



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Media Contact:**

Cassie Flores, 915-345-4952  
[cflores@rabengroup.com](mailto:cflores@rabengroup.com)

Tony Marin, 575-646-7207  
[amarin@ad.nmsu.edu](mailto:amarin@ad.nmsu.edu)

## **HUNDREDS OF 6<sup>TH</sup> GRADERS AND FAMILIES RALLY AT NMSU FOR SECOND ANNUAL YOUNG ACHIEVERS FORUM IN NEW MEXICO**

*Higher education focused event grows regional reach and program access across Doña Ana, Otero and Luna Counties*

LAS CRUCES, New Mexico – Today, CommUNITY en ACCIÓN—a nonprofit dedicated to advocating for the Hispanic community in the region— and New Mexico State University (NMSU) held the second Young Achievers Forum (YAF) in New Mexico, expanding the program's reach across the region. YAF is a free education focused event that gives at-risk students and their families a taste of college for a day.

Approximately 600 middle school students and their families attended the event held at NMSU. The forum instills in students the importance of higher education, and walks them and their families through how they can make it a part of their lives. Since its inception in El Paso County, the forum has already introduced over 6,000 students to the possibility of a higher education and each year its impact continues to grow.

"I'm overjoyed to see YAF continue its mission of educating students and their families about the importance of pursuing higher education degrees," said **Raymond Palacios**, President of Bravo Chevrolet and founder of YAF. "It's encouraging to see the steady yet undeniable impact of this program in the region."

A key component of YAF is ensuring that parents are engaged in their students' pursuit of post-secondary opportunities from an early start. "Parent involvement is essential. There are significant education challenges facing southern New Mexico and we are better able to combat those challenges when parents are active participants in their child's education. YAF engages the parent just as much as it engages the student," said **Dr. Garrey Carruthers**, Chancellor and President of NMSU and institutional partner of YAF.

Students and families were welcomed by Dr. Bernadette Montoya, Vice President of Student Affairs and Enrollment Management followed by keynote remarks by KVIA ABC7 reporter and NMSU alum, Josie Ortegon.

During the day-long event, groups of students attended informational sessions covering five broad fields of study: health and medicine; science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM); business and finance; liberal arts and education; and public safety. The goal of these sessions is to show students the different career opportunities that await for them post-college and how other regional leaders were able to make these careers a reality.

Special breakout sessions for parents and family members—facilitated in Spanish and English—helped them prepare their children for higher education and explained financial aid options.

Building on its tradition of being a community-driven effort, NMSU undergraduates volunteered for this year's event, serving not just as guides but as role models for sixth graders from area school districts. YAF attendees and participants came from every school district across Doña Ana, Otero and Luna Counties.

In addition to the great show of college volunteers, the Young Achievers Forum also recruited business leaders from across the region to help lead some of the breakout sessions and talk to the parents during the event.

“The 2nd annual YAF New Mexico was a huge success,” stated **Dr. Anthony Marin**, Assistant Vice President of Student Affairs at NMSU, “We are very grateful for our partnerships with CommUNITY en ACCIÓN, regional school districts, volunteers, and most of all the students and parents who took action today towards the path of higher education.”

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**About CommUNITY en ACCIÓN:**

The purpose of CommUNITY en ACCIÓN is to instill Hispanic pride, unity and leadership and have a positive impact on the El Paso region by engaging in “value-driven” initiatives through a cohesive network of Hispanic community leaders.

**About Young Achievers Forum:**

The Young Achievers Forum is a county-wide event that gives at-risk students and their parents the college experience for a day to introduce post-secondary education to families who may not otherwise have exposure.

**About New Mexico State University:**

New Mexico State University is a comprehensive research land-grant university excelling in teaching, research and public service. NMSU is truly a reflection of the region's vibrant communities – an exciting place to tackle challenges, find answers to important issues and prepare for the future.