

# THE DEFENDER

*Monthly newsletter of the  
New Mexico Law Offices of the Public Defender*

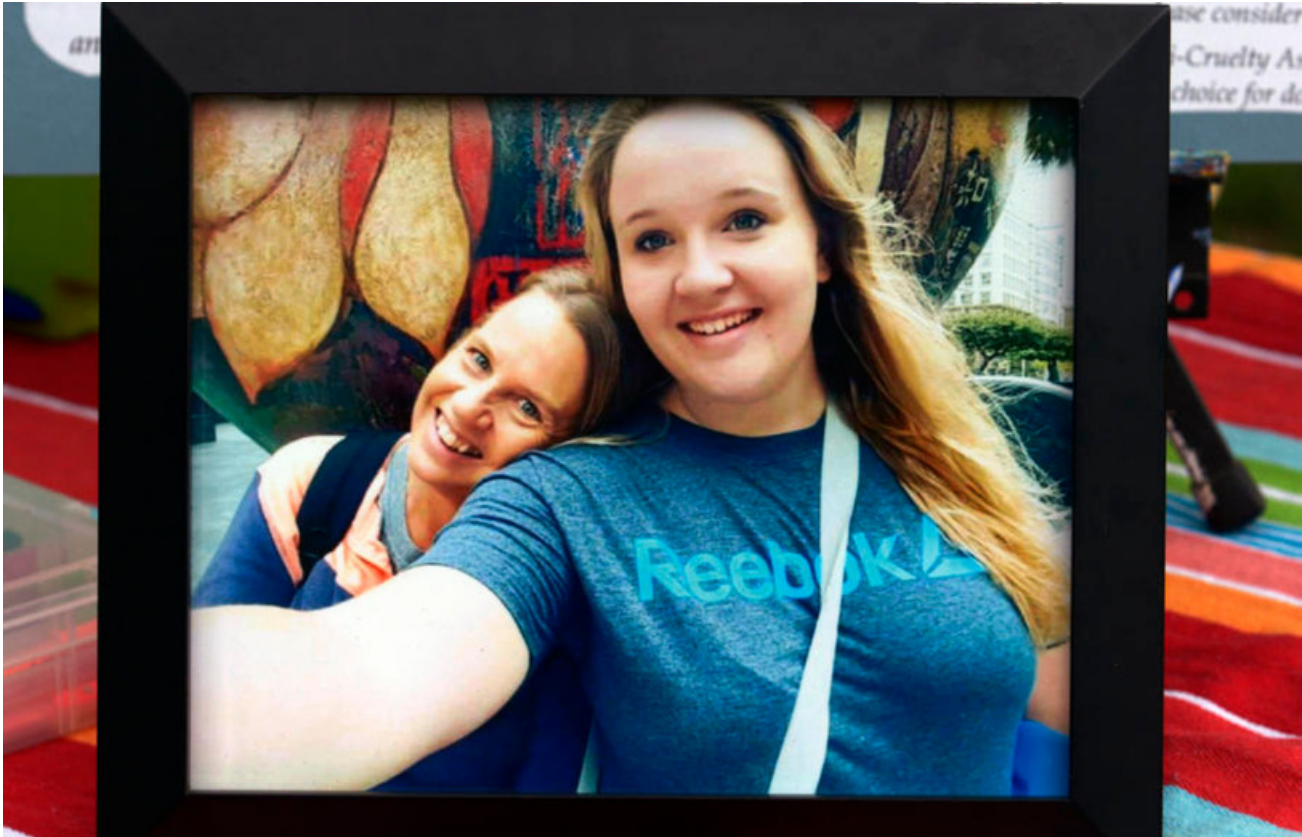


## **Mourning Laura Hanish**

L.H.

In the weeks since news of the death Laura Hanish and her daughter, Shanta Hanish, started spreading through the Albuquerque office, where she worked as a social worker for 24 years, a strong picture has emerged from across the state of who we and the world have lost. Tributes poured in testifying to Laura's strong heart and her dedication to showing love and compassion to the people vilified so strongly by so many. She was a force that embodied what we strive to do at LOPD. Laura and Shanta will be deeply missed.

**May the memory of her keep the fire of  
love and justice lit in each of us**



A selfie picture of Laura and Shanta Hanish sits on a table at a candlelight vigil at Hyder Park on Thursday, (Greg Sorber/ Journal)

After receiving her social work degree, Laura first worked for CYFD. She joined LOPD in about 1994 and worked her way into the heart of the most intense social work position in the department in the capital crimes unit. She traveled the state getting to know and care for adults and teens charged with the most heinous crimes. She raised her daughter, Shanta, with great joy. Laura's office is covered with pictures of Shanta, who was 19 when she died. She worked as a city pool lifeguard and was in her junior year pursuing an education degree at UNM.

Shanta's ex-boyfriend has been arrested and charged in their deaths. The department has contracted out the case. Every single LOPD colleague who knew Laura seems to agree that she would not want the young man demonized or used as any example of any sort.

"She'd want him to get a vigorous defense and go through the process like anyone else," Albuquerque District Defender Jeff Rein said. "We are just devastated, but she wouldn't want us to demonize him. She believed and she told her clients that 'you might have done something terrible but you are not a terrible person. You are not your worst mistake'."

## Counseling available

Counseling and a Critical Response Debriefing were provided by the department. Counseling is still available through the department's Employee Assistance Program. Call 1(855) 231-7737 or visit [www.solutionsbiz.com](http://www.solutionsbiz.com) with login SONMEAP

# Hobbs office welcomes ACLU visit

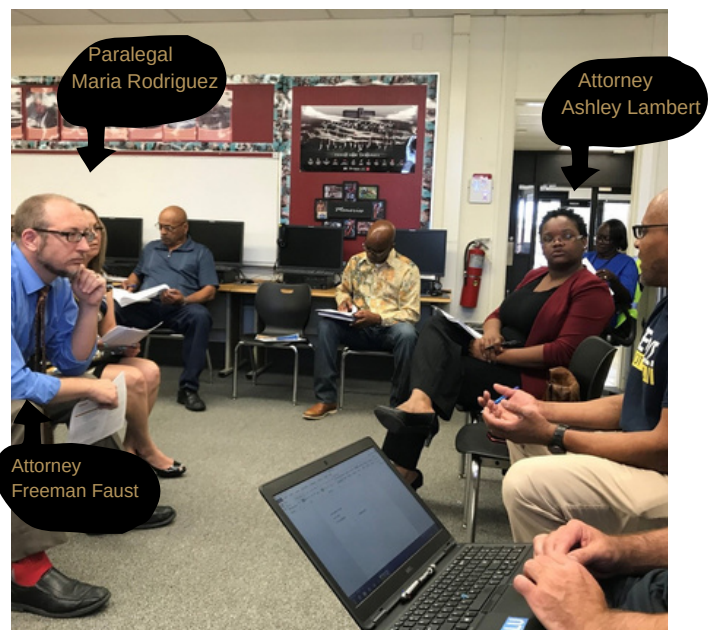


LOPD attorneys join, from left, ACLU of New Mexico Senior Policy Analyst Paul Haidle and Smart Justice Coordinator Barron Jones and NAACP Hobbs Branch President Joseph Cotton at their June 3 gathering to discuss regional civil rights issues.

Members of LOPD's Hobbs office joined the Hobbs Branch of the NAACP hear more about the ACLU of New Mexico's "unprecedented, multiyear effort to reduce the U.S. jail and prison population by 50% and to combat racial disparities in the criminal justice system."

Initiative Coordinator Barron Jones and ACLU Senior Policy Analyst Paul Haidle made the trek from Albuquerque to Edison Elementary School in Hobbs for the June 3 meeting.

"With so many passionate advocates in attendance, the meeting will certainly be the first of many in a meaningful collaboration," said LOPD attorney Alex Cherup, who attended the gathering.



Barron Jones, far right, Smart Justice coordinator for the ACLU of New Mexico, addresses a group of LOPD and community leaders during a visit to Hobbs.

# LOPD Anniversaries

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

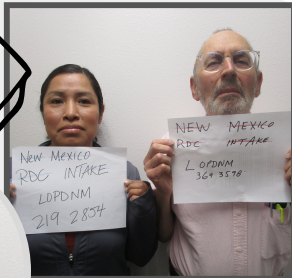
\*\* some anniversary dates include years at other state agencies. It's difficult to separate.



### 20 Years

**Jason Rael**, managing attorney for the Juvenile Division

### 15 Years



Shannon and Michael wanted this to be their anniversary pic .



Here they are smiling:  
Shannon Armijo,  
paralegal, and attorney  
Michael Rosenfield



Hilda Adame  
paralegal  
in Las Cruces

### 5 Years

Philip Larragoite  
Jason Sanchez  
Laura Chavez  
Eva Buchwald  
Douglas Wilber  
Debra Lautenschlager  
Craig Acorn  
Ibukun Adepoju  
Perry Klare  
Freeman Faust

### 1 Year

Antonio Medina Roderickus Collins  
Michelle Patterson Kenneth Heineman  
Lisa Robles Joshi Valentine  
Dommino Delgado Sarah Wintermute  
Michael James Mamalis  
Monteagudo Adele Toscani  
Cassandra Montoya Wayne Sorensen  
Donna Perez-Hernandez Joanne Angel  
Gloria Seifert Shaheen Rassoul  
Michael Tighe John Bennett  
Katrina Campbell Ashley Standifer  
Daniela Chacon Patricia Patterson  
Alexandria Allen Roberto Zaragoza  
Kathy Genao Hunter Hoaglund

\*\*Thank you to Cassandra Montoya 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.

# Team changes

## 🔨 Hellos and good-byes

### Hello and welcome to:

Leon Richter-Freund attorney in Abq Metro  
Sarah Parker attorney in Las Cruces  
Jeff Ball attorney in Las Cruces  
Catherine Olmstead senior secretary in Santa Fe  
Tiffany Cornelius attorney in Clovis  
Hannah Vellinga, attorney in Aztec

### Retirement farewell to:

Brenda Cunningham  
Brian Tucker  
Elizabeth Johnson  
Karl Martell  
Marcella Benavidez  
Richard Abeyta  
Robert Martin  
Roberta Arguello  
Sharon Martinez

# Upcoming events

## LOPD Commission meeting

🔨 Friday, July 12 at 10 a.m. in the 17th floor conference room at the Albuquerque office.

# IT 'miracles' underway

The IT Department has been hustling to get some major improvements to your computer systems up and running.

IT Director Matt Bevington says to expect to see the first batch this month.

- Internet speed increase in every office

"That's going to do wonderful things for Defender Data," Bevington said.



IT Director Matt Bevington

- More electronic storage, including in email and mailbox size
  - Backup system, so if there is an outage, service won't be interrupted
- "This is the foundation truly to do miracles," Bevington said.

And more is set to come. So stay tuned.

Bevington said because LOPD's own IT team is doing the work, the otherwise \$2 million+ project is coming in at about \$700,000. That funding comes from the legislature through LOPD's supplemental request.

## Free wellness classes

June: Mindfulness and focus through Mindfulness Matters class, open June 18 on July: Managing pressure and balancing priorities through Making a Life While Making a Living: Work-Life Balance class, open July 16 on Free at [www.solutionsbiz.com](http://www.solutionsbiz.com)  
Password: phs

## Paralegal certification training available

Anyone with an LOPD Westlaw subscription now has access to Westlaw's Paralegal Certification training program.

The certification can be included on a resume.

To participate, work with your supervisor around scheduling and enter the TRAIN code (paid time) in SHARE for any time spent engaged in the certification training.

The program can be found on the Westlaw "training & support" page and the bottom of the home page. From the "training and support" page, select "paralegal certification" from the right side and follow the instructions.



# Conference complements

The annual LOPD conference hosted about 350 LOPD investigators, social workers, staff, contractors and attorneys and took a few wild turns. More than 50 presentations were provided. Training and Recruitment Director Patricia Anders, who annually organizes the gathering, thanks everyone for their contributions of time, expertise and energy. The raffle to dunk department leaders raised \$435 and 15 suits were gathered for the Suits for Cause drive for new attorneys starting in August. Here are some visual highlights of the event and your LOPD and contract colleagues brought to you by intern Sophia Cadena :



See page 13 for the splash



Attorneys Margaret Broenniman, David Richter and Nansi Singh



12th District Defender Matt Chavez and case manager Danielle Muñoz



General Counsel Adrienne Turner, intern Joel Robinson, Programs Administrator Julie Kitch and Executive Secretary Judy Gonzales



Extern Emma Easom, of the University of Kansas School of Law



LOPD commissioners Hugh Dangler and Dan Banks



Dir. of Training and Recruitment Patricia Anders, Deputy Chief Public Defender Jennifer Birmingham and Chief Bennett Baur



Sophia Cadena

Albuquerque attorneys Robert Zamora, Maggie Brister, and Sam Jay



Sophia Cadena

Hobbs MCU attorney Freeman Faust





Commissioner Hugh Dangler



Social worker Megan Leschak and case manager Annette Rougemont



Albuquerque MCU attorney Craig Acorn



Margaret Broenniman, Albuquerque attorney



Social workers Sylvia Pennington and Iris Jacinto and social work intern Jennifer Smith



Abq social worker Kate Halbach, Las Cruces case manager Lisa Jenkins and Las Cruces social worker Kathy Apodaca.



Contract attorneys Johnathan Miller and Marie Legrand Miller



Gallup case manager Erin Gutierrez and Carlsbad case manager Michelle Patterson



LOPD's investigator power team



Albuquerque attorneys Doug Wilber and Joshi Valentine



A different side of Doug Wilber



Abq Metro attorneys Jessica Allsup and Tess Williams



Carlsbad Managing Attorney Nate Banks



Attorney F.M. von Hoffmann of Roswell



IT master and rock star Ron Day



Just a few of the many people needed to get Heather LeBlanc out of the dunk tank in her wesuit



Abq Juvenile Managing Attorney Jason Rael ready for the dunk tank



Juvenile Division's Alma Roberson, Dennica Torres, Eva Buchwald, David Richter, Jason Rael and Alison Pauk



Deputy Chief Jennifer Birmingham braces for a cheat dunk by Nate Banks



Attorney Tonie Abeyta taking one of several plunges



And there it is.

Big smile after  
throwing the  
dunking shot.

## Message from the Chief

Despite the soggy, dunk tank ending, this year's conference was absolutely great. People learned a lot. I learned a lot. But most important to me, we had time together to connect and reconnect with each other, to remember why we do what we do, and to appreciate the people we work with. In this job, group spirit goes a long way. Our offices and our contractors are spread across the whole state, and it's a large state. That makes it hard for everybody to exchange ideas and to support each other. Interacting through emails or interacting over the phone can't take the place of being together in person in the same place. I hope this conference gave you each a reminder of why you do what you do, in addition to your learning. Thank you to Patricia Anders and to her staff, and we will all look forward to an even more eventful conference next year.



Contract attorney Brett Phelps

# LOPD Commission gets new members



Melissa Sawyer

Melissa is a private attorney in Hobbs and owner of The Sawyers Law Group. She's a 1992 graduate from Tulane University School of Law and holds a BA in political science from Arizona State University. She practiced law briefly at the District Attorney's Office in Clovis before transferring to Hobbs and going into private practice. She has two teen children, Michael and Elizabeth.



Traci Neff

Traci works for San Juan County as the Administrator of Juvenile Services. She holds holds a BA in Business Administration, and is a graduate of Leadership New Mexico, and Leadership San Juan. She is currently an elected officer on the New Mexico Detention Affiliate, NM Sentencing Commission (Juvenile Committee), and many other statewide committees related to juvenile justice. Traci is married to Weldon Neff and has two sons, Joel and Conner.

Commissioners Leo Romero and Hugh Dangler have completed their terms. Melissa Sawyer and Traci Neff join Chairperson Thomas Joseph Clear III, Vice chair Raymond Sanchez, Secretary Daniel Banks and fellow commissioners Ahmad Assed, Naomi Salazar, Michael Stout and Michael Vigil.