

STATE OF NEW MEXICO

# County of Luna

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## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### Media Release

Luna County's director of the Parents as Teachers program has been recognized as the region's promotora of the year by the Paso Del Norte Promotora Committee.

Anna Barraza received the award from the network of health promoters during the organization's 12<sup>th</sup> annual conference, held October in El Paso, TX. During the regular meeting of the Luna County Board of Commissioners, held Tuesday, Dec. 16, she was honored by the Commission and presented with the award by her colleagues.

"She's a very caring person, and is genuinely interested in caring for our families," Zalenna Piñon, PAT administrator, said of her boss. She has worked with Barraza for nearly six years. "She does everything from the bottom of her heart."

In her 14 years of serving Luna County, Barraza has worked in nearly every capacity as a community health promoter — or promotor(a) in Spanish — until taking the reins of the Parents as Teachers program in 2013, her first post as a program director.

"I needed a job," Barraza quipped when asked why she entered the field. "I was going to school for Business Administration and I had no clue about child development or being a promotora."

Though she knew little about the field going in, she quickly became acclimated through trainings, education, and the realization that at its core, the job is about helping people.

"I never thought there were so many people with so many needs, emotionally and economically," she said. "I felt I needed to help and support them."

She estimates that over the course of her career, she has worked with around 5,000 families, mostly through home visiting programs designed to encourage early child development and healthful living. Since moving into the director's seat, she is not able to perform as many home visits as previously in her career. Instead, she now oversees and guides seven promotoras and other staff in the Parents as Teachers program.

"Under Anna's guidance, Parents as Teachers has grown to serve over 100 Luna County families with regular home visits, access to a wide range of services, and referrals to services she cannot offer through the program," said Jessica Moreno, director of Luna County's Community Health and Well Being department, under which PAT falls. "I could not be more proud of the accomplishments of her and her staff, and I could not ask for better friends and colleagues."

Barraza has been recognized several times over her career for outstanding work, but this is her first recognition on a regional level among promotoras serving in New Mexico, Texas, and Mexico. She won the award for the state of New Mexico.

"Anna's devotion to her program's clients and staff is remarkable, and should serve as a model for any program director," Luna County Manager Charles "Tink" Jackson said. "Our community is lucky to have her."

Services offered by the program include, but are not limited to, home visiting, free pregnancy tests, car seat installation and inspection, and referrals to medical services. Parents as Teachers personnel undergo intense training to learn how to assess child development and to help teach parents to be successful.

“A home visit doesn’t mean you’re low income; the services are important for everyone,” Barraza explained. “Families of all economic levels can benefit from home visiting.”

For more information, visit the program at 205 E. Hemlock St., next to the New Mexico Department of Health clinic on Silver Avenue. The program may also be reached by calling (575) 546-9254. All services are provided free of charge, except for car seats. A small fee is necessary to offset the cost of the car seat.