

Enterprise Bank Helps SMDP Soup Kitchen Make Great Things Happen



Gathered recently for an interview at the SMDP Soup Kitchen in Española, from left, sisters and co-founders Theodora Valdez and Erlinda Quintana, Enterprise Bank & Trust Region President Liddie Martinez, 4th generation family members Lauren Trujillo, 7, and Aria Trujillo, 3, Francine Huerta (2nd generation), sister/co-founder Suzan Roybal and her granddaughter Kristen Trujillo (3rd generation). Photo by Carol A. Clark/ladailypost.com

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By **CAROL A. CLARK**
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ESPAÑOLA – San Martin de Porres (SMDP) Soup Kitchen in Española is nearing its 30th year serving hot meals

to the poor and hungry in northern New Mexico communities.

Three sisters founded the nonprofit in July 1992, and now have Enterprise Bank & Trust in their corner helping them and their passionate volunteers make great things happen every day for those in need.

The SMDP Soup Kitchen feeds 50 to 100 people a day, provides food baskets, assists with rent and utility bills and other critical needs for those suffering hard times.

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Kuropatwinski Joins Marines



Los Alamos High School Class of 2021 Graduate Robert Ignatius Kuropatwinski will enter Marine Boot Camp Monday. Courtesy photo

By **CAROL A. CLARK**
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Robert Ignatius Kuropatwinski graduated in May from Los Alamos High School and Monday boards a plane for Marine Boot Camp at Camp Pendleton in San Diego, Calif.

“I’ve wanted to join some branch of the military since about the eighth grade and about a year and a half ago made the decision to join the Marines,” Kuropatwinski said during an interview Wednesday with the Los Alamos Daily Post. “I decided on the Marines for its feeling of honor and commitment and also for the feeling of belonging and brotherhood and camaraderie.”

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Larry R. Walkup Aquatic Center Facing Shortage Of Lifeguards

By **KIRSTEN LASKEY**
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Even before the pandemic hit in 2020, lifeguarding was having its own crisis to fill those high perches above pools. Now, Los Alamos County’s Parks, Recreation and Open Space Division is strategizing ways to attract more applicants to its full-time and senior lifeguard positions.

Community Services Department Director Cory Styron said typically the Larry R. Walkup Aquatic Center will have four to six lifeguards on duty depending on the number of people in the pool. He said there are currently six openings. With the Leisure Lagoon opening for business next year, there will be four additional openings.

Not having all the lifeguard positions impacts the pool’s hours of operations, he said.

“If we stay at the current level, we can maintain where we are,” Styron said. “To fully open the Walkup to pre-COVID levels and to have the leisure pool, we need

to fill these positions ... to ensure everyone has a safe experience.”

To help fill those spots, Aquatic Center Manager Denise McCoy said hiring and retention bonuses are being considered.

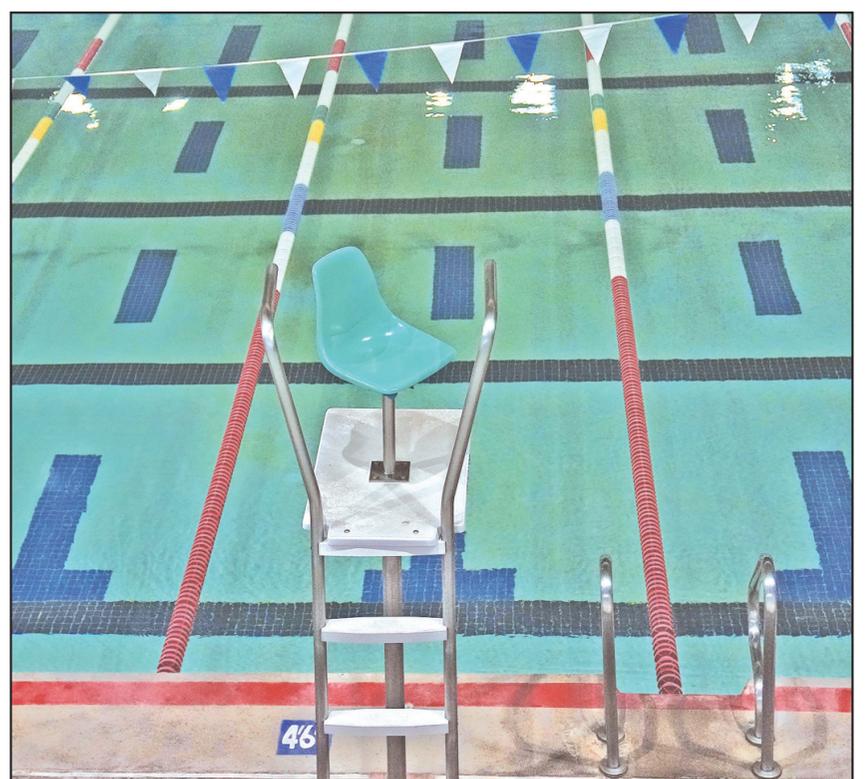
There are many factors behind the shortage of lifeguards, McCoy said. She pointed out many high school or college age young people are more attracted to work at an outdoor pool and of course the pandemic had a significant impact, too.

McCoy said COVID-19 put a stop to all certifications and trainings for lifeguards and those who were already certified had their credentials expire.

Plus, a major recruitment for lifeguards is through the high school’s freshmen physical education program, she said. When the program stopped during this school year and the last school year, McCoy said the opportunity to introduce young people to lifeguarding also halted.

She explained there are three different

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Larry R. Walkup Aquatic Center is hiring lifeguards. Photo by John McHale/ladailypost.com



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NEWS

SMDP

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Enterprise Region President Liddie Martinez describes the founding sisters, Theodora Valdez, Erlinda Quintana and Suzan Roybal, as great humanitarians.

“They are champions in the extended community and are always the first to volunteer when need is identified,” Martinez said. “The bank is honored to support their incredible endeavors, which mean so much to those they serve in our region.”

Roybal has served as executive director at the SMDP Soup Kitchen since its inception. She is now mentoring her granddaughter Kristen Trujillo to take the reins and keep their noble mission going. From the time she was 4 years old, Trujillo, 34, accompanied her mother Francine Huerta to the soup kitchen. As she grew older, she learned to help her mother, grandmother and aunts. She now serves as administrator.

“This has always been a huge part of my life... I’ve always admired my grandmother and think I also have a calling to help the poor as she does,” Trujillo said. “I am very blessed to have her as my grandmother and my mentor. God puts certain people in certain places, we all have a calling and we should all

help each other. I am just so proud of my grandmother. She and my aunts are beautiful and wonderful people and I want to continue their legacy... I know I have very, very big shoes to fill.”

Trujillo also spoke about the importance of Enterprise’s support to her families’ mission to feed the poor.

“We think the world of Liddie and Enterprise,” Trujillo said. “They are a huge support to us, and we admire them for not only all they do to help us but for what they do to help so many other nonprofits and community organizations... Enterprise is wonderful.”

SMDP serves hot lunches and food baskets to anyone referred to them by a church or state agency. They serve the physically ill, disabled, homeless, unemployed, low-income and senior citizens.

“We do not turn anyone away... if they tell us that they are hungry – we feed them,” Roybal said. “When you allow yourself to walk and talk with God, he allows great things to happen!”

While it began as a small community outreach effort providing meals three times a week, due to the expanded need in the community the kitchen is now open five days a week.

In co-operation with the City of Española and the local HUD program, the SMDP Soup Kitchen operates out of the Apple Valley Senior Center. The facility is loaned to SMDP rent and utility free by the Española Housing Authority.

During a recent interview at SMDP, the founding sisters spoke about how they came to dedicate nearly three decades of their life to this mission. In April of 1989, they took a pilgrimage to Medjugorje (Medjugorje) and described that journey as completely changing the direction of their lives. They explained that since 1981, in the small village of Medjugorje in Bosnia-Herzegovina, the Blessed Virgin Mary has been appearing and giving messages to the world.

On their fateful trip, the sisters met Florida Ortega. She was a cancer survivor who told them she had been healed after praying to the Blessed Mother. Heat came over her body and she was healed, Ortega said, adding that she was traveling to Medjugorje in Thanksgiving as a promise for her healing.

Ortega’s story and other spiritual experiences on that trip transformed the sisters. They said they knew they had a calling and upon their return spent nearly two years researching the best way to establish an effective, efficient nonprofit to

feed the hungry.

The operation of the SMDP Soup Kitchen is quite simple. It is managed and maintained 100 percent by its volunteers. The volunteers prepare and serve all the meals and are responsible for clean-up and maintenance of the facility.

Volunteers are always needed, and people may volunteer as little as one day per month.

“We ask anyone, or any organization interested in volunteering to please contact us,” Roybal said. “We also welcome donations in any amount to help us feed those in need. Tax deductible donations can be made by cash, check or through PayPal. Food donations also are appreciated. Please call to schedule food donation drop off times.”

The sisters ask readers to help spread the word to those in need.

“Do you know someone who goes without daily lunch or could use a good meal? Send them our way... many people do not know we are here for them,” they said.

To learn more, volunteer or donate food or funds, call 505.753.4956 or email smdpsoupkitchen@yahoo.com.

LIFEGUARD

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positions in lifeguarding: casual, full-time and senior. Casual employees come in as needed, full-time employees work regular hours and senior lifeguards have some supervisory duties.

Being a lifeguard at the aquatic center is more than just sitting on a chair, looking for troublemakers.

McCoy said lifeguards help with opening and closing, assist with pool maintenance, teach swim classes and water aerobics.

With a multitude of duties, she said being a lifeguard can be a great stepping stone in a person’s career. McCoy pointed out that many lifeguards at the aquatic center have moved on to be teachers, firefighters, police officers and paramedics.

Additionally, being a lifeguard can be a great way to get a foot in the door for working for Los Alamos County.

Styron agreed.

“It is a great first job,” he said. “You learn good values, you learn discipline. You learn lifelong skills ... that can not only help you in your job here but in your life moving forward and make a difference in someone’s life down the road.”

It pays well, too. Depending on the position, lifeguards can make anywhere between \$17.82 an hour to \$26.27 an hour.

The other perk is that the aquatic center is a great place to work, McCoy said.

“I believe it is a family atmosphere,” she said. “It’s like an extended family ... you become part of a family with mentors who can guide you through difficult times.”

“It’s a great place to work,” McCoy added. “It’s a treasure...”

If interested in applying for a lifeguard position, call the aquatic center at 505.662.8170 or visit the County website.

MARINE

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Kuropatwinski, 18, has a long history of participating in service oriented endeavors. He joined the Boy Scouts in first grade and completed his Eagle Scout project at the Pajarito Environmental Education Center in 2020 and was awarded the rank of Eagle Scout earlier this year. Kuropatwinski also participated in NJROTC all four years of high school.

Kuropatwinski will spend the next 13 weeks in boot camp after which he is scheduled to serve eight years in the Marines. He will spend four years active duty and four years in the reserves, he said, adding that he has the option to spend his full career in the Marines and will make that decision sometime down the line.

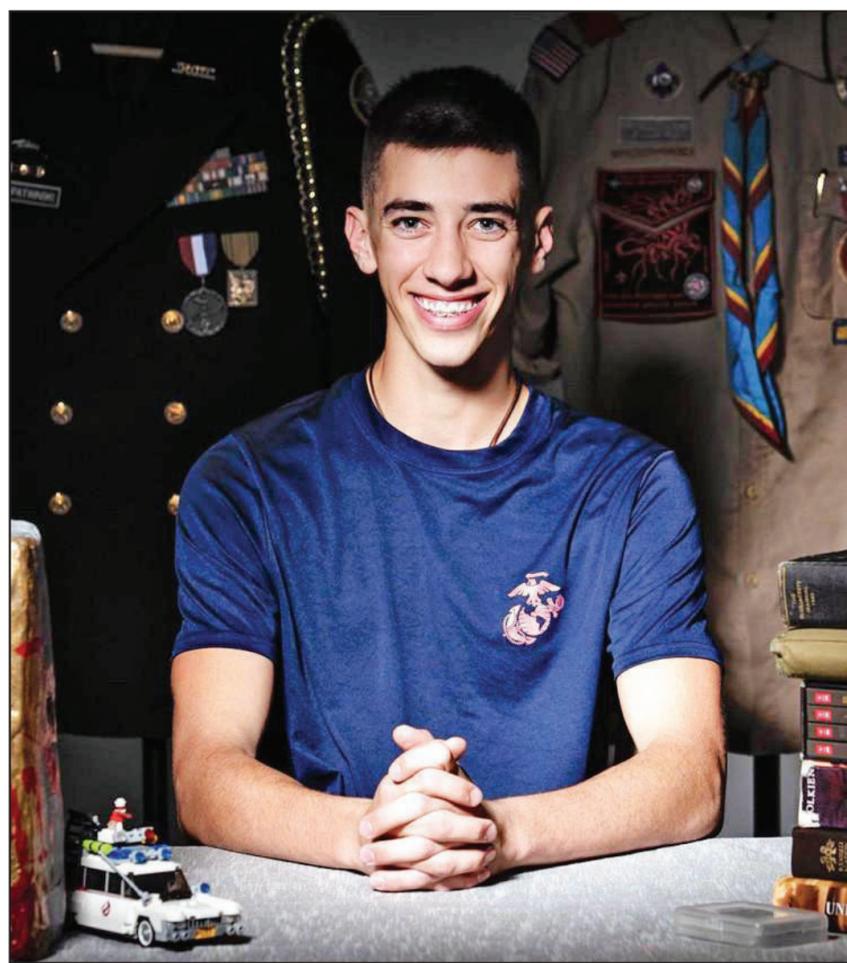
Kuropatwinski is the son of James and Shelly Kuropatwinski.

“Ignatius is a good guy always looking for a challenge and the Marines should give it to him,” James said. “He is a son of Los Alamos and will represent Los Alamos and New Mexico well in the Corps. I am very proud of our boy!”

Shelly agreed with her husband in the esteem they each hold for their son.

“I am proud beyond words and humbled beyond belief,” she said.

The Marine recruiter told the Post that during the next 13 weeks, Kuropatwinski



Ignatius Robert Kuropatwinski will be in boot camp for 13 weeks. Courtesy photo

will undergo intense physical and mental training to become a Marine.

“Robert Ignatius has wanted to become a Marine for a long time and has made

all the right decisions to this point to not just be a qualified but a highly qualified candidate to become one of the few and the proud.”

Folk Rock Band Dusty Low Debuts At Summer Concert Series

COMMUNITY News:

The 2021 Los Alamos Summer Concert Series presented by Toyota of Santa Fe, presents the second live show concert of the 2021 season featuring folk rock/Americana sensation Dusty Low from El Paso, Texas.

Dusty Low, the third collaboration of the Sullivan brothers, has brought their

folk-rock/Americana roots to fruition. The Sullivans have been sharing their original music nationally and internationally since 2007.

Jesse Sullivan leads the group on vocals and guitar. Danny Sullivan sings back-ups as well as holding down the beat on the drums. Sam Sullivan adds trumpet and harmonica licks and contributes on vocals, completing the Sullivan Bros three-part harmony.

In 2016 the boys were joined by longtime friend Adam Trzyna on bass, guitar and vocals. Dusty Low is working on their fourth studio album, which they plan to release early next year. For more information about the band, visit www.DustyLow.com.

This second Overlook Park live in-person concert is Friday July 9 and will be the final concert of the series to take place in White Rock.

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