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## **First Charter School in U.S. Aimed at Educating Inmates Opens in Bernalillo County**

(Albuquerque, NM – July 22, 2008) – Bernalillo County’s nationally recognized Metropolitan Detention Center will make history this month when it opens the Gordon Bernell Charter School for inmates and those currently serving time in the County’s Community Custody Program.

The 250 student jail-based education program will be the first of its kind in the nation. The educational staff will employ teachers, a psychologist and administrators and will offer inmates the chance to earn a high school diploma.

“Recent surveys indicate that nearly half the adults who are incarcerated in our nation’s jails and prisons don’t have a high school diploma,” says Steve Gallegos, President of the Board, Gordon Bernell Charter School. “We believe that offering them the opportunity to complete their education will give them a better chance to become productive members of society and will reduce the ever-challenging recidivism rates. There is considerable research indicating that the higher the levels of education, the less likely individuals are to commit crimes.”

The Albuquerque Public School Board unanimously approved the charter application creating the Gordon Bernell Charter School. Funding for the operations will be provided by the New Mexico Public Education Department. The Charter School will operate out of two locations; one at the Metropolitan Detention Center on the City’s west side; the other at the Bernalillo County Downtown Public Safety Center located at 401 Roma NW.

“A lot of people who end up in jail think they don’t have a second chance”, says Bernalillo County Commissioner Alan B. Armijo. “Graduation from this school will give them an opportunity to get a job and acquire a life that won’t lead them back to jail once they leave. In the long run, taxpayers will benefit by not having to pay high-rising jail costs.”

### **Gordon Bernell Charter School Grand Opening**

Saturday, July 26<sup>th</sup> at 10:00 a.m.

Bernalillo County Metropolitan Detention Center, Training Room #4

100 John Dantis Drive SW

Albuquerque, New Mexico 87151

**Directions:**

Exit on Paseo del Volcan from I-40 west

Head south crossing Central Avenue and turn right onto the Frontage Road

Turn left onto Shelly Road and proceed south to the facility

Parking available in the Visitor’s Parking Lot