



# the laboratory connection

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

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*a word from*

the Community Relations Office

## As the Laboratory workforce

ages, adding young technical staff members will be essential to ensure that we continue to fulfill our national security mission. Our goal is to attract quality candidates with a range of critical skills who reflect the diversity of our region and our nation. We can all share in the recruitment effort by spreading the word that LANL is an outstanding place to work. But the day-to-day responsibility for coordinating the effort belongs to the Recruiting Team in the Human Resources Division.

This team, headed by Karen Burkett, provides support for technical staff to recruit on campuses throughout the United States, particularly those who graduate students in our critical skills areas. Every resumé collected is submitted to the division's new searchable database, Personic. The staff also offers hiring officials the University Hiring Program, designed to expedite recent university graduate technical staff hires.

LANL reps attend a number of Diversity Conferences throughout the year. At these national events, staff can promote the Lab as an exceptional place to work and seek out diverse candidates with skills we need to maintain our premier scientific status.

In addition to the AISES conference highlighted in this issue, in 2001 the Recruiting Team also participated in conferences sponsored by the National Society for Black Engineers (NSBE), the Mexican American Engineering Society (MAES), the Society for the Advancement of Chicano and Native Americans in Science (SACNAS) and the Organization for Chinese Americans (OCA).



Nuclear Materials Technology Division employees display a limited edition "Circle of Life" commemorative Pendleton blanket honoring tribal elders, keepers of wisdom, and spiritual direction. The blanket was presented to the Lab by AISES at the 23rd annual conference in Albuquerque. Clockwise from top left are Stacey Talachy, Tim George, Patrick Trujillo and Vera Aguino.

## AISES Connects Indian Students to Science Careers

Nearly 1,000 Native American college students participated in the American Indian Science & Engineering Society (AISES) 2001 National Conference in Albuquerque in November. The conference included workshops, a trade fair, a scholarship honors banquet, and a pow wow and traditional dinner. The keynote speaker at the opening ceremony was Dr. Lori Arviso-Alvord, Associate Dean of Student and Minority Affairs at Dartmouth College and the first Navajo woman to become a surgeon.

For 23 years, the AISES conference has brought together American Indian high school and college students, professionals, educators, tribal enterprise leaders, and representatives from government agencies, corporations, and nonprofit organizations for a variety of career-building activities, including educational and motivational sessions.

In addition to being one of several major sponsors of the conference, the Lab was among 650 businesses and institutions with booths at the trade fair, hoping to recruit top talent among the American Indian students. Students from colleges throughout the country and some from local high schools stopped by to pick up

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literature, view short films, and hear from LANL representatives about opportunities available here.

According to Mindy Mendez of the Lab's Education Program Office, most of the attendees who stopped by the LANL booth were from universities in the Southwest. The majority were interested in various engineering fields, with others inquiring about opportunities in computer science, chemistry, biology, and several nontechnical fields.

One member of the Lab's team of recruiters was Stefanie Lawson, a postdoctoral student who came here through her connection to AISES, which she first joined in 1988 as an undergraduate at MIT. The Portland, Oregon, native and member of the Tsimshian tribe studied planetary science at MIT and began attending AISES conferences.

"AISES has been a great support network for me and kept me in touch with other students from all over the country with similar interests," she said. At one of the approximately dozen AISES conferences she has attended, Lawson got the opportunity to apply for an internship at NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory in Pasadena, where she has spent six summers. While in graduate school at the University of Colorado, she attended an AISES conference and met Barbara Grimes of the Lab's Community Relations Office who helped her land her postdoctoral appointment.

Chris Echohawk, a member of the Pawnee Nation hired by the Lab two years ago, is also an AISES

Española Kids Fest. Lab Scientist Tim Darling, left, Elizabeth Watts and Bettie Bedell of the Bradbury Science Museum, center, gave electricity demonstrations at the annual Kids Fest and Teddy Bear Parade, sponsored by Española MainStreet. Mable Amador, right, played the accordion for the Teddy Bear Parade. The event, which culminates in the Electric Light Parade, is a free Christmas activity to which the Lab provides science education outreach.



member who arrived here through networking opportunities that the organization provided. Currently a task leader for the Lab's Environmental Restoration Project, Echohawk has been a part of AISES since his undergraduate days at the University of Colorado.

"I was studying aerospace engineering and saw AISES as a terrific combination of my heritage and my profession," he said. "It was also an opportunity to help the Native American community influence the technical direction of the country. AISES provided a valuable means to network with cutting-edge technical organizations."

Echohawk landed his first position and his current job through AISES. Tanya Larra was one of four students from D-Q University in Davis, California, who attended this year's conference and stopped by the Lab's booth at the career fair. Larra, who wants to go into forestry, heard about the conference from students who attended last year.

"I made some good connections and had a great time," she said. "I'm glad I came. I had heard about Los Alamos National Laboratory

back home, but I didn't know they did so many different things."

The career fair also gave the Lab an opportunity to tell its story. "I'm a good example of someone who came here to do work in an area we aren't so famous for," said Lawson.

Other visitors to the Lab's booth included Julius Yellowhair, a UNM graduate student from Black Mesa, Arizona, studying electrical engineering and considering his career options, and Diane Williams, AISES sponsor for Bernalillo High School, who brought nine students to this year's conference.

"They all seem to be enjoying it," she said. "In this group, there are hopefully a couple of engineers, maybe two prospects for the health field, and one who could do just about anything he wants." Next year's conference will be held in Tulsa, Oklahoma. AISES is a national American Indian organization that promotes American Indian pursuit of careers in science and technical fields. For more information on AISES and its program, go to [www.aises.org](http://www.aises.org) on the Web.

## Ombuds Office Also a Resource for Local Business

In recent years, the Lab has increased its outreach efforts to regional small businesses, with an eye to procuring more goods and services from local companies. Some of those businesses have been frustrated by the inevitable red tape and other challenges of bidding against larger companies for government contracts.



To help address concerns in a neutral forum, Deputy Director Joe Salgado asked the Ombuds Office to implement its Program for Small Business Concerns in the fall of 2000. The program is designed to assist business with its interface with the Lab, and approximately 60 businesses have used its services. Senior-level management at the Lab has demonstrated its commitment to the program by increasing both its budget and staff.

The ombuds program addresses concerns voiced by more than 50 small business owners who participated in a series of roundtable discussions with Lab leaders. Those concerns focused on access to Lab business, competing with existing contractors, and the neutrality of the appeals process. Timeliness of payment has also been an issue for some businesses working through the ombuds process.

"Ombuds offers a little more buffered avenue for businesses to appeal Lab procedures and decisions," said Bruce Macallister, who heads the Ombuds Office. Jack Foley and Dee Dee McInroy are the Associate Ombudsmen who most frequently work with the business community.

The program offers informal, confidential, and impartial dispute-resolution assistance in the areas of technology transfer, procurement and vendors, and other community-related issues. The Ombuds Office operates independently from the Lab's Small Business Office, but does not advocate for small business.

"It's important that people understand our role," Macallister said. "We don't arbitrate, and we are not small business advocates. We want to make sure that small businesses get channeled to the right resource through the right process. If it looks like something's fallen through the cracks, we try to get it back on track. And we are an empowerment tool for the Lab's business operations staff. Without sharing our confidential information, they can take our data and refine their programs."

Issues brought to an ombudsman are confidential to the maximum extent provided by law. The Ombuds Program

reports directly to the Lab Director, but staff share only general trends to help improve performance.

The word "ombudsman" comes from Scandinavia, where the concept of appointing a neutral person to address citizen complaints about the government was developed almost 200 years ago. Since the 1970s, the role of the ombudsman has gained acceptance in a variety of settings from workplace dispute resolution to government review of programs.

The Lab's Business Ombuds Office also offers a telephone hotline, available to vendors and individuals doing business with the Lab, as well as to the Lab workforce. It's 667-9370. The program's Web site can be accessed at <http://www.lanl.gov/ombuds>.

## A Record for History; Scholarships for the Future



**The Fire Book** records the Cerro Grande Fire's tragedy, bravery, generosity, and rebirth. A limited number of signed copies are available for \$28 (with discounts for purchases of five or more) in Los Alamos at R Books, the Otowi Station Bookstore and Science Museum Shop, and at the Community Relations Office. They are also available at Collected Works bookstore on the Santa Fe Plaza. Proceeds go to a scholarship fund for the children of the families who lost homes in the fire. The photos at left are from the book. Above, Dick Burick, the Lab's former Deputy Director for Operations, and Los Alamos Fire Chief, Doug MacDonald sign copies for Beverly Neal-Clinton and R Books store manager, Melissa Mackey.

## Independent Committee Reviews Proposed Biohazard Research

Emerging threats of bioterrorism have drawn attention to the Lab's efforts to identify, track, and neutralize a variety of biohazards. These are defined as organisms that present risks to humans and can include infectious microorganisms, biological allergens, and toxins. Researchers must be exceptionally vigilant when working with bioagents and biohazards to make sure that the work is done safely and without risk to the public they seek to protect by studying the pathogens.

When Lab investigators propose to conduct work involving biohazards, they must first write a detailed protocol of that work and the safe work practices they will use and then submit it to the Institutional Biosafety Committee (IBC). For more than 30 years, this committee has been the gatekeeper for any work with these potentially dangerous materials at the Lab.

The role of the IBC is to assure Lab management and the public that due care is being exercised for operations involving bioagents and biohazards. The panel's members have expertise in fields including occupational medicine, industrial hygiene, infectious diseases, microbiology, virology, recombinant DNA and community health care. At its semiannual meetings, which are



Meeting in Los Alamos in December are from left, IBC members Charles Pergler and Cheryl Lemanski, secretary Dusty Deaguero, Biological Safety Officer and IBC member Dina Sassone, IBC chairman James Freyer and IBC member Dr. Hugh Smith.

open to the public, the IBC reviews and approves, amends, or rejects proposals for work involving a broad range of potentially infectious materials.

"The committee has the sole authority to set the safety levels of any work being done at LANL," said Jim Freyer of the Lab's Bioscience Division, now serving as IBC chairman. "Even if we approve a proposal, the work still needs to be authorized by line management. But if the committee disapproves a project, the work cannot be done at this laboratory."

The 11-member committee must, by law, include at least two representatives from the larger community. The current committee has six members who are scientific and medical experts: four are LANL staff members and two have no other official connection to the Lab. The current outside scientific experts are a retired virologist and a physician with the New Mexico Department of Health.

There are three other community members independent of the Laboratory: a physician at Los Alamos Medical Center, an environmental consultant, and a science teacher from Los Alamos High School. All these members participate fully in the deliberations of the committee and in decisions concerning biosafety level and project approval. There is also ex officio membership by representatives from the DOE.

"The committee is an independent body whose membership includes internationally recognized experts in biosafety and infectious diseases research, a prominent example being Dr. Karl Johnson, a retired virologist from the Center for Disease Control now living in Placitas," said Biosciences Division Director Jill Trehwella. "I look to the expertise on the IBC as an important checkpoint to validate our safe work practices with respect to biohazards. It is also an important conduit to the community."

Although the IBC is now fully constituted, Trehwella noted that a number of scientific community representatives have expressed interest in an appointment. "Membership sometimes turns over, and it is always useful to have a list of qualified people who could contribute to the work of the IBC," Trehwella said.

The IBC's meetings are announced in advance, and the public is both invited and encouraged to attend.

## Business Brief

The Lab awarded two contracts to northern New Mexico businesses for work related to its Cerro Grande Rehabilitation Project. T.C. Co. of Hernandez will thin piñon and juniper trees at Technical areas 36, 39, and 68, under its \$1.7 million contract. T.C. Co. will use a hydrostatic brush cutter to grind cut trees into a mulch, which will remain on the site where the trees were cut. Hurd Brothers Logging in Chama will log and thin ponderosa pine trees around Technical Areas 11, 16, and 28, under its \$1.1 million contract. Work by both companies is expected to be completed next summer.

## Lab Employees Respond to Local and National Needs



Two checks totaling more than \$8,000 were presented to the United Way's Sept. 11th Fund just before Christmas. One check represented the proceeds from three America's Pride food sales held in Los Alamos and White Rock after the September tragedies. The events were organized by Johnson Controls of Northern New Mexico, whose parent company matched the money raised. Presenting and receiving copies of the checks are, left to right, Mike Barr, president and general manager for JCI-NNM, Raul Rodriguez, head of the Los Alamos County United Way, Wayne Brownlee from the Los Alamos Police Department and Dennis Duran from the Los Alamos Fire Department.

The Laboratory community demonstrated its usual generosity and concern for its neighbors during several charitable campaigns conducted late last year. Lab employees contributed more than \$667,000 in pledges and donations to this year's United Way campaign, surpassing last year's record-setting total of \$613,000. Twenty social service agencies are members of the United Way of Los Alamos/Northern New Mexico network. Several dozen more are part of the United Way of Santa Fe County network. This year's campaign also featured a separate fund to help victims of the terrorist attacks in September, and employees contributed more than \$20,000 to this fund. In addition to the pledges and donations from Laboratory personnel, the not-for-profit Los Alamos National Laboratory Foundation also donated \$50,000 to this year's campaign.

Lab employees, subcontract staff, and their families adopted 19 families, more than 300 Angel Tags and donated 50 boxes of food during this year's Holiday Drive. The

annual campaign collects food, clothing, and toys for the less fortunate in nearby communities. Items collected by the Lab were distributed through the Salvation Army to families in northern New Mexico communities including Los Alamos, Española, Las Vegas, Taos, and Santa Fe.

In addition, three Lab divisions—LANSCE, X, and BUS—conducted their own holiday drives. The BUS Holiday Drive collected new and used clothing, including socks, hats, gloves, and mittens for homeless men and women at St. Elizabeth's Shelter in Santa Fe. Lab workers also donated new clothes and food for an elderly woman and man through Amigos del Valle, and new and used clothing and toys for homeless and runaway children through Youth Shelter and Family Services.

The BUS Division supports several organizations year round, and accepts donations of food, clothing, and toys throughout the year.

## C-LIBS Helps Track Carbon in Soils

Lab scientists have developed a small, portable instrument that uses a laser to analyze the amount of carbon in soils, which can give scientists a better understanding of terrestrial processes that could accelerate or retard global warming. With increasing international concern about the greenhouse effect, scientists have sought better and more cost-effective ways of measuring changes in the amount of land-based carbon, much of which is located in soils.

Using a technology called Laser-Induced Breakdown Spectroscopy—known simply as LIBS—scientists can point a flashlight-sized laser device at a soil sample in the field or taken from the ground and determine how much carbon the soil contains. The newly developed technology will aid scientists trying to determine how soil-based carbon is released into the air through natural or manmade processes, or if atmospheric carbon is being absorbed into soils.



**Air Force Band of the West.** Conductor Capt. Dean Zambinski leads the band in a free concert at Los Alamos' Duane Smith Auditorium in November. The band is stationed at Lackland Air Force Base in San Antonio, Texas, and tours extensively. The Los Alamos performance was hosted by the Los Alamos Chamber of Commerce and the Los Alamos Monitor, with support from the Lab's Community Relations Office.

## A Daughter Shares a Proud Moment

In late November, dignitaries from throughout New Mexico gathered in Window Rock, Arizona, to honor some American heroes from the World War II era. Jeannie Sandoval, a Lab database programmer, was among those who attended the Congressional Silver Medal ceremony. Her father, Merril Sandoval, was one of the nearly 300 Navajos recognized for devising a code that was never broken by the Japanese.

The so-called Code Talkers used their native language as the basis for code, and its use was credited with saving thousands of lives during World War II. New Mexico Congressman Tom Udall and Navajo Nation President Kelsy Begaye spoke at the medal ceremony.

"It was a joy to see my dad finally receive such an honor," Sandoval said. "I am so proud of him. Ending the war might have been more difficult without the heroism of the Code Talkers and the contribution of Los Alamos National Laboratory." Sandoval's uncle, Samuel Sandoval, also was honored.



Jeannie Sandoval, left, admires the Congressional Silver Medals presented to her uncle, Samuel Sandoval, center, and her father, Merril Sandoval, at a ceremony in Window Rock, Arizona. The two men are Navajo Code Talkers.

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