



The Sky Center

New Mexico Suicide Intervention Project

Our mission is to meet the challenge of youth suicide in Santa Fe and Northern New Mexico through lasting solutions that encourage resiliency, courage, connection and hope.

NEWSLETTER | FALL 2024



The gang's all here! "Suicide Workout 505" Founders John Barela and Stephen Arguelles pictured with community members who came together to raise funds for The Sky Center/New Mexico Suicide Intervention Project.

Photo: Megan Marunowski

Putting Some Muscle Behind Fundraising!

September was National Suicide Awareness Month as we shared in The Sky Center/New Mexico Suicide Intervention Project's advertisement describing our services in the *Santa Fe New Mexican*. Two community members took the message to heart and organized fundraisers on September 29th to benefit The Sky Center/NMSIP.

John Barela and Stephen Arguelles founded "Suicide Workout505" four years ago. John provided background on the event, "I can't believe we have been holding these workouts for the past four years! It all started from a desire to get involved with an event that promotes Suicide Awareness and Mental Health. When we couldn't find an existing event, we decided to create our own Workout. Participation has grown year after year!" This year it also expanded to include Workouts in Kansas City, MO and Tulsa, OK.

Stephen explained why the workout format was adopted, "We have found community in the gym. We come together: men, women and children. We want to get out the message that they're not alone when it comes to mental health. There is no one who hasn't been touched by suicide – maybe they've experienced someone personally, or know a family member or a friend that has been affected by suicide. They share their stories with us, and we want to point them to some resources that might be helpful to them."

"We ask the participants to pair up in teams of two for motivation; symbolizing that in life, we need to lean on each other," said John. Megan Marunowski, an intern in the Graduate and Advanced Studies Program at The Sky Center participated in the event and commented "on what a lovely group of people participated in the rigorous event."

John explained the workout program, "Given the statistic that there is a suicide every 11 minutes, we designed the workout around the number 11. There are 11 repetitions of each exercise: Body Squats, Push Ups, Sit Ups, Side Laterals, Lunges, Back-to-Back Wall Sits, and 200 Yards of Running."

The philosophy governing the fundraiser is that "each of us makes a difference for all of us." On September 29th at Rio Rancho Sports the 55 participants (and 3 out-of-state) certainly agreed and generated over \$1,600 in pledges to support the mission of The Sky Center/NMSIP.

Also on September 29th, [Dennis Bumgarner](#), LCSW, ACSW, who has been a Clinical Supervisor at The Sky Center/NMSIP for over a decade, was a man on a

mission. A longtime cyclist, Dennis signed up for the Tour of the Rio Grande bike ride in New Mexico.

Dennis used his 100-mile cycling feat to raise awareness and funds for The Sky Center/New Mexico Suicide Awareness Project. He explained his motivation, "As a clinical supervisor in my 11th year at The Sky Center, I am aware of the transformative work done with young people and their families there. I thought I would turn my ride into an opportunity to raise money to support The Sky Center/ NMSIP in its efforts to prevent youth suicide."

So far, The Sky Center/NMSIP has received donations of nearly \$2,000 in support of Dennis' ride.

Contributions are still coming in in support of both John Barela and Dennis Bumgarner's exceptional efforts. If you would like to contribute, please donate through our [secure website](#).

If you would like to organize your own fundraiser to benefit The Sky Center/New Mexico Suicide Intervention Project, please contact Janice Mayer, Grants and Development Director via email at janice@skycenter.nmsip.org.



John Barela, is also the Vice President/Strategic Services Manager at Bank of Albuquerque and helped facilitate a \$5,000 grant to The Sky Center/New Mexico Suicide Intervention Project from the [Bank of Albuquerque Foundation](#). Pictured at the check presentation are (L-R) Janice Mayer The Sky Center/NMSIP's



Despite the road closed sign behind him, Dennis Bumgarner headed out on the open roads of the Tour of the Rio Grande.



Opening Remarks at the September 29th Work out in Rio Rancho. The sun rising over the Sandias was inspiring to all!

Photo: Megan Marunowski

Grants and Development Director,
John Barela, Denise L'Esperance BOA
Senior Community Relations Manager,
Benjamin Garcia BOA Financial
Advisor, Apryl Miller The Sky
Center/NMSIP's Executive Director,
Marisol Peña The Sky Center/NMSIP's
Associate Director and Staff
Therapist, Nate Crayton BOA Vice
President Consumer Area Manager,
and Paloma Sandoval, The Sky
Center/NMSIP's Office Assistant and
Spanish Language Interpreter.

Welcoming the 2024-2025 Class of Graduate and Advanced Studies Interns



The new class of interns pictured in August at their orientation held at the serene [Academy for the Love of Learning](#). Pictured left to right: Gabriela Villalobos, Maya Huffman, Tahoma Wrubleski, Tereza North, Abby Carlin-Le, Beau Scurich, Megan Marunowski, Anna Doten. Advanced Studies participants, Devon M. Corbet and Heather Strasser, who are returning for their second year, are not pictured. Photo: Annai Burrola.

As reported in the recent three-part article in the *Santa Fe New Mexican*, New Mexico is experiencing a severe shortage in behavioral health professionals statewide; only 14.4% of the need is currently being met. This shortage is especially acute in bilingual and bicultural providers according to the CHRISTUS Community Health Needs Assessment.

As part of our core programming, The Sky Center/New Mexico Suicide Intervention Project's rigorous Graduate and Advanced Studies Program helps to address the critical need for qualified behavioral health providers in New Mexico. Interns are New Mexico-based graduate students who remain in the New Mexico workforce after receiving intensive training in the full spectrum of prevention, intervention, and postvention behavioral counseling with oversight by experienced clinical supervisors with decades of family counseling experience.

In August 2024, 10 interns joined the team. On the opening day of their extensive orientation, Executive Director Apryl Miller said, "We are so excited to welcome our new group of interns and share with them our strength-based approach to serving families in our community. We know they will have a life-changing experience at The Sky Center over the next nine months."

Two members of the new cohort, Abby Carlin and Anna Doten, are currently pursuing their Master's Degree in Art Therapy at Southwestern College in Santa Fe. Abby shared her aspirations for the nine-month training program, "I'm hoping to gain greater knowledge and understanding of Family Systems and how to implement art therapy interventions into my practice. I'm also hoping to have stories of hope to remind myself with when the work gets difficult." Anna added, "In my personal worldview and approach to art therapy, I hope that this experience at The Sky Center helps me continue to reconnect the things I once saw as separate and disconnected: in myself, families, and larger systems. I hope to share in the highs and lows of this journey with my fellow interns and make a difference in the community I call home."

Tereza North and Tahoma Wrubleski are also attending Southwestern College. They are enrolled in the Master's Degree in Counseling programming. Tereza, who is also a first-year intern, shared "I'm hoping to grow my skill set by working with a diverse array of clients and challenges at The Sky Center so that my confidence and capacity are strengthened to meet the growing demands of the mental health field to effect positive change." Tahoma is doing double-duty at The Sky Center. He said, "this year I will be balancing two roles, one as the Natural Helpers Coordinator and the other as a Sky Center Intern. As an intern

working with families, I hope to gain greater knowledge of Family Systems Theory in practice, to develop a more cohesive identity as a family therapist, and to cultivate a greater capacity to hold space and support families in accessing their ability to heal together.”

Maya Huffman, Megan L Marunowski, and Gabriela Villalobos are all enrolled in New Mexico Highlands University’s Master’s Degree in Social Work program. Megan and Maya both spoke about the community atmosphere of The Sky Center, with Megan saying “I’m so excited to be a part of this community here at The Sky Center. The safety net of the team approach and feedback culture is something I value in my experience so far. I’m hoping to build confidence in myself and gain knowledge about how to support the multifaceted world of family systems. With a hand-on approach, I feel I am receiving supportive training to become a licensed clinical social worker in New Mexico.” Maya added, “The Sky Center offers such a valuable gift to the community and I’m looking forward to learning as much as I can from expert supervisors while being supported by my team of interns. I hope to work with a diversity of clients and challenges and leave my internship as a culturally humble and competent beginning family therapist, equipped with valuable skills and a curious mindset.” Gabriela Villalobos’ focus is on Bilingual/Bicultural training. She offered, “During my internship at The Sky Center, I hope to gain skills in therapeutic sessions so I can help address the need for Spanish-speaking therapists” in New Mexico.

Beau Scurich represents Western New Mexico University where he is pursuing his Master’s Degree in Social Work. Beau said that his “hope is to build the clinical skill set needed to become an effective therapist.”

Returning for Advanced Studies, Devon Corbet said, “I am anticipating building on the foundational skills that I acquired last year and hope to further refine my clinical skills in this second, advanced study year at The Sky Year. Deepening my understanding of family systems and working relationally to support families in reducing symptoms is what I am here for in addition to the wonderful supervision.” Her second-year colleague, Heather Strasser, resides in Santa Fe, but is completing her course work through long-distance learning at Syracuse University in New York. Heather said that this year “I am looking forward to experiencing a varied caseload, as well as having the opportunity to work with different supervisors to broaden my training.”

We are delighted to introduce you to such committed family therapists in training and wish them well this year during their internship at The Sky Center/New

Mexico Suicide Intervention Project. If you would like to learn more about the Graduate and Advanced Studies Program, please visit our [website](#).

A Rising Star in The Sky Center Firmament



New Clinical Program Director and Clinical Supervisor Annai Burrola, LCSW

Photo: Marc Forlenza

At the start of the 2024-2025 academic year, [Annai Burrola](#), LCSW, was promoted from Bilingual Supervisor to Clinical Program Director. The Bilingual/Bicultural Supervisor position had been created for her when The Sky Center identified the need for greater support for the bilingual/bicultural interns, as well as the Spanish-language interpreters who assist during family counseling sessions,

In her new role as Clinical Program Director, Annai will oversee hiring and training interpreters, focus on supporting interns, coordinate school and community suicide awareness trainings, supervise the Inner and Outer Life Skills in-school counseling groups, and plan and prepare the materials for the extensive Graduate and Advanced Studies Orientation Program.

A first-generation Mexican American, Annai grew up in a monolingual Spanish household. Her first introduction to English was when she entered the school system in Pre-K. Over the years, she became fluent in both English, and Spanish which was spoken exclusively at home.

After majoring in family studies at the University of New Mexico, she took a position at Growing Up New Mexico as a case manager. Through her work, she met a network of support professionals and realized the need for bilingual specialists. In 2018, she returned to school, obtaining a Master's Degree in Social Work at New Mexico Highlands University in 2020.

One of her Annai's professors at New Mexico was longtime Clinical Program Director at The Sky Center/New Mexico Suicide Intervention Project, [Erin Doerwald](#). "Erin lovingly 'pushed' me to join The Sky Center's Graduate and Advance Studies Program," said Annai. After nine months working with families, "I came to realize that this is how healing and change can happen. I was able to see my path to supporting and impacting my community in Santa Fe and Northern New Mexico."

When asked what the promotion has meant to her, Annai humbly responded, "I think that I am finally realizing that I have what it takes to step into a leadership role. Erin's initial confidence in me at Highlands, and then at The Sky Center, has allowed me to develop my competency and confidence. Erin and Executive Director, [Apryl Miller](#) always believed in my potential, and I've now caught up and accept their belief in my capabilities. Having adopted the values of the agency, the community at The Sky Center has also validated me and made me feel that this is where I belong."

We look forward to Annai's observations, innovations, and contributions to The Sky Center/New Mexico Suicide Intervention Project in her new role.

Business Outlook

First Quarter Business and Corporate Sponsorship Campaign Results Announced!

The Sky Center/New Mexico Suicide Intervention Project is a new Member of the Santa Fe Chamber of Commerce and launched its first business and sponsorship

campaign. We are delighted to welcome our first 14 Sponsors and thank them for their generous support:

Our Growing List of Corporate and Business Sponsors:

Adverti-Zing!

[Alicia's Tortilleria, LLC](#)

Brad Gallegos – [Cardinal Financial](#)

[Gruet Winery](#)

[Hello Wellness Therapy](#)

[Los Alamos National Laboratory Employee Giving Campaign](#)

[Payne's Nurseries & Greenhouses, Inc.](#)

[Pinpoint Ventures, Inc. \(dba Paper Tiger\)](#)

[Positive Energy Solar](#)

[Santa Fe Association of REALTORS®](#)

[Santa Fe Mobile MD](#)

[Santa Fe New Mexican](#)

[Target Circle Community Giving Program](#)

[Thornburg Investment Management](#)

If you would be interested in joining these community-minded businesses as a sponsor, please visit our [website](#) to learn about business benefits, or e-mail Janice@skycenter.nmsip.org for more information.



The Sky Center/NMSIP's Founding Executive Director Apryl Miller. Photo: Zina Jundi

Coming Attraction

Hear [Bridget Dixon](#), President and CEO of the Santa Fe Chamber of Commerce, interview The Sky Center/New Mexico Suicide Intervention Project's Founding Executive Director, [Apyrl Miller](#), on The Business Matters radio show on October 19th 11:00- 12:00pm on 103.7 & 1260 AM KTRC – or on <https://santafe.com/shows/business-matters/>

Listen online! Streaming LIVE @ https://santafe.com/radio_stations/1260-103-7-talk-ktrc/

A Fresh Start for Natural Helpers



Ortiz Middle School Natural Helpers
Fall 2024 Retreat Boys Pictured in
Outside Activity Photo Marc Forlenza



Ortiz Middle School Natural Helper
Students are chosen not only for their
ability to lead but also their ability to
listen Photo Marc Forlenza



Ortiz Middle School Natural Helpers
Fall 2024 Retreat Circle with Flipchart
Observations posted on the wall
Photo Marc Forenza

This fall, [Tahoma Wrubleski](#) returned as Coordinator of the [Natural Helpers](#) peer-to-peer counseling program for the fourth year. We caught up with him after his first few weeks of retreats at [Camp Stoney](#). Tahoma reported, "I was delighted witness how the program has grown since the pandemic with greater numbers of students participating, and with returning students feeling empowered and stepping into leadership roles."

For the upcoming academic year, participating schools include Academy for Technology and the Classics, Aspen Community Magnet School, El Camino Real Academy, Mandela International Magnet School, Milagro Middle School, New Mexico School for the Arts, Nina Otero Community School, and Ortiz Middle School. Each school nominated 20 to 30 students considered leaders within various peer groups to participate as Natural Helpers. Through the program they develop their helping and listening skills, so that they may connect vulnerable peers to trusted adults and other appropriate resources. We're also pleased to welcome new school sponsors, who partnering with their returning co-sponsors, will bring additional support and fresh energy to the school groups.



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