

volume 3 number 5

the laboratory connection

your community's link
to information, opportunities, and people
at Los Alamos National Laboratory

may 2002

a word from the Community Relations Office

“To whom much is given, much is expected.” That statement can apply to most Lab employees, who generally enjoy good working conditions and excellent benefits working for the University of California and other Lab subcontractors. Although workers at other companies and institutions in northern New Mexico are often subject to the ups and downs of the economy and the vagaries of the legislative process, Lab employees can expect to be well compensated for ability and hard work. Many of us celebrate our good fortune by becoming increasingly involved in our communities.

An impressive number of employees show their appreciation with a variety of public service activities. Quite a few hold or have held elected or appointed offices with their state, county, municipal or tribal governments. While these activities can be enormously time-consuming, they allow officeholders to have meaningful input on important issues affecting many of their fellow citizens now and in the future. An even greater number of Lab employees volunteer in one or more of the many service organizations active in northern New Mexico. Some have carved out their own niche by fashioning an independent response to unmet social needs. Still others contribute their time and talents to artistic and cultural endeavors that feed the soul of the community. In this issue of Lab Connection, we'll look at the service choices employees make and why they make them.

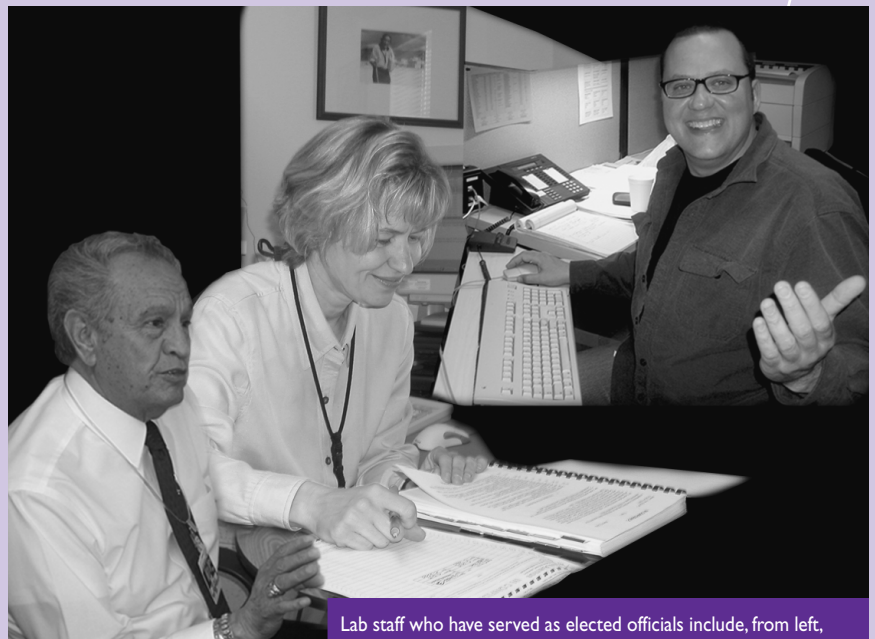
Lab Fosters Service For Many Elected Officials

When young Nick Salazar began working as a Lab warehouse clerk in 1950, he never imagined that one day he would testify before the United States Congress or have a college building named after him. But those were among the rewards of a half century of service to the Lab and his community. For many of those years, Salazar held a full-time Laboratory job while serving as an elected official, first as a Rio Arriba County Commissioner, later as a state representative. Nowadays, Salazar is an associate in the Lab's Governmental Relations Office and still serves in the New Mexico legislature.

“ I first ran for county commissioner because I thought I could contribute to my community,” Salazar said. “At that time, our people in the Valley were not as apt to get the better jobs because of lack of education, particularly technical education.”

Salazar had some college education but little technical training when he arrived at the Lab, but he took some courses and was able to

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Lab staff who have served as elected officials include, from left, State Representative Nick Salazar and former Los Alamos County Councilors Chris Chandler and James Rickman.

Elected Officials
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learn on the job. He eventually worked on thermonuclear research projects and became an expert on insulating vacuum systems.

Salazar is credited with many legislative accomplishments, but his proudest may be the creation of Northern New Mexico Community College. He not only sponsored the New Mexico legislation, but testified before the United States Congress about the need to train new generations of Lab employees.

“The college tries hard to place its students and has a high success rate,” he said, “and together with the Lab has raised the per capita income in the Española Valley,” he said. In his honor, NNMCC recently dedicated the Nick L. Salazar Center for the Arts.

Los Alamos County Councilor Diane Albert also champions technical education and her political career led her to bring that focus to her work. A metallurgist and engineer when she came to the Lab almost a decade ago, she



LA County Councilor Diane Albert

found politics incompatible with her job after her election.

“In technical research, you have to be there all the time,” she pointed out. “So I decided to make my avocation—mentoring—my vocation.”

Now a Science Education Specialist, Albert started a workforce development internship program, which has been funded by DOE. She teaches a class at UNM-LA each semester and has been developing entry-level technician training.

“When you work on the workforce at the Lab, you serve the entire region in economic development and education,” she said. “It’s astonishing the skills that people have that they’ve never had a way to use. So my job at the Lab helps Los Alamos County.”

Elected in 1997 when he was in his early thirties, James Rickman was the youngest Los Alamos County councilor to hold office. The son of local junior high school teachers and a former reporter for the Los Alamos Monitor, Rickman had a different, more blue-collar perspective of the town and the Lab. He has been a media specialist in Public Affairs for 8 years.

“As a reporter covering local government, you tend to get a little cynical about things,” he said, “but this is my home town and I wanted to have a say in what happened here.”

The Laboratory allows paid community service leave for elected officials, among others, but because Los Alamos County Councilors receive a small stipend, they’re allowed less than their unpaid colleagues. Rickman said he devoted between 15 and 40 hours a week to his political duties, using 100 hours of vacation time every year of his tenure for meetings,

lobbying trips to Washington D.C. and other council business. “I was elected at a tumultuous time for Los Alamos,” he said. “There was the land transfer issue and efforts to diversify the economy. I knew it would be a hassle and a time crunch.” Although he decided not to run again for the Council, Rickman now plans to run for Magistrate Judge, a full-time job.

Chris Chandler of the Lab’s Legal Office served as a Los Alamos County Councilor at the same time as Rickman and still sits on the Planning and Zoning Commission. She agreed that public service can be time-consuming, but that some sacrifice is inherent in the decision to run. During her term as councilor, Chandler served one year as chair and another as vice-chair, adding agenda management and spokesperson duties to an already busy schedule.

“What is volunteering other than accepting that you will be inconvenienced some?” she asked. “We do get some community service time, and have ample vacation when we need to tap into it. I also tried to schedule meetings late in the day or early in the morning and read my prep materials at night.”

State Representative Debbie Rodella chose to deal with the heavy demands on her time by going to part-time status after her election 10 years ago. A Materials Science Technician, she now works three days a week.

“The legislature only meets for 30 or 60 days a year, but constituent and community meetings occur throughout the year and committee hearings are held throughout the state,” she said. “I take lots of leave without pay, and it has

created a financial burden for our family. But I thought it was important to get involved and try to make things better.”

Española City Councilor Patrick Trujillo, chief of staff for the Lab’s Nuclear Materials Technology Division, was recently named **Mayor-Pro-Tem**, in addition to his other political duties. His desire to help his hometown cope with growth, water, and wastewater issues led him to run for his seat two years ago.

“The Lab is very generous in giving us community service time,” he said. “It’s a real benefit that we try to use wisely.”

One of Española’s newest councilors is **Carla Martinez**, a Lab Quality Assurance Specialist elected this spring. Although she’s still getting up to speed, Martinez previously sat on the city’s Planning and Zoning Commission and has some idea of the time demands she will face. “Running for city office has been a goal of mine since I was in college,” she said. “I have a very supportive manager. And I’ll probably spend all my vacations on city business.”

Los Alamos County Councilor Lawry Mann has been retired since before he ran for elective office, but he spent 10 years on the town’s Utility Board while heading a computer group.

“I used to go to work at 7:00 a.m. so that if I had to do something during the day I could take the time,” he said. “We would also have meetings during the noon hour or after work. I also had a good group as backup.”

Councilor Diane Albert has another way of adding hours to her day. “I don’t get much sleep,” she said.

Tribal Officials Balance the Interests of Two Cultures

When Elmer Torres was first elected Governor of San Ildefonso Pueblo in 1994, he was working as lead technician at a Lab radiation instrument calibration lab. Knowing the demands that would be made on his time, Torres took an unpaid leave of absence.

The Pueblo tried to match Torres’ Lab salary, but he ultimately took a significant pay cut. When he was re-elected to a second two-year term, Torres was faced with having his Laboratory position eliminated.

“The Lab had never given four years of leave without pay,” Torres said. “They took it up to the Regents of the University of California, who decided to give tribal officials another two years of leave while retaining their positions. Otherwise, I’d have been out of a job.”

In 1998, the Lab instituted a Tribal Leave policy that allows sitting tribal governors and lieutenant governors to retain 60 percent of their salaries and benefits. Several other Lab employees have taken advantage of this opportunity.

“Within the years that I served as Governor, the Lab became more sensitive to the roles we play in our communities and the time that requires,” Torres said.

Torres noted that when serving as a tribal official he was constantly barraged by issues from law enforcement to roads to wandering livestock.

“The Lab gets frustrated when we don’t respond immediately to its concerns, but there are so many pressing issues,” he said. “We are very interested in what the Lab does, and we will continue to be.”

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Former Tribal Governors Elmer Torres, left, and Joe Garcia. Torres was also Lt. Governor at San Ildefonso Pueblo and Garcia is now a councilman at San Juan Pueblo.

Office Holders Report Few Perceived Conflicts of Interest

Holding public office while working at the Lab presents some challenges for employees who've tried it, but most feel the benefits of their Lab perspective outweigh any problems they've encountered.

Former Los Alamos County Councilor Chris Chandler said her work in employment litigation hardly ever involved an issue of concern to the council, but that wearing two hats can still be a balancing act.

"The Lab gets frustrated with the County, and the County with the Lab, and that conflict can be difficult if you're a dedicated Lab employee," she said. "I was on the Council when most of the government assistance payments went away and was frustrated that there seemed to be a lack of willingness by the community to move forward."

Councilors also must deal with the perennial issue of whether the Lab should be taxed. James Rickman said, "This was a difficult issue for me because I could see both sides of that

"In public affairs, we like to highlight Lab successes and sometimes the Council would be critical of DOE," he said. "But we also successfully lobbied to increase the environmental restoration budget and did other things that were beneficial all around for the community and the Laboratory."

Councilor Lawry Mann pointed out that "the Lab and the County sink or swim together, so I have never felt a conflict. When we lobby our Congressional delegation, we're always seeking what's best for both of us. And when

Rep. Salazar said he has always been very careful not to put himself in a position to be crossways with the Lab or with his constituents.

"My job gave me an opportunity to be a conduit to all of my colleagues about the Lab and what it does," he said. "In the course of my years in the Legislature, there have been some memorials chastising the Lab for this or that. But I work here and I know what goes on. Outsiders are usually the ones criticizing."

Rep. Debbie Rodella sponsored the Lab oversight resolution passed during the last legislative session, and said her constituents have concerns about environmental, recruitment, and diversity issues.

"I am outspoken, and if issues need to be raised, I'm not afraid to raise them," she said.

Councilor Patrick Trujillo said that some of his constituents are concerned that the Lab is not spending enough money in northern New Mexico.

"We need to take a hard look at this," he said.

Newly-elected Councilor Carla Martinez said her work in quality assurance has little connection with constituent concerns, but that she heard about some procurement issues while campaigning last winter.

"I'd like to explore how we can better partner with the Lab for economic development, but I think the Lab does a lot they don't get credit for," she said. "The Lab should provide avenues for business, but the businesses need to take the initiative to learn the procurement process."



Española City Councilor Carla Martinez (above right), and State Representative Debbie Rodella



LA County Councilor Lawry Mann

debate very well. Mostly I fought it, from an economic development point of view, because the idea of people losing jobs was never a palatable part of the equation for me."

Rickman said the nature of his work in Public Affairs sometimes chafed with his official duties.

I was on the Utility Board, the things we were doing all benefited the Lab."

Diane Albert said people have told her that they voted for her because of her technical credentials.

"When you're considering plans for a new sewage plant, it's good to have a technical background," she said. "You can make better decisions when you're really well-informed and understand the technology."



Española Mayor Pro Tem Patrick Trujillo

Two Worlds
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Joe Garcia, now head of the Lab's Tribal Team, served four terms in appointed positions at San Juan Pueblo during the '90s while working in electrical engineering instrumentation. He took leaves of absence while governor, and part time status for the less time-consuming positions.

"It depends on how active you want to be," Garcia said. "I took the job very seriously because when I took office we were at the beginning of refining tribal government and looking into economic development and education. Even when I was on a partial leave of absence, the workload was full time in both places. But somehow I found the energy."

Garcia found some mental challenges in integrating the two jobs in two realms.

"The differences in modes of operation and the culture of the organizations was sometimes hard to deal with," he said. "Up here, it's the job first, and our way is to always put people first."

Garcia still serves as a councilman at San Juan, and is currently first vicepresident of the National Congress of American Indians, which means frequent trips to Washington, D.C. and many other meetings and conferences in support of its 260 member tribes.

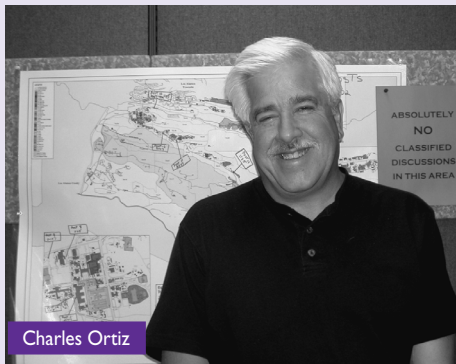
"I do this work on personal time, but if it benefits Indians, it's a sacrifice I'm happy to make," he said.

There is one area Garcia won't sacrifice. "I make it a point to always spend a lot of time with my family," he said. "It makes everything else go better."

Lab Volunteers Return Benefits To The Workplace

When Gloria Garcia leaves her office in the Otowi Building, she never knows what she'll find there when she returns. Bags of clothing, toys, books, makeup, and packages of personal-sized shampoo and soap from employee travel frequently appear in her absence, courtesy of the large network of supporters for her volunteer efforts.

For the past 20 years, Garcia has been collecting and distributing necessities to those in need in northern New Mexico. As project leader for BUS Division's Bridge to Employment program, she has focused her recent efforts on the needs of the Welfare to Work women in her charge, but her



Charles Ortiz

efforts are wide ranging and year round. She takes men's clothing for teenagers to the Youth and Family shelter, women's work clothes to Team Works, book and toys to the Head Start program, food and clothing to Amigos Del Valle, food to Bienvenidos shelter, and clothing and small appliances to Esperanza.

"People at the Lab know that I'll take anything I can get my hands on," she laughed. "I can always find a taker. I like to help people, especially those who have less. I've found that there are many generous people at the Lab and Johnson Controls and I have become the funnel to ensure that what they offer is put to use. The service agencies know me, and know that I can find whatever's needed."

Garcia is particularly proud of her division's Adopt a Family efforts at the holidays.



Pat Soran

Fourteen families received food, gifts, and clothing; some received major appliances like washers, dryers, and microwaves.

Working with the Bridge to Employment women has also been rewarding.

"Many of the women need appropriate work clothes, so we let them pick from the donations we receive," she said. "We do our best to keep them in the workforce; they have so much potential."

Garcia said her supervisors at the Lab have always supported her efforts, allowing her to pick up donations on her way to and from meetings.

"I see that the Lab has been focusing more on corporate responsibility and involvement in the community," she said. "This way we'll make it better for everyone."

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Gloria Garcia, right, picks up a donation from Ada DeAgüero

Raising the Curtain on Lab's Theatrical Talent

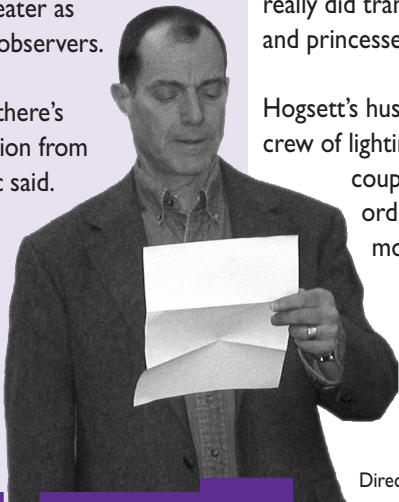
When the curtain went up on the Los Alamos Light Opera Company's production of *The King and I*, the man in the spotlight was X-Division's Galen Gisler in the uniform of Captain Orton on whose ship Anna Leonowens arrives in Siam. Later in the first act, when the young bride Tuptim is brought to the King of Siam, she is accompanied by her secret lover, Lun Tha, portrayed by NIS physicist Rick Elphic. And when Little Eva, played by Elphic's wife Gail, dies at the conclusion of the ballet/play of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, she ascends to a smiling golden Buddha, Carol Hogsett of the Lab's recruiting office.

These are just a few of the dozens of Lab employees who participated in the March production at the Duane Smith Auditorium, including the show's producer, director, assistant director and choreographer, dancers, set carpenters and painters, costumers, hairdressers, makeup artists and lighting technicians. Hundreds of others, including Lab Director John Browne, attended one of the four performances.

"Theater is an opportunity to expand our experiences beyond what we ordinarily encounter," Gisler said. "I've never been a ship captain, nor will I ever be. Yet for a few weeks, I could act in that role and feel richer for it."

The Lab, like the town as a whole, has embraced amateur theater as both participants and observers.

"For a town this size, there's tremendous participation from the community," Elphic said. "I had been onstage before in *A Christmas Carol*, but I'm not a singer. That part was terrifying, but it was an opportunity for my wife and me to



Director Cy Hoffman

participate in something really different. And the community appreciation was tremendous."

Hogsett, a dancer for 25 years, and a choreographer for 10, had never worked with children before this production, where she was responsible for coordinating the 16 five to 14-year-olds who played the King's children. She also choreographed a waltz and a polka for the adult characters, and suggested movement for the singers.



Galen Gisler as Captain Orton

"My strength is in taking a cast and making the choreography fit them so they look good onstage," she said. "And once the kids got into their makeup and costumes, they really did transform into little princes and princesses."

Hogsett's husband, Vic, was among the all-Lab crew of lighting technicians. Like many other couples, they both participate in order to see each other during the months of rehearsal.

The show was the fifth directed by Cy Hoffman, who works at the Lab's



Ann Mauzy, front, as Topsy, Carol Hogsett as Buddha and Larry Marek

Milagro astronomy project at Fenton Hill. Hoffman's wife, Jane, played Anna and through her, he has

been involved in light opera for 20 years, singing, acting, tap dancing, and directing.

"When you have to talk in public, it's a great help to have performed in front of hundreds of people," he said. "I am never nervous talking in public, and I used to be." Hoffman sees other values to the experience. "Directing involves organizational skills that can be applied elsewhere," he said. "Putting together a show is a huge teamwork activity. You have people in big roles, small roles, makeup, costumes, dressers, and you need everybody. It's very apparent because the goal is obvious, but it also carries over into other activities where the goal may not be so obvious."

Volunteers
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Choreographer Carol Hogsett and the Siamese children

Lab writer and editor Ann Mauzy handled publicity for the production and also danced the role of Topsy in the ballet.

"I participate in theater, as most of us do, because I am a 'ham' and love the attention," she said. "Dancing is my exercise, my art, my psychiatrist, and my social life. I find a synergy between my job in publications and theater because in both, you have to understand your audience and morph your product so it will interest and inform them."

Costume designer Pam Paine has been sewing since grade school and over the years became interested in costuming. "I get to come to work every day and be creative, play, and have fun," she said of her job as a graphic designer in X-Division. "The creativity on the job fuels creativity in costuming and vice versa. One feeds on the other."

Carol Hogsett said her recruiting group at the Lab has also benefited from her work in theater. "I've certainly met a lot of people I wouldn't have otherwise," she said, "some community members, but also a network of people at the Lab that have been useful to know." She also cites one more reason to check out theater in Los Alamos: "It's always a hoot to see an astrophysicist dancing a jig," she said.

PTLA's Charles Ortiz has concentrated his volunteer efforts around the young and old of his home community of Chimayo. In 1996, he was among the founders of the Chimayo Crime Prevention Organization, a nonprofit dedicated to reducing crime there. In May of 2000, the organization started the Chimayo Boys and Girls Club, where Ortiz serves as president of the advisory board. The LANL Foundation recently awarded the club a \$10,000 grant for a tutoring program.

"We will get the best students from Northern New Mexico Community College to come and tutor the kids," Ortiz said. "It will help them in school and give them some good role models and ideas for their future. The program also promotes intergenerational mentoring where older people in the community can teach children weaving and other skills." The Chimayo Boys and Girls Club recently broke ground for a new multipurpose room and serves as a safe haven for the village's youth.

"The club gives our kids a positive, safe place to have after-school activities, and also allows us to give a positive spin to education," Ortiz said. He has promoted several new initiatives to reduce the dropout rate locally and is scheduled to give a presentation to the Española school board on the community academy model. For the past three years, he has helped bring a Math and Science Camp to fifth and sixth graders in Chimayo.

Ortiz said his volunteer activities are time consuming, and he fits them in on vacation time, after work, or on leave without pay. But he credits PTLA for working with him to make a difference. "PTLA has offered to help us prepare the documents to incorporate and register as a 501(c)(3) organization," he said. "They have also helped transfer coded radios salvaged from the Lab to the state police for use in its crime-fighting efforts in our area."

Retired nuclear engineer Pat Soran was a key player in the founding of the Lunch Buddy program in 1996 and still serves as the organization's president. The program matches adult volunteers with elementary school children for weekly lunch dates. This year it was expanded to include schools in the Española Valley.

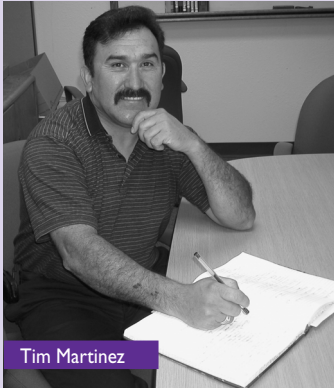
Soran is enthusiastic about the benefits, direct and indirect, of community service. "Encouraging employees to volunteer is a good investment for the Lab," he said. "Volunteering always made me feel better, and when employees feel better, they perform better. In particular, mentoring makes a better worker because it teaches you how to listen and not be judgmental, and that will have a positive effect in the workplace." Before his retirement in 1999, Soran was an X-Division group leader who always promoted volunteerism.

"As a group leader, I always wanted to hire well-rounded people with outside interests," he said. "And I also looked for people who were putting something back into the community." Soran also administers the Diane Soran Foundation in honor of his wife who died in 1996. In addition to helping Lunch Buddies get started, the foundation has built and maintained tot lots around town, and has started the Crisis Center of Northern New Mexico branch in Los Alamos. The Crisis Center project arose from the experiences of Soran's adult children, both doctors who have worked in county hospitals in California and witnessed the results of domestic violence.

Although he has always done a fair amount of volunteer work, Soran said he has become even more involved since his retirement. "We are working on an endowment fund for Lunch Buddies, and building a Web site and database for the Crisis Center," he said. "Once you start pulling that thread, you can work 80 hours a week. But I feel very lucky. The Lab, and Los Alamos, have been very good to me."

In Business

Small Business Outreach Office Opens in Española



Tim Martinez

Tim Martinez, a procurement specialist and supplier liaison, will serve as the new point of contact for small businesses in the Española Valley who want to do business with the Lab. The Alcalde resident, who has worked at the Laboratory for more than 20 years, will staff the Lab's small business outreach office in Española.

The office is located in the Community Relations Office's Española Outreach Center at Northern New Mexico Community College. Small business owners in the Valley will be able to meet with Martinez to discuss small business procurement opportunities and receive guidance on the Lab's procedures and requirements.

"We expect to open up more business doors for small business in northern New Mexico," Martinez said. "The government can be very difficult to deal with, but I can help business owners find the end users for their products, put them in contact with specific people at the Lab, and also help them understand our contracts and how they work."

Martinez recently helped host a construction procurement meeting to offer regional construction business owners an opportunity to ask questions and air concerns about Lab procurement efforts and practices.

"There's a lot to do here," Martinez said. "People want to find new ways to do business with the Lab. The response from the community has been overwhelming."

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