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Los Alamos
NATIONAL LABORATORY
Ideas That Change the World
NewsLetter

Week of April 28, 2003 **Vol. 4, No. 9**

From left to right, Preston Dell, Eric Searle, Sean Smock and Hugh Wimberly enjoy a photo opportunity as winners of the top prize in the 13th annual New Mexico Adventures in Supercomputing Challenge at the Laboratory. The team from Albuquerque Academy won for their supercomputing project, "Encryption through Three-Dimensional Separation and Recombination of Data." Each member took home a $1,000 savings bond. For their prize-winning project, the student team examined existing encryption methods and wrote and developed encryption software using an algorithm without compromising the integrity of the code or the encrypted data. U.S. Sen. Pete Domenici, R-N.M., a long-time supporter of the Adventures in Supercomputing Challenge, and Bill Press, deputy director for science and technology, awarded the first and second place awards. Nearly 170 students were at Los Alamos to take part in the activities. *Photo by LeRoy N. Sanchez; photo illustration by Denise Bjarke*

Albuquerque Academy takes top prize

by Steve Sandoval

A computer team from Albuquerque Academy won the top prize April 22 in the 13th annual New Mexico Adventures in Supercomputing Challenge at the Laboratory.

The student team of Preston Dell, Eric Searle, Sean Smock and Hugh Wimberly each took home a $1,000 savings bond for their supercomputing project, "Encryption through Three-Dimensional Separation and Recombination of Data." Their teacher, Jim Mims, received a computer for his classroom. For their prize-winning projects, the student team examined existing encryption methods and wrote and developed encryption software using an algorithm and did so without compromising the integrity of the code or the encrypted data.

A trio of computer aces, Samuel Ashmore, Jessica E. Behles and A. Zoe Dennis from Bosque School in Albuquerque took second place with their project, "Waiter! There's a Message in My Soup! Uncovering Steganography." They each received a $500 savings bond, and their teachers, Debra Loftin and Dorothy Ashmore, were awarded a computer for their school. Their project examines steganography, the process of using a computer program to hide messages in various types of computer files. The team also received the Best Written Report Award from the Society for Technical Communications.

Another team of computer wizards from Albuquerque Academy took the third place award for their project, "Centralized Emergency Response." Team members are Jim Adolf, Josh Langsfeld, Matt Strange and Philip Coleman, and their teacher is Jim Mims. The team also received the Cray High Performance Computing Award and the KRQE Multi-Media Award for best graphics presentation.

U.S. Sen. Pete Domenici, R-N.M., a long-time supporter of the Adventures in Supercomputing Challenge, and Bill Press, deputy director for science and technology, awarded the first- and second-place awards.

The Amy Boulanger Memorial scholarship from New Mexico Technet, good for $2,500 a year for four years at any accredited institution of higher education in the United States, was awarded to Elizabeth Yaros of Farmington High School.

Nearly 170 students were at Los Alamos to take part in the activities.

Fifty teams, including 11 finalist teams, heard talks from researchers at Los Alamos and toured the supercomputing centers at the Laboratory. Students from 36 schools around the state spent the last year researching scientific problems and writing programs to solve them on supercomputers at the Laboratory.

The goal of the New Mexico AiS Challenge is to increase knowledge of science and computing; expose students and teachers to computers and applied mathematics; and instill enthusiasm for science in secondary students, their families and communities. Any New Mexico student in grades 7 through 12 can enter the Challenge. "Christian radio broadcaster Mel Johnson observed that 'teenagers are like airplanes, you only hear about the ones that crash.' We are trying to change that with the Supercomputing Challenge," said David Kratzer of Los Alamos' High Performance Computing Group. "There are a lot of bright, capable, motivated students in New Mexico, and we want to help them prove it," said Kratzer.

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Second place

Zoe Dennis, left; Samuel Ashmore, center; and Jessica Behles of Bosque School in Albuquerque placed second in this year's AiS Challenge with their project, "Waiter, There's a Message in My Soup."

Third place

From left to right, Jim Adolf, Josh Langsfeld, Matt Strange and Philip Coleman of Albuquerque Academy took the third place award with "Centralized Emergency Response." A complete list of student projects is available online at http://www.challenge.nm.org/.

Photos by LeRoy N. Sanchez

Inside this issue ...

Los Alamos NewsLetter

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Los Alamos enhances global security by ensuring safety and confidence in the U.S. nuclear stockpile, developing technologies to reduce threats from weapons of mass destruction and improving the environmental and nuclear materials legacy of the Cold War. Los Alamos' capabilities assist the nation in addressing energy, environment, infrastructure and biological security problems.

NNSA National Nuclear Security Administration

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FROM THE TOP

Lab disputes assertions made by DOE Inspector General


Interim Laboratory Director Pete Nanos

Interim Laboratory Director George P. (Pete) Nanos expressed disagreement with findings contained in a report issued April 21 by the Department of Energy's Inspector General addressing unallowable costs. The report claims that more than $14 million in costs reimbursed to the Laboratory should be considered unallowable.

"We must take strong exception to the conclusions of this particular report," Nanos said. "We believe the Laboratory's operations related to meal and travel costs, and the operation of its Audits and Assessments function, are consistent with its contract. We also believe we have been consistent with the requirements of federal travel regulations and other federal requirements and guidance for allowable and unallowable costs.

"Over the last several months, the Laboratory has been the subject of numerous audits, investigations and reviews, including those by the Inspector General," Nanos continued. "For the most part, we have accepted their general conclusions and promptly implemented corrective measures. We will continue to do so in our effort to improve Laboratory business practices. We do, however, disagree with the conclusions of this report."

Following are the Laboratory's responses to specific areas within the audit report:

• Laboratory financial systems

While we have formally disagreed with a large number of findings within the IG report, we do recognize that there are needed enhancements to our systems of internal controls. The job we are engaged in now is to ensure that one-year from today there are no challenges to the Laboratory's stewardship of financial resources.

• Meal costs

Laboratory meal policies are consistent with the contract and with those of other management and operation contractors in the DOE system. The Laboratory believes the primary-purpose test was met that the meal or refreshments were an integral part of the meeting and that the costs were reasonably incurred and are allowable under the contract.

However, we are anxious to work with National Nuclear Security Administration to provide every assurance that we have effective contractor systems. We will review the Laboratory's meal guidance with NNSA and make such revisions as are deemed appropriate in consideration of best business practices.

• Travel costs

In accordance with its contract, the Laboratory follows the Federal Travel Regulations for lodging reimbursement.

The Laboratory requires a conference registration receipt in those cases in which payment is made to an individual; when conference registration is paid directly by Laboratory check, we accept the cancelled check as the receipt. We believe this practice is consistent with federal travel regulations.

While we believe the costs were reasonably incurred and are allowable under the contract, we will review our practices with NNSA and make needed revisions to ensure best business practices.

• Audits and assessments function

With respect to the IG's findings about the audit function, while we disagree that its costs should be disallowed, the concerns identified in the audit report are among the issues the University of California and the Laboratory already have recognized and addressed. As a result, a number of actions that are recommended are already accomplished and/or are the subject of ongoing efforts that are supported by sustainable processes.

The university and the Laboratory clearly recognize the need for a strong internal audit function, as evidenced by the actions taken since January. These include a series of aggressive steps by the university auditor, who has assumed management of the Laboratory's internal audit function, that are designed to ensure that [the audit function] meets the highest professional standards for independence and performance including timely and thorough investigations of all allegations of wrong doing.

• Contract worker award, employee morale activities

The University and the Laboratory concur with the IG finding.

The Los Alamos Area Office, which oversees the Laboratory for DOE and NNSA, is the final arbiter of allowable or unallowable cost.

Albuquerque Academy ...

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About $27,500 in scholarships was given to Challenge participants this year. Participating students also set up poster exhibits of their work in the Adventures in Supercomputing Challenge Expo. Here their work was shared with other teams and judged for awards. During the Expo, students and teachers choose three projects for special awards.

For a complete list of award and scholarship recipients, go to the April 23 Daily Newsbulletin at www.lanl.gov/newsbulletin online.

The New Mexico Adventures in Supercomputing Challenge was conceived in 1990 by former Los Alamos Director Sig Hecker and Tom Thornhill, president of New Mexico Technet Inc., a nonprofit company that in 1985 set up a computer network to link the state's national laboratories, universities, state government and some private companies. Sen. Pete Domenici, R-N.M., and John Rollwagen, then chairman and chief executive officer of Cray Research Inc., added their support. Sen. Domenici attended this year's awards expo with other invited guests.

Last year, the Adventures in Supercomputing and the New Mexico Supercomputing Challenge merged to create the Adventures in Supercomputing Challenge.

The Adventures in Supercomputing Challenge is sponsored by the Laboratory, Department of Energy, NASA's Ames Research Center and New Mexico Technet. Educational Partners are CHECS, Eastern New Mexico University, New Mexico Highlands University, New Mexico Institute of Mining and Technology, New Mexico Department of Education, New Mexico State University, University of New Mexico, San Juan Community College and Santa Fe Community College.

For Your Safety

Three rules for safe refueling

While filling up ...

- Turn off engine
- Don't smoke
- Never re-enter your vehicle

For more information, go to *www.PEI.org/static/index.htm*.

NIS Center dedication part of 60th anniversary activities

Interim Laboratory Director Pete Nanos speaks at the dedication of the Nonproliferation and International Security Center at Technical Area 3 last week. The new facility houses some 400 NIS Division personnel. Seated in the photo is Linton Brooks, nominee to be permanent undersecretary of the Department of Energy and administrator of the National Nuclear Security Administration. In addition to Brooks, other distinguished guests were on hand to acknowledge the Laboratory's six decades of achievement. Among them were Sen. Jeff Bingaman, D-N.M.; Sen. Pete Domenici, R-N.M.; Rep. Tom Udall, D-N.M.; Governor Bill Richardson; State Rep. Jeannette Wallace, R-Los Alamos, Sandoval; New Mexico House Speaker Ben Lujan, D-Santa Fe; University of California Regents Chairman John J. Moores; and UC President Richard Atkinson. The governors of the four accord pueblos also attended and were honored at the opening ceremony in the Administration Building Auditorium earlier in the day. Schedules and general information about 60th anniversary activities are available at http://sixty.lanl.gov online. New events will be added frequently to the event schedule. *Photo by LeRoy N. Sanchez*

DPIP
Director's Performance Improvement Project

Editor's note: The following is a memo sent to Laboratory leaders last month from John Immele, deputy director for national security and sponsor of the group-leader problem-solving action council, concerning the formation of the Group Leader Action Council.

Group Leader Action Council

John Immele

As you know, recent examination of group management through a series of focus groups resulted in bringing several recommendations to the Senior Executive Team. All of these recommendations were endorsed by the SET and implementation is proceeding.

One of the recommendations was the formation of the Group Leader Action Council. The purpose for the GLAC is to bring to the SET further "actionable" recommendations, either from issues identified during the previous exercise or new issues. I am serving as the SET champion for this effort.

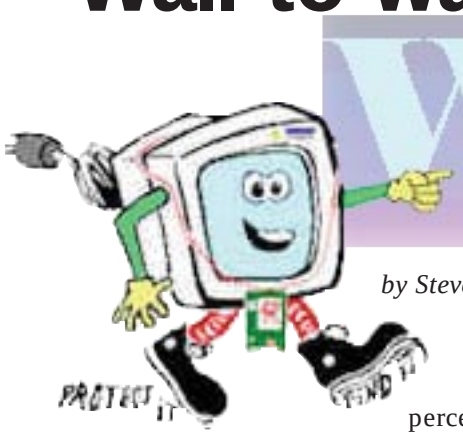
Geoff Reeves of Space and Atmospheric Sciences (NIS-1) has agreed to chair this council and the four other group leaders who presented to the SET in February also have agreed to serve — Audrey Archuleta of Communication and User Coordination (LANSCE-4), Larry Hersman of Langham Resource (B-2), Deborah Bennett of Actinide and Fuels Cycle Technologies (NMT-11) and Harry Dewey of Advanced Chemical Diagnostics and Instrumentation (C-ADI). To further staff the GLAC, we asked for volunteers from the 31 group leaders who helped formulate the original set of recommendations. Kim Mousseau of Advanced Information and Business Application Development (IM-8), Ware Hartwell of Transuranic Waste Certification (RRES-CE), Chad Olinger of Space Instrumentation and System Engineering (NIS-4), John Bliss of Health Physics Operations (HSR-1), Carol Sutcliffe of Tritium Science and Engineering (ESA-TSE), Mike Stevens of Structure/Property Relations (MST-8) and Martin Cooper of Subatomic Physics (P-25) volunteered. We also have asked Bill Gillison of Security Plans and Programs (S-1) and Sandy Haire of Benefits and Employment Services (HR-B) to participate.

All of these individuals have agreed to serve for six months. After the initial six months, the GLAC will have a permanent charter in place and a process for determining GLAC membership, drawing from the entire group-leader population, will be instituted.

Interim Laboratory Director Pete Nanos and the Senior Executive Team are committed to supporting the GLAC and ensuring progress continues in bringing group leader "actionable" recommendations to the SET. Please join me in thanking these individuals for their energetic and enthusiastic commitment to group management.

Thanks to all of you for leaning forward and teaming with the director in managing Los Alamos better.

Wall-to-wall inventory weeks ahead of schedule



Reconciliation phase next

by Steve Sandoval

Laboratory property administrators have inventoried more than 91 percent of Labwide controlled personal property, and the inventory process is moving into a new phase.

Property Management (BUS-6) began the physical inventory Feb. 3, and it was expected to take about four months to complete, said John Tapia of BUS-6, project leader. There are nearly 80,000 items identified as the baseline of items to be inventoried. These items have an acquisition value of about $1 billion, he said.

The Lab will report its findings to the University of California and the Department of Energy/National Nuclear Security Administration this fall.

Interim Laboratory Director Pete Nanos said in a Jan. 6 all-employee meeting that the Lab would inventory all controlled personal property. Property administrators are the primary points of contact for Laboratory organizations for the inventory.

"The property administrators are mobilized to complete the inventory successfully. Their experience and continued effort will allow us to complete reconciliation and validation of the remaining inventory items," said Tapia. "Based on all the support and cooperation by employees and managers, it is going extremely well."

As part of the wall-to-wall inventory, property administrators are going to all accessible labs, office space and storage areas, closets, desks and bookcases, as well as to equipment in outside areas to look for and scan bar-coded property subject to inventory. An outside area could include items that are in storage for future use.

Tapia said the wall-to-wall inventory will soon move to the reconciliation phase, in which BUS-6 property team leaders ensure the accuracy of the inventory results by reviewing documentation for off-site property; reviewing documentation of items previously considered unlocated to ensure that these items are reinstated into the database of inventoried property; and developing root-cause analysis of those items not located during the wall-to-wall inventory.

The reconciliation is performed to test the accuracy of the inventory results, correct any discrepancies and ensure the accuracy of the property-management database.

"This phase requires as much support and attention to detail as the physical inventory, so management support remains a critical factor in our success," said Tapia. "Slow in comparison to the first phase, the reconciliation requires close coordination among [BUS-6], the Laboratory employees with assigned property and the employees' managers."

The original BUS-6 schedule called for one-quarter of the wall-to-wall inventory to be completed by March 31, with a 50-percent-completion rate by April 30. BUS-6 provides Laboratory senior managers with twice-a-month update reports on the progress of the wall-to-wall inventory.

BUS-6 has created a Web page with more information about the wall-to-wall inventory. It can be found at *businternal.lanl.gov/bus6/FY03W2W/ W2W.htm* online. The Web page includes a list of frequently asked questions related to the wall-to-wall inventory, as well as contact information.

There are several important reminders for all Lab workers as the wall-to-wall inventory continues, according to Allen Wallace of BUS-6:

- Safety comes first for everyone. Property administrators and employees should adhere to all safety practices during the inventory.
- Property administrators will be in touch with Lab workers to arrange scheduling, especially for restricted or hard-to-access areas and items.
- Property administrators will be tagging inventoried items with a fluorescent-green dot to show that the property has been inventoried.
- Lab personnel who have bar-code-numbered property at home for official use or when on travel will be required to bring it in to their property administrators on a mutually acceptable day to have it bar-code scanned. Exceptions may be granted only in special circumstances and will require proper approval from the project leader.
- For Laboratory property on loan or furnished under contract to an external organization, an affidavit is required, in which a property administrator in BUS-6 affirms that the external organization is in possession of the Laboratory property.

Wallace noted that UC and DOE auditors will conduct an independent validation, most likely a physical inspection of a random sample, to confirm the integrity of the inventory.

Tapia added that group leaders should be actively involved in the wall-to-wall inventory. "For this effort to be successful, the group leaders need to be actively engaged," he said.

The Laboratory last conducted a wall-to-wall inventory of all bar-coded property in 1998; that inventory met the UC and DOE standards.

Lab workers who have questions about the wall-to-wall inventory can contact their property administrator, the BUS-6 property help line at 5-3230 or write to *lanlproperty@lanl.gov* by e-mail.

For more information, see the Jan. 14 master management memo from Richard Marquez, associate director for administration, and the Feb. 3 Daily Newsbulletin.

Volunteers make Mediation Center a valuable resource

by Judy Goldie

"We're all in this together" is a very collaborative statement. And whether it is interpersonal conflict or an institutional crisis, solving the problem is the goal.

The Laboratory's Mediation Center, part of the Ombuds Program Office, is one way to minimize the escalation of disputes by resolving them informally, quickly, cost effectively and in a mutually acceptable way. In addition, the center handles mediation referrals to resolve formal employee complaints as well as other serious disputes at all levels in the Laboratory.

The Mediation Center is staffed by a mediator pool that comprises volunteers who are a cross section of employees: division-level managers, technical staff, administrative and support staff and

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A class of volunteer mediators recently completed 40 hours of intensive, hands-on mediation training. The training was taught by Scott Hughes, standing, a professor on sabbatical from the University of New Mexico School of Law. Shown seated from left to right are Shelley Thompson of Facility and Waste Operations (FWO-TA-55), Shelly Spearing of Scientific Software Engineering (CCN-12), Elaine Best of CCN-12, Harold Corn of Hydrodynamics (DX-3) and Deesh Narang of Nuclear Materials Management (NMT-14). *Photo by LeRoy N. Sanchez*

Ten years later and we're still talking

by Edwin Vigil

All is a little more quiet these days in the Laboratory's Satellite Operation Center (SOC), the only sound being the hum of the computers downloading data from an old pal they haven't seen in 10 years but still talk to at least twice every day. Absent is the din of a team of Lab staffers and students evident just after the launch, as they desperately tried to keep alive the dream of a milestone project that had begun four years earlier with the design, creation and launch of ALEXIS, one of the world's first modern, sophisticated, miniature satellites. Designed and built by the Laboratory with the help of AeroAstro Inc., 10 years ago, ALEXIS, an ultra-soft X-ray- and radio-frequency satellite, began its decade-long odyssey in the spring of 1993.

Designed as a "faster-cheaper" satellite and built for a mere $19 million, ALEXIS was expected to be in service for one to three years, but life for the small, 248-pound satellite got off to a bumpy start. Launched on April 25, 1993, on a Pegasus rocket, ALEXIS successfully made it into space, but a problem soon developed. The magnetometer, which controls the attitude of the satellite, failed when a bracket holding the solar panel to which it was attached became damaged.

This created a major problem for ground control — the inability to contact ALEXIS. The staff feared that the mission was lost forever. It wasn't until June 2 of that year that ALEXIS made brief contact with the SOC; the already anxious staff would have to wait another four weeks, until June 30, for ALEXIS to begin what would be the start of many years of meaningful and scientifically fruitful conversation with ground control.

Several dozen students, a handful of Lab staff members and many years later, ALEXIS is still talking to the SOC every 12 hours or so, every day, day in and day out. "The warranty was only supposed to be good for one year," said Jeff Bloch of Space and Remote Sensing Sciences (NIS-2), a former project leader for ALEXIS, "but it's 10 years later, and we're still talking and receiving valuable data."

The process for gathering data from ALEXIS and Blackbeard, the other experiment on board, was automated five and half years ago. This eliminated the need for a team of dedicated staff and students to manually monitor and direct the satellite. Gone were the 36 students who over the years had logged in time making sure the mission was a success. "ALEXIS was an opportunity for many of our student employees to do some hands-on science," said Bloch, "And for many it was an opportunity to see where they wanted to go with their education."

"We had students from all different areas of study," said Diane Roussel-Dupre of Space Data Systems (NIS-3), the current ALEXIS project leader, "including physics, astrophysics, aerospace engineering, geology and the liberal arts, all of which proved to be an effective recruiting tool for the Laboratory. In addition to those students who have gone on to become Lab employees, we have had several other students go on to work for other organizations including Ball-Aerospace, the University of Colorado and NASA. For example, two of our students now work at NASA-Houston, one as ascent-and-entry life-support officer for the space shuttle and the other as a crew life-support officer for the International Space Station."

As for the future of ALEXIS, whose funding ran out two years ago, Roussel-Dupre noted, "As long as ALEXIS continues to talk to the SOC without too much trouble or effort, we will continue to talk to it."

ALEXIS, the acronym stands for "Array of Low Energy X-ray Imaging Sensors," is a Nonproliferation and International Security (NIS) Division project that was designed with two experiments on board, each with a treaty-verification and basic-research component.

Made up of an array of six low-energy X-ray telescopes, ALEXIS, scans the sky for constant emissions from hot cosmic interstellar plasma and any transient emissions that may occur from cosmic binary stellar systems in the extreme ultraviolet portion of the spectrum. The telescopes also have been used by scientists to determine and distinguish the variety and frequency of naturally occurring short, intense bursts of radiation that could cause confusion and mis-characterization of data gathered for the nuclear detection mission.

The Blackbeard experiment comprises a complex radio receiver that surveys Earth for radio signals. Like the ALEXIS telescopes, Blackbeard's radio also is used to help researchers determine and distinguish naturally occurring impulsive radio-frequency radiation in the various forms of lightning that might be mistakenly identified as nuclear in origin. Blackbeard was the precursor to the Laboratory's more sophisticated Fast On-orbiting Recording of Transients Events, or FORTE, satellite launched in 1997.

Lorrie Bonds Lopez

Lopez named RRES chief of staff

Lorrie Bonds Lopez is the new chief of staff in the Risk Reduction and Environmental Stewardship (RRES) Division. Bonds Lopez began her position April 7. She has been at the Laboratory since May 1999 when she joined the Ombuds Program Office as a contractor. She became a University of California employee in May 2001.

Bonds Lopez has a bachelor's degree in outdoor education from Prescott College in Prescott, Ariz. Her master's degree is in counseling and psychology from Southwestern College in Santa Fe.

During her tenure in the Ombuds Office, Bonds Lopez was primarily responsible for organizational assessment and conflict resolution. During that time, she worked with 84 organizations and more than 3,059 individuals to provide comprehensive problem-solving services such as assessment, strategic planning, training in conflict resolution and communication, management coaching and team building.

Before coming to the Lab, Bonds Lopez spent six years as an executive coach, assisting managers and business owners in becoming more effective and working with that group's next tier of managers in organizational development that included strategic and tactical planning, resource management and communication planning.

"In the work I did for my undergraduate degree, I learned sound environmental principles. I look forward to folding those skills into those from my work in organizational-development and fostering RRES initiatives in a variety of ways. And for me, environmental stewardship is a cause; I am committed to it, so this is a really good fit," she added.

Hoover new radiation protection program manager

Paul Hoover of Health, Safety and Radiation Protection (HSR) Division is the Lab's new radiation protection program manager. Hoover also was recently appointed by New Mexico Gov. Bill Richardson to be a member of the New Mexico Radiation Technical Advisory Council.

"The radiation protection program has an excellent opportunity to build upon our strong history along with the rest of HSR Division and the Laboratory, focusing on applied technology, increased formality and self-assessment, optimized resource management and service delivery, collaboration within and outside the Laboratory and ultimately increased worker safety," said Hoover. "I am excited and honored to be able to help the program execute its mission and improve in these areas. I also look forward to helping support the Laboratory's expanding missions in areas such as emergency response and homeland defense."

Paul Hoover

Hoover joined the Lab as a graduate research assistant performing research on neutron dosimetry in Radiation Protection (HSE-1). He was hired as a technical staff member in 1990, working as a health physicist in the former Chemistry Radiation Protection Group (HSE-10). Since 1998, Hoover has served as deputy group leader for Health Physics Operations (HSR-1) for Nuclear Materials (NMT) Division facilities.

"The New Mexico Radiation Technical Advisory Council provides me an opportunity to share relevant experience, lessons and resources from the Laboratory and to participate in education, rule-making and worker safety in broader, public environments," he added.

The RTAC is composed of seven members statewide and advises the New Mexico Environmental Department and the Environmental Improvement Board on technical matters and rules regarding the use, management, storage and disposal of radioactive materials, he said.

Hoover has a bachelor's degree in radiological health engineering and a master's degree in health physics from Texas A&M University. He also is certified by the American Board of Health Physics.

Wildfire 2003

Despite cold, snowy weather, a large audience turned out on the evening of April 15 for "Wildfire 2003," the fifth annual wildfire awareness event of its type to be held in Los Alamos. Though there was precipitation outside, a panel of presenters from various national, state and local agencies told the audience about how lingering drought, fuel overcrowding and massive tree mortality from a bark-beetle infestation has created conditions for high fire danger in the area.

In the photo at right, Craig Martin holds a fire-fighting tool called a Pulaski as he explains forest rehabilitation efforts performed by the Volunteer Task Force during the Wildfire 2003 annual meeting. Volunteer Task Force members spent thousands of hours after the Cerro Grande Fire trying to help prevent erosion and rehabilitate burned areas in the Los Alamos area.

In the inset photo, Sam Loftin of Ecology (RRES-ECO) explains about the Laboratory's efforts to reduce fire danger and create a fuel break in piñon-juniper wilderness on Lab property near Pajarito Acres in White Rock. Loftin explained to the audience that the long-term impact of the Laboratory's fire-mitigation activities on piñon-juniper wilderness will be minimal and may help trees better survive the ravages of the bark-beetle plague because forest thinning will reduce competition for precious moisture and nutrients among surviving trees.

Attendees also heard about community emergency-preparedness plans, fire-mitigation activities being conducted by Los Alamos County as well as other topics. In addition to listening to presentations, attendees had a chance to learn about fire-related topics at a series of booths and posters. Wildfire 2003 was cosponsored by the Interagency Wildfire Management Team and the Laboratory's Public Interface Design Study. *Photos by James E. Rickman*

Deadline close for 2002 Distinguished Performance Awards Nominations

The Laboratory is accepting nominations for the 2002 Distinguished Performance Awards, which recognize individual employees or teams of six or fewer people, and for the Distinguished Project Team Awards, which recognize larger project teams of up to 75 people.

Outstanding employees in any and all job series — OS, GS, TEC, SSM and TSM — are eligible. Nominees may be regular employees and current limited-term employees of the Laboratory.

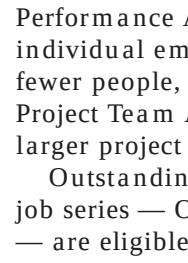
Contract workers may be included in any of the team awards, but they are not eligible for an individual award, nor can they receive the monetary component of the small-team award.

The nomination should cover distinguished performance activities conducted between October 2001 through December 2002. Activities conducted outside this time frame will not be considered.

The deadline for submitting a nomination is May 16. All submissions are final and names cannot be added to nominations once submitted.

Send the original nomination package and six copies of all materials to Lucy Maestas of the Director's Office at Mail Stop A100.

For more information and guidelines for preparing nomination packages, go to *int.lanl.gov/memos/alldist/LANL_ALL386.PDF* online.



To your health

Editor's note: April is Cancer Control Month. The following tips are from the American Institute for Preventive Medicine.

Hope and health

According to the American Institute of Preventive Medicine, research has linked a personality trait with the development of cancer. People who tend to have a "helpless" and "hopeless" view about life may be more prone to cancer and may succumb to it more quickly once a diagnosis is made.

Activity may prevent cancer

A review of the Missouri Cancer Registry determined that men who had jobs that involved a lot of physical activity experienced lower rates for cancer of the colon, prostate and testes. If you work in a sedentary job, be sure to get a good deal of exercise during your leisure time.

Cancer causes

According to the American Institute of Preventive Medicine, diet is the single greatest factor related to the likelihood of getting cancer and is responsible for some 35 percent of all cases. Tobacco use is close behind with responsibility for 30 percent of the cases. Alcohol and sun exposure cause 6 percent of cases.

Nanos, Cochiti Pueblo governor meet, discuss Lab-tribal issues

Cochiti Pueblo Gov. Simon Suina, left, of Security Support (S-5) talks with Interim Laboratory Director Pete Nanos during a get acquainted meeting in April at the Cochiti Pueblo Governor's Office. Nanos has met with governors of the four accord pueblos — San Ildefonso, Santa Clara, Jemez and Cochiti — to discuss issues of mutual concern and to share his philosophy and vision for the Laboratory. Suina characterized the meeting with Nanos as productive and a sign of the positive relationship between Cochiti Pueblo and the Laboratory. The meeting was arranged by the tribal relations team in the Government Relations Office (GRO). *Photo by LeRoy N. Sanchez*

Volunteers ...

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technicians. A call for volunteers goes out periodically and all are trained in conflict resolution — for the work they do in addition to their full-time regular jobs.

The current class of volunteer mediators is undergoing extensive conflict-resolution training, broad-based training from the ombudsman and other staff, further quarterly updates on issues related to their volunteer work and the recently completed 40 hours of intensive, hands-on mediation training. The latter training was taught by Scott Hughes, a professor on sabbatical from the University of New Mexico School of Law. "We are fortunate that the timing is right for Professor Hughes. His credentials are outstanding," said Mary Beth Stevens, associate ombudsperson and Mediation Center project leader. Hughes teaches all levels of mediation coursework as well as a series of mediation training sessions. In addition, he is director of the UNM Law School's Alternative Dispute Resolution Program and is nationally recognized for his work in confidentiality and ethics in mediation, noted Stevens.

This is a skills-based training program, Stevens said, that is designed to develop competency in mediation of a broad variety of disputes. Some of the training tools employed encompass mediation simulations and debriefings and professional demonstrations. During role-playing, the volunteers were coached by seasoned mediators from the existing volunteer pool and Ombuds Office staff.

"Scott Hughes was a wonderful instructor — when I was a master's student, I would've liked the opportunity to take classes from him," said Kathy Rokop of Staffing (HR-S), who was in the training. She added, "This is the best training I have ever attended. I am confident the skills I learned can be transferred to my everyday work."

Ann Mauzy of Communication Arts and Services (IM-1), also a newly trained volunteer mediator, said of the training, "There were people from all over the Lab and quite a few from Human Resources — people who have to deal with conflict as part of their jobs — and there were technical people and retirees, too.

When asked why she volunteered, Mauzy said, "In the job I do now, I work only with IM-1, and I miss working with people throughout the Lab. I feel I can help the Lab, and this one way of doing that."

"There were five practice mediations in which we role-played," Mauzy noted. "The instructor ensured we were with a different group of people each time. I'd be happy to co-mediate with any of the people in the class," added Mauzy.

Another of the volunteer mediators, Shelley Thompson of Facility and Waste Operations (FWO-TA-55) said, "The mediation training was an invaluable experience, and I look forward to putting in to practice what I learned — both here at the Lab and in my personal life. I hope my training, including the hands-on mock-mediation sessions, allows me to make a difference in the people's lives who use this avenue to resolve their issues."

"The strength of the Ombuds mediation program is in the employees from all over the Lab who volunteer to serve in this way. These are busy people who do mediation as a collateral duty, motivated by an interest in using their skills and experience to help other members of the work force," emphasized Stevens

The volunteers must sign an Ombuds Program Office confidentiality agreement and maintain strict compliance with the Mediation Center confidentiality requirements.

The services of the Mediation Center are open to all members of the work force, including contractors and others doing business with the Laboratory. To contact the Mediation Center, call the Ombuds Office at 5-2837 (OM5-BUDS) or go to its Web site at *www.lanl.gov/ombuds/mediationhome.html*.

PTLA shows its stuff

Protection Technology Los Alamos personnel held a live-fire demonstration in their new state-of-the-art "shoot house" for the local media on April 14 at the PTLA shooting range, located in Technical Area 72. Members of the media also were shown examples of new-recruit firearm training. The new shoot-house training facility consists of a modular system of doorways, hallways, rooms and targets that can be reconfigured for different training scenarios and is described by PTLA staff as the best facility of its kind in the Department of Energy complex.

Above: Special Response Team Capt. Randy Putt adjusts body armor on New Mexican photographer Kathy DeLaTorre before the SRT demonstration. All observers of live-fire training at the PTLA shoot house are required to wear body armor and double ear protection as a safety precaution.

Left: News photographers Jeff Giessler of the Albuquerque Journal, left, and DeLaTorre of the Santa Fe New Mexican take photos of new-recruit training at the PTLA firing range.

Below: SRT Capt. Putt is interviewed by KOAT-TV reporter Matt Grubs and photographer Kevin Dermody inside one of the shoot house rooms following the live-fire demonstration.

PTLA recruit Crystal Cusak checks right, then left, after firing at her target from a kneeling position. PTLA protective-force personnel must be proficient from a variety of shooting positions.

Background image: A Special Response Team member prepares to make initial entry into the shoot house with "flash-bang" grenades and an AR-15 semi-automatic rifle. *Photos by LeRoy N. Sanchez. Text by Kevin Roark*

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