LOPD
THE DEFENDER
Newsletter of the New Mexico Law Offices of the Public Defender
JANUARY/FEBRUARY/MARCH 2022

Deputy Chief of Operations Jennifer Barela

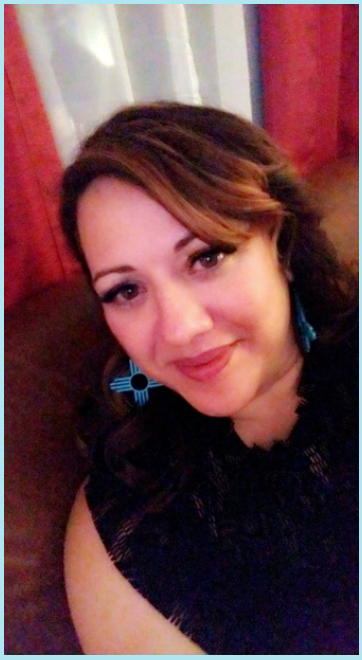
New Deputy Chief Jennifer Barela, third from right, is visiting offices across the state. Here she is in Ruidoso with, from left, Stephen Ochoa, Ryan Parsons, Ashley Ventura, Katina Slaughter, Rachel Sutherland, Katie Ruckel and Shane Brill.

Chief's message

We have wrapped up a whirlwind of a legislative session and are looking now as the dust settles to see what finalizes at the governor's desk, including our budget. We will put out a special legislative wrapup edition of the newsletter with information about our budget and some of the many successes we contributed to this session.

In the meantime, please take a moment to get to know Jennifer Barela, our new Deputy Chief of Operations. Jennifer has dedicated her career to public defense from Las Cruces to Albuquerque to the statewide responsibilities representing juveniles and adults. She's always made sure to put clients first in her work. She brings to her position strong dedication to our clients, our mission and to her colleagues.

-Ben



For the last 19 years, almost all of it at LOPD, Jenifer Barela has reveled in the on-the-ground fight for her clients.

"I like to stand by the person everyone else hates. I enjoy that. I love trial, everything about it, the stress," Barela said.

Now that she's transitioning to the executive administrative role as deputy chief of operations, she's trying to figure out how to channel this fight.

"I will always at least want to second chair at one trial a year. And the thing I miss most is interaction with clients," Barela said from her new office in Albuquerque a few floors away from the trial lawyers she most recently supervised as Albuquerque District Defender.

Barela says she always knew she'd be a lawyer, and once she got to high school, she knew it would be in public defense.

"My mother was a legal secretary for 30 years, first in Alamogordo, then Albuquerque, and federal public defenders," Barela said. "That is why I really respect staff. They are essential to our office"

Her time visiting her mother's work introduced her to public defense and Barela said she saw how the field had a direct impact on her community.

DC Barela keeping one foot in the fight

"I considered it helping my people, people of color, Hispanic people," she said. "I'm very proud of my Hispanic heritage and being a native New Mexican."

Barela graduated from University of New Mexico School of Law in May of 2002 and actively sought a job at LOPD. Recruiting practices back then were much different, she says, recalling she had to hustle to get a position. She chose to start in the Las Cruces office to be near family and use her Spanish speaking skills.

For all but a short stint in private practice, which Barela says she's glad she experienced but wouldn't return to, LOPD has been her home.

"In the end, I didn't enjoy fighting over money, I think fighting over liberty is more rewarding," she said.

Moving from the courtroom and into more management positions has been a challenge. Barela, who lives in Albuquerque near her close-knit family, says her new role gives her an opportunity to mentor more women in leadership and advocate for clients in new ways.

Jennifer Barela and her mother, Belinda St. John. Barela enjoys football and baseball, and is a big fan of the Pittsburgh Steelers. She keeps a Steelers-themed basket of snacks for sharing in her office.

"I love for people to come ask me questions. When I say I want to brainstorm, I mean it," Barela said. "I believe in the mission here. I believe in LOPD. If I do my job good now, here, it has a wider impact on more people, it's just not as direct."

District Defender changes across the state

12th DD Jennifer Birmingham
Alamogordo and Ruidoso

2nd DD Matt Chavez
Albuquerque

Black History Month

Black history is American history

Tune in to listen to Gideon's Promise and NAPD leaders speak about Black History Month through the lens of public defense, what it means to be the first, and how social workers can help public defenders communicate with their clients.

Black History Isn't Just a Thing of the Past is now live with hosts Jonathan Rapping and Ilham Askia! This episode features special guest, Lori James-Townes, the new Executive Director for the National Association for Public Defense. Listen here: https://bit.ly/GPEpisode19

For 15 years and counting, the mission of Gideon's Promise is to transform the criminal legal system by building a movement of public defenders who provide equal justice for marginalized communities.

1st Black female, 1st public defender nominated to US Supreme Court

Judge Ketanji Brown Jackson would be the first Black woman to sit on the court, and the first justice who has experience as a public defender. Jackson, 51, would be the second-youngest justice on the current court and the first justice since Thurgood Marshall with significant experience as a defense lawyer. But she would not change the court's current 6-to-3 conservative supermajority.

Judge Nina

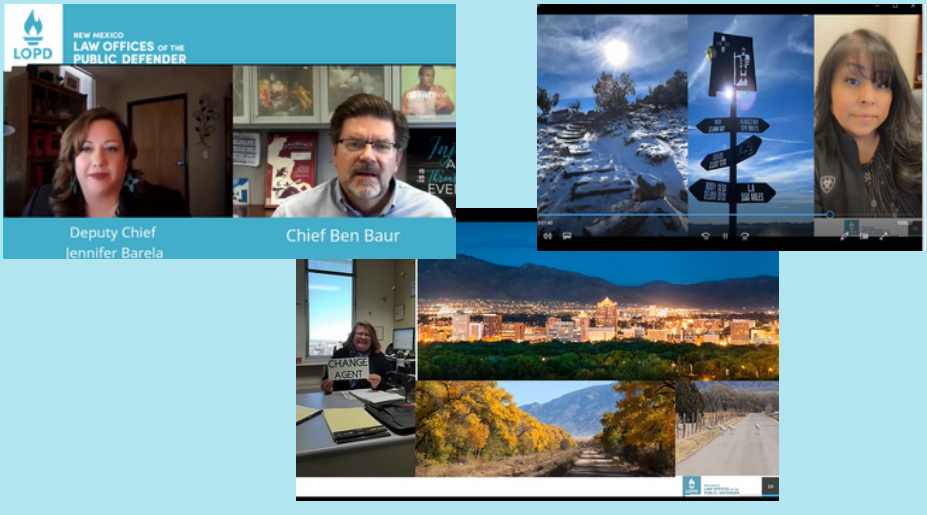
LOPD's Nina Safier has been appointed to the criminal bench in Albuquerque Metro Court. She takes her post in early March. Congrats Nina!

LOPD at the NM Supreme Court

LOPD's Allison Jaramillo, center, joined amicus counsel Kate Burdick from the Juvenile Law Center, left, and local counsel Denali Wilson from the ACLU-NM in oral argument for State v. Rodriguez in January. At issue was whether a child can appeal the finding by the district court that he is not amenable to treatment as a juvenile and the resulting adult sentence after he enters a guilty plea on the underlying youthful offender charges. The case has not been decided yet.

Social Work video headed to NAPD

LOPD's Social Work Unit put together a heartfelt video about their work to be part of NAPD's national conference in March. The video will be played during the conference's social work segments.



UNM SOL Public Interest Job Fair

Training and Recruitment Director Liz Holmes talks with prospective defenders.

Metro Managing Attorney Tonie Abeyta talks with students.

Albuquerque District Defender Matt Chavez, left , joined forces with Deputy Chief Randy Chavez, center, and Training and Recruitment Director Liz Holmes.

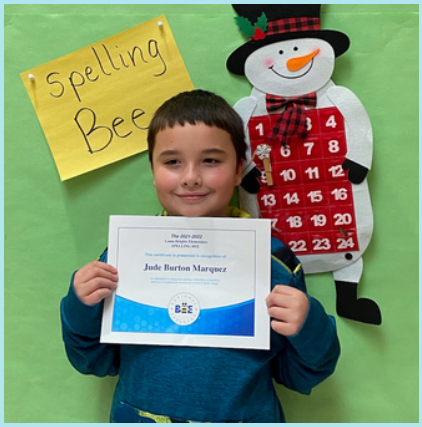
Team LOPD worked the room at the most recent Public Interest Job Fair at the University of New Mexico School of Law. They hyped public defense and agency opportunities to increase the number of interested applicants. This is one of many recruiting efforts underway, including the annual Equal Justice Works job fair, a virtual UNM job fair, Sonoran Career Fair virtually and the National Public Law Schools Alliance virtual job fair.

"We're also reaching out directly to law schools promoting all the benefits and qualities of our department," Liz Holmes, LOPD's training and recruitment director, said. "And if you have ideas about recruitment please contact me, or if you want to help spread the word yourself, please share my contact information."

Liz Holmes at elizabeth.holmes@lopdnm.us

Spelling success

Las Cruces legal associate Cheyenne Burton's son, Jude, poses after his spelling bee in which he took 7th place out of more than 20 students. He is in 3rd grade and is "one smart cookie," his mama says. He competed against 3rd,4th and 5th grade students.



Upcoming trainings

Contact Liz Holmes at elizabeth.holmes@lopdnm.us if you have questions about registration.

Harassment Prevention - required for all LOPD

EasyLlama

You will receive an email from EasyLlama with directions on how to access the training. The training must be completed by April 29.

If you haven't received your email, contact Liz Holmes at elizabeth.holmes@lopdnm.us

Level up your Zoom presence

Ingela Onstad

- **March 10, 2022 3:00 PM: Zoom Confidence (2 general CLE) Register**

The naturalness of human communication is now challenged by our screen-focused world. Activities such as pitching to prospective clients or showing up to court have changed in a virtual world. Our in-person skills may not easily transfer into on-screen charisma and we may find ourselves feeling less effective. This workshop teaches tools taken from the entertainment industry to help you feel relaxed, focused, and confident in your on-screen tasks.

Contact Liz Holmes at elizabeth.holmes@lopdnm.us or register HERE.

Holiday parties

Yes the season is over, but we have evidence good times were had.

Todd Olmos, supervising attorney in Abq Metro, dresses up like Santa and delivers gifts to everyone in metro – every year!

Clovis/Portales holiday party with Jeremiah Hall in the forefront, and from left Tiffani Lopez, Brenda Franco, Kaitlyn Cochran, Angel Rivera, and Sophia Arrighi, Melisa Fondrick is to the right of Jeremiah. Not in Picture – Jon Harris, Elva Harvey, Tashika Curlee, Tiffany Cornelius, Corina Mascarenas, Maggie Chavez, Mitchell Mender, and Roderick Juarez.

Social Work Director KC Quirk as Santa for the annual Crossroads for Women party.

JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2022

LOPD Anniversaries

Celebrating 1, 5, 10,
15, 20+ years

15 years

Dennica Torres
Juvenile MA

Sandie Herrera-Trujillo
Santa Fe
Paralegal

Amanda Stephenson
Habeas MA

10 years

Maribel Ortega

5 years

Julie Ball
Ryan Parsons
Mary Stubberud
Andrew Magida

1 year

Jacob Jones
Wenona Benally
Phyl Bean
Susan Garcia
Tiffany Lopez

Retirement

Geri White
Erik Tranberg
Debra Lautenschlager
Michael Rosenfield
Tobias Martinez
Maria "Olga" Shroyer
Elizabeth Aranda

Welcome to the LOPD team!

Jenna Dill Social Worker
Patrick Smith attorney
Nancy Garcia Senior Secretary
Frank Hickey Investigator
Brianna Champ attorney
Susannah Rogers attorney
Marcus Sedillo attorney
Tania Shahani attorney
Richel Tapia Financial Specialist
Reina Archuleta Secretary
Cristina Savery Secretary
Imad Awad attorney
Mallory Harwood attorney
Rhonda Noah Senior HR Admin
Kent DeYoung Accountant/ Auditor
Robert Otero Investigator
Patricia Savage Senior Secretary
Kimberly Vigil Legal Associate
Melissa Wright Secretary

Thank you to the HR team for compiling these lists. If your name was somehow left off a list, please know it was not on purpose. Just let Maggie Shepard know and she'll make it right in the next newsletter.

Sorry for the delay in the newsletter. I try to get it out every 2 months, but I broke my wrist in early January and have been slooooow ever since. I'm healing now and should be back on schedule. Keep the good pictures and stories coming, please. Thank you!

- Maggie Shepard
Communication Director

To contribute, correct, compliment or criticize newsletter content or to talk to LOPD Communication Director Maggie Shepard, contact her at **maggie.shepard@lopdnm.us or (505) 690-4529**.
All newsletter content is compiled by Maggie Shepard and approved by LOPD leadership.