



Women's HISTORY MONTH HER story

THE LAS CRUCES Bulletin

Tori Crichton: 24-year-old rocket scientist

BY MIKE COOK
For the Las Cruces Bulletin

Tori Crichton only graduated from New Mexico State University a few years ago but already she's a rocket scientist working in the aerospace industry.

"A big thing that helped me to get to where I am is NMSU and Atomic Aggies," said Tori (Hoffman) Crichton. The 24-year-old is a Las Cruces native and a Mayfield High School and New Mexico State graduate who is now a propulsion engineer with Virgin Galactic at Spaceport America north of Las Cruces.

As part of Atomic Aggies, NMSU's collegiate rocketry team, Crichton got hands-on experience designing, building and testing high-powered rockets in the annual Spaceport America Cup competition. Her team finished eighth in the finals among 150 national and international teams in the 2021-22 competition. And, the Atomic Aggies won the Chile Cup in both her junior and senior years, as NMSU finished with a higher overall score than regional rivals the University of New Mexico, New Mexico Tech and the University of Texas at El Paso.

"You really learn to build, launch and recover rockets" and gain leadership experience in the competi-



tion, said Crichton, who is the daughter of Kiel Hoffman and Darby Sanchez.

Crichton graduated from NMSU in 2023 with two degrees – one in aerospace engineering and one in mechanical engineering. She had job offers in many states, but only one in Las Cruces: Virgin Galactic, "the first commercial space-line for Earth, pioneering human space-flight for private individuals, researchers and professional astronauts," according to the Virgin Galactic website.

"Ultimately, I chose to stay here," Crichton said. She and her husband, Remington Crichton (they were married in 2023), have bought a house in Las Cruces, which Tori said is a "great little town to raise a family in one day."

While Atomic Aggies ignited her love for rocketry, Crichton said her

"love for rockets and space started when I was a little kid." Her parents took Tori and her sister, Sidney, to the New Mexico Museum of Space History in Alamogordo, where they got to build and launch small rockets.

"I thought that was the coolest thing ever," she said.

Crichton is a propulsion operations team lead at Galactic, working on rocket motors and engines – "everything that propels," she said. Working for Galactic "has been an awesome experience."

Watching people step off the spacecraft after a Virgin Galactic flight and "getting to share their testimony makes your work feel rewarding," she said. "It's just really exciting. I just love to do what I do. I love to put a smile on people's faces and see their dreams come true."

Along with all the other Galactic employees, Crichton gets to sign her name on the rocket motor she has worked on before the spaceship goes up.

When she talks to young students about engineering and rocketry, "it's not gender specific," Crichton

said. "I just kind of think, I can do it too, so who cares."

Galactic has offices in Las Cruces and at Spaceport America, which is located in the Jornada del Muerto desert basin about 45 miles north of Las Cruces and 20 miles southeast of Truth or Consequences.

Getting to live and work in Las Cruces "is a blessing," Crichton said. "Both our families live here."

Crichton said her family has "always been my biggest cheerleaders. When I wanted to work on a dual-degree program, they never had a doubt that I'd be able to do it," she said. "They supplied me with everything I needed. I couldn't have done it without them."



Women's HISTORY MONTH

Celebrating HER story

Like what you see in this issue? We will be featuring more local women in history for another two weeks. If you would like to advertise in this special section call us at

575-524-8061

THE LAS CRUCES Bulletin

Crystal Diamond Brantley: Making a difference

BY MIKE COOK

For the Las Cruces Bulletin

In the 2020 general election, Crystal Diamond Brantley won New Mexico State Senate District 35, which includes all or part of seven New Mexico counties. A resident of Elephant Butte, she is the first woman and the first Republican ever to hold the seat. Brantley was re-elected without primary or general-election opposition in 2024, even though the district had been substantially redrawn following the 2020 census.

Brantley said she represents all voters in the huge district that includes all or part of Catron, Doña Ana, Grant, Hidalgo, Luna, Sierra and Socorro counties.

"I consider myself, and certainly vote, as a moderate Republican," said Brantley, who is a New Mexico State University graduate and a former member of the Truth or Consequences Board of Education.

Her effectiveness in the state Senate "has been more than anything about relationships," she said. That includes friendships with senators across the aisle like moderate Democrat Joseph Cervantes of Las Cruces and progressive Democrats like Mimi Stewart of Albuquerque, who, as Senate president pro tempore, appointed Brantley as ranking Republican on the Senate Judiciary Committee, which Cervantes chairs.

"She and I never vote the same," Brantley said about Stewart. "Politically, we are very different. But there is a level of respect between us," she said, and that was part of the reason Brantley got the appointment as ranking member on Judiciary.

Serving in that leadership role is "arguably the most important and effective" assignment Brantley could have in the Senate, she said, because Judiciary deals with the vital issue of public safety.

In Santa Fe and throughout her district, being successful as an elected official is also "a matter of listening to the constituents," Brantley said. She and other Republicans who have won legislative seats in traditionally Democratic areas in southwest New Mexico "often do not vote straight party," she said. "We carry the votes of our constituents. That goes back and forth across party lines."

Brantley said her motivation for running for the state Senate and for continuing to serve is her two daughters.

"They are my reason for going to Santa Fe and the reason I can't wait to leave Santa Fe," she said. "I ran for office to show them as women we really can make a difference."

Both girls have taken leadership roles in student government and FFA in T or C public schools, Brantley said. And, since she married Carlsbad farmer and rancher Tom Brantley in 2023, their family has expanded to five girls.

"We're all kind of in this together," Brantley said.

Although uncertain if 2026 will be the right time to consider a run for governor, "I don't think the state Senate is where I'll end," Brantley said. But "for this session especially, I am extremely effective. Right now, I need to be here and do my best work for the district and the state. I'm in an important position where I can influence a lot of policy."

She supports a criminal competency and treatment bill that passed both chambers and has been signed by the governor. The bill is a top priority for law enforcement, Brantley said.

Addressing failures in the state Children, Youth and Families Department is "a moral calling as a legislator

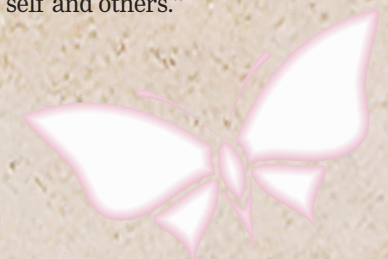
and a mother," she said. "We have to do something to fix this agency. If we're not willing to help our most vulnerable children,



what more can we do as a state?"

Brantley has introduced Senate Bill 11, Anti-Distracted Policy in Schools, which she said would encourage schools to adopt policies to provide "specialized storage equipment" – Brantley called them "lock bags" – to lock up phones during classes so they aren't a distraction to student learning.

"It's an honor to serve Senate District 35," Brantley said. "My most important work is as a mother and a wife. I bring values to build a stronger family for myself and others."



Women's History Month

Tori Crichton

Congratulations on your success! Thank you for staying in Las Cruces. Pioneer Bank is proud to support women in business.

3831 E. Lohman | 2900 Roadrunner Parkway | 705 E. University Ave.
www.pioneer.bank

'Mother Hubbard': A legend

BY MIKE COOK

For the Las Cruces Bulletin

"ACTS of the Heart: The Remarkable Story of Live Entertainment's Mother Hubbard" is the title of a new book about Las Cruces and New Mexico State University legend Barbara Hubbard, who retired for the second time in 1998 as director of NMSU's Pan American Center after decades of bringing some of the biggest names in the entertainment industry to perform in Las Cruces.

A native of Benton, Arkansas, Hubbard came to Las Cruces in 1954 – she was Barbara Johnson in those days, marrying Peirce Hubbard (1931-2006) in 1959 – to become a teacher at Las Cruces High School. She joined NMSU in 1966, first in the athletics department and then as the first ever director of special events and director of the Pan American Center. From 1967-1987, Hubbard ran the facility with just a secretary, a custodian, a box office manager and NMSU student volunteers.

"I'm proud of that," Hubbard said, sitting on a couch at Hubbard's Music, the Las Cruces music store owned by her son, Dru Hubbard.

And, as the book title reflects, she's also proud of the American Collegiate Talent Showcase (ACTS) scholarship campaign she created more than 50 years ago to help students at NMSU and across the country break into the entertainment industry and get an education.

Hubbard is still booking top-level entertainment at venues across the country and continues to work tirelessly for ACTS. She is planning a fundraiser to bring the ACTS endowment to the \$1 million mark, hopefully around her 98th birthday in July, or later this summer.

"I'm working on it," Hubbard said. "I'm optimistic. Don't tell me I can't do anything."

Friends of Barbara agree.

"Barbara Hubbard is still out there at almost 98 years old pursuing her dream and her passion every day," said Marci Dickerson. "She basically started an industry of concerts and entertainment and led the way for women's participation in that industry. She just did it, and she created more opportunities for those of us who came later."

"I have sat across from Barbara Hubbard at St. Paul's United Methodist Church for 45 years and I have watched how her spiritual strength has allowed her to help so many young musicians," said Heather Polard.

"Barbara Hubbard is the most amazing lady in the entertainment world," said Wanda Bowman. "She went into the entertainment business when it was all men. She's never given up. I work to keep up with her – she's still working the crowd for music groups."

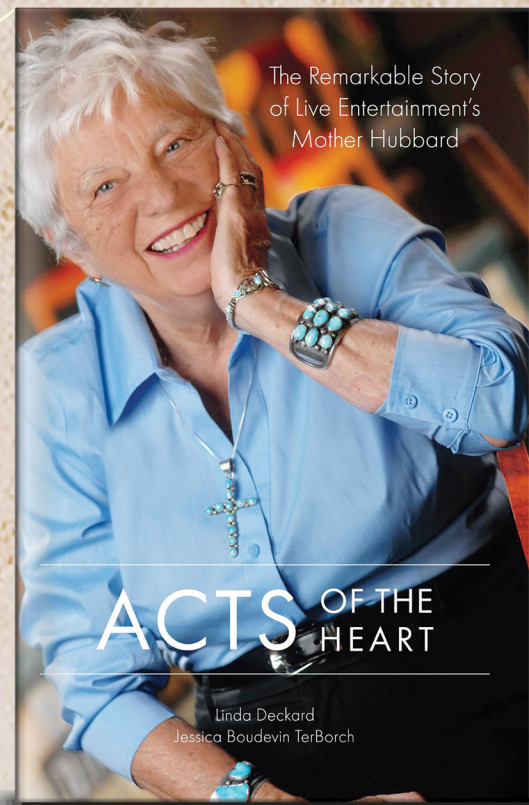
Hubbard continues to assist NMSU School of Hotel, Restaurant and Tourism Management Director Jean Hertzman, Ph.D., by teaching a class at the university called entertainment business and venue management.

Hubbard has received many honors over the last 50-plus years, including Pollstar Magazine's first-ever lifetime achievement award (she is also featured in the March 2025 issue of Pollstar), Billboard magazine's Golden Circle Award and Venue Today magazine's first Women of Influence Award. She received NMSU's third-ever Presidential Medallion in 2017, along with the NMSU Distinguished Alumni Award. The NMSU College of Arts and Sciences gave her a lifetime achievement award in 2023. Hubbard also received NMSU's James F. Cole Memorial Award for service, and the 2023 award for Women in American History from the Daughters of the American Revolution.

The performers Hubbard brought

to Las Cruces include Paul McCartney, Bill Cosby, Bob Hope, Taylor Swift, George Strait, Reba McEntire, ventriloquist Jeff Dunham (an ACTS student in 1983), The Eagles, Guns N' Roses, Kenny Rogers, George Burns, Johnny Cash, James Taylor, Mac Davis, Merle Haggard, Alan Jackson, John Denver, Randy Travis, Linda Ronstadt, Tom T. Hall, the Bolshoi Ballet, Olivia Newton John, Neil Diamond, Fleetwood Mac, KISS, Ike and Tina Turner, Garth Brooks, Charlie Pride and many more.

"People have been good to me," Hubbard said. "I like people. I love my students. That's what keeps me still here."



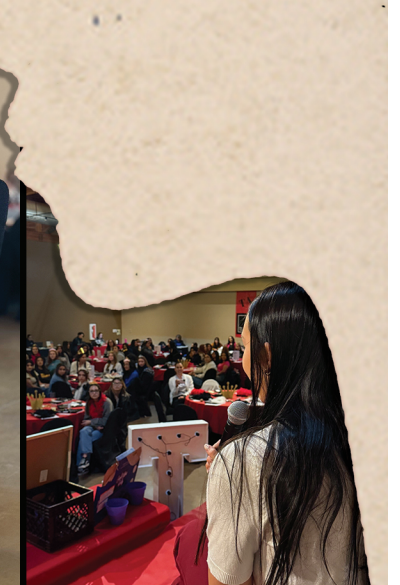
CONGRATULATIONS MOM! KICKING ASS AND TAKING NAMES FOR 97 YEARS!



108 E. Wyatt Drive
Las Cruces, NM
(575) 526-8884

The
Association
Women's Group

We Develop Strong Women



JOIN
NOW



Theassociationwomensgroup.com/membership