hesitant about getting vaccinated with any of the three available and free vaccinations.

All Americans have the right and freedom to make our own decision on whether or not to receive their vaccinations. Currently, there has been over 265 million vaccine doses given and over 118 million people fully vaccinated, about 36.8 percent.

Many states and companies are offering incentives to those individuals who are reluctant to be vaccinated. They are offering free rides to vaccination locations and free tickets to sporting events. Ohio is the first state to offer a chance to win a million-dollar lottery for anyone getting a vaccination.

Why are we giving incentives to get individual vaccinated? The goal is to get 70 percent of Americans vaccinated by July 4. If this can be accomplished, we will hopefully have the opportunity to reopen businesses to full capacity. Imagine the change we can make for our city, state, and country with all us being vaccinated and all restrictions removed.

The CDC has lifted its restriction guidelines for fully vaccinated individuals, on mask wearing and social distancing while indoor or outdoor. Fully vaccinated people can also engage in full activities regardless of the group size without wearing a mask. The CDC has also approved children from 12 years and up to be vaccinated. Schools will be able to fully reopen five days a week when more children have been vaccinated.

There are so many great reasons why everyone should get vaccinated. I am truly excited to see the pandemic is being curved downward in America and throughout the world. I am optimistic that all Americans will get fully vaccinated and help our communities fight this virus. We are Americans and there is nothing that we can't do if we are unified and work together.

Many precious souls have been lost and many businesses have suffered and some have closed due to COVID 19. We can now make a difference. Get vaccinated and help us reopen our businesses to full capacity.

May God bless you and all of our family members and friends that we have lost this past year.

WORKPLACE, FROM PAGE **1**

furloughed employees, transitioning away from mandatory remote work or ramping back up toward full productivity regardless of where work is being performed. For many companies, it likely means a combination of all three. But as management teams develop strategies to get their businesses back on track, most will probably focus on getting employees who really need to be in the office or on the factory floor back into the building as soon as it is safe and practicable to do so.

What do employees need to manage this change?

Without employee buy-in, even the best-crafted plans are likely to run into trouble. Management teams should lead with empathy and demonstrate an understanding that while all of their employees have experienced this crisis, they haven't all experienced it the same way. Some employees may have conditions that increase their risk of serious COVID-19 infection and may be reluctant to return to the office. Others may be eager to leave remote work behind, but have care giving responsibilities that make it difficult or impossible for them to do so. Sensitivity to this reality is a must.

Digital Security While Working Remotely

Companies of all sizes are under attack. Meanwhile, remote work has become a necessity for modern organizations looking to recruit talent and create business continuity plans. A good example of business continuity occurred in the spring of 2020, when organizations around the world sent hundreds of thousands of information workers to work from their home offices in response to the COVID19 outbreak.

- Avoid public Wi-Fi; if necessary , use personal hotspots or some way to encrypt your web connection.
- Keep Work Data on Work Computers.
- Block the Sight Lines.
- Encrypt Sensitive Data in Emails and on Your Device

Physical Security While Working Remotely

- Lock Your Doors.
- Never Leave Your Devices or Laptop in the Car.
- Don't Use Random Thumb Drives.
- Use a USB Data Blocker when Charging Up at a Public Phone Charging Station.

5 simple and effective tips to spring clean your business

BY ALEX BELSEY

During the season of Spring, it can be beneficial to clean not only your home, but other areas of your life too.

For example, if you are a business owner, now can be a great time to reassess where you are and plan for a prosperous future.

Spring is the perfect time for fresh starts and new beginnings — and that goes for your business too.

Spring cleaning may normally involve physically cleaning, decluttering, and organizing your space, but in business, it can extend so much more than that. For example, why not declutter your digital files, organize your budget, optimize your processes, and more?

With the five simple and effective tips below, you will learn how to spring clean your business in easy and impactful ways. You can help your business from the inside-out, improving and refining inner workings such as processes, budget, and workplace culture, through to outward-facing areas such as reputation, accreditation, and outreach.

Read on to discover where to start when giving your business a spring clean, and watch your business grow and thrive as a result.

1. Revise Your Budget & Processes

An important first step in spring cleaning your business is to revisit its crucial core elements especially budget and processes.

Your budget should be as flexible and adaptable as possible. It should be easy to maintain, and most importantly, regularly reviewed. Otherwise, it is easy for costs to creep up and for the business to become unprofitable.

You can use this as a time to assess exactly how and where your business is spending money, and assess whether you are receiving enough benefit from these expenses.

Perhaps there is one area of outreach or advertising that is working well, for example, and another that is weak. Maybe it would be a better decision to invest more in the effective area, and stop paying for the other.

Depending on the size and scale of your business, budgets and processes can quickly become overwhelming and time-consuming — especially if they need to be regularly reviewed. This is a great time to embark on our second tip, getting a fresh perspective from a knowledgeable professional.

2. Enlist the Help of Experts

No matter how experienced and accomplished they are, the best entrepreneurs know when others know better. They enlist the help of experts, specialist advisors, and those with specific skillsets, on a daily basis.

A great way to update and upgrade your business is to do the same. Identify the areas that you most want to improve or seek advice on — such as processes, budget, or advertising, for example — and enlist the help of an expert.

Many companies rely on copywriters with experience in search engine optimization, for example, or bid and tender professionals who can identify the best opportunities and help to win more work for their business.

An expert professional can help you to gain an overview and see the bigger picture in your business, or else home in on the fine details and the specialist support that they can provide.

Rather than trying to learn and execute everything yourself, rely on the knowledge and experience of others, thereby growing your business as a team — whether as a one-off consultation or a more sustained, regular collaboration.

Select the areas of your business on which you wish to focus, then research and reach out to the best professionals who can help.

3. Communicate with Your Team

A spring clean of your business should also involve the help of your team. Now is a great time to discuss your ideas and goals with them, and to get their input.

Not only is this a great way to gain additional insights on where your business might be thriving or underperforming, but studies also show that employees who feel involved and consulted are more likely to be invested in the outcome, and in the business overall.

Additionally, seeking the opinions of your team and genuinely trying to implement their advice, suggestions, and preferences is a great way to foster a strong team dynamic and grow the business organically.

The best leaders are not only concerned with what their employees can do for them, but also what they can do for their employees. Make an effort to foster a workplace culture that is inclusive, communicative, and mutually supportive.

Your business will soon reap the rewards of a happy workforce, with increased productivity, better employee retention, and faster growth.

4. Earn Certifications & Accreditations

A great way to upgrade the inner workings of your business — as well as its image and public reputation — is by seeking official accreditations and certifications.

Certifications and accreditations are a great way to instantly communicate your legitimacy, experience, and trustworthiness to your potential clients.

They help to show that you are fully up-to-date with all the necessary safety protocols and procedures, for example, and that you have undertaken the relevant checks, examinations, and more.

An accreditation or certification can communicate all this with just a simple logo or 'stamp of approval'. In a competitive marketplace, more customers than ever are seeking the fastest and most reliable ways to decide which company to purchase from.

A trustworthy stamp of approval or accreditation could therefore be the difference between standing out from your competitors or slipping under the radar of your customers.

The best choices of accreditation will depend on your industry and sector. Respected accreditations in construction will differ from well-known certifications in accounting, for example, but both would serve the same function as a great way to immediately demonstrate your expertise to potential clients and customers.

5. Align Your Goals with Your Values

Whatever the time of year, be sure to regularly assess your business goals and whether they still align with your overall values and vision.

This might include factors like your working hours, workplace culture, as well as the growth you want to see for your business in the next few years, the problems you hope it will solve, and the customers you want it to serve.

As a business evolves, so too does its owner. Schedule regular and methodical times to take stock of your progress and evaluate your next move.

This way, you can be sure that both you and your business are progressing in ways that always align with the principles, goals, and lifestyle that you value.

FROM THE LOS AMIGOS CHAIR

Volunteer Fair and Giving Day Event Huge Success!

AMANDA MORALES

As we are almost half-way through with 2021, many nonprofit organizations, businesses, and individuals, are finding their 'new normal'. Virtual meetings via Zoom and virtual events have become staples in our every day lives, while large in-person gatherings have become a thing of the past…for now….

This year's Volunteer Fair and Giving Day event was held virtually via the Facebook event page on Friday, April 23, 2021. The event was designed to ignite giving across the region for 23 hours, to support causes in our community and to give matching funds to 23 nonprofit organizations.

For the giving aspect of the event, for 23 hours, donors were encouraged to give to their favorite nonprofit organizations to support causes in our community. Donors were engaged via social media and emails for weeks leading up to the event. The event was also utilized to provide organizations with the opportunity to nominate a dedicated volunteer to be recognized via a social media post in the Facebook event page. Volunteers are a vital part of the success of nonprofit organizations. Agencies cannot achieve their mission without the generous time given by volunteers.

The first 23 organizations that successfully registered were eligible to receive matching funds offered by the Community Foundation of Southern New Mexico and United Way of Southwest New Mexico. In order to be eligible for the matching funds, organizations must have a 501c3 tax determination or be connected to an organization (as an affiliate or as their fiscal sponsor) that has the 501c3 tax status. Organizations that do not hold such a status were encouraged to still participate and take donations, but they were not eligible for the matching funds provided by our community partners. All donations made during the 23-hour time frame online via the donation link provided were eligible for the matching funds.

Through this event, we were able to promote philanthropy and use social media to engage new donors in our community. Nonprofit organizations were able to reach their fundraising goals, but also reach new donors and share messaging about their vital programming.

Nonprofit organizations and donors throughout our community who participated in the Volunteer Fair and Giving Day event on Friday, April 23, 2021, assisted with raising $19,893.80 which was matched by our community partners for $7,817 for a grand total of $23,708! Our community is so generous and truly amazing!

Now looking forward, the event committee has big dreams to expand the Giving Day event for 2022 by recruiting more organizations to participate in the event. The goal would be to engage more donors and business corporations in creative ways via multiple social media platforms, newsletters, other media outlets, email listservs and so much more!

The Volunteer Fair and Giving Day steering committee includes: Community Foundation of Southern New Mexico, La Casa, Inc., Mesilla Valley Habitat for Humanity, and United Way of Southwest New Mexico.

For more information about Volunteer Fair and Giving Day, contact Amanda Morales at impact@uwswnm.org or 575-524-7561.

Always at your fingertips!

No login.
No fees.
Check out the entire Bulletin in our weekly e-edition.
THE LAS CRUCES Bulletin
www.lascrucesbulletin.com

Get your Bulletin at home

Call the Bulletin today, at 575-680-1841, or email circulation director Teresa Tolonen, teresa@lascrucesbulletin.com
THE LAS CRUCES Bulletin
1740-A Calle de Mercado, Las Cruces
575-524-8065
www.lascrucesbulletin.com

FROM OUR U.S. SENATOR

The beginning of the end of the pandemic

BY U.S. SENATOR MARTIN HEINRICH

I am grateful to all of the New Mexico health care heroes and other essential workers who have stepped up to help our communities weather the challenges of this past year. I am increasingly optimistic that with the widespread distribution of vaccines--and particularly with our strong rollout in New Mexico--we are finally nearing the end of this pandemic.

As part of the American Rescue Plan that Democrats in Congress and President Biden recently passed into law, there was $20 billion to supercharge our nationwide vaccine distribution campaign—including dedicated funding for the VA Health Administration and the Indian Health Service that I secured to make sure vaccines make it to our veterans and hard-to-reach Tribal communities. We also passed $50 billion in new funding for testing, genomic sequencing to stay ahead of the curve on new variants of the virus, and contact tracing efforts so we can finally put an end to this pandemic.

HEINRICH

There will soon be $1.2 billion in emergency funding support heading to New Mexico's K-12 public schools to help our educators address students' needs and make sure all of our schools can safely reopen for fulltime in-person instruction. I also fought to secure a $350 billion program that will soon deliver aid to state, local, and Tribal governments to help them cover the emergency expenses of the pandemic and protect the jobs of teachers, firefighters, and first responders.

I also fought to pass additional support for small business owners in the American Rescue Plan, including more support for the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) and a new $28.6 billion Restaurant Revitalization Fund that is specifically targeted toward small, locally-owned restaurants, food trucks, and bars that are the cornerstones in our communities to help them keep their doors open.

The American Rescue Plan also included critical financial support for families and workers like the $1,400 direct payments, expanded support for food assistance programs, and a historic expansion of the Earned Income Tax Credit to allow workers to keep more of their paycheck and the Child Tax Credit to help parents and families cover the costs of raising a child.

Now that we have passed emergency resources to address the immediate emergency brought on by the pandemic, we need to invest in our nation's infrastructure and human capital to set the foundation for a strong and sustainable long-term economic recovery. Too many families in New Mexico are living without internet access, clean water, and reliable electricity. President Biden's American Jobs Plan is our opportunity to change that.

I am committed to passing legislation in the Senate that will make bold and forward-looking investments in transportation and water systems, in our land ports of entry like Santa Teresa and Columbus to grow our trade economy, and in the clean energy infrastructure that will help us confront the climate crisis and power our economic success in the decades ahead.

President Biden's American Families Plan offers us another once-in-a-generation chance to expand our children's opportunities by providing each and every one of them with a high-quality education from early childhood all the way through to college and a good-paying career. It will also take a two-generation approach to deliver economic security to families by providing much-needed support for child care, making health care more affordable, and establishing a comprehensive, national paid leave policy.

We've learned the hard way over the years that if you don't make these kinds of investments in people and families, that the negative impacts of an extreme event like COVID or a financial crisis linger in the economy. We need to make the right decision this time around to not take an austerity mindset so that we can get the economy going in a way that delivers opportunities for success to all New Mexicans. I will never stop fighting to make sure New Mexico gets the resources it needs to build an economy that grows even stronger and is more diverse than before the pandemic.

I also want to help provide the resources New Mexicans need to get back on their feet after all we have been through during this past year. My office is here to help you navigate any challenges or identify new opportunities. You can reach my Las Cruces Office by calling (575) 535-6561 or by visiting my website at Heinrich.Senate.Gov. Please don't hesitate to contact us if we can be of any assistance to you and your family.

VOLUNTEER TODAY!

Help us advocate on behalf of foster children in Doña Ana County

Join our 70+ volunteers helping children and teens in foster care virtually!

CASA Court Appointed Special Advocates FOR CHILDREN MESILLA VALLEY CASA

MESILLA VALLEY CASA

Contact us or use the QR Code to get started!

(575) 527-0035
INFO@MESILLAVALLEYCASA.ORG
102 WYATT DRIVE, LAS CRUCES, NM 88005

Visit Desert Exposure online at www.desertexposure.com

DESERT exposure

Aprendamos family of services announces new chief operating officer

BY CAROLINE ZAMORA

Aprendamos Family of Services is proud to announce Celina Waller as the new Chief Operating Officer. As Chief Operating Officer, Celina will oversee the operations of the six programs under Aprendamos Family of Services.

Celina Waller grew up in the small village of Tularosa, New Mexico. Celina's parents instilled the values of placing family first, integrity, and respect onto her and her sisters. After high school graduation, she moved to Las Cruces to pursue her dreams of becoming a New Mexico State University Aggie. She graduated with her Bachelor's Degree in Criminal Justice in 1997 and her Master's Degree in Business Administration in 2007.

COURTESY PHOTO

Celina Waller, MBA Chief Operating Officer

Celina has over 20 years of management experience in healthcare and human services. She started her journey at Aprendamos Family of Services in 2009 as the Clinic Director of Esperanza Children's Therapy Clinic. During her tenure with Aprendamos, she then became the Director of Children and Family Services.

As Chief Operating Officer, Celina will continue her passion for supporting children and families while supporting the six programs under the Aprendamos Family of Services umbrella.

Celina currently serves on the New Mexico Interagency Coordinating Council, which advises and assists the administration of the statewide early intervention system through the New Mexico Family Infant Toddler program.

Celina and her husband, Keith, have four daughters and four granddaughters. Outside of work, Celina enjoys creating memories with her family, yoga, listening to podcasts, reading, and taking family walks along the pecan orchards with their dogs.

"I believe in creating positive change for children and families in our community, and one of my favorite quotes is from President Barack Obama 'Change will not come if we wait for some other person or some other time. We are the ones we've been waiting for. We are the change that we seek."

- Celina Waller

"The Aprendamos Shareholders welcome Celina Waller as our Chief Operating Officer. Given Celina's diverse experience and compassionate servant leadership, we are confident she will continue to work with our Program Directors, Managers, colleagues, and community to ensure that the developmental needs of every child are met. Celina will continue to work across systems so that as a community, we support families and help shape our future generations."

- Abel Covarrubias, Chief Executive Officer and Shareholder, Aprendamos Family of Services

COURTESY PHOTO

The Waller Family

About Aprendamos family of service

Aprendamos Family of Services had been providing services to our communities for over 15 years. Six programs make up Aprendamos Family of Services with over 230 passionate team members working with children and families daily.

Cariño Home Visiting Program provides free home visiting, parent education, and community resources for families with children up to the age of 3. Services are provided throughout Doña Ana and Otero Counties.

The **Conscious Fathering Program** provides free classes and support for fathers and father figures (grandfathers, uncles, big brothers).

Aprendamos Early Intervention provides free early intervention services for infants and toddlers. Services include speech, occupational, physical therapy, nutrition and nursing support, infant massage, developmental instruction, and service coordination. Services are provided throughout Doña Ana County, and visits are conducted via telehealth or in-person.

Esperanza Children's Therapy clinics provide speech therapy, occupation, and physical therapy for children ages three to 18 years old. Clinics are in Anthony and Las Cruces, NM. Therapy sessions are conducted via telehealth or in-clinic.

Mariposa Autism Service Center provides ABA or Applied Behavior Analysis therapy to children diagnosed with Autism. Service areas include Doña Ana County, Deming, and Albuquerque Metro.

APRENDAMOS
Family of Services

Alegria Family Counseling provides mental health counseling services to children, adolescents, adults, couples, and families. Services are provided via telehealth or in-clinic.

To learn more about Aprendamos Family of Services, visit www.aitkids.com or call 575-526-6682.

Alma d'arte Charter High School: Preparing artist/scholars to succeed

To fully appreciate the story of Alma d'arte Charter High School–where it's been, where it is today and where it's going–one must also understand its beginnings and the rich past of the historic building that houses the school.

Initially, the property was the site of the original Doña Ana County Court House that existed at the site from the 1890s until 1936. Then, in 1941, Court Junior High School came to fruition through a Works Progress Administration (WPA) project. Following its stint as a junior high school, it became Court Youth Center in 1993 under the direction of Irene-Oliver Lewis who led a campaign to secure more than $6 million to renovate the historic school and developed and implemented an award-winning, after-school arts program using a positive youth development philosophy. The arts integration, positive youth development, and multi-cultural awareness that was created by the Court Youth Center later became the basis for starting a charter school.

After two years of research and meeting with a variety of focus groups, Alma d'arte Charter High School was created. Its founder, Irene Oliver-Lewis–a writer, producer, performer, arts administrator and advocate–envisioned an institution where student's creativity would be awakened and where they may flourish as productive, successful scholars.

Alma d'arte was chartered by the Las Cruces Public Schools Board of Education in December 2002. The school is a pioneering arts-based secondary school serving a diversity of learners through a rigorous academic and integrated arts program since 2004. Alma's dynamic educational program integrates the visual, performing, literary, media, and culinary arts into academic content areas. Students learn to understand and creatively explore the connections between disciplines and diverse ways of thinking. This integrated approach ensures that students develop into creative thinkers equipped to better succeed in a complex society where personal, professional and artistic boundaries are increasingly fluid and career multi-faceted.

PHOTOS BY LOGAN MCCLENAHAN-YOUNGMAN

PHOTOS BY LOGAN MCCLENAHAN-YOUNGMAN

In its first year, the arts integration charter high school enrolled approximately 80 ninth and tenth graders split evenly between the two grades. There was one teacher for each "core" subject (English, Mathematics, Science and Social Studies), a Spanish teacher, a visual arts teacher and several Americorps artists in residence that worked with licensed teachers to facilitate arts integration. Americorps artists along with community members provided art enrichment opportunities to Alma students such as jewelry making, band promotion, hand drumming, silk screening and martial arts. The school planned to work with students with special needs through a full inclusion approach and a special education coordinator rounded out the faculty.

From its inception, cross-curricular integration was as equally important as arts integration. Amy Simpson, the school's first English teacher, suggested the implementation of an essential question project where students and teachers would delve into an overarching theme for a whole year. Each course would complete a project that would help students answer the essential question from that content area perspective and students would present their findings to a panel of teachers. Every year since that first year, with the exception of the 2020-21 school year (due to COVID-19), students and teachers have grappled with fundamental questions dealing with the arts, the self, community and how we engage with each.

2010 was the final year in which Americorps participated at Alma, ending a very fruitful period of learning for both students and teachers. With the help of the Americorps artists in residence, many teachers had developed strong arts integration projects that deepened students' understanding of the core curriculum. The essential question projects continued to provide cross-curricular learning for students while the Apprenticeship program served as a culmination of Platica advisory program (another seminal idea of the founders). The Apprenticeship program also culminated with a Senior Panel where seniors shared their apprenticeship experiences along with a reflection of their time at Alma with a panel of teachers. The powerful reflections students share make having a Kleenex a must, along with a good appetite due to the delicious dishes culinary students' often share to ensure a strong score. Teachers are only human, after all.

Currently Alma also provides the offerings of a typical high school such as special education services, assistance for English language learners, Advanced Placement and honors courses as well as Dual credit classes offered in cooperation with the Doña Ana Community College and New Mexico State University. Alma offers free lunch prepared by the culinary students and electives like theater, guitar, dance, yoga, botany/gardening, sculpture, advanced culinary and poetry. The visual art program has become one of the strongest visual arts programs in the city as students have earned best in show honors at every spring Senior Art Show since they have started submitting.

Today, students and staff who are a part of the Alma d'arte learning community are here because they are interested in the value of an educational experience which has arts integration as the foundation to academic excellence. Arts integration provides the skills, methods, strategies, and problem-solving (opportunities) necessary for positive youth development in today's sophisticated multi-media world.

Alma offers a unique school culture that enables students to flourish as artists and scholars in a creative and nurturing environment. This is a home-away-from-home for its students, where they are surrounded by like-minded peers and supportive faculty in a small class setting. Students receive opportunities to participate in a variety of traditional school sponsored activities, special events, clubs, and organizations that enhance leadership skills, develop confidence, and form meaningful memories.

With Alma's high level of diversity, students are emboldened to embrace their individuality and educators work to help them nurture self-expression. Built on passion, discipline and a commitment to excellence this integrative educational experience inspires all students to believe in themselves and what they can accomplish.