Merry Christmas,
Happy Holidays and
A Prosperous New Year

The Board of Directors and Staff of the
New Mexico Municipal League and the
New Mexico Self Insurers’ Fund
27th Annual Municipal Day is January 29

The 27th Annual Municipal Day will be held Friday, January 29 at La Fonda Hotel in Santa Fe. A reception will be held on Thursday evening, January 28 at 5:30 p.m. at La Fonda and all legislators are invited to attend.

Municipal Day is an opportunity for League staff to brief members on what is happening in the legislature during the 30-day session.

For registration and hotel information, go to www.nmml.org/events.
At the presentation of the Young Citizen of the Year Award at the 2015 Law Enforcement Conference. From left: Marty Vigil, Chief Investigator, 13th Judicial District Attorney’s Office; Mrs. Melissa Jaramillo; Young Citizen of the Year Award recipient Abigail Jaramillo, Rio Rancho Police Department Explorer; Mr. Casey Jaramillo; Young Citizen of the Year Committee Chair Sally Uebelacker, Senior Manager, Sandia National Laboratories; Rio Rancho Police Department Explorer Daniela Valenzuela; and Rio Rancho Police Department Officer Gaspar Garcia.
Roswell Councilman Steve Henderson Receives NLC University Training Honor
Also Appointed to NLC Policy Committee

Roswell Councilman Steve Henderson was recognized by the National League of Cities’ University (NLC University) for reaching the “Diamond Level” in its certificate program. Sponsored by the NLC and Wells Fargo, the award was presented in Nashville, Tenn. at the annual Congress of Cities and Exposition in November.

Henderson is one of the less than 130 NLC members to have reached the diamond level in the “Certificate of Achievement in Leadership” program since its inception. To reach the Diamond Level, a local official must earn 80 credits by taking seminars that encompass all four proficiency areas of the certificate program curriculum: management, leadership, engagement and expertise.

Each training seminar addresses one or more of the core areas of municipal leadership, including personal leadership growth and development, effective governance, effective communications, skills in developing and promoting partnerships, and managing change. The certificate program was created in 1999 with the primary purpose to recognize and acknowledge excellence in leadership by NLC members.

Henderson also has been appointed to NLC’s 2016 Human Development Policy Committee. The committee has the responsibility for developing NLC’s federal policy positions on issues involving social services, children and learning, poverty and income support, employment and workforce development, equal opportunity, Social Security and seniors, individuals with disabilities, public health care, mental health parity and immigration reform.

“‘I am honored to be appointed once again to the Human Development Committee,’ Henderson said. ‘This committee plays an important role in defining human needs in our nation.’”

Former Sunland Park Municipal Judge Passes Away

Former Sunland Park Municipal Judge Jose C. Tovar passed away on Sunday, December 6, 2015. Judge Tovar served as Municipal Judge for the City of Sunland Park from March 1988 to March 1996. He is remembered for his contributions not only to the service to the city but also his service to the country having served in the United States Army from November 1945 to May 1947.

He was also a Justice of the Peace and Deputy for Dona Ana County prior to his municipal service. Judge Tovar also served as Pastor of Christ the Rock Church. His wisdom, devotion and love for everyone is greatly cherished by family, friends and knew of his service to the community.

Think Trees Conference Will Be February 4 & 5, 2016

The 2016 Think Trees New Mexico Conference will be February 4 and 5 at the Crowne Plaza Hotel in Albuquerque.

Think Trees New Mexico provides space free-of-charge to non-profits and government organizations in order to spread their message to hundreds of members in the New Mexico Urban Tree Care community.

Both manned and un-manned display areas will be available. For more information, contact Paul Bryan Jones at (575) 741-0868 or Jennifer Dann at (505) 476-3332.
Along the Way
Kristy Ortiz Making a Difference in Bayard, New Mexico
By Terry Brunner, USDA Rural Development State Director

Fairly or unfairly, government employees often get a bad rap. Complaints about the bureaucracy were likely as common in ancient Rome as they are today. No matter what you believe, most government employees truly care about, and are invested in the well-being of their community.

One such employee is Kristy Ortiz, City Clerk in Bayard. At first glance you wouldn’t think this unassuming, modest person has the ability to move mountains. However, she has scaled the rugged mountain of issues that besiege this rural mining community as it struggles to build on its economic present to define its economic future. Nestled at the southern edge of the Gila Mountains, Bayard once was a flourishing mining town that supported the area copper mines. The story of that bygone era is punctuated by the old mining cars, machinery and a mural of hardworking miners that can be found around town.

Communities surrounding mining areas often have it pretty tough. Mining was backbreaking work. Wages were low and there wasn’t too much long-term community investment in mining towns. To be sustainable in the 21st century, mining communities are often trying to catch-up on infrastructure upgrades, housing, and community buildings.

Many old mining communities don’t survive, but Bayard has managed to stay alive and, some would say, thrive. During the last 20 years the town has been managed by a series of visionary Mayors and City Councilors. Politicians alone don’t get the work done and they come and go. In Bayard, the one constant presence during the last 13 years has been Kristy Ortiz who acts on all the ideas coming from community leaders.

In the last six years I’ve known her, Kristy has teamed up with the United States Department of Agriculture to finance a new library, community center repairs, new police cars and water system improvements. During her tenure Kristy pushed through dozens of other projects for her community from various government agencies. She doesn’t command a large staff so often Kristy writes the applications and oversees the projects herself. She’s not intimidated at all by federal or state government paperwork or processes. She says she “likes the challenge.”

I found Kristy’s library project to be especially inspiring. With federal stimulus funds, Bayard expanded their old library to include a media room, a children’s room and a public meeting room. The library provides so much for a small town where there isn’t much to do. It’s a community meeting space, internet access point and a place for kids to go when maybe going home isn’t always the best option.

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Kristy’s determination to get things “working right” as she puts it isn’t the only thing that makes her successful. She’s infectiously positive and as one of her co-workers puts it, “She’ll do anything for you.” Other than Eddie Martinez, the maintenance director that fixes the water leaks and keeps up the parks in town, Kristy is the go-to person in when anything goes wrong.

You see Kristy’s influence far beyond her projects. The city staff is a group of refreshingly positive people and there are often smiles on their faces and a decent amount of laughing around city hall. You can tell that, for them, this is more than a job. The other day when I was passing through Bayard I noticed that even their police Lieutenant had his hand on a speeder’s shoulder and an understanding smile on his face as he kindly explained why he had been pulled over. That’s something you don’t see every day!

Kristy understands that there certainly are challenges in a small town like Bayard. Substance abuse, lack of economic opportunity, people leaving town and never coming back, not enough things for kids to do are just a few. But rather than dwell on these issues, Kristy just keeps moving. She’s already thinking about the next project and the next challenge to overcome for her town. This is one government employee that’s moving mountains and it’s wonderful to watch.
See what’s new on your Grow It! page:

growitnm.org/your-city

Examples: growitnm.org/santa-rosa & growitnm.org/grants