

# the laboratory connection

volume 3 number 10

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

november/december 2002

a  
word  
from

the Community Relations Office

**F**or most of us, the holidays are a time of reflection. As 2002 draws to a close, memories of September 11 commemoration ceremonies and the newly established Patriot Day were positive signs of our nation moving forward, refusing to allow fear to overshadow our lives. One negative note, however, was the year's frequent headlines about corporate scandals that damaged our nation's trust in corporate leaders.

In a recent talk on ethics, Laboratory Director John Browne emphasized the Laboratory's values—trustworthiness, safety and security, excellence, teamwork, public service, and diversity. We work together to solve problems, Browne said. We deliver on our commitments to the taxpayers, our customers, and each other.

The Golden Rule is no more evident than during our United Way campaign and annual Holiday Drive. This year's United Way campaign raised a record amount during its first few weeks, demonstrating that our employees become more enthusiastic and more generous every year. Despite their many personal obligations, employees have reached deeper into their pockets and worked just as hard to ensure that other New Mexican families have food on their tables, warm clothes to wear, and gifts under their Christmas trees.

The Community Relations Office would like to thank everyone who participates in these events for truly living the Golden Rule and for helping brighten the lives of other New Mexican families.

Have a safe and wonderful Holiday Season!

## Lab's Holiday Drive Extends Good Will and Cheer



Two employees from the Nuclear Materials Technology Division, helped out during the Laboratory's 2001 Holiday Drive. Sophie Vigil tries out one of the bicycles donated by TA-55 employees and Kandice Merrell holds a bag of wrapped gifts that were distributed to northern New Mexico families in need.

**During the holiday season, spreading good will and holiday cheer by sharing with others is a northern New Mexico tradition. Generosity seems to grow each year, and many Laboratory employees, groups and divisions play a major role.**

**“This year, I want to bring the Holiday Drive focus further north than Santa Fe,” said Holiday Drive coordinator Debbi Wersonick. “I want to concentrate on families in Los Alamos and Rio Arriba.”**

**This year's Laboratory Holiday Drive will begin November 25 and extend through December 16. During the 2001-2002 Holiday Drive, 19 families, more than 400 individual children and 50 senior citizens received gifts of food and clothing. All of the Laboratory's divisions contributed generously.**

**Among the most active were Shelly Melton, of the Human Resources Division, her husband Dave, of the Risk Reduction and Environmental**

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Holiday Drive  
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Stewardship Division, her brother-in-law, Tom Petersen of the Engineering Sciences and Applications Division, and her sister, Jackie Petersen. Together, they adopted three New Mexican families.

“My sister Jackie and I divided the wish lists and bought all the toys they asked for,” Melton said. “One of the little girls had requested an Easy-Bake Oven, something that I had wanted as a little girl, so it was neat to buy that for her.”

Melton also said that they provided a gift basket of shampoo, soaps, and lotions for one mother and each family with an extra food box containing canned goods and other nonperishables.

“We buy things on sale throughout the year and it’s amazing how many things you’ve got by the time Christmas comes around,” Melton explained. “As you get older, you appreciate all that you have and what others don’t. We’ve been very fortunate.”

Also through last year’s Holiday Drive, the Chemistry division adopted a family and collected more than \$1,200 in donations from its employees to buy gifts and food. With the donated money, the group bought each child a new bicycle, helmet and lock, a complete outfit including hats and gloves, pajamas, a backpack, and board games. The family also received an artificial Christmas tree, lights and ornaments, food for several meals, and a WalMart gift card for \$400. At Technical Area 55, the Nuclear Materials division has a long history of working to help others. Last year,

in addition to participating in the Lab’s Holiday Drive, employees from this facility coordinated a Thanksgiving Drive.

“We worked through Amigos Del Valle and provided food for more than 60 families last year,” said Karen Walterscheid, chief of staff for the Nuclear Materials Technology division. “Because it was so successful, we want to do it again this year. The employees out here are so generous.”

For the past 20 years, Gloria Garcia’s perennial efforts have become a sort of tradition in themselves. Garcia is a project leader for the Bridge to Employment program in the Lab’s Business Operations division. In addition to focusing on the needs of the women in the Welfare to Work program, she also takes men’s clothing to St. Elizabeth’s Shelter, teenage clothing to the Youth and Family Shelter, women’s work clothes to TeamWorks, books and

toys to the Head Start program in Española, food and clothing to Amigos Del Valle, food to Bienvenidos, and clothing and small appliances to the Esperanza Shelter for Battered Families.

Garcia is particularly proud of her division’s efforts. Last year, 14 families received food, gifts, and clothing. Some families also received major appliances like clothes washers and dryers and microwave ovens. Donations from other Laboratory divisions and KSL services (formerly JCNNM) employees made this a successful effort.

“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.”

The Community Relations Office also extends special thanks to those behind all of the charitable efforts throughout Northern New Mexico.



The Los Alamos Neutron Science Center Division Office collected gifts for distribution to 103 children from Taos last year. While on gift inspection, Santa passed out a candy cane to Lynn Varoz.

## Lab's Fire Mitigation Projects Continue to Make a Difference

Of the many Laboratory projects that have positively affected northern New Mexico, few have been as visible or have partnered with as many local businesses and community members as the Laboratory's fire rehabilitation efforts. Through cooperative work, the Laboratory's Facility and Waste Operations (FWO) Division's work within the Cerro Grande Rehabilitation Project (CGRP) has produced a long list of accomplishments. FWO-CGRP has worked closely with the Interagency Wildfire Management Team (IWMT), Laboratory's Emergency Management and Response group, the Ecology Group, Los Alamos County, the Pueblos, the U.S. Forest Service, and local northern New Mexico businesses.

"We've been working hard to thin the forests and woodlands in an effort to reduce the wildfire hazards and increase the health of the ecosystems," explained Stephen F. Mee, FWO-CGRP Program Manager. "Many of the thinned trees have been distributed to the public as free firewood or for commercial purposes. As a result, both the forest and the local community benefit."

To date FWO-CGRP has thinned more than 3,788 acres, sold 337,300 board feet of timber to small northern New Mexico sawmills and released 2,488 loads of firewood free to the public, through the [firewood@lanl.gov](mailto:firewood@lanl.gov) e-mail address. They are efficiently disposing of the slash produced by all of the above work in an Air Curtain Destructor. In the last week more than 3,600 cubic yards of slash (resulting in a 98% reduction of waste materials) were burned.

During just one week in September, FWO-CGRP thinned 139 acres throughout seven Laboratory technical areas through contracts with local Pueblos and small northern New Mexico businesses.

- Santa Clara Pueblo thinned 29 acres of Ponderosa Pine;

- TC Company thinned 30 acres of piñon-juniper and 25 acres of ponderosa pine;
- Hurd Brothers thinned 20 acres of ponderosa pine;
- Jemez Pueblo thinned 35 acres of piñon pine;
- Jemez Pueblo also split 90 cords of ponderosa pine; and
- Allied Tree Service continued work on defensible space thinning and cleared the power lines at two additional technical areas

Other accomplishments include the following:

- FWO-CGRP in conjunction with Emergency Management and Response (EM&R) completed improvements to the fire cache and helicopter landing area at Technical Area 49.
- Los Alamos County and US Forest Service personnel decided to maintain the Los Alamos Reservoir in a low-storage condition for use in the event of post-fire flooding. The initial dredging of the reservoir was funded by the Cerro Grande Rehabilitation Project and managed by FWO-CGRP.
- Bandelier National Monument has nearly completed the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) compliance for thinning along Highway 4. The thinning included the removal of trees 300 feet from each side of the highway. FWO-CGRP thinning operations worked with Bandelier personnel to chip the slash from this project to further reduce the fire danger.

"This fire season was characterized by long periods of extreme fire danger followed by drought stress and beetle mortality in the local area trees," Randy Balice, a Laboratory ecologist with a Ph.D.



Nestor Martinez, a contract worker from Santa Clara Pueblo Forestry, stands clear of a tree that was just felled by him and fellow wood cutter Salomon Martinez, also of Santa Clara. Chainsaw crews were clearing wood near the intersection of NM 502 and the Ski Hill Road as part of a Fuel Reduction Program through the Laboratory's Cerro Grande Rehabilitation Project.

in Forestry and Wildlife and Range Sciences explained. "These conditions caused a brief second fire season."

Balice is also a member of the Lab's Ecology Group, which completed the installation of the RRES-ECO Wildfire Behavior Modeling System at the Emergency Operations Center (EOC). The development of this modeling system was made possible by a three-year project funded by the Environmental, Safety and Health Division's Technology Development, Evaluation, and Assessment Program. The installation of the model at the EOC was supported by the FWO-CGRP.

"If a wildfire is discovered by 8:30 a.m., we can be modeling the direction and spread of the fire by 10:00 a.m.," he said. "We've also sampled 57 forest vegetation plots in support of the modeling efforts and to help assess forest thinning effectiveness."

Robbie Stibbard, from the Los Alamos County Fire Department, said that crews worked by hand on County lands removing slash in previously thinned areas and cutting trees immediately adjacent to power lines.

Fire Mitigation  
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"This winter, thinning and mechanical treatments of fuels will continue in 900 unburned acres in Walnut Canyon, Bayo Canyon, and other areas," he said.

Doug Tucker, also of the Los Alamos County Fire Department, said the County Council's approval of a Defensible Space Plan facilitated the thinning and removal of dead trees on private property. The county signed contracts for thinning and wildfire hazard reduction in Bayo Canyon, Rendija Canyon, and elsewhere throughout the county.

Carey Bare, from the Ecology Group, said that Cochiti Pueblo reported unusual amounts of tree mortality in their woodlands because of bark beetles. In response, several forest health specialists met to discuss the situation and assess the impact. Bare and other Lab forest management specialists also met to discuss the impact on Lab property.

"The recent mortality of piñon and ponderosa pine has been disappointing. However, this has largely been a natural event associated with drought and overcrowded forests," said Balice. "The long-term effects will be reduced wildfire hazards and increased vigor of the surviving trees."

Elmer Torres, from the Community Relations Office, is collaborating with the Pueblos on wildfire issues and the additional restrictions. He said the Pueblos are coordinating all fire suppression efforts with the Bureau of Indian Affairs, Northern Pueblos Agency.

For more information about this year's thinning accomplishments, please contact Stephen F. Mee FWO-CGRP at 665-8024. For information pertaining to the Inter-agency Wildfire Management Team's accomplishments, please contact Carey Bare at 667-3349.

## Diversity Group Chairman Stresses Teamwork



Rube Williams, the African American Diversity Working Group Chairman

"Our main focus is to support the Laboratory goals that have been set up by John Browne: recruit and cross-train young staffers," said Rube Williams, Jr., chairperson of the African American Diversity Working Group. "My focus is team. It's the most enjoyable, efficient way to work. It gets things done."

Williams, who is originally from Houston, Texas, has worked at the Laboratory for two years. He is a nuclear engineer and he received his B.S., M.S., and Ph.D. degrees from Texas A&M University.

"I was recruited by a Laboratory manager while I was a Visiting Assistant Professor at Texas A&M University," Williams said. "New Mexico is a great place. We need more snow — that's a pet complaint of mine. But, it's fun to live in a community where you can ski, jog, fly, swim and also do great science and engineering."

Williams said that the AADWG recruited 10 students from Morehouse College in Atlanta, Georgia last summer and this summer there are 8 students. He credits teamwork for successful recruiting.

He also credits the former AADWG diversity champion, Don Cobb, for being a strong diversity champion. Cobb is now one of three diversity champions for the new Diversity/Affirmative Action Board.

"He is 130 percent in support of getting African-Americans hired at the Laboratory," said Williams. "He's been real supportive. I try to keep him informed on what we're doing so that we're representing the Laboratory's interest, his interests, and ours."

Other goals for this working group include raising awareness of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and Black History Month, as well as getting more African-American students involved in the LANL Foundation scholarship process.

This year, the AADWG and the Lab's Diversity Office invited several speakers to the Laboratory. In celebration of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day, Dr. Cornelia Gillyard, chair of the Chemistry Department at Spelman College was invited to speak. Her presentation was titled "The African-American Presence in Science, Medicine, Engineering, and Technology, Then and Now."

She is currently researching the study of organoarsenicals and the synthesis and characterization of spectroscopic analytical procedures for monitoring environmental pollutants and toxins. Gillyard's mentoring activities include duties as the director of the NASA Women in Science and Engineering Scholars Program.

## NM Citizens' Advisory Board Visits WIPP

Representatives from the Northern New Mexico Citizens' Advisory Board (CAB) visited the Waste Isolation Pilot Project (WIPP) in Carlsbad earlier this year to get a sense of the challenges involved in expediting the shipment of Transuranic radioactive wastes from the Lab.

The CAB provides public input to the Department of Energy (DOE) on cleanup proposals, alternatives and procedures at the Laboratory. Ted Taylor serves as DOE liaison to the group.

"Quick to WIPP is a series of initiatives that would allow the acceleration of waste characterization and a change in the safety analysis based on shorter transportation times," Taylor said. "This would allow greater volumes of aboveground waste to be shipped to WIPP much more quickly." Taylor said the project would require additional equipment for characterization.

The Cerro Grande Fire in the summer of 2000 and the events of Sept. 11, 2001, have intensified concerns about the vulnerability of wastes from plutonium processing activities, and the Lab and the community have been eager to transport wastes to WIPP that are currently stored at aboveground sites at the Lab. The CAB has participated in many hours of technical discussions on the initiative to expedite

shipment over the several months preceding the tour in the spring.

"This acceleration project would move a significant volume of Transuranic nuclides (TRU) waste to WIPP in an expedient manner, removing it from the Pajarito Plateau and placing it in its final storage location," Taylor said.

Richard Gale was among CAB members who made the trip to WIPP, and he returned confident that the two institutions are actively and effectively working to make the project a reality.

"In the past, I suspected that the Lab and WIPP might not be on the same track, but my concerns were almost totally eliminated on this trip," he said. "We asked lots of questions and got good answers. They showed me that some very smart people are talking to each other and working on solutions to problems."

The Quick to WIPP project group meets by phone once a week, and face-to-face once a month. Problems are addressed and resolved without regard to whose territory is involved. All focus is on the solution.

Gale, who is chairman of the CAB's waste management committee, said the project

was exactly what they had been promoting for a long time, and that they were extremely pleased to champion this solution.

"This is a great project," he said. "To get a large percentage of the risk moved down there without repackaging will be a significant cost savings, greatly reduce environmental hazards here on the Hill, and significantly reduce worker risk to exposure."

The CAB has existed in its present form since late 1995, when it was reorganized and solicited a new and revitalized board.

The group meets monthly to receive community input in areas including waste management, environmental restoration, and groundwater surveillance. Members are selected through a formal process following national guidelines. Twenty-one members are authorized, and 18 very diverse members presently serve on the CAB. They include an apple grower from Dixon, a state employee from Velarde, a retailer from Santa Fe, a medical doctor from Las Vegas, and other community members from Taos to Cochiti Lake to Las Vegas. Only a few are Laboratory employees.

For more information about this group and its extended community interests, contact the CAB office in Santa Fe at 1660 Old Santa Fe Trail, 989-1662 or visit the web site at [www.nnmcab.org](http://www.nnmcab.org).



Eating breakfast at a diner near the WIPP site are, left to right, Carmen M. Rodriguez, the CAB liaison to the Lab's Environmental Restoration Project, CAB members Armando Benavidez of Santa Fe, Dorothy Hoard of Los Alamos, chairman Jim Brannon of Santa Fe, unidentified diner, vice chair Don Jordan of Albuquerque, Carl Friedberg of Santa Fe, Richard Gale of Santa Fe, and executive director Menice Manzanaras of Taos.

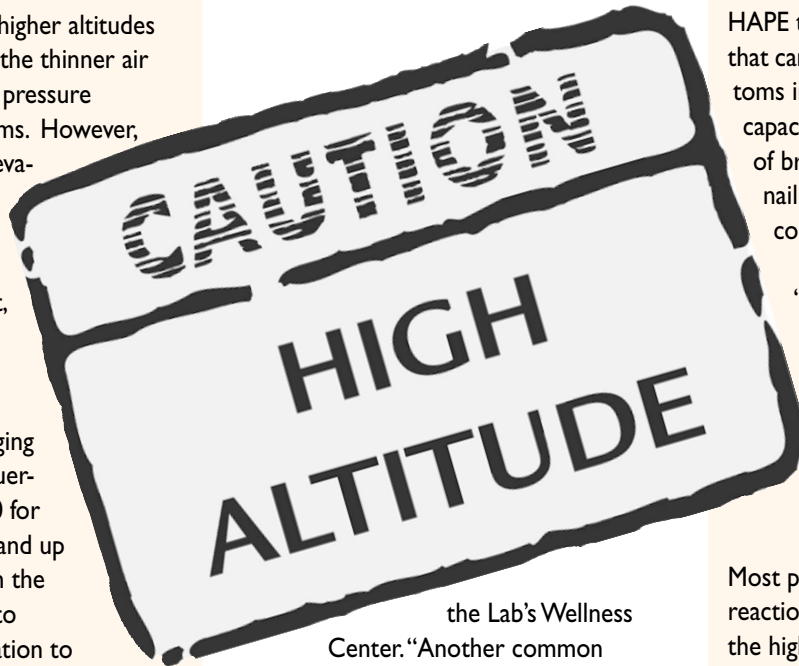
## Getting an Altitude: Tips for Coping

For those adapted to the higher altitudes in northern New Mexico, the thinner air with its lower barometric pressure presents no health problems. However, for visitors from lower elevations – whether customers, suppliers, friends or family members — the story can be very different, said Dr. Hugh Smith, a physician with the Lab's Occupational Medicine Group. With altitudes ranging from 5,000 feet for Albuquerque and Española to 7,000 for Santa Fe and Los Alamos, and up to 13,000 feet for peaks in the Jemez and Sangre de Cristo mountains, visitors' adaptation to higher altitudes can vary greatly.

Acute Mountain Sickness can occur at altitudes as low as 4,000 feet, but is more common above 8,500 feet. Above this altitude, more serious complications including death, can develop if ascent is too fast and the time spent at altitude is prolonged, said Smith. Although reactions to higher altitudes cannot always be predicted, understanding symptoms and options can be vital to protecting health.

Some people don't show any symptoms at all, but the most common reaction to ascending to higher altitudes—where the partial pressure of oxygen is less than at sea level—means that people will tend to breath more rapidly to adapt to a lack of oxygen supply to the body.

“On the simplest level, this more rapid breathing means that lowlanders expend more effort and need to consume about 500 more calories a day—preferably from carbohydrates – as well as more water because they are losing a greater amount of water vapor through respiration,” said Marta Gentry-Munger, a nutritionist with



the Lab's Wellness Center. “Another common problem is sleeplessness,” said Smith, “since periodic breathing can result in fitful nighttime patterns.” Alcohol and sedatives should be avoided because they tend to depress respiration.

Full-blown Acute Mountain Sickness can resemble a hangover with a throbbing headache, nausea or vomiting fatigue, dizziness and loss of appetite. For most people symptoms occur within six to 24 hours and abate at around the three-day mark. No further ascent, fluids, aspirin and a gradual increase in physical activity are the best remedies, Smith said.

If visitors plan to do some hiking or camping over 10,000 feet, other, more serious, complications can occur. High-Altitude Cerebral Edema (HACE) and High-Altitude Pulmonary Edema (HAPE) are potentially life-threatening conditions that require a return to lower altitudes and follow-up medical care.

With HACE, fluids and proteins leak into the brain causing confusion, loss of coordination, drowsiness, seizures, and even coma. With

HAPE there is fluid collection in the lung that can lead to death, Smith said. Symptoms include a decrease in exercise capacity, fatigue and weakness, shortness of breath, persistent dry cough, lips and nail beds turning blue and audible chest congestion.

“Not surprisingly, these conditions are more likely to occur in young people who don't want to admit that they are having problems or who push themselves too hard before they've had a chance to adapt,” he said.

Most people won't experience the severe reactions to altitude while visiting here, but the high altitude can exacerbate pre-existing medical conditions. Problems such as chronic heart or lung disease can be made worse at high altitude, and extra caution is needed.

“The most important thing is gradual ascent to altitude to allow the body to respond to the new demands and allow it to adapt,” said Smith. “Even an overnight stay in Albuquerque can help people who have altitude problems adjust on their way to the altitude of Santa Fe or higher.”

“Not even those who live at high altitude are immune from problems,” said Smith. “Even a week at sea level can cause people to lose their adaptation to higher elevations. And it can take up to three weeks to get it back.”

For more information on altitude illness you can check the Centers for Disease Control web pages at <http://www.cdc.gov/travel/diseases/altitude.htm>.

## Lab Trainer Dissects the Science of Diversity at NM Conference



The Lab's Todd Conklin was the keynote speaker at this year's EEO Diversity Training and Awareness Conference. He is congratulated by Cecil Lynn, outgoing chairman of the Albuquerque-Santa Fe-Los Alamos EEO Council.

"Noncomfort is a powerful force," Conklin said. "Whenever significant change goes up against significant culture, culture always wins out. People who move against culture in our organizations generally leave."

Conklin, a deputy group leader in the Lab's Nuclear Materials Technology division, has specialized in human resource issues and human reliability for the

past 10 years. He recently received his PhD in Organizational Communication and has a national reputation for taking a humorous approach to sensitive and difficult topics.

Conklin said employees carry basic assumptions or beliefs with them in and out of the workplace. These beliefs, based on experience and upbringing, impact what they feel is valuable and will be reflected in behavior.

"We try to change culture by changing people's basic assumptions," he said.

Conklin described several stages of cultural adaptation to change, and listed six workplace issues that are impacted by cultural perceptions. They are workload, control/power, reward, fairness, values and community. Commenting on a few of these, he said, "Everything is about power; everything else is about control. There is no small issue. Reward is an opportunity to interact in a positive way. And fairness is largely a matter of perception. This is important, only because it seems to be a critical factor in decision making."

Conklin said the key to finding a safety net in any organization is a favorite acronym, YOGOWYPI, which stands for You Only Get Out What You Put In.

"The worst thing you can do in an organization is shut down," he said. "The best thing you can do is to engage through conversation. This helps impact basic beliefs, which is how change happens."

Conklin's training clients include Coca-Cola Enterprises, the National Headquarters of the American Red Cross, the University of California, the FBI, the National Parks Service, Boeing, and Microsoft. He is the author of "Friendships at Work," which looks at workplace relationships.

Fairness is a matter of perception. You only get out what you put in. The most diverse set of friends you will ever have is going to be in the workplace.

These are all nuggets of wisdom that are central to the diversity message Todd Conklin delivers at least 50 times every year to groups throughout New Mexico and across the country. As this year's keynote speaker at the July Diversity Training and Awareness seminar, sponsored by the Albuquerque/ Santa Fe/Los Alamos Equal Employment Opportunity Council, Conklin spoke on "How to Successfully Survive Outside Your Comfort Zone and Culture."

Diversity  
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Tommy E. Smith, Director of Diversity Programs and Affirmative Action at Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory was invited to speak in celebration of Black History Month. His presentation was titled "African American Contributions to the American Mosaic."

Williams said, "Black History Month provides an opportunity for us to enjoy casual and formal reflections on the contributions of African Americans to the American success story."

Williams continued by saying that as all Americans have begun to embrace such discovery, Negro History Week has grown into Black History Month, and [also] has spawned other such monthly reflections concerning diverse and often overlooked origins of contributions to our quality of life.

Smith spoke about how the contributions of African-Americans and other constituent groups have contributed to a national

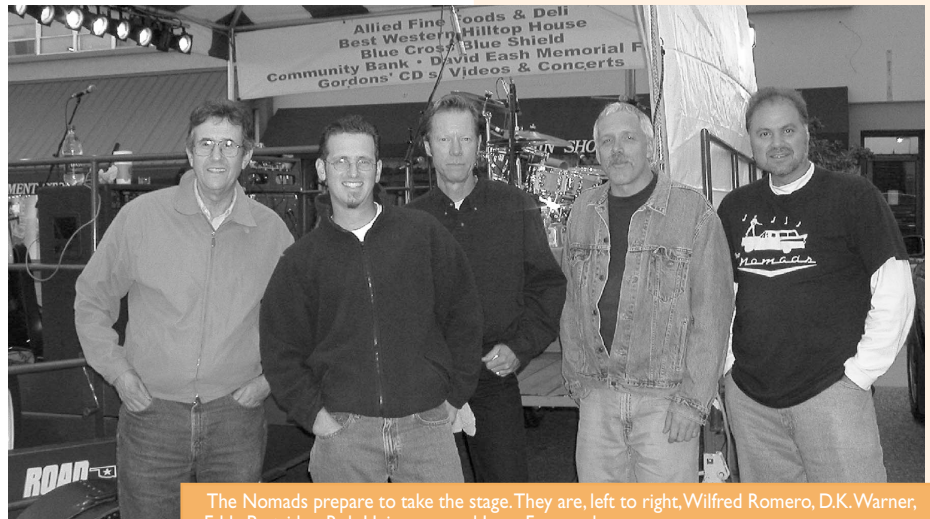
robustness and a tendency for success in meeting forward challenges.

This group also sponsored two Director's Colloquium speakers: Professor Sylvester James Gates, an endowed Physics Chair at the University of Maryland, and the AADWG Vice Chair, Giday Woldegabriel whose work has earned him the Laboratory Fellows Prize among other honors.

## Nomads Play Street Dance to Close Summer Concert Series

Every Friday night from mid-May to mid-September, free concerts are staged at several outdoor venues in Los Alamos, courtesy of Gordons' CDs and Tapes and a number of other local sponsors. The final show of this summer's concert series featured local garage-style band The Nomads, most of whom have day jobs at the Laboratory.

Eddy Partridge, an electronics tech at LANSCE, and Wilfred Romero, a mechanical technician who has worked at the Lab for more than 37 years, started the band two decades ago. Both play guitar and sing. The rest of the lineup has evolved over the years and now includes D.K. Warner of the Spallation Neutron Source project on drums, guitar, and vocals, and Jerry Foropoulos of Nuclear Materials Technology on bass and vocals. Rob Heineman, who plays keyboards, is the owner of



The Nomads prepare to take the stage. They are, left to right, Wilfred Romero, D.K. Warner, Eddy Partridge, Rob Heineman, and Jerry Foropoulos.

Pueblo Electric in Los Alamos and the only non-Lab worker in the current group. "It's just a hobby for us," Partridge said. "We play at parties, weddings, and the occasional bar for whoever wants to hear us. We're a

cover band. We mine the motherlode of songs that have already been written by Chuck Berry, the Beatles, and Buddy Holly instead of making up our own. We just try to get people to dance and have fun."

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