

# NEW MEXICO GENERATIONS

SPRING/SUMMER 2026

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THE INTERVIEW

## Laura and LaDonna Harris

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# NEW MEXICO GENERATIONS

SPRING/SUMMER 2026

## FEATURES

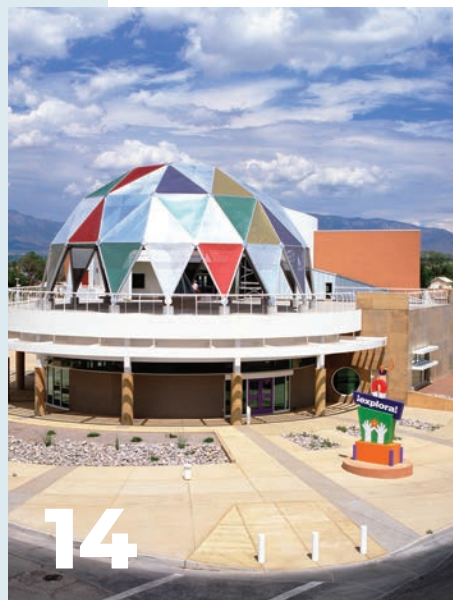
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#### A Life That Shaped a Nation

For decades, LaDonna Harris helped influence national policy and advance Indigenous sovereignty. Now 95, Harris is living with dementia, and while her public work has slowed her influence endures. Her daughter, Laura, reflects on legacy, leadership, and the deeply personal work of caring for the woman who changed the nation.

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*New Mexico's 250 Senior Centers are vital to supporting our state's aging adults, offering a host of opportunities to come together across the state.*

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: UNGELBAH DÁVILA, SHUTTERSTOCK, COURTESY OF EXPLORA!

# Growing Older, Together

**A**s spring turns to summer in New Mexico, the season brings its familiar rhythms: longer evenings, family visits, community gatherings, and outdoor adventures. It's also a time when many of us take stock of our health, our homes, and the people we love.

In my role as Cabinet Secretary of the Aging and Long-Term Services Department, I'm reminded daily that getting older is often discussed as an individual experience, but it's also a collective one. How we age depends not only on personal health or family circumstances, but on the strength of the systems and communities around us. In New Mexico, where family ties run deep and neighbors often step in when formal systems fall short, aging well has often been a shared responsibility.

That truth is especially clear when memory begins to change. Alzheimer's disease and other forms of dementia affect far more than the individual diagnosed. They reshape daily routines, family roles, and long-held expectations about independence. They ask caregivers—often spouses, adult children, or close friends—to take on responsibilities they may never have anticipated.

This issue of *New Mexico Generations* has an extremely powerful interview on what it means to meet those challenges together. In our cover story, "A Life that Shaped a Nation" (page 18) we talk with Laura Harris, the daughter of LaDonna Harris, a longtime social activist and politician, and the founder of Americans for Indian Opportunity (AIO). LaDonna, now 95, has led a remarkable life but recently began suffering from dementia, as so many elders do around the state. Laura discusses the diagnosis openly and honestly, and talks about what it's like to care for her mother while also carrying on her legacy at AIO.

Caregiving in all its forms runs through many of these pages. Whether it's a family member helping out a loved one with mem-

ory loss, a veteran receiving support at home from someone they trust, or a volunteer stepping in to extend the reach of essential programs, caregiving is the backbone of aging services in New Mexico.

In our spotlight on the Office of Alzheimer's and Dementia Care (page 30), you'll see how a state program can make a profound difference for people living with dementia and their family members.

Throughout this issue, there's a common thread that I encounter so often, both at work and with my own aging parents: Aging is not something any of us should have to navigate alone. It requires systems that work and communities that are able to show up. At the Aging and Long-Term Services Department, our responsibility is to help build and strengthen those supports, so that care isn't left to chance and growing older in New Mexico comes with real options.

Aging may be personal, but in New Mexico it has always been something we do together.



**Emily Kaltenbach,**  
**Cabinet Secretary**

*New Mexico Aging and Long-Term Services  
Department*



# New Mexico Aging Services

Helping New Mexicans achieve lifelong independence and health.

## About New Mexico Aging Services\*

Our mission is to serve and inspire the state's older adult community to live active, healthy lives and enhance their connections within their community. The department is a leader in developing programs and building partnerships that support lifelong independence and healthy aging, providing advocacy, support, and resources for seniors and for adults with disabilities.

● For more information about NMAS, visit [aging.nm.gov](http://aging.nm.gov) or follow us on Facebook, Instagram, and X [@NewMexicoAging](https://twitter.com/NewMexicoAging).

## About New Mexico Generations

*New Mexico Generations* is dedicated to enriching the lives of every generation of New Mexican by offering inspiration, resources, and community connection.

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\*New Mexico Aging Services is the forward-facing name for the New Mexico Aging and Long-Term Services Department. We use the Aging Services name in external communications and with constituents in order to better represent the full breadth of work we do and the people we provide services for across the state.

## NM Aging Services Division Overviews

**Adult Protective Services:** APS is committed to protecting the safety of adults who are not able to protect themselves and to promote personal choice and self-determination among the aging. There are five Adult Protective Services regions serving all 33 counties of New Mexico. Its services include investigation of reports of abuse, neglect, and exploitation of vulnerable adults.

● If you suspect an adult is being abused, neglected, or exploited, call Adult Protective Services toll-free at (866) 654-3219.

**Aging Network:** New Mexico's four Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs) provide in-home and community-based services that allow older individuals to remain in their homes and receive support as they get older. Services include home-delivered meals, employment, transportation, healthy aging and prevention programs, and access to the department's network of over 250 senior centers statewide.

**Office of Indian Elder Affairs:** OIEA facilitates supplemental funding and offers technical support to tribal senior centers and adult day services centers that are providing eldercare services. Additionally, OIEA serves tribal elders, and their caregivers, by providing information about available tribal, and ALTSD, support services and resources.

● For more information about OIEA or to sign up for its e-newsletter, email [oiea.info@altsd.nm.gov](mailto:oiea.info@altsd.nm.gov).

**Consumer Elder Rights Division and the Aging & Disabilities Resource Center:** Together, these divisions help elders, persons with disabilities, and caregivers find services and information to help aging New Mexicans live well and independently. This includes assistance with registering for Medicare and Medicaid, paying for prescriptions drugs, assessing long-term care programs and services, and more.

**Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program:** The program's public advocates, all of whom are volunteers, visit assisted-living facilities and nursing homes on a regular basis, advocating for residents' rights, investigating complaints or concerns with staff, exploring solutions, and ensuring quality of care.

● To report abuse, neglect, or other concerns, call (866) 451-2901.

**Long-Term Care Division:** The department provides community and caregiver-focused services to New Mexicans. It manages five programs: the Veteran-Directed Care Program, New MexiCare, Care Transition, the Office of Alzheimer's and Dementia, and the Kinship Caregiver Pilot Program.

### Contact NMAS

(800) 432-2080  
[help@altsd.nm.gov](mailto:help@altsd.nm.gov)  
[aging.nm.gov](http://aging.nm.gov)  
[@NewMexicoAging](https://twitter.com/NewMexicoAging)

## Envejecer, en comunidad

**C**uando la primavera deja paso al verano, Nuevo México entra en una época de ritmos ya conocidos: tardes más largas, encuentros familiares, reuniones con la comunidad y aventuras al aire libre. Es también un momento en el que muchos aprovechamos para hacer un balance de nuestra salud, de nuestros hogares y de las personas que queremos.

En mi función de secretaria del gabinete del Departamento de Servicios para Personas Mayores y a Largo Plazo, cada día veo cómo el envejecimiento, que suele considerarse una experiencia individual, es también una experiencia colectiva. La forma en que envejecemos no depende únicamente de la salud personal o de las circunstancias familiares, sino también de la solidez de los sistemas y de las comunidades que nos rodean. En Nuevo México, donde los lazos familiares son muy profundos y los vecinos suelen intervenir cuando los sistemas formales fallan, envejecer bien es, a menudo, una responsabilidad compartida.

Esta realidad se hace aún más evidente cuando la memoria comienza a verse afectada. La enfermedad de Alzheimer y otras formas de demencia no afectan únicamente a la persona que recibe el diagnóstico. Ellas transforman las rutinas diarias, los roles familiares y las expectativas de independencia a largo plazo. Las personas que prestan cuidados —a menudo cónyuges, hijos adultos o amigos cercanos— se ven obligadas a asumir responsabilidades que quizá nunca habrían imaginado.

Este número de *New Mexico Generations* presenta una entrevista muy reveladora sobre lo que significa afrontar esos retos en comunidad. En nuestro artículo de portada, “Una vida que moldeó una nación” (página 18), hablamos con Laura Harris. Ella es la hija de LaDonna Harris, veterana activista social y política y fundadora de *Americans for Indian Opportunity* (AIO). LaDonna ha tenido una vida extraordinaria, pero ahora, a sus 95 años, ha comenzado a mostrar síntomas de demencia, al igual que muchos otros adultos mayores en todo el estado. Laura nos habla del diagnóstico con franqueza y sinceridad y nos cuenta cómo es cuidar de su madre a la vez que perpetúa su legado en AIO.

El cuidado en todas sus formas recorre muchas de estas páginas.

Tanto si se trata de un integrante de la familia que asiste a un ser querido afectado por la pérdida de memoria, como de un veterano que recibe cuidados en su hogar por parte de una persona de su confianza, o de una persona voluntaria que interviene para ampliar el alcance de los programas esenciales, el cuidado de otras personas constituye la columna vertebral de los servicios para personas mayores de Nuevo México.

En nuestro artículo destacado sobre el Centro de Atención para el Alzheimer y la Demencia (página 30), podrán ver la gran diferencia que supone contar con un programa estatal para las personas con demencia y sus familiares.

El hilo conductor de esta edición es algo que veo muy a menudo, tanto en el trabajo como con mis propios padres, ya mayores: envejecer no es algo que debamos afrontar solos. Para ello, se necesitan sistemas que funcionen y comunidades presentes. En el Departamento de Servicios para Personas Mayores y a Largo Plazo tenemos la responsabilidad de ayudar a crear y reforzar estas estructuras de apoyo, de modo que la atención no quede librada al azar y que envejecer en Nuevo México venga acompañado de opciones reales.

Envejecer puede ser un proceso personal, pero en Nuevo México siempre ha sido un camino que transitamos juntos.

Cordiales saludos,



**Emily Kaltenbach,**  
secretaria del gabinete

*Departamento de Servicios para Personas Mayores y a Largo Plazo de Nuevo México*



# Servicios para Personas Mayores de Nuevo México

Acompañamos a las personas de Nuevo México para que puedan gozar de independencia y buena salud durante toda la vida.

## Acerca de los Servicios para Personas Mayores de Nuevo México\*

Nuestra misión es servir e inspirar a las personas mayores del estado para que lleven una vida activa y saludable y para que establezcan vínculos sólidos con la comunidad. El departamento es pionero en la creación de programas y de alianzas que favorecen la independencia a lo largo de toda la vida y el envejecimiento de forma saludable, ofreciendo protección, asistencia y recursos para personas mayores y adultos con discapacidades.

● Para obtener más información sobre estos servicios, consulte el portal [aging.nm.gov](http://aging.nm.gov) o síganos en Facebook, Instagram y X (@NewMexicoAging).

## Acerca de la revista New Mexico Generations

*New Mexico Generations* busca enriquecer la vida de todas y cada una de las generaciones de Nuevo México, ofreciéndoles inspiración, recursos y oportunidades para conectar con la comunidad.

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\*Servicios para Personas Mayores de Nuevo México es el nombre que utilizamos para referirnos al Departamento de Servicios para Personas Mayores y a Largo Plazo de Nuevo México. Usamos este nombre en las comunicaciones externas y con la población en general para reflejar completamente el alcance de nuestro trabajo y representar mejor a quienes prestamos servicios en todo el estado.

## Información general sobre el Departamento de Servicios para Personas Mayores de Nuevo México

### Red para Personas Mayores:

Las cuatro Agencias de Área para Personas Mayores de Nuevo México prestan servicios domiciliarios y comunitarios que permiten que las personas mayores puedan permanecer en sus hogares y recibir asistencia durante la vejez. Estos servicios comprenden comidas a domicilio, empleo, transporte, programas para el envejecimiento saludable, programas de prevención y acceso a una red con más de 250 centros para la tercera edad en todo el estado.

### Oficina de Asuntos de Personas Mayores Indígenas (OIEA, sigla en inglés):

La misión de la OIEA es coordinar y potenciar un sistema de servicios que empodere a las personas mayores de la comunidad indígena estadounidense, brindándoles asistencia y recursos para llevar una vida saludable con alegría, respeto y dignidad en sus comunidades tribales. Estos servicios comprenden comidas en los Centros Tribales para Personas Mayores, comidas a domicilio, transporte, tareas domésticas y oportunidades de ejercicio físico para mantenerse en forma.

● Para obtener más información sobre los servicios de la OIEA, escriba a [oiea.info@altsd.nm.gov](mailto:oiea.info@altsd.nm.gov).

### Departamento de Derechos del Consumidor para la Tercera Edad y Centro de Recursos para Personas Mayores y Adultos con Discapacidades:

Estos dos departamentos trabajan de forma conjunta para ayudar a los adultos mayores, a las personas con discapacidad y a quienes los asisten a encontrar

servicios e información para que puedan llevar una vida saludable e independiente. Entre otras cosas, los ayudan con los trámites de inscripción en Medicare y Medicaid, a pagar los medicamentos recetados y a evaluar los programas y servicios de atención a largo plazo.

### Programa de Defensoría del Pueblo:

Este programa cuenta con defensores públicos, todos voluntarios, que visitan periódicamente los centros geriátricos y las residencias para personas mayores con el fin de defender los derechos de quienes residen en ellos, investigar denuncias o problemas con el personal, buscar soluciones y garantizar la calidad de la atención.

● Para denunciar maltrato, abandono u otros asuntos, llame al 866-451-2901.

### División de Cuidado a Largo Plazo:

el departamento brinda servicios centrados en la comunidad y en los cuidadores para habitantes de Nuevo México. Administra cinco programas: el Programa de Cuidado para Veteranos, New MexiCare, el Programa de Transición de Cuidados, la Oficina de Alzheimer y Demencia y el Programa Piloto para Familiares que Prestan Cuidados.

### Póngase en contacto con los Servicios para Personas Mayores de Nuevo México

800-432-2080

[help@altsd.nm.gov](mailto:help@altsd.nm.gov)

[aging.nm.gov](http://aging.nm.gov)

[@NewMexicoAging](https://www.instagram.com/NewMexicoAging)



● A new law, affecting seniors across the state, took effect in January.

## A Heads Up for SNAP Customers Over 50 in New Mexico

**I**f you or someone you know uses SNAP to help buy groceries, there's a new federal law that may impact you.

The recent law expands work and activity reporting requirements for SNAP. For the first time, adults aged 55 to 64 may need to meet these rules to keep their food benefits. The new rules began in January and will take effect when you apply for SNAP or renew your case.

### What This Means

If you're between 18 and 64, able to work, and do not care for a child under 14, you may need to show 80 hours each month of work, training,

or volunteering. This doesn't mean you need a full-time job. Many people meet the requirement through part-time work programs or community service.

People who are 65 or older, have a disability, are pregnant, care for someone, are in treatment, or attend school are exempt from this new requirement. Native Americans and some New Mexico communities are also excepted.

### Why People Are Concerned

In the past many older adults, veterans, and people experiencing homelessness did not have to meet these rules. Under the new law, those

automatic exemptions are gone. That's why it's important to check your situation early to make sure your benefits aren't affected.

### You Have Time and Support

The state will not apply these rules until your next SNAP renewal after January 1, 2026. If you're unsure where you fall, you can get help now to better understand how you may be impacted.

Visit [hca.nm.gov/snaphchanges](http://hca.nm.gov/snaphchanges), call (800) 283-4465, or stop by an HCA Income Support office. Staff can explain the rules in plain language, help you report hours, or confirm that you qualify for an exemption.

Food is basic to health and dignity. Even though these rules are coming from Washington, D.C., New Mexico is committed to helping people keep the support they need.

# Family time.



Nestled in the picturesque mountains of southern New Mexico, Ruidoso offers more than just a getaway, it's a way of reconnecting. Gather multiple generations to spot elk and wildlife in their natural habitat, explore scenic trails, browse distinctive galleries and shops, and savor exceptional dining. Then retreat to cozy fireplaces and mountain views. Whether you're seeking outdoor adventure or relaxed togetherness, Ruidoso invites you to discover memories that span generations.



[DiscoverRuidoso.com](https://DiscoverRuidoso.com)



● **From top:** The Gathering of Nations Powwow will conclude after 43 years this April.

## Honoring Tradition at the Gathering of Nations

**F**or the past 43 years, the Gathering of Nations Powwow, in Albuquerque, has brought together Native communities from across North America to celebrate culture, tradition, and connection. This year’s event, however, will be its last. Organizers are calling it “The Last Dance” (April 24–26). Featuring traditional drum groups, colorful regalia, artisan markets, cultural presentations, and the crowning of Miss Indian World,

the powwow has always reflected the living heritage of Indigenous peoples. This inter-tribal international event also reflects the representation of generations. Some who began singing and dancing at this powwow as youth and now carry tribal elder wisdom.

This year is a great, final opportunity to honor tradition and experience one of New Mexico’s most powerful cultural gatherings. For more details on specific events, visit [gatheringofnations.com](http://gatheringofnations.com).



### Activity Spotlight: New Mexico Senior Olympics

Year after year, the New Mexico Senior Olympics bring familiar faces and competitors together in the spirit of healthy aging. Designed to promote physical fitness, friendly competition, and community connection, this statewide program offers a full calendar of sporting events for seniors of all abilities. Whether you enjoy individual challenges like archery and swimming or team events like volleyball and softball, there’s something for everyone. Local games hosted in communities throughout the state give participants a chance to

compete, make new friends, and stay healthy year-round. Successful competitors can advance to New Mexico’s Summer and Winter Games, which bring athletes together from around the state to celebrate athletic skill, vitality, and camaraderie. More than a competition, the Senior Olympics encourages lifelong health and connection among older adults. This year, the Senior Olympics State Summer Games run June 17–21, and the State Bowling Tournament is July 22–24. To learn more about both events and to participate, visit [nmseniorolympics.org](http://nmseniorolympics.org).

COURTESY OF GATHERING OF NATIONS

# Celebrate Volunteers in New Mexico this April

**A**pril is both National Volunteer Month (volunteer.gov) and includes National Volunteer Week, this year the 19–25. As such, it's the perfect opportunity to recognize the people who quietly strengthen communities throughout New Mexico by showing up, lending a hand, and sharing their time. From delivering meals and providing transportation to offering peer support, advocacy, and administrative help, volunteers play a vital role in helping older adults and individuals with disabilities remain connected, supported, and independent.

Around the state, volunteers are a steady presence behind many essential services. Programs supported by New Mexico Aging Services are just one example of how volunteer engagement helps extend care, information, and dignity to those



● Volunteering has benefits not only for the people it serves, but for those volunteering, too.

who need it most. This month is also an opportunity to thank the thousands of New Mexicans who already give their time so generously—your contributions matter, and they make a difference every day.

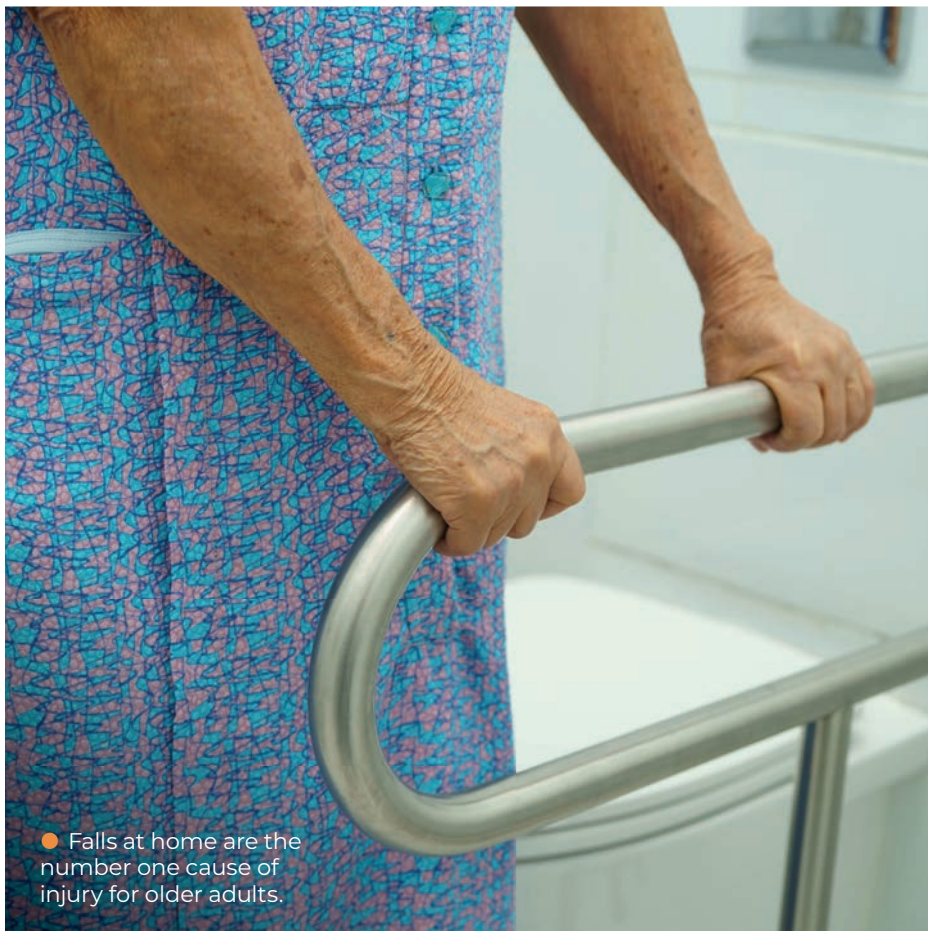
For those considering volun-

teering, it's never too late to start. Whether you have an hour a week or a few hours a month to give, your experience and compassion are needed. To learn more about volunteering in New Mexico, visit [aging.nm.gov](http://aging.nm.gov) or call **(800) 432-2080**.

## Flip the Script on Aging: Older Americans Month

Observed each May, Older Americans Month honors the contributions, achievements, and ongoing impact of older adults nationwide. This year's theme, Flip the Script on Aging, encourages communities to challenge outdated stereotypes and recognize aging as a time of purpose, possibility, and continued engagement. For older New Mexicans, the month is an opportunity to celebrate resilience, connection, and the many ways people aged 50 and over strengthen families and communities. To learn more and discover how Older Americans Month is being observed around the country, visit [acl.gov/oam](http://acl.gov/oam).





● Falls at home are the number one cause of injury for older adults.

## Budget-Friendly Fixes for Aging in Place

*Simple home updates that improve safety without costly renovations.*

**T**here's no place like home, and most of us want to stay there as long as possible. But as we age, the house we've lived in for decades can become more challenging: A slippery tile floor. A too-low toilet. A throw rug in the hallway. Familiar features can turn into serious hazards without the right precautions.

The good news? Making your home safer doesn't mean making it look like a hospital, and it doesn't have to drain your savings. Stacie Johnson-Davis knows this better than most. A registered nurse and a native New Mexican, she cofounded Home Modification Solutions in 2014, com-

bining her medical background with construction expertise to help people live independently.

"It's really about being safe in your own home," says Davis. "Wouldn't you rather make a few small changes and be able to stay where you are? That's what people really, really want."

### Don't Let Your Ego Cost You

One of the biggest barriers Davis encounters isn't financial—it's psychological. At a recent community event, she spoke with seniors using canes and walkers who brushed off her suggestions for small, easy changes now rather than larger, more

expensive ones later.

"I was talking to them about grab bars or small ramps, and they're like, 'Oh yeah, I don't need that yet,'" she recalls.

Davis understands that reluctance but tries to reframe home modifications as empowerment, not defeat. "Encouraging people to recognize that these decisions actually allow them to stay home safely is key," she says. Her advice: Don't wait for a fall to take action. After an injury, changes are often required immediately, and they're almost always more expensive.

### Start in the Bathroom

Falls are the number one cause of injury for older adults at home, and the bathroom is where many of them happen. Fortunately, the fixes with the biggest impact are also among the most affordable.

"Grab bars are probably the least expensive and most important safety feature people can add to their home," Davis says.

Proper installation is critical. Well-meaning family members sometimes put up grab bars without anchoring them into wall studs, which means they can pull out of drywall when needed most. Davis also notes that the bars no longer have to look clinical; they're available in bronze, nickel, and other finishes that blend seamlessly with modern bathrooms.

She also cautions that a beautiful renovation isn't always a safe one. Davis recalls her mother-in-law's shower remodel, completed by a contractor not experienced with the needs of aging clients. "When he finished, it was beautiful," she says, "but it was actually more dangerous than what she had before." Slippery tile and poorly placed glass made the space riskier. The right contractor understands both safety and aesthetics.

Davis recommends the following affordable bathroom upgrades: **Install grab bars** near the toilet and in the shower, anchored into studs. An ADA-height toilet (17–19 inches from floor to seat) makes sitting and stand-

**“Wouldn’t you rather make a few small changes to your house and be able to stay where you are? That’s what people really, really want.”**

—STACIE JOHNSON-DAVIS

ing easier. If replacing a toilet isn’t feasible, grab bars provide essential support.

**Add a shower chair** and a handheld, adjustable showerhead mounted lower on the wall. This is often easier and more affordable than replacing a tub, even if a curbless shower may be needed later.

**Apply a nonslip coating** to existing floor tile, which can become slick. It’s safer and often cheaper than replacing flooring or relying on rugs.

**Lower your water-heater temperature** to reduce risk of scalding, as heat sensitivity decreases with age.

### **Next, Address Other Common Problem Areas**

**Kitchen:** Reorganize frequently used items so they’re at countertop height. Repeatedly climbing a step stool to reach upper shelves is a fall waiting to happen. Replace round cabinet knobs with loop- or bar-style handles, and swap twist faucets for lever or motion-sensing models, since grip strength decreases with age. The same applies to round doorknobs throughout the house—lever handles are easier for everyone.

**Living areas:** For those who struggle to rise from a chair, motorized lift recliners—available through medical-equipment providers and at many furniture stores—can help users move from seated to near standing at the push of a button. A lower-cost alternative is a set of furniture risers, which permanently elevate chairs to make sitting and standing easier.

**Stairs:** Install handrails on both sides of staircases, and make sure there’s strong lighting at the top and the bottom. At some point, many older adults

decide that living on the ground floor is the way to go, so consider moving your bedroom to avoid unnecessary stairs. For those with mobility challenges, hallway handrails can provide additional support in other areas of the home.

### **Look for Low-Cost Fixes Throughout the Home**

Many of the most effective adjustments cost little or nothing at all.

**Remove throw rugs:** “Rugs are the number one tripping hazard in the home,” Davis says. As we age, we tend to shuffle rather than lift our feet, and a bunched rug can cause an instant fall.

**Boost your lighting:** Vision naturally dims with age. Replace bulbs with brighter options, and consider motion-activated lights in hallways. Strong lighting at the top and the bottom of stairs is especially important.

**Mark stair edges:** If carpet and flooring are similar in color, it’s easy to misjudge the last step. Accent tape along stair edges provides a simple visual cue. “We think we know our house,” Davis says, “but sometimes we’re off by a step or two.”

**Eliminate cords and wires:** Cables

running across floors are a common tripping hazard. If a cord is necessary, cover it with an inexpensive cord protector so it doesn’t move. Also, watch for small steps—such as between the garage and the house—that can easily catch someone off guard.

**Wear proper footwear indoors:** Backless slip-ons can cause feet to slide out during a stumble. Form-fitting slippers with heel straps or lightweight indoor shoes are much safer.

### **Know Your Financial Resources**

Medicare doesn’t currently cover home modifications, but several programs can offset the cost of safety upgrades:

- Albuquerque and Rio Rancho offer grab-bar installation and other assistance for qualifying residents. You can find out more and contact the senior-services department directly at [cabq.gov/seniors](http://cabq.gov/seniors).
- New Mexico LTSS Medicaid provides eligible members up to \$6,000 every five years for home modifications, enough to cover a ramp or a shower conversion. Contact your care coordinator to check eligibility.
- Veterans Affairs benefits offer home-modification assistance for qualifying veterans with service-connected disabilities. You can find your local VA location through [va.gov](http://va.gov).

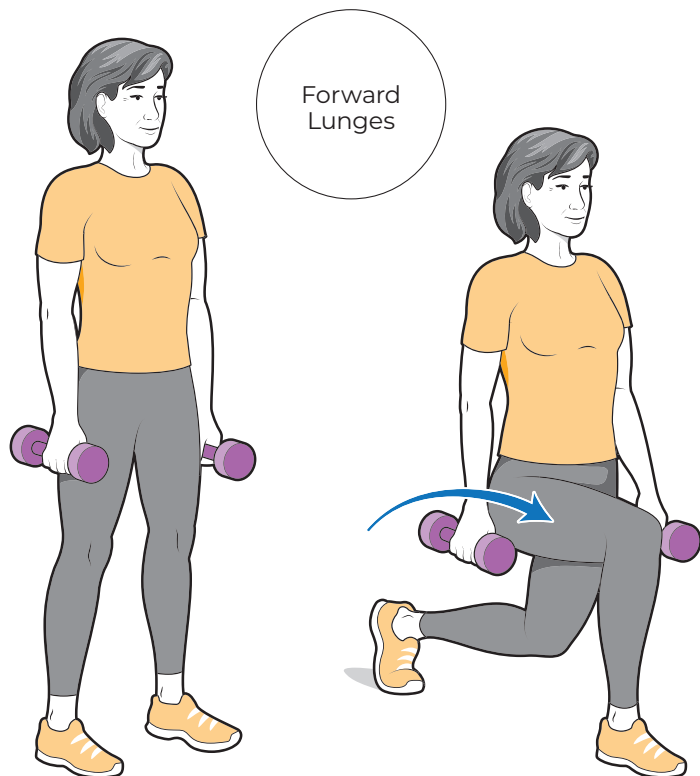
Your home has kept you safe for years. With a little planning—and the right help—you can make sure it continues to do so for many more.

### **If the Worst Happens**

Even with every precaution in place, falls can still occur. Davis’s top recommendation is simple: Take your phone into the bathroom with you.

“I’ve heard horror stories where people fell in the bathroom and were there for days because no one knew,” she says. “They lived alone and didn’t have their phone with them.”

Wearable emergency-response devices are also worth considering—as long as you remember to put it on. “It can be the difference between getting help right away or being stuck for a long time before someone realizes you’ve fallen,” Davis says. Make sure you always have an easy way to call for help.



# Strength for Real Life

*Simple exercises that help you stay steady, strong, and independent as you age.*

**By Marjorie Korn**

**W**e've all heard the warnings that we lose muscle mass as we age. The effects of this are obvious when you go on a longer hike or need to move a piece of furniture. But muscle loss also needs to be understood in everyday terms. How many times have you hauled a week's worth of groceries from the trunk of your car to the kitchen with no one around to help? What if your grandchild wandered too close to the edge of a koi pond—would you have the strength to pull them back? Can you do everything you want to do around the house, including putting away a stand mixer? Independence relies on being able to handle these moments safely. And for anyone north of fifty, bone and muscle health deserve serious attention. The good news: Strength training supports both.

"It's important for seniors to have strength for daily tasks," says Gary Schneider, a National Academy of Sports Medicine–certified personal trainer and the owner of Santa Fe Senior Fit. "Getting out of your car is essentially a seated squat. Lifting a cast-iron skillet onto a shelf is an overhead press. Stepping out of a bathtub resembles a side lunge. All of these require grip strength, good balance, and strong muscles." Strength training can also help slow age-related bone-density loss. Among adults over fifty, about 44 percent have been diagnosed with osteopenia, and ten million Americans have osteoporosis. (Both conditions are more common in women than in men.) The likelihood of bone-density issues increases with age.

If you're new to strength training, or if it's been a while since you've

lifted weights, the key is to focus on foundational movement and start light. Don't be surprised if these exercises feel like cardio, too; they're compound movements that challenge multiple muscle groups at once, including the heart. Take your time.

To ensure safety, Schneider begins with balance and mobility work before adding strength tools like dumbbells. He also recommends working with a trainer or an experienced friend who can help clarify your goals, assess your starting point, and build a personalized plan. If you're ready to begin, the following movements provide a solid foundation.

Remember: Proper form and balance come before adding weight. Stay at Level 1 until you feel completely confident in the movement. Doing these exercises in front of a mirror can help you check your form.

## FORWARD LUNGES

**Level 1:** Stand sideways next to a wall counter and use your hand for balance. Step one foot forward and lower the opposite knee toward the floor, tapping it down if you can. Keep the front knee stacked over the foot. Pause, then press through the front heel to return to standing. Complete eight to ten repetitions, then switch sides. Rest and repeat two or three times.

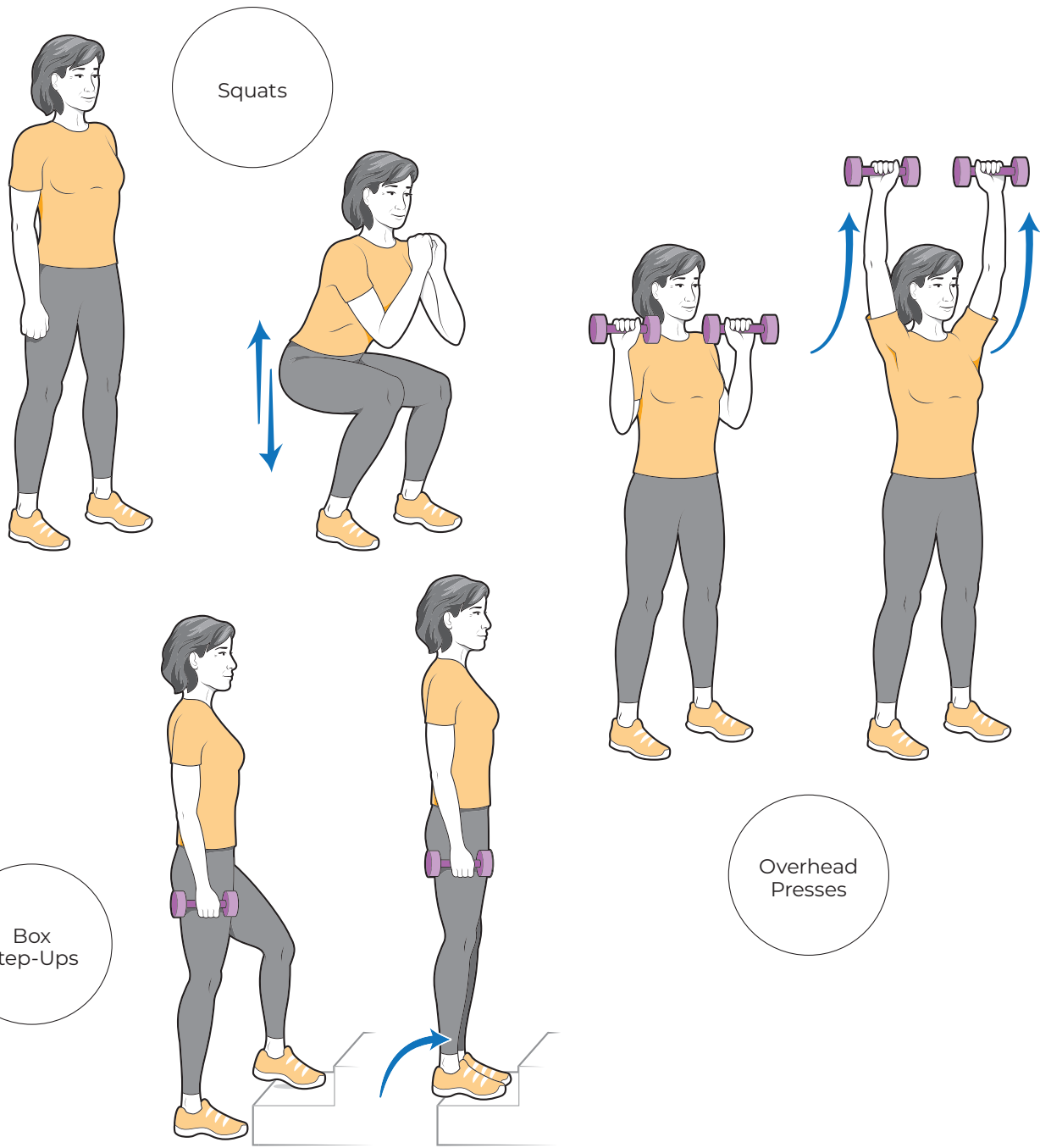
**Level 2:** Perform the movement without using your hand for balance. When that feels steady, add light dumbbells.

**Level 3:** Increase the weight and vary the movement with side or reverse lunges.

## SQUATS

**Level 1:** Sit on a chair with your feet flat on the floor, shoulder width apart. Keep your chest up and your back straight as you stand, engaging your glutes. Place your hands on your thighs for assistance if needed. Complete eight to ten repetitions, then rest. Repeat two or three times.

**Level 2:** Stand with feet hip width apart and lower yourself as if sitting down in a chair. Use the wall or a counter for balance if needed. Return



to standing by squeezing your glutes. When the movement feels solid, add light dumbbells. Increase repetitions before adding weight.

**Level 3:** Progress to heavier weights and complete eight to twelve repetitions per set.

### OVERHEAD PRESSES

**Level 1:** Stand while holding a dowel or broomstick across your chest, with hands slightly wider than shoulder width apart. Start with the stick just below your chin, palms facing forward. Press it overhead until your arms are

fully extended, then return to the starting position. Complete eight to ten repetitions, then rest. Repeat two or three times.

**Level 2:** Switch to light dumbbells and repeat the movement, focusing on posture and smooth control. Increase reps before increasing weight.

**Level 3:** Gradually add weight, and perform eight to twelve repetitions per set.

### BOX STEP-UPS

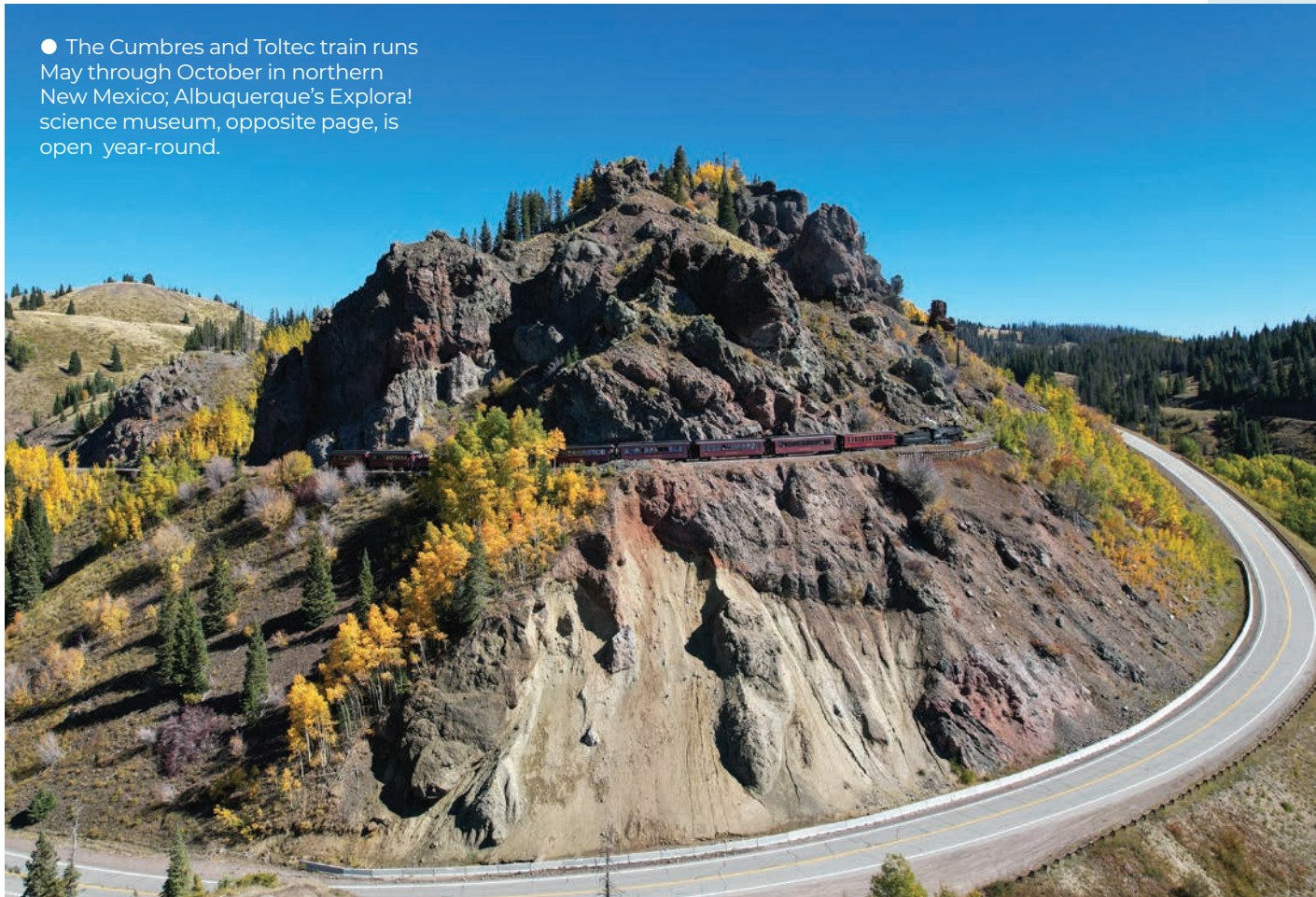
**Level 1:** Stand at the base of a staircase and hold the handrail for balance. Step

up with one foot, then bring the other foot up to meet it. Step back down to starting position. Complete 12 to 15 repetitions on one side, then switch. As balance improves, let go of the handrail.

**Level 2:** Add a light dumbbell in one or both hands. Focus on steady footing and higher reps before increasing weight.

**Level 3:** Increase the height with an aerobic step or box, using the wall for balance if needed. When the movement feels easy, add dumbbells and increase weight gradually.

- The Cumbres and Toltec train runs May through October in northern New Mexico; Albuquerque's Explora! science museum, opposite page, is open year-round.



# Summer Adventures for the Whole Family

*Whether you're marveling at fossils, riding a historic train, or exploring a desert ecosystem, these intergenerational day trips are sure to delight every member of your family.*

## Northwest

### **Cumbres and Toltec Scenic Railroad, Chama**

This historic steam-powered train, which winds its way through the rugged San Juan Mountains, isn't just a locomotive ride; it's a journey through time. The trip is a way for adults to relive the golden age of rail travel and show kids the sheer novelty of riding in a train car. The original route was constructed in 1880 to serve the silver mines high up in the mountains, which means that

today it offers unparalleled views of New Mexico's alpine forests, framed by dramatic canyons and ridgelines. The scenic railroad operates five narrow-gauge steam locomotives, all refurbished with painstaking care, and there are several ticket options. The Chama to Antonito segment, with a return bus ride, is a great option in summer. This is an all-day adventure, so plan accordingly, and savor the opportunity to slow down and enjoy the journey together.

**Tickets:** There is a 5 percent dis-

count for AARP members, and prices are reduced for children under 12 and toddlers, making this an affordable outing for the whole family. The season starts on May 23, and ticket prices vary by day and route, starting around \$120.

## Northeast

**Mesalands Community College's Dinosaur Museum and Natural Science Laboratory, Tucumcari**  
For families with budding paleon-

COURTESY OF CUMBRES AND TOLTEC SCENIC RAILROAD

tologists, the Dinosaur Museum in Tucumcari is a treasure trove of prehistoric wonders. The museum cultivates specimens from local dig sites, and the exhibits feature both replicated and original fossils, including a rare 40-foot-long *Torvosaurus*, a relative of the *Tyrannosaurus rex*. The museum's fun, informative approach makes it engaging for kids, while grandparents will appreciate the educational depth—including an impressive collection of minerals sourced from around the world—and a chance to learn alongside their loved ones. The building's

manageable size allows for a relaxed visit, and the indoor setting makes it a great option for hot summer days.

**Tickets:** Discounts for seniors (\$8) and kids under 11 (\$6) mean it's a perfect warm-weather outing.

#### *Metro ABQ*

#### **Explora! Science and Children's Museum, Albuquerque**

For Albuquerque parents, this hands-on science museum near Tiguex Park may be familiar, but it's worth taking the whole family, even if they've been before. Unlike traditional museums, Explora! encour-

ages kids to touch, build, and experiment with its exhibits. In short, it turns learning into an adventure, with more than 250 exhibits focused on science, technology, and art. From creating giant bubbles to constructing bridges, the activities are designed to engage curious minds of all ages. Grandparents can join in the fun or watch loved ones' faces light up with discovery, and the museum's open layout makes it easy to move through the exhibits at a leisurely pace. On a nice summer day, you can pair a visit to the museum with a walk around Old Town Albuquerque,





● **Clockwise from top right:** Native flora, a javelina, and a resident owl are on view at Living Desert Zoo and Gardens State Park.

located just around the corner.

**Tickets:** Seniors can take advantage of discounted admission (\$8), and entry for kids 11 and under is \$7.

**Southeast**

**Living Desert Zoo and Gardens State Park, Carlsbad**

This isn't a traditional zoo; it's a carefully curated experience that allows families to see New Mexico's native flora and fauna up close. Easy walking trails lead visitors through exhibits featuring bobcats, prairie dogs, and snakes, as well as a variety of desert plants. The park's interpretive programs add an educational layer that appeals to both kids and adults. Summer mornings are the perfect time to visit, as slightly cooler temperatures make the outdoor

trails more comfortable to navigate. The park is compact enough to be manageable for older adults and grandparents, but is filled with enough variety to keep kids entertained. There are also several shaded areas where you can take a break and enjoy the scenery. Check the schedule for ranger-led programs, which provide fascinating insights into the animals and plants you'll encounter.

**Tickets:** Admission is just \$5 for children under 12. Adults and seniors are \$10.

**Southwest**

**New Mexico Farm and Ranch Heritage Museum, Las Cruces**

Spread across 47 acres, the New Mexico Farm and Ranch Heritage Museum features outdoor exhibits,

live animals, and demonstrations of traditional farming techniques. It also has indoor exhibits that include a gallery area with artworks and the interactive Dairy Spot: Discovery Center, where families can learn about the long history of the dairy industry in the state. The museum's exhibits are both educational and fun, making it a hit with visitors of all ages—especially the live demonstrations. A pleasant summer day is a great time to explore the outdoor exhibits, including the sheep and goat barn and the Historic Green Bridge, the second-oldest highway bridge in New Mexico.

**Tickets:** Discounts for seniors (\$6) and kids under 17 (\$5) make this an affordable day trip for families.



● **From left:** Sheep shawl demonstration at Farm and Heritage Museum; crossing the historic Green Bridge.



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THE INTERVIEW

A Life  
That  
Shaped  
a Nation

LaDonna Harris transformed American policy.  
Her daughter Laura reflects on that legacy and on caring  
for the woman behind the work. By Ryan Krogh

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PHOTOGRAPHS BY STEVEN ST. JOHN



● LaDonna Harris  
at her home in  
Albuquerque.

For more than half a century, LaDonna Harris operated at the center of American political life, shaping policy not from elected office but through persuasion and a unique ability to connect with people. ¶ A Native American activist and political strategist, she helped redefine how the federal government understands and works with Tribal nations, insisting that Indigenous sovereignty and values belong at the heart of American democracy.

Her record is sweeping. Harris, who lives in Albuquerque, helped return Blue Lake to Taos Pueblo, and played pivotal roles in landmark federal actions including the Menominee Restoration Act and the Alaska Native Claims Act. She was instrumental in embedding formal Indian policy statements inside federal agencies—structural changes that continue to inform relations between Tribal governments and the U.S. today. Through Americans for Indian Opportunity (AIO), the organization she founded in 1970, Harris launched an Indigenous leadership movement whose Ambassadors Program has trained hundreds of leaders from more than 150 tribes in the United States and around the world.

Her influence is so expansive that her papers span three presidential libraries, several speaker of the House libraries, and major academic collections at both the University of Oklahoma and the University of New Mexico, where the LaDonna Harris Native American Collection is widely regarded as one of the most comprehensive archives of modern Native political history.

Now 95, Harris is living with dementia. The public work has waned, but the legacy has not. In this conversation, her daughter Laura Harris reflects on a life spent watching her mother connect people and bend systems. Laura, 65, who is now the executive director of AIO, also speaks about stepping into the role of caregiver, a deeply personal transition that mirrors the experience of many families navigating the aging process.

**What was it like growing up with a mother like yours? It must have been unconventional, to say the least.**

**Laura Harris:** It's true, she was not your average *Leave It to Beaver* mother. [Laughs] My mother was very unusual, and so was my father. They had a really close partnership. My mother didn't go to college or law school, but she worked so my father could. As he was studying, he kind of taught her the things he was learning, and they had discussions about it.

Then, when he got elected to the Oklahoma state senate, she was the only wife who came to the capitol during the session. She acted as a hostess and emptied ashtrays. But through those opportunities, she learned a lot about how politics works.

**Was she always political?**

In her own way. She was one of the key people who created what was called "the group" in my hometown of Lawton, Oklahoma. They were a collection of Native Americans, Anglo-Americans, and African Americans, and they successfully integrated Lawton before the civil rights movement was really underway.

They started having meetings in one another's homes, and sometimes it was the first time a Native person had been in a Black or Anglo person's house, and vice versa. They were just a social group that took on political action and were very successful, and that really kind of launched her advocacy. I think she decid-

ed, "Well, if we can do this, then we can address other Native American issues."

**That's when she founded Americans for Indian Opportunity?**

Yes. It was originally Oklahomans for Indian Opportunity, and it was the first statewide intertribal organization in Oklahoma. They worked on a range of issues. Then my dad, Fred Harris, was elected to the United States Senate and we moved to Washington, and she just continued her role and advocacy.

My dad often told the story that, during a campaign, there was a financial supporter who sat him down and said, "There's just too much LaDonna in the campaign." [Laughs] It never bothered my dad. She was campaigning for him while pregnant with me. She got hate mail for that.

**It must have been hard for her in D.C. during those early years?**

It was very unusual for a white man to be married to a Native American, especially in D.C. We lived in Virginia, just outside Washington, and their marriage was illegal there at the time. In fact, Virginia didn't even really count Native Americans as part of their population. They claimed there were no Native Americans in Virginia. But luckily the *Loving v. Virginia* case took place and we were all legitimized [laughs].

**What was it about your mom—or your parents' relationship—that made her so interested in politics and activism?**

Well, she had a very unique upbringing. She had the good fortune of being raised by her traditional grandparents, who spoke Comanche. So she grew up with traditional Comanche values, and she always credits that upbringing with centering her and her cultural identity. With her cultural identity and Comanche values, that really propelled her to want to make a difference in the world.

**Looking back now and thinking about her accomplishments, are there any that stand out as capturing her vision and impact?**

There's one very relevant example for today. She was instrumental in creating what we call Indian desks in every federal agency, which made each agency adopt an Indian policy statement. She drafted the first statement like that for the Environmental Protection Agency, and then the Department of Energy and the Department of Agriculture. And it's those offices within each department that are protecting the government-to-government relationship today. They're going to the Department of Energy and saying, "Well, the administration can't do that, because we have these policies in place." So that's been an amazing thing, and it's one of the things she talks about the most as one of her accomplishments.

The other accomplishment is AIO's Indigenous-values-based leadership program. We call it the Ambassadors Program. And we now have 350 graduates who represent 150 tribes, 40 states, and six countries. These people are just the most amazing leaders, and they're in every industry and every kind of career mode. A good many of them are really having a strong impact in their industries.

### **What was it like growing up with your parents?**

My parents were really inclusive of us. We had conversations about everything at the dinner table. So my brother was running around saying "I'm illegitimate, I'm illegitimate" when we found out that their marriage wasn't sanctioned.

People were always at our house. We had amazing people that came through our lives because of our parents' work. I knew my mom was a big deal in the Native American community. And really, my mom and dad worked together to help Taos Pueblo get Blue Lake back. That was the first time the federal government had ever returned land to an Indian tribe. And I knew then that she was pretty something. That was in 1970, so I was about nine years old.

### **How did you start working for your mom?**



● Harris with Hubert Humphrey

**"In her own way. She was one of the key people who created what was called 'the group' in my hometown of Lawton, Oklahoma. They were a group of Native Americans, Anglo-Americans, and African Americans, and they successfully integrated Lawton before the civil rights movement was really underway."**

—LAURA HARRIS

That is an interesting story. My mom had gotten a grant from the Kellogg Foundation, because they were working on Indian tribes as regional health care providers. This was probably in 1990. So Kellogg funded that, and there was a reception and a conference in Washington about it.

I was working for the Smithsonian at the time, and my sister happened to be in town. So when my mom got sick with real bad asthma, she asked us if we could take the day off and step in for her. My sister helped facilitate the conference, and I hosted the reception. When my mother came down after the

reception in her pajamas, the program officer said, "LaDonna, how did you do this? How do you have two daughters that could just step in like this?" And she said, "I don't know," and he responded by saying, "Well, if you can figure it out, I'll give you a grant for it."

So she said to me—and eventually convinced me—to quit the Smithsonian and move back to Albuquerque to help create this leadership program for AIO. I talked to my sister and she said, "That sounds like the worst idea I've ever heard, to work for our mother."

I'm glad I didn't listen, because it really turned out to be the most wonder-



● Laura Harris, left, lives with and takes care of her mother with the help of family.

ful thing in the world, to work at AIO and to help carry out that leadership program, and all the graduates who are part of our lives now and part of our work. It's just been really gratifying.

**What was it about your mom that made her so effective?**

We call her the connector in chief. She connects people all the time, even at social events. She'll say, "Oh, so-and-so, I want you to meet so-and-so. They're working on this, and I think they could help you with what you're doing." And soon enough, a new organization would pop up. One of our board members once said that if LaDonna tripped on the sidewalk in New York City, a new foundation would throw money at her and a new organization would come into being.

She has this charisma—it's almost

magic. You can't hardly describe it. People want to be around her. When she makes a speech, people come over afterward and introduce themselves. I never saw her make a presentation where someone didn't come up and say, "Your speech changed my life."

The latest story I heard was Robin Wall Kimmerer. She wrote *Braiding Sweetgrass*, which has become a super bestseller. She's a Native woman with the Leopold Writing Program, in Albuquerque, and she told me that she saw my mom speak at the University of Maryland and it changed the trajectory of her life. She went up to my mom and said she was flailing around with her cultural identity, and my mom gave her a ring from her own hand as a way to say, "You're Native. You're as Native as anybody, and so here's this turquoise ring." Kimmerer said she probably

wouldn't have even published that book or been teaching botany in the way she's doing it now, through her indigeneity, without my mom.

But that's what my mom does. She accepts people for exactly who they are. She finds a way for them to contribute. One of her sayings is "Everybody has medicine." And medicine, for Natives, means our inner strength—our personal talent. She's always been able to bring that out in people and then find a way for them to contribute to the whole.

She seems to have made an impression with a lot of politicians, too.

Hubert Humphrey [the 38th vice president of the United States], was one of her biggest fans. He was always inviting her over to his hideaway in the Capitol. And she got him to work with President Lyndon B. Johnson to do a whole bunch of stuff for Natives. Johnson was really the first president that recognized us as citizens and included us in federal programming through the War on Poverty. So she played a big role in the War on Poverty.

**When you started working at AIO with your mom, what was it like to step into that role?**

Well, I really worried about it. But I've worked for a lot of political candidates, and I like to be the person behind the candidate—giving them the message and then they deliver it. And even though I'm the youngest, I've kind of been in charge of mom.

After events, my father would always tell me, "Go in there and get your mother," because she could never get herself out of an event. People always wanted to talk to her. So my job as a five- or six-year-old would be to say, "Ms. Harris, we have to go to our next appointment." Everybody would laugh, and then I could grab her hand and pull her out.

So it was kind of natural to step in and help her with AIO. Then around 2006, I think I took over as executive director, and she started to do a little bit less, but she still came to the office every day and opened the mail. She did this well into her eighties.

### How has AIO evolved over the years, and what is the focus today?

We were founded out of three great successes—policy shifts in the federal government—and that group of national activists my mom was working with to create change. It was Taos Blue Lake, the Menominee Restoration Act, and the Alaska Native Claims Act that she'd been very active in.

My mom has this innate ability to see what's coming down the pike—what's going to affect tribes in the future. She was early talking about water issues and computers, getting tribes to start using GPS and GIS programming and tracking, and the internet. She served on [Vice President] Al Gore's Information Infrastructure Committee, so we always like to joke that she helped Al Gore start the internet.

But she could see these things coming. So she'd say, "OK, this is what we need to concentrate on right now." She'd get tribal leaders and national activists interested, hold a conference of experts and community people. Her talent was to facilitate community, get a community plan, and then help them figure out how to implement it. After she created the inter-governmental policy for the EPA, she taught the EPA people how to carry out that policy. There had never been a policy like that before.

We facilitated the founding of the American Indian Housing Council. We founded the Council of Energy Resource Tribes, and it really changed the way tribes negotiate contracts with the extractive industry. She helped create the Superfund program, which is supposed to clean up Superfund sites, the majority of which are on Native American land. So every issue you can think of—housing, education, energy—AIO had a role in all of them.

### One of the main programs for AIO became its leadership program?

Yes, it's been so successful. We ended up having 13 cohorts, and two Maori cohorts from New Zealand. We have a sister organization in New Zealand that she created. The first class was in 1993. Right after our first convening, she said,

"We should take it outside of the country," and we did. We went to Mexico, Guatemala, Peru, Bolivia, Ecuador, Japan. We have participants from Japan, Australia, and New Zealand.

Now there's a worldwide Indigenous solidarity movement that led to the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. She saw that coming.

Right now we're concentrating on alumni, but we also started doing local work here in Albuquerque, including a nonpartisan urban Native get-out-the-vote effort in Albuquerque, which has been successful. We're trying to raise visibility that we're 8.2 percent of the population—the highest percentage of any major city—and yet we don't get equity of services for our numbers.

We also do what we call "changing the narrative"—my mom called it Indian 101. She would go before federal agencies and educate them on what tribes can and can't do, what tribal sovereignty means, and how tribes fit into the federal system of governments, like states. She found that to change policy, you had to educate decision-makers, because they didn't learn this anywhere else.

### As you've taken on leadership, what parts of your mom's example have shaped how you lead?

I remember what she told me in high school. She said, "You have to make your own standards." She said her grandmother told her something similar, that her life was so different than hers that she couldn't give her advice. But if she held herself to her own personal standards—had those personal standards—then she'd be OK.

The other thing is she really leads with love and inclusion. She's probably one of the most inclusive people I've ever known. She was able to help people feel fulfilled and lead with love. And I think that's what we try to do at AIO—love and compassion, not getting judgy, never attacking another Native or Native organization. Being as inclusive as we can. Management skills, she was miserable at those. That's where I came in, to organize stuff and keep us organized.

### What else did you learn from watching her work with people?

My father used to say this until the day he died: She read the room.

He would give his speech as a politician, and he'd be worried about himself



● LaDonna (left) with Lady Bird Johnson and House Speaker Carl Albert in 1964.

● LaDonna (far left) at the White House during the Johnson administration.



**“One of her sayings is ‘Everybody has medicine.’ And medicine, for Natives, means our inner strength—our personal talent. She’s always been able to bring that out in people and then find a way for them to contribute to the whole.”**

—LAURA HARRIS

and how he was coming across, but he wasn’t reading the room. Afterward, she could read the room and tell him, “This person you’re going to have to work on. This person is really for you. This person we might have to have over for dinner.”

She was very good at recognizing systems and then how to impact those systems. She’d know who’s in charge, and then how to influence those people so the systems get changed. My parents believed systemic change is possible.

They were successful in systemic change. They were radically optimistic about life and politics. So I grew up with the idea that you can create systemic change.

**Your mom influenced so many people. I read that she adopted actor Johnny Depp. Is that true?**

Yes. This is another great idea she had that I had to figure out how to pull off.

She read an article in *Vanity Fair*, I

think, where he said he’s part Cherokee. If you’re Native American, you hear a lot of family stories like that. She said, “You know, the Cherokees ought to adopt him and make him an honorary Cherokee or help him find his genealogy.” And then she said, “Oh, they’ll never do that, so why don’t we adopt him?”

He was making *The Lone Ranger* out near Laguna Pueblo. We had a cousin who was a cultural adviser to the movie, and one day a woman who worked in the industry called me and said, “Did you know Jerry Bruckheimer’s publicist is trying to get ahold of you?” Johnny had heard my mom wanted to adopt him, and they wanted to do it directly with us. So we did it. We had a traditional ceremony. Our tribal chairman came from Oklahoma, and a lot of folks from Oklahoma came. They made him an honorary Comanche—to this day. He was the marshal of our annual parade, the Comanche Fair parade.

The minute he met her, it was just love. Every time he sees her—though it hasn’t been in a long time—he’ll sit at her feet and hold her hand. We make fun of him, like, “Stop doing that. She’ll want everybody to do that.” But her charisma captured him.

**You live with your mom now, right?**

I moved in about five years ago. We kept her as independent as we could. She lived on her own, then we had somebody come in during the day, and then it finally became apparent that she needed somebody there all the time—so that when she got confused, she wouldn’t be afraid.

**How has your relationship changed since you became her primary caregiver?**

I have been close with her my entire life. She was always my Friday-night date. We’ve traveled the world—along with my son. My son really grew up with her, too. So we’ve been a really good partnership, and moving in with her has definitely made us closer, but it’s also “the long goodbye.” She has moments of cognitive clarity, and we all

COURTESY OF LADONNA HARRIS

look at each other in surprise. Sun-downers time is the worst.

But she has a nice life. She still loves to be around people. It's part of her medicine, part of what makes her her.

**Caregiving for a parent is becoming more and more common. What has it been like for you and what advice would you offer others?**

It's like one of the best and worst things I've ever done. It's very difficult. My life feels like it's on hold sometimes. But she's a national treasure and deserves to be cared for in such a way. And she's generally easy. She gets grumpy. She does not like to be bossed around. She never has.

I have a lot of support, too. My sister comes down every other weekend and once a week for dinner. I have cousins and coworkers and old family friends who come to spend time with her. I often say I'm a woman of a certain age caring for grandkids and parents at the same time. I'm not really a caregiver for my granddaughter, but I spend a great deal of time with her.

Sometimes my granddaughter will look at us like we're crazy when we tell stories about what her great-grandmother did. Like, "I don't think that person could have done what you said she did." But she has a relationship with her, and I know when she grows up she'll say, "Oh yeah, I knew my great-grandparents." And I think that will be significant in her life.

**What helps you day to day?**

I think I'm most successful when I lead with love and hugs and kisses. If I come home stressed out and don't do those little things, the evening is harder.

And doing improv. A friend of mine taking care of her mother said, "I had an improv class in college, and I just fall back on that." Being in their reality, not trying to convince them their reality is wrong, that's been a real thing. Her delusions are almost always centered on packing to go to Washington. If she watches the news too long, she'll say, "They're all messed up in Washington. We've gotta go fix 'em." She'll want to pack.

If I tell her, "No, you don't have a meeting, there's nothing going on," she'll fight it. But if I say, "Oh, they called and I forgot to tell you. They had something come up, so they postponed it." She acts relieved. "Oh good, so we don't have to go?" I say, "Nope." She goes, "Oh, thank goodness."

**Is it also about being present?**

Yeah. It's just being there. It's challenging, but it has funny little rewards too.

This is the first time I've really talked publicly about it. People have asked for interviews, and we just say, "Well, she's in her nineties, she doesn't do interviews or public speaking anymore." We didn't really talk about the dementia, because she was so important to so many people. We kind of protected her for a little while. But now it's like, "That's silly." This is just a stage of life. We're not ashamed of it, and if it helps someone else, we're happy to share.

**She's already impacted so many lives, and yet even now it seems she's leading the way.**

Absolutely. I remember one time I picked her up at the airport. She was coming back from Bolivia, where President Evo Morales had invited her to celebrate the signing of the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. She joined an international group of Indigenous leaders from around the world. When I picked her up, she was so exhausted, but she said, "I could just quit. I could just die right now, because this is just the pinnacle of my career."

She went on for another ten or twenty years after that, but I know she really feels fulfilled, that she made a contribution and had a positive impact.

It's funny, sometimes she doesn't remember much of it. But when we talk about it, she's like, "I did all that?" And I have to remind her, "Yeah, you did all that." ●



● Laura says she's most successful with her mother when she leads with love.

# A Native Gathering Place, Fifty Years On

The Indian Pueblo Cultural Center celebrates five decades of serving Pueblo elders, artists, and communities.

Story and photographs by Ungelbah Dávila

**W**hen Ada Pecos Melton steps into the Indian Pueblo Cultural Center for work each day, she is greeted by familiar sensations drifting up from the restaurant below. “You smell chile, oven bread, and tortillas. You hear the music,” Melton says. “It feeds you.”

Melton, 70, of Jemez Pueblo, has been a tenant at the IPCC since the 1990s. As the president of American Indian Development Associates (AIDA), a consulting firm, she assists tribal governments in blending Indigenous governance systems with Western legal frameworks. The IPCC offers not just an office, but a daily reminder of why the work matters.

A typical workday begins with Melton walking past sculptures honoring Pueblo leaders and through the entrance to the world’s only museum dedicated exclusively to Pueblo history and culture. When visitors come to the museum, set on an 80-acre site, they start their journey with a re-creation of Chaco Canyon, followed by permanent exhibits tracing more than 400 years of colonization, adaptation, and resilience among the region’s Pueblo peoples. For Melton, most days include passing through the circular inner plaza. At its heart is a main stage used for Buffalo and other traditional Pueblo dances. The plaza also serves as a marketplace, where Native artists sell their work directly to visitors.

Each weekend, the space comes alive with drumbeats, ancestral songs, and dancers whose steps follow rhythms older than American history. In every drumbeat, every song, every footstep, the plaza creates an ancient rhythm that is impossible not to feel.

This year is the IPCC’s 50th anniversary, a milestone that marks not just the life of a building, but the enduring sovereignty of the 19 pueblos that created it.

“There are times when you look around and realize this place is bigger than any one person,” Melton says. “But it wasn’t built just for us. It was built for those coming after.”

**IN 1975, CONGRESS PASSED THE** Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act, granting tribal nations the federally recognized authority to operate their own programs and assert sovereignty after generations of U.S. government control. The following year, in August 1976, the 19 pueblos of New Mexico came together to open the Indian Pueblo Cultural Center as a nonprofit organization. The IPCC was not simply a new institution, but a statement of authority, one rooted in culture, governance, and self-definition.

In 1987, the IPCC expanded its mission by adding Indian Pueblo Marketing Inc. (IPMI), a for-profit arm designed to support Native-owned enterprises and tenants like AIDA.



● **Clockwise from top left:**  
Amy Johnson tends to the center's collection of art; an exhibit at the museum; the inner plaza of the IPCC; and Native dancers performing at the center.

On the nonprofit side, the IPCC operates a museum, a library, and cultural and educational programming. On the for-profit side, it houses tenants, the Indian Pueblo Kitchen, a gift shop, the Avanyu Plaza, and the Four Winds convenience store and gas station.

For many Pueblo families, the center is not just an institution; it's a bridge between generations.

Claudia Mitchell, a third-generation potter from Acoma Pueblo and granddaughter of renowned potter Lucy M. Lewis, sees that continuity each time she sets up her booth in the plaza.

"Growing up, I was always around pottery," Mitchell says. "My mother made it, my aunt made it, my grandmother made it. So from a very young age, we were all encouraged to work with the clay."

Her grandmother's work remains part of the IPCC's permanent collection. Years ago, Mitchell and her family gathered at the center to honor Lewis's legacy.

"To just talk about her and what she's done for Acoma pottery, but also to bring her knowledge to the cultural center—that was really special for our family," Mitchell says.

After her mother passed away in 2013, Mitchell made a decision that reshaped her life.

"In 2014, I quit my regular job and decided to become a full-time potter," she says. "I knew no one else in my immediate family was going to take up the craft, and I couldn't just let her clay and her paints and her tools not be used. So I took it up."

Since then, Mitchell has participated in the center's daily artist program, often setting up to sell her wares Friday through Sunday when inventory allows. For artists who work from home without storefronts, the IPCC offers rare visibility.

"Most of us don't have storefronts. We make our stuff at home," she says. "This is one way for us to have that exposure."

For Mitchell, pottery is more than art—it's time made tangible. Traditional Acoma pottery incorporates ground shards from older pots mixed into new clay. "We're bringing that past into the



● Ada Melton has had an office at the IPCC since the 1990s.

**"There are times when you look around and realize this place is bigger than any one person. It wasn't built just for us. It was built for those coming after."**

—ADA PECOS MELTON

present with the new pottery," she says. "And eventually, when those new pots get broken, they'll be reused at some point, so it's just a constant cycle."

That cycle mirrors the mission of the IPCC, which preserves culture while keeping it alive.

"It's amazing that we even have this space," Mitchell says. "To have a museum dedicated to the Pueblo people, that's monumental."

The IPCC also serves as a home for Indigenous enterprise. After earning her master's degree in public administration from the University of New Mexico, Ada Melton found her purpose when tribal leaders around the country began seeking her help in integrating Indigenous and Western judicial systems.

By 1989, she needed office space, but none was available at Jemez Pueblo or with her husband's tribe, at Pueblo of Laguna. Melton approached the IPCC,

arguing that Pueblo entrepreneurs should be prioritized as tenants. Initially, there was no room. About a year later, the executive director called her about the center's new tenant spaces.

"He started off by asking, 'Are you still in business?'" Melton recalls. "I broke my lease and moved in immediately."

Moving into the IPCC felt like a full-circle moment, she says. The center was created to tell Pueblo stories from Pueblo perspectives, and housing Native-led businesses was part of that vision. Melton now works alongside her children in her consulting firm and views the center as part of a larger arc of Pueblo self-determination.

"When we tell our own stories, we're stronger," she says.

**AS THE INDIAN PUEBLO CULTURAL** Center marks its golden anniversary, the celebration looks forward as

much as it looks back. Events will include exhibitions revisiting its founding, performances by Pueblo dance groups, and reflections from past and present leaders.

Mitchell will take part as one of more than 60 Pueblo artists serving as curators for the upcoming *Grounded in Clay* exhibition, running March 20, 2026, through February 21, 2027. The exhibition represents an unprecedented approach to showcasing the art, allowing Pueblo voices to shape how their work is presented.

“To know that these museum settings are actually listening to us, not dictating to us how our culture should be presented, is vital,” Mitchell says.

For Melton and IPCC curator of collections Amy G. Johnson, of Isleta Pueblo, the most meaningful moments are often quiet ones: a child recognizing a relative’s pottery in a display case, an elder sitting in the courtyard, artists setting up booths before dawn, kitchen staff preparing oven bread.

“You don’t just work here,” Johnson says. “You help carry it.”

Johnson began at the center’s front desk 24 years ago, when volunteers shouldered much of the work. Over time, she learned the IPCC was never intended to function like a conventional museum.

Decisions about exhibitions, programming, and even daily operations are weighed against responsibility to community, culture, and history.

“When I first started there was no staff,” Johnson says. “It was just the museum director and a very large crew of volunteers. They were basically running all the different arms of the museum—the programming, the education, the archives, the collections and acquisitions.”

Over the next two decades, elders, artists, historians, and administrators shaped Johnson’s understanding of what the center represents beyond exhibitions and performances. It’s not just a museum or event space; it’s an assertion of sovereignty.

“I had a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree from the University of New Mexico, so the woman they hired as the interim director, after the museum director

passed away, she found out I had an art degree,” Johnson says. “She asked me, would you like to come work with me as my curatorial assistant?”

Over the years, Johnson watched the center expand from art markets and feast-day dances to educational outreach and youth initiatives. School groups from around the state now visit to learn Pueblo history not as a chapter in a textbook, but as a living, ongoing presence.

She has also witnessed generational shifts as younger Pueblo professionals step into curatorial, managerial, and

executive roles once held largely by non-tribal staff. Many students who visit on school trips later return as interns, dancers, or employees, moving on to careers in museum studies, public administration, or tribal governance.

“There’s pride in seeing our own people in those roles,” Johnson says.

Half a century after its founding, the IPCC stands not simply as a museum or event venue, but as proof that sovereignty isn’t abstract. It’s practiced daily—in courtrooms and classrooms, kitchens and galleries, and drumbeats and clay. ●



● From top: Dancers in the inner plaza; the gift shop at IPCC.





● Alzheimer's or dementia can be a scary diagnosis, but there is help available.

## When Memory Care Becomes a Community Effort

*How the Office of Alzheimer's and Dementia Care is responding to the growing need for support.*

**I**f you're a New Mexican and you or a loved one have received a diagnosis of Alzheimer's or dementia—or you're simply concerned about what might occur in the future—it can be a frightening prospect to face. Thanks to the Office of Alzheimer's and Dementia Care, whatever happens, you won't be facing it alone.

For more resources and information about the Office of Alzheimer's and Dementia Care, visit [aging.nm.gov/oadc](http://aging.nm.gov/oadc).

“As our population ages rather rapidly, we want to have robust resources,” says manager Trista Turner. “A person is not a diagnosis, and we don't want it to be a stigma.”

The office is looking out for the more than 46,000 people who have been diagnosed with Alzheimer's, which accounts for nearly 12 percent of adults over the age of 65. In addition, an estimated 67,000 caregivers provide some 119 million unpaid hours of care each year to people living with the disease.

Alzheimer's and dementia are unique diseases in how they affect families. They're progressive con-

ditions that often begin with subtle signs, gradually developing into symptoms that worsen over time. This can be especially challenging for families, since behaviors and thought patterns may change even as a person remains physically capable. For these reasons, when experts look at Alzheimer's and dementia care, the role of caregivers—including both loved ones and professionals—is a priority. That's one reason New Mexico partnered with the Alzheimer's Foundation of America to offer resources that can help prepare caregivers for what comes next.

The partnership includes free

webinars running through June 2026 on care-related topics such as addressing wandering behavior and understanding why people with brain diseases may exhibit aggression. These webinars are intended for anyone who wants to learn more, not just those directly affected by Alzheimer's or dementia. "The more people who participate in webinars, the closer we get to our goal of a dementia-friendly New Mexico," Turner says.

The Office of Alzheimer's and Dementia Care also acts as a bridge for people living with dementia and their family members by connecting them with state resources. These include offerings like the New MexiCare Program, which provides financial assistance and training to caregivers helping friends or family with daily activities due to physical or cognitive limitations. Other services include the Care Transition Team, which advocates for people during periods of transition, and the Veteran Directed Care program.

New Mexico is also drafting its Alzheimer's State Plan, based on a needs assessment conducted by a professional advisory council. "This plan will lay out a road map for us to meet goals over the next five years by building services, resources, and awareness throughout New Mexico," says Kyra Ochoa, Long-Term Care Division director.

Receiving a diagnosis can be intimidating, which is why the Office of Alzheimer's and Dementia Care is working to make its website easier to navigate and more responsive to the needs of New Mexicans. Currently, the site offers resources for long-term planning, caregiving, and brain health.

"There's a great need for increased services of all kinds—adult day care, memory care services, and programs like New MexiCare that support family caregivers," Ochoa says. "Still, I think New Mexicans should be proud of what we're building to ensure that people living with Alzheimer's and dementia are well supported."



### You're Not Alone

People who provide care for family members or friends face their own challenges. Around 65 percent of caregivers have chronic health conditions, and nearly one-third experience depression. The Office of Alzheimer's and Dementia Care works with several partner organizations to help ensure that people living with brain diseases and their caregivers can navigate daily life with dignity, avoid burnout, and feel supported.

- **The Family Caregiver Center of New Mexico**, an Albuquerque-based organization, focuses on the needs of informal caregivers such as spouses and adult children. "When we look at the effects of dementia on caregivers, stress levels tend to be higher than with other illnesses, due to the longevity of the disease and how much it changes over time," says Trista Turner, manager of the Office of Alzheimer's and Dementia Care. The organization helps participants navigate health and government systems, offers support groups in Spanish and English, and provides evidence-based tools that build skills and encourage self-care.
- **The Memory Care Alliance**, in Santa Fe, is committed to building communities of care through small-group, all-day workshops for caregivers. These workshops include free on-site respite, meaning that people with Alzheimer's or dementia are cared for in a safe environment during the workshop, removing a major barrier for attendees. Topics include person-centered communication, logistics, and legal and financial guidance. The organization hopes to expand to other parts of New Mexico.
- **The New Mexico Caregiver Coalition** offers respite vouchers for caregivers that are intended to ease the burden of caring for an older adult with a brain disease or conditions such as Parkinson's. The organization is also working to address the health care workforce gap by offering free training and background checks for those interested in becoming professional caregivers, and by maintaining a registry that families can use to find help.
- **The Alzheimer's Foundation of America** offers free memory screenings by phone with a licensed clinical social worker. If you suspect that you or a loved one are showing signs of cognitive impairment, consider scheduling a screening. Following the consultation, participants receive guidance on whether concerns should be discussed with a physician.



● Volunteers play an essential role supporting the state's older or disabled adults.

## Strengthening Volunteer Engagement at NMAS

**N**ew Mexico Aging Services continues to deepen its commitment to older adults, individuals with disabilities, and caregivers by expanding meaningful opportunities for community involvement through volunteering. Volunteers play an essential role in helping extend the department's reach and strengthening programs that support independence, dignity, and quality of life throughout the state. Volunteering has benefits for volunteers too, as it has been shown to improve their physical and mental health.

To support these efforts, New Mexico Aging Services recently welcomed

Michele Benavidez as the department's volunteer manager. In this role, she's responsible for implementing a volunteer program that supports the agency's diverse divisions, including the Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program, the Aging and Disability Resource Center, and the Aging Network. She'll also assist the agency with volunteer expansion.

This new centralized approach is focused on strengthening recruitment, training, and recognition efforts while thoughtfully matching volunteers with opportunities that reflect their skills, interests, and community connections. By improving coordination and communication across programs,

NMAS aims to make volunteering more accessible and effective for everyone involved.

Volunteers have long played an important role in supporting New Mexico's older and disabled adults. Whether advocating for residents in long-term care facilities, serving as caregivers, or working in senior centers, volunteers bring compassion, commitment, and valuable lived experience to their role.

**If you're interested in learning more about how you can make a difference by volunteering, contact Michele Benavidez at [volunteers@altsd.nm.gov](mailto:volunteers@altsd.nm.gov) or call (800) 432-2080. You can also visit [aging.nm.gov](http://aging.nm.gov) for more about how New Mexico Aging Services is building strong volunteer initiatives statewide.**

## A Program that Helps New Mexicans Come Home

If you or a loved one need help moving from a long-term care facility back into your home or community, the Care Transition Program is here to help. We spoke with program manager **Amy Lucero** about how it can help and who it serves.

### What is the Care Transition Program and how does it work?

**Amy Lucero:** It's a statewide, free program that helps residents in long-term care facilities reintegrate back into a community setting, like their home or an assisted living facility. A lot of folks don't know where to begin or what's available to them. Sometimes people don't even know what's available through their managed-care organization (MCO) or insurance, so we come in and help. Our care-transition specialists work with individuals enrolled in the program to ensure they are being discharged into a safe environment with the best possible outcome. This means they work alongside the client's MCO and the facility staff to make sure the client has everything they need.

### Who is eligible for this program?

**AL:** There are three requirements: (1) A person must have been staying at a long-term care facility for 90 days or more; (2) the person must have income, though there is no income-level requirement; and (3) the person must have or be in the process of receiving institutional Medicaid.

### What kind of feedback have you received?

**AL:** We hear from the families of people we've served all the time, and they're very grateful. We've had people say that we helped



● Amy Lucero



them stay organized during a difficult time and that they felt supported and less alone. Many families are navigating these complex systems while coping with stress and uncertainty, so having someone there with them can make it less overwhelming and more manageable.

### How can people access the Care Transition Program?

**AL:** Feel free to reach out to us at [cts@altsd.nm.gov](mailto:cts@altsd.nm.gov) or call (800) 432-2080. We get referrals from facilities or MCO coordinators. Once you're connected, our specialists will reach out to the facility and see how we can best help.



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● The Lillian Romero Senior Center at Taos Pueblo.

## More Than a Meal

*Inside the Taos Pueblo senior center, where elders are nourished by food, connection, and care.*

**A**t the Lillian F. Romero Senior Center, at Taos Pueblo, lunchtime is about more than food. It is a daily act of care—and community.

Marina Rough, who has served as director since June 2022, did not set out to lead the center. She was living in Colorado Springs when her father's health began to decline. She moved home to be near him, stepping into the role of caregiver long before she stepped into the role of director.

When she was hired, the learning curve was steep. Rough started the job during the final stretch of COVID-19 restrictions, when the center's doors were still closed and the staff were focused almost entirely on delivering homebound meals. At the time, 85 to 90 elders relied on those deliveries.

"I basically had to learn everything on my own," she says.

State reporting requirements, administrative systems, and daily operations were all new territory. Her teachers, she says, were not manuals or workshops but the people beside her: cooks, drivers, and longtime employees.

"It's not just my job," Rough says. "It's everybody's job."

After the pandemic, Rough remembers repeatedly wondering when the center would be safe to welcome elders

back inside. When the doors finally opened for group meals in April 2023, five people came in. Then ten. For a while, the numbers hovered there.

So Rough began experimenting. She introduced arts and crafts—painting, pottery, and other hands-on projects—to give elders a reason to linger. Participation has fluctuated, but attendance now averages between 20 and 30 people a day.

Meals are served Monday through Friday from noon to 1 p.m., though staff will serve anyone who walks in at 12:59. The center itself is open from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m., and Rough occasionally schedules evening activities, including a needle-point group, cooking demonstrations, art instruction, and is planning future collaborations, such as mosaic workshops with a visiting artist.

Transportation is another vital service. Through rotating "town days," staff members take elders to shop for groceries, pay bills, or pick up medications.

As far as Rough is concerned, the center's purpose is simple but essential: It's a place to socialize, share a meal, and stay connected. During community events such as Thanksgiving, the broader pueblo community fills the space, reinforcing the center's role as a gathering place across generations.

Those intergenerational connections matter deeply. Rough remembers fondly a visit from local students who played traditional hand games with elders. She hopes to build more partnerships with the education department, inviting youth to sit with elders for story time, bingo, and conversation.

In 2025, Rough was honored with the State of New Mexico Aging and Long-Term Services Department's Nick L. Salazar Senior Advocate of the Year Award. The recognition caught her off guard.

"It takes a bunch of people to make this happen," she says. "My elders make it happen. My staff make it happen. Without them this building wouldn't be here."

The building itself carries deep personal meaning. The center is named for Rough's mother, Lillian Romero, who served as director for more than 40 years. The broader vision—the Lillian Romero Senior Center Complex—is a three-part plan Romero championed before her passing in 2017.

The first phase, the senior center itself, is complete. The second, a day center, will provide care for elders whose families work, offering activities and supervision. The third—and most ambitious—is a future living center, allowing elders who need more intensive support to remain close to home rather than relocating to facilities in larger cities.

"She felt there needed to be change in this community," Rough says. "At least our elders would be at home here and loved ones would not have to worry about going to Albuquerque to see their grandmother or grandfather."

For Rough, the work is both professionally and personally rewarding. She understands the strain of caregiving because she has lived it. Her hope is that the center—and eventually the full complex—will ease that burden for families. "It provides relief for the caregiver," she says.

In a community where elders hold history, language, and memory dear, the Taos Pueblo Senior Center is more than a building. It's a commitment to community, one shared meal at a time.

## Spring/Summer 2026 Events

A look at the upcoming opportunities to get out and about in your community.

### APRIL

#### National Volunteer Month

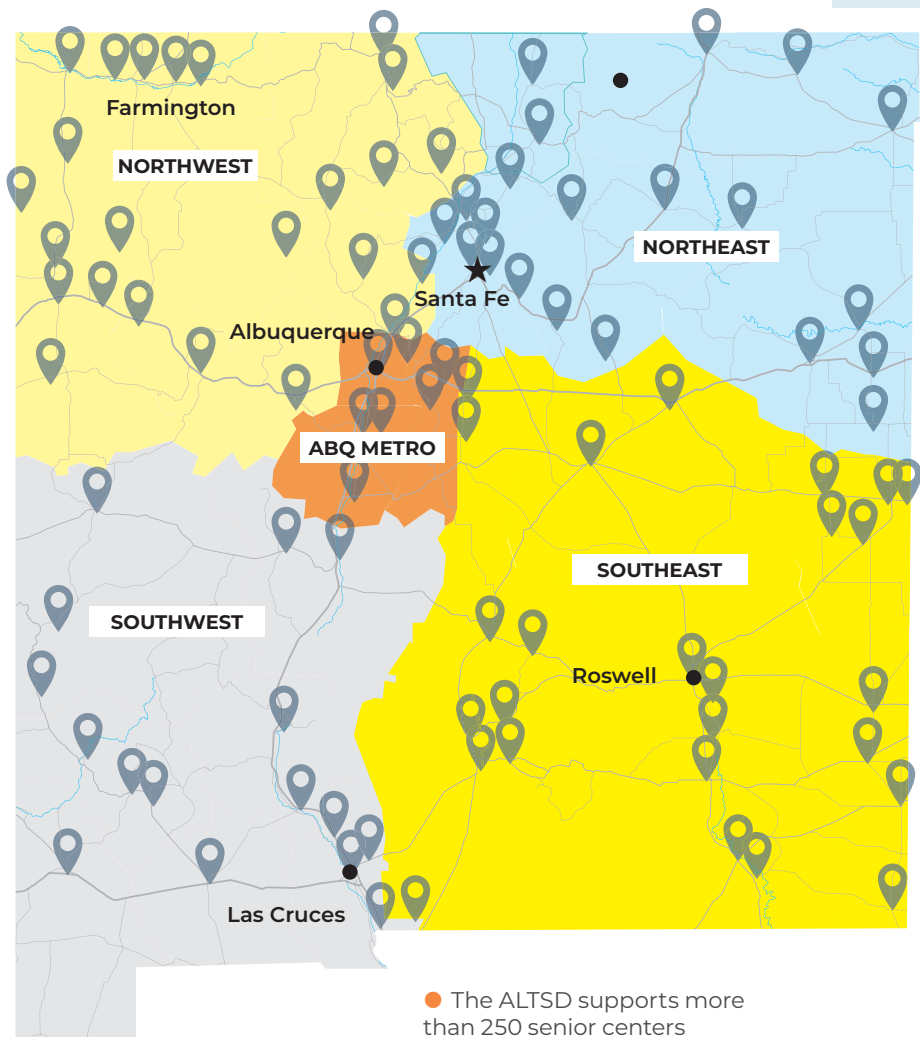
Each April, National Volunteer Month celebrates the vital role volunteers play in strengthening communities throughout the state (and country). It's a time to thank those who give their time and talents. It's also an invitation for others to get involved in ways that fit their interests and abilities. From mentoring and caregiving to parks and public lands, there are countless opportunities to make a difference. Learn more at [volunteer.gov](http://volunteer.gov).

#### Dances, Classes, Games, Clubs, and More

##### Ongoing Albuquerque

Throughout the year, the Department of Senior Affairs offers a vibrant schedule of social, recreational, and educational activities for adults 50 and older at its senior and multigenerational centers across the city. From partner dance classes to yoga and gentle exercise for strength and balance, there's something for every interest and ability. You'll also find games (like cards) and special-interest clubs like ukulele and knitting. Regular social gatherings are great for meeting new friends and staying connected. These activities are designed to promote well-being, connection, and lifelong learning in a welcoming, age-friendly environment. For a full list of events and activities, download the 2026 activity calendar at [cabq.gov/seniors](http://cabq.gov/seniors).

**Alzheimer's Foundation Webinar: PTSD and Dementia—an Exploration of Brain Health and Trauma**  
*April 14, 10 a.m. to 12:10 p.m.*



#### Virtual

Research shows trauma and chronic stress can affect brain health and increase dementia risk. This clinical webinar explores the link between PTSD and dementia, helps identify trauma-related behaviors, and introduces trauma-informed care strategies to promote safety, trust, and understanding. Learn more at [aging.nm.gov/long-term-care/nmtraining](http://aging.nm.gov/long-term-care/nmtraining).

#### Alzheimer's Foundation Webinar: Tapping into the Power of Emotional Memories

*April 28, 10 a.m. to 12:10 p.m.*

#### Virtual

Emotional memories often outlast episodic ones for people living with

Alzheimer's and dementia. This live, interactive clinical webinar explores how the five senses trigger affective recall and offers practical strategies to foster connection, communication, and well-being through positive emotional experiences. Learn more at [aging.nm.gov/long-term-care/nmtraining](http://aging.nm.gov/long-term-care/nmtraining).

### MAY

#### Older Americans Month

Observed each May, Older Americans Month celebrates the lasting contributions of older adults across the country. It recognizes the many ways seniors strengthen their communities—as caregivers, mentors, volunteers, workers, and veter-

ans—while also raising awareness about elder abuse and neglect. The observance encourages individuals and communities alike to challenge outdated stereotypes and rethink how we view and talk about aging, highlighting the value, experience, and continued impact of older Americans. For more info, visit [acl.gov](http://acl.gov).

**Vámonos Santa Fe Walks**

Running from May through October, the Santa Fe Conservation Trust hosts a series of guided walks and hikes around the Santa Fe area, including options designed with seniors in mind. These outings offer an easy way to explore local trails, enjoy fresh air, and connect with fellow walkers. The season kicks off May 5. Learn more at [sfct.org](http://sfct.org).

**Alzheimer’s Foundation Webinar: The Importance of Cultural Considerations in Dementia Care**

*May 12, 10 a.m. to 12:10 p.m.*

Virtual

This live, interactive webinar explores how culture shapes experiences of dementia and caregiving in diverse communities. Participants will examine disparities, the impact of discrimination, and strategies for providing culturally sensitive, inclusive dementia care through ongoing reflection and learning. Learn more at [aging.nm.gov/long-term-care/nmtraining](http://aging.nm.gov/long-term-care/nmtraining).

**JUNE**

**Alzheimer’s Foundation Webinar: The Impact of Stigma and Discrimination on LGBTQ+ Older Adults in Healthcare**

*June 9, 10 a.m. to 12:10 p.m.*

Virtual

This live, interactive webinar examines how stigma, discrimination, and health disparities affect dementia risk and care for LGBTQ+ older adults. Par-

ticipants will explore trauma-informed approaches, the role of chosen family, and strategies for creating inclusive, welcoming care environments. Learn more at [aging.nm.gov/long-term-care/nmtraining](http://aging.nm.gov/long-term-care/nmtraining).

**New Mexico Senior Olympics State Summer Games**

*June 17–21*

Las Cruces

Join athletes from around New Mexico at the 2026 State Summer Games, a signature event celebrating active living at every age. Whether you’re a returning champ, competing for the first time, or cheering from the sidelines, the games offer a lively week of competition and camaraderie, with 23 sports offered. Events range from archery, basketball, and pickleball to golf, billiards, and race walking, with options for a wide variety of interests and abilities. Registration is \$60. Learn more at [nmseniorolympics.org](http://nmseniorolympics.org).

**New Mexico Senior Olympics State Bowling Tournament**

*July 22–24*

Santa Ana

Strike up some friendly rivalry at the New Mexico Senior Olympics State Bowling Tournament, where bowlers from throughout the state come together for three days of competition and camaraderie. This year’s tournament features a full slate of action, including men’s and women’s singles and doubles, mixed doubles, and team events, with mixed teams new to the lineup. Whether you’re aiming for a personal best or simply enjoying the atmosphere, it’s a lively way to test your skills at any age. Learn more at [nmseniorolympics.org](http://nmseniorolympics.org).

**JULY**

**Silver City CLAY Festival**

*July 15–21*

Held each July, the Silver City CLAY Festival celebrates the art

of ceramics in all its forms. The weeklong event brings together artists, collectors, educators, and the public for exhibitions, hands-on workshops, and artist-led talks. Visitors can watch demonstrations, learn from working ceramists, and explore a juried exhibition showcasing contemporary clay work. Learn more at [clayfestival.com](http://clayfestival.com).

**AUGUST**

**Gallup Inter-Tribal Indian Ceremonial**

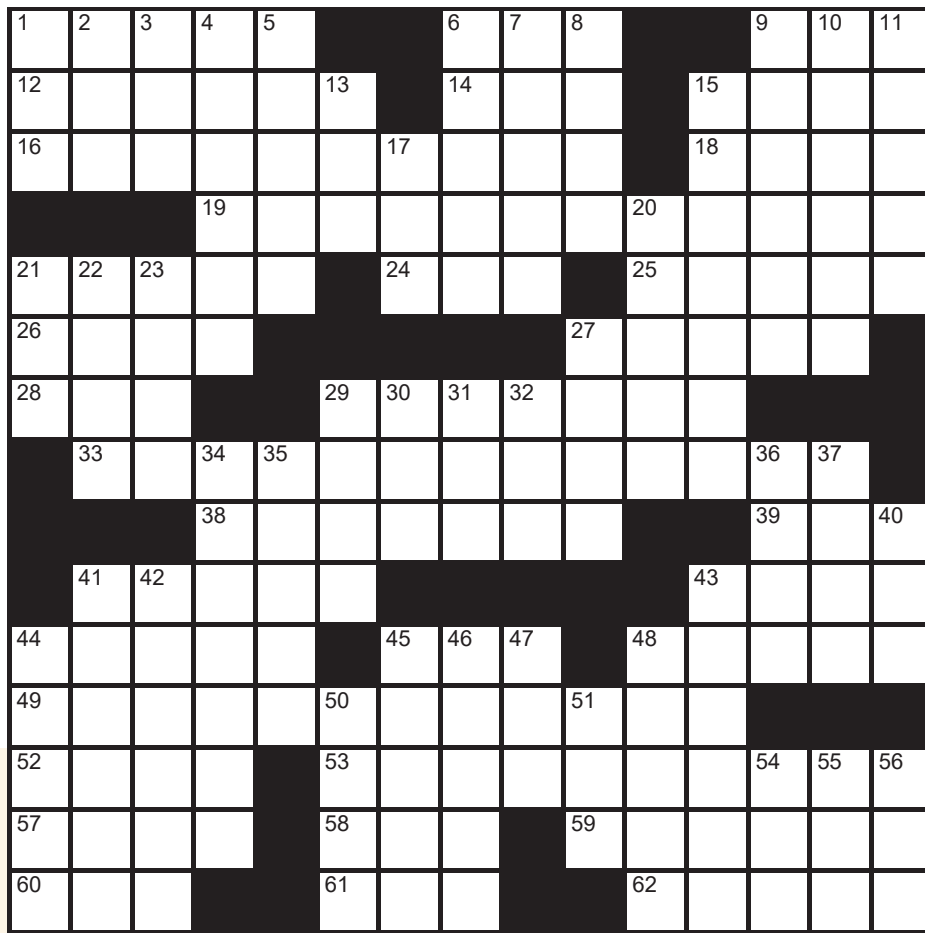
*July 31–August 9*

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**THE CROSSWORD**

Solution to the Winter 2025 puzzle:

C	O	P		A	C	T	S		V	E	N	I	A	L
A	M	E		M	A	H	I		I	D	U	N	N	O
R	E	D	R	I	V	E	R		S	A	N	D	I	A
A	G	R	E	E		S	E	R	U	M		I	O	N
T	A	O	S		S	A	N	T	A		F	A	N	S
					S	K	I		E	L	G	I	N	
P	O	A	C	H	I	N	G			L	E	T	M	E
E	N	C	H	A	N	T	E	D	F	O	R	E	S	T
I	S	I	A	H		M	I	A	M	I	A	N	S	
					D	I	S	C	O		G	I	S	
E	S	P	N		A	N	G	E	L		F	I	R	E
P	T	A		S	P	E	A	R		S	A	L	E	M
S	I	P	A	P	U		P	A	J	A	R	I	T	O
O	P	E	N	I	T		E	T	O	N		A	R	T
M	E	R	I	N	O		D	I	E	S		D	O	E



The solution to the puzzle will be printed in the following issue, and available online at [newmexicogenerations.com](http://newmexicogenerations.com) in early May.

**DOWN**

- 1. Forensic drama on CBS
- 2. Anti-moonshine org.
- 3. Snoop
- 4. Put down shingles
- 5. Mature
- 6. Off
- 7. Tractor handle?
- 8. Purple smoothie ingredient
- 9. Ancient Greek islander
- 10. Talent hunters
- 11. Sort
- 13. WWII inits.
- 15. "It's possible"
- 17. "That's so sad!"
- 20. Word before academy or base
- 21. Yellowfin tuna
- 22. Man Ray's métier
- 23. Aerosmith's "Love \_\_\_ Elevator"
- 27. Brand of ice cream
- 29. It's quite a stretch
- 30. Uncle \_\_\_
- 31. Bosox org.
- 32. FL neighbor
- 34. Unmoved
- 35. Sonata section
- 36. Wild \_\_\_
- 37. Put in stitches
- 40. Tiebreakers, briefly
- 41. Daughter of Muhammad
- 42. Stood the gaff
- 43. Army medic
- 44. Hitchcock film (with *The*)
- 45. Stand
- 46. "That's \_\_\_!" (end-of-filming shout)
- 47. Fancy neckwear
- 48. Icy sheets
- 50. Roswell sightings
- 51. Real estate ad abbr.
- 54. Two-time Super Bowl MVP Manning
- 55. Yo-yo
- 56. Festoons with in Cottonelle, for short

# The Crossword

A New Mexico Generations Original  
By Brendan Emmett Quigley

**ACROSS**

- 1. Director of *Meet John Doe*
- 6. Coding pioneer Lovelace
- 9. NYC sports venue
- 12. Went boldly
- 14. Flash
- 15. Squeakers
- 16. Start of a quote by Georgia O'Keeffe
- 18. Any minute
- 19. Quote, part 2
- 21. On \_\_\_ (trying to lose weight)
- 24. Org. with a SmackDown event
- 25. Die down
- 26. Quote, part 3
- 27. Balances
- 28. Ore-\_\_\_ (frozen food brand)

- 29. Equally furious
- 33. Quote, part 4
- 38. Floor-cleaning robots
- 39. Enero to enero
- 41. In like \_\_\_
- 43. Quote, part 5
- 44. Bleated
- 45. Go on and on
- 48. Dukes
- 49. Quote, part 6
- 52. Confirmation, e.g.
- 53. End of the quote
- 57. Contacted directly over X
- 58. Female gametes
- 59. Close tightly
- 60. Kind of blue
- 61. Kind of IRA
- 62. Foul moods

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*New Mexico Generations* magazine is a quarterly publication published by the New Mexico Aging and Long-Term Services Department, whose mission is to serve and inspire the state's older adult community to live active, healthy lives and enhance their connections within their community.



## When Albuquerque Swam in the Rio Grande

**I**n the late 1920s, the Middle Rio Grande Conservancy District undertook a massive effort to control the annual flooding that plagued land located along the Rio Grande. As part of that project, engineers flooded a nearly mile-long streambed adjacent to Albuquerque, which had a population of just 30,000 people at the time. Fresh river water flowed in through a 30-inch pipe, and because the resulting ten-foot-deep pond looked like an inviting swimming hole, the idea emerged to create a public beach along the sandy stretch of shoreline.

Construction crews installed bathhouses, a boat dock, diving platforms, and even a slide, and on August 8, 1931, Albuquerque officially inaugurated Conservancy Beach. During the summer months there were lifeguards on site, and judging by this photograph, from around 1945, swimming became a popular pastime. A children's wading pool was later added, and the riverside levee was widened to accommodate a scenic roadway named Tingley Drive, in honor of former governor Clyde Tingley.

In 1948, however, the levee system was redesigned, eliminating the pond's source of water. Soon after, the polio epidemic of the early 1950s brought swimming to an permanent end. Over time the area became known as Tingley Beach, and in 2004 it was reimagined once again—this time as a landscaped park with trails and fishing ponds, integrated into what's now the ABQ BioPark complex. Although its uses have shifted over the decades, recreation remained central to the site, evolving alongside Albuquerque itself.



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