

*In part one of this story, Embudo Valley Library created an afterschool program that is a joyful rhythm of mindfulness, homework help, hands-on activities, and outdoor exploration.*

## **Making Learning Fun: Embudo Valley Tutoring Association's Afterschool Magic**

At the end of each school day in the quiet community of Dixon, something special begins to unfold behind the Embudo Valley Library. The doors of the community center swing open, and the hum of laughter, learning, and connection fills the air. The [Embudo Valley Tutoring Association's \(EVTA\)](#) joins the [Embudo Valley Library's](#) Afterschool Program to enhance the space where local children are not only supported academically but also empowered to explore, imagine, and grow.

For Billie Bolton, who assists in the program once a week, it's a joy to watch children come through the doors—sometimes racing in after school, eager for what the afternoon holds. “It's exciting to see so many kids coming regularly to participate in the program,” she shares. “It's nice to see kids sitting under a big apple tree with their friends or going on a hike in the hills behind the library, instead of being glued to a phone or computer game.”

Billie brings math games and strategic challenges like Yahtzee to help students master their multiplication and division skills in a fun, relaxed environment. She also creates space for cultural storytelling, once captivating a group of students with the story of Our Lady of Guadalupe and Juan Diego. “To my delight, the students were very interested and tuned in. Several of them even came up to me afterward to tell me how much they liked it,” she says, smiling.

Cynthia Osmundson, a familiar face both at Dixon Elementary and the afterschool program, brings her own brand of warmth and encouragement. Known to students as the “math games lady,” Cynthia shows up with puzzles and problem-solving activities designed to challenge and inspire. She's been especially moved by how committed the students are to completing their homework, even seeking out help when needed. “These kids really enjoy playing games and learning new strategies,” she explains. “As the weather gets nicer, we even play together outside. I think the kids like having someone consistent to spend time with, and I enjoy it too.”

In the background of all this hands-on engagement, program assistant Brynn Crockett has watched something else bloom: the growth of communication, connection, and confidence among the students. “Over the past two months, I've observed significant growth in the students' listening and communication skills—not just with us, but with each other,” she says. “It's been especially rewarding to see their teamwork improve, even among students who weren't friends before.”

Brynn sees the power of structured activities that still leave room for creativity—like hikes, painting, or brainstorming sessions about future projects. “These moments help the students feel excited, and they begin to take ownership of their learning,” she shares. When she noticed several girls were particularly interested in jewelry making, she turned their enthusiasm into a learning opportunity—teaching them advanced techniques for crafting earrings and necklaces.

“It’s been wonderful to see their creativity flourish and their confidence grow as they refine their skills.”

Together, these mentors and educators reflect the heart of EVTA’s mission: to support students in both their academic journeys and their personal growth. Whether it’s through solving a tricky math problem, storytelling under the apple tree, or simply being present after school, the EVTA Afterschool Program is creating a space where children can feel safe, supported, and inspired to explore who they are.

As Billie, Cynthia, and Brynn would all agree—this isn’t just an afterschool program. It’s a foundation for brighter futures, built one joyful afternoon at a time.

Over the last few years, Embudo Valley Tutoring Association has expanded their services to include Dixon Elementary, Velarde Elementary, Alcalde Elementary and San Juan Elementary. [United Way Northern New Mexico](#) has been a proud supporter of their services and expansion into more elementary schools.

### **Want to learn more?**

Visit [www.embudovalleytutoring.com](http://www.embudovalleytutoring.com) to learn more about Embudo Valley Tutoring Association services.

Visit [www.unitedwaynm.org](http://www.unitedwaynm.org) to learn more about United Way Northern New Mexico or join the effort to strengthen many local nonprofits by donating.