

May I make a suggestion? Vote for Norm Wheeler for District Attorney of Silver City. Here's why:

“Good Job!” Norm said to me after we made our closing remarks to the jury in Taos, New Mexico.

When Norm and I prepared to discuss this case with the jury we each wanted to highlight certain jury instructions so we put a post-it note on each. When I addressed the jury I methodically removed the post-it after mentioning each instruction. Then I sat down. Defense counsel made his closing. Norm got to have the last word. As he stood, Norm asked me for our packet of jury instructions. I handed them to him, post-it-noteless. His eyebrows hit his hairline. He was going to have flip through more than thirty pages to find the passages he wanted to discuss on the fly. Which he did; no problem. Rather than cuss me, berate me, or walk away from me, Norm, characteristically and genuinely thanked me for my effort on the case.

Norm and I met when our offices were next to one another in the 8th Judicial District Attorney's Office. I had been practicing for only a few years at the time and he became a sounding board and mentor.

When Norm later accepted a Deputy position in Rio Arriba, New Mexico, I followed about six months later. I accepted a senior trial attorney position in a small satellite DA's office in Espanola, New Mexico, where there was no shortage of violent cases, under-resourced law enforcement partners, and frustrated staff.

Norm took on the responsibility of filing for pre-trial detention of Defendants who had committed violent offenses. These hearings must be held quickly under the law. The tight time line means a lot of work. On top of this responsibility, Norm took on a hefty case load, and a leadership position within the office.

Norm insisted staff responsibilities change in order to streamline work, prevent error, create redundancies to enable the office continue to meet deadlines in the event someone got sick or took a rare vacation. Fair to say, the staff initially were none too pleased with Norm. But over time, the staff came to see that Norm had the best interest of the office in mind. The staff came to know Norm, professionally and personally. They witnessed his efforts pay off in the form of successful litigation of motions, Defendant's guilty pleas, and convictions. After one particularly positive result, Norm took the entire office to lunch to thank them for their hard work. Norm understands that he does not carry the day, justice is a team sport.

“May I make a suggestion?” was (and is) Norm's favorite refrain to law enforcement. New Mexico State Police Agents, Rio Arriba Sheriffs Deputies, and Espanolia Police Detectives and Officers called Norm at all hours. First, they sought his advice and then, they sought out *his* advice because Norm listened. Norm helped them think through the goals of the investigation and the safety of the community. Norm fosters good positive relationships with each and every law enforcement officer because he knows so much is

asked of them and he wants to see them succeed for betterment of the case and the protection of the community.

“Do you have a second?” was Norm’s polite way to step into an office and check in with me and others. He would ask my opinion. I was honored by this every time. Not to age Norm here, but he’s practiced law as long as I’ve been alive. I wondered what could I offer to him that he hasn’t considered. But that never stopped him. Norm was humble enough to seek the counsel of people his junior.

In these conversations, Norm and I would talk about cases and their impact on us. We exchanged ideas about the victims, the community, and the law enforcement that investigated the crimes. We talked about prosperity and our experiences prosecuting crimes in areas that suffered under a lack of prosperity. We talked about fentanyl. Our hearts mutually broken by the distress we saw victims AND defendants experience. Norm is by nature thoughtful.

If I may make a suggestion, find a second, and go vote for Norm Wheeler for DA because he implements positive staff changes in ways staff will appreciate; he respectfully uplifts law enforcement; he humbly seeks out the counsel of others; he thoughtfully considers his impact and the impact of crime on a community. I promise, Norm Wheeler will do a damn good job.

Written & Submitted by: Emily Dewhurst