

HISPANIC HERITAGE MONTH

SEPTEMBER 15 - OCTOBER 15



MIKE COOK
For the Bulletin

Brandi Gutierrez has a tattoo of an oil can with a drop of oil coming out of it pointing down to her elbow. It's a reminder that hard work, measured in elbow grease, is essential for success.

Gutierrez owns and operates Nubes Dispensary in Sunland Park and Las Cruces with her husband, Peregrin Ramirez, and a partner who lives in Las Vegas, Nev.

The Sunland Park cannabis dispensary opened in August 2022, followed in October 2023 by the Las Cruces location, which will celebrate its second anniversary during Hispanic Heritage Month.

A piñata in the shape of a cannabis leaf is part of the decor in the showroom of Nubes Dispensary in Las Cruces, on Sept. 19, 2024.

"We're really just here to give back," said Gutierrez, a native of El Paso who lives in Sunland Park with Ramirez and their two children, ages 6 and 11.

Gutierrez has experience in the cannabis industry in five states, including New Mexico. She was at one time director of operations for Hush Canna, which began in Oregon in 2015.

"We grew and went public and became Halo Collective," an international cannabis oil manufacturer, Gutierrez said.

She later became operations manager at Amazon.com before deciding Sunland Park was the

place to make a home and start a business.

A 2007 graduate of Horizon High School in El Paso, Gutierrez has a chemistry degree from New Mexico State University (she taught high school chemistry for two years), where she was also an outstanding distance runner. Opening Nubes' Las Cruces dispensary in the Pan

Am Plaza building that used to be an off-campus bookstore was part of Gutierrez's plan to "bring something back to New Mexico. We felt like we had this mission, this duty to make that something beautiful," she said.

Gutierrez and her family came home in April 2021, renting a building in Sunland Park and developing a business plan a year before recreational cannabis became legal in the state.

Gutierrez said she and her husband, a military veteran, have both had significant health benefits from cannabis and wanted to share their knowledge and personal experience with others.

Nubes has 10 employees, she said, following in the tradition of yerberas (herbalists) who are extensively trained in

the many health benefits of cannabis and traditionally "come from both indigenous people and Spanish roots," according to the Nubes website.

"We hired locally and we trained up," Gutierrez said. "We have some of the best cannabis employees in the business."

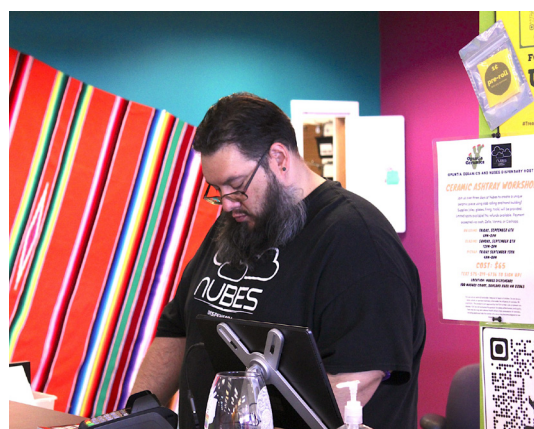
Her staff learns about the chemical background and medicinal benefits of the products they sell, she said, and the art of listening, so they understand the specific needs of each client.

The entire team is part of Nubes' "accessibility to the community," Gutierrez said, and its commitment to give back through local service projects like a toy drive to benefit La Casa's domestic violence program, local schools, food drives that benefit Casa de Peregrinos emergency food program, while

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Keeping the Tradition

Dispensary upholds yerbera tradition



Nubes Dispensary manager Alan Nuñez is seen at the counter on Thursday, Sept. 19, 2024.

(Las Cruces Bulletin photos by Algernon D'Amassa)

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Disorienting space

Muralist confronts border with abstract art

ALGERNON D'AMMASSA
Las Cruces Bulletin

On Monday morning, a boom lift inside the University Art Museum at New Mexico State swayed as two people, standing in its basket carefully applied

blue painter's tape to a wall overlooking a second-story balcony.

For several days, artist Carlos Morales-Silva has been preparing a mural spanning two walls of the museum's Mullennix Bridge Gallery titled "Border De-

stroyer," with an opening reception set for Friday evening. He worked alongside Cassidy Fritts, a fellow muralist and painter from San Antonio, Texas.

An El Paso native from a large family still rooted in the commu-

nity, Morales-Silva is now based in New York but said he was enjoying an extended stay here, teaching an advanced painting class at NMSU and incorporating a display of several students' paintings into his mural.

The student works emerged from an assignment Morales-Silva presented to students last spring, to compose works responding to their environment.

He spoke of environment – physical and cultural – as a driving force in his own development as an artist, rooted in the history, architecture and topography of the Rio Grande region.

"There's something about this place that has burned and imprinted onto me, just a way of seeing," he said. "Part of it is the landscape – you can see so far in any direction, because everything is so low lying. The sky is so

like spectacular most days, like, just like the depth of field that you can see is really kind of disorienting in a way."

Yet within that open view, he described taking in views of White Sands Missile Range, Fort Bliss, El Paso and Ciudad Juárez from the region's mountain ranges, and their cultural context. "That kind of perception is really unique here," he continued. "It's kind of a disorienting space, and that's what a lot of my work is about."

The mural under development presented fortress-like structural shapes in contrast with flowing waves resembling paisley or floral forms, and intense combinations of colors that almost seem to hiss.

"The general idea was to have this kind of abstracted version of a border wall crawling around, and these kind of big sun shapes bursting through it and creating these abstract color fields," Morales-Silva said, "Organic shapes that are growing out of it, kind of bursting through the fence."

On one side, the more organic shapes predominate and serve as a platform for several student works that explore shape, color and texture in a variety of modes, some more abstract,



Students' paintings are incorporated into a site-specific mural by Carlos Morales-Silva at NMSU's Museum of Art in Las Cruces, as seen during its preparation on Sept. 24, 2024. (Las Cruces Bulletin photos by Algernon D'Amassa)



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Carlos Morales-Silva applies painter's tape as he prepares a wall for a mural at NMSU's Museum of Art in Las Cruces on Sept. 23, 2024. (Las Cruces Bulletin photos by Algernon D'Amassa)

some less.

"I wanted it to be about the possibilities of education and art education, and to have the actual work of the students that I've been working with," Morales-Silva said.

"A lot of my work is trying to find those combinations in unique form with unique colors," he continued. "Some of that comes from brightly colored buildings that are around the area, but it's also become a really deep study of color theory, a really deep study of formalism ... I think it's all kind of based in the way that I learned how to see here.

"There's a lot of complex things going on at all times, just like in the landscape and just like in the culture and in the politics."

Morales-Silva used similar elements in his first Los Angeles exhibition, "Border Logic," in 2023, with paintings of various sizes and combinations of abstract shapes, colors and surface textures.

His distinctive murals include an installation at the San Antonio Museum of Art and a 2,000-foot mural facing two sides of W. 34th Street in New York City.

"Border Destroyer" will be on display through March 8, 2025. The opening reception on Sept. 27 will run from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m., along with the opening of two other exhibits at the UAM: "Carolyn Salas: Night Vision" and "Warhol & Friends." More information is available online at uam.NMSU.edu.

YERBERA TRADITION

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serving posole and menudo at Nubes events that include the whole staff. They also join other locally owned businesses at Sunland Park and Las Cruces mercados.

"We're competing at a very top level," she said. "It's just a matter of getting that local support and supporting that mission."

In New Mexico, it also means dealing with "ever changing rules and regulations" in the cannabis industry, Gutierrez said, where large out-of-state companies and small locally owned companies are not treated the same.

"We need to work together and listen to each other," she said.

For Gutierrez, the work, the community she serves and Hispanic culture are all part of the cycle of life. And so is the cannabis Nubes is helping to restore to its rightful status, she said.

"What once was taboo is now being honored as something that should have been beautiful the whole time," Gutierrez said, as cannabis is now being recognized as part of "holistic wellness."

Her dispensaries are "loud and colorful and very New Mexico inviting," she said, reflecting popular themes like

football and Dia de los Muertos. The long-term goal is to expand Nubes into "a multi-state operation," Gutierrez said.

Nubes' locations are 100 Maguey Court in Sunland Park (575-332-4340) and 1713 E. University Ave. in Las Cruces (575-259-3957). The Las Cru-

ces dispensary is open 10 a.m.-10 p.m. Sunday-Thursday, and 10 a.m.-11 p.m. Friday-Saturday. The Sunland Park dispensary is open 7 a.m.-11 p.m. seven days a week. More information is available at NubesDispensary.com or @nubesdispensary on social media.



In the lobby of Nubes Dispensary's Las Cruces location, an ofrenda for Día de los Muertos serves as an altar commemorating the cycle of life and death. Sept. 19, 2024.

(Las Cruces Bulletin photos by Algernon D'Amassa)



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Zoot Suit Pachanga takes a year off

Bulletin Report

There is some sad news for local pachucos and pachucas, car fans and the owners who lavish care on them, or people up for a big pachanga (party). One highlight of Hispanic Heritage Month in Las Cruces is reportedly not going to happen this year, though organizers say it will be back in 2025.

Las Cruces' annual Zoot Suit Pachanga and Car Show was set to convene on Oct. 12, bringing the flamboyant suits, colorful lowriders and classic cars, live music and food trucks to Young Park for the second year in a row: The event relocated from Klein Park last year, to

accommodate growing attendance, including visitors from Chihuahua and El Paso and neighboring states came for the celebration of Chicano culture and style.

However, organizers posted on the event's Facebook page that the event is skipping 2024 and would be back in October of 2025. "We deeply regret having to cancel 9th Annual Event," an Aug. 4 post stated. No details were given other than, "the support & movement of this event was just not possible at this time."

This pachanga was founded by Victor Gallegos, Manny Renteria and Bob Schunior, who kept the event in Klein Park, in the city's historic Mesquite district, until it had grown too big for that venue.



Patsy Sanchez, Frank Herrera, Aracely Martinez and Hugo Cardena suited up for last year's Zoot Suit Pachanga and Car Show in Las Cruces. In 2024, the event is taking a year off but organizers say it will return next year.
(Courtesy photo by Zoot Suit Pachanga and Car Show)



**From the Community.
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Helping his community, honoring historic roots

Las Cruces attorney Israel Chávez is descended from generations that have lived and worked in the Mesilla Valley as subsistence farmers, bracero laborers and leaders of their community, migrant workers and families with mestizo roots along the Rio Grande's route through southern New Mexico.

Israel himself is the first attorney in the family, enrolling in law school at the University of New Mexico after graduating from Mayfield High in Las Cruces.

"I saw continually how people in my community didn't get the representation they deserved," he said. "These were people who looked like my family, like my tíos and tías, who did not have people in court to advocate for them.

"No matter how good your interpreter is, it's always a huge empowering moment when your attorney speaks to you in your language," said Chávez, who is bilingual in English and Spanish.

After working at New Mexico State University, serving as an assistant

county attorney and as a criminal and labor prosecutor, Chávez established his own practice last year.

"Since I was kid, it's always been about fairness," he said of his inspiration. "That's how I was raised: That things should be fair and if it's not fair, you have an obligation to speak up. Now I have the privilege of being able to do that on behalf of my community."

He represents people who have been injured, has a civil rights practice focusing on New Mexico's civil rights law and other areas where clients need help.

He has also given back to the community where he grew up as founder of the Doña Ava Village Association, providing outdoor youth programs and local agricultural history and education. He also heads the recently-formed Southern New Mexico Bar Association, which he said has offered 400 free legal consultations in the region over an eight-month period.

"This is really making a dent in the legal needs of our community," he said.



LAW OFFICES OF
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