

STATE OF NEW MEXICO

# County of Luna

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## Media Release

With three out of four child safety seats used incorrectly, Luna County’s Parents as Teachers program carries a heavy responsibility as the only agency in the county with certified car seat technicians on staff.

In recognition of the program’s important work of keeping Luna County children safe, the program was presented with the Commitment to Excellence Award for their New Mexico Child Safety Car Seat Distribution Program by Safer New Mexico Now.

“We had the opportunity to provide over 100 car seats to qualifying families last year, and we plan to double that amount this year,” Jessica Moreno, director of the Community Health and Well Being Department, said. The PAT program falls under her department. “Our goal is to have every child in Luna County properly fitted to a car seat.”

This award recognized PAT as an exceptional advocate for occupant protection as demonstrated by their service to caregivers and children, the number of hours worked at child passenger safety events in and outside of their immediate community, the number of individual events that organization supported, the conscientious compliance with and timeliness of record-keeping tasks, and a showing of passion for service to the public.

The New Mexico Department of Transportation, Traffic Safety Division and Safer New Mexico Now are continually impressed by the dedication of law enforcement personnel, healthcare representatives, and other advocates who educate families on the importance of properly restraining everyone in their vehicles, according to a statement.

“Our staff is dedicated to helping children in as many ways as we can,” Anna Barraza, Parents as Teacher director, said. “Ensuring car safety seats are correctly installed gives us a way to help protect kids beyond the walls of our office or homes we visit.”

The PAT program provides education and instruction on child safety car seat use/misuse and installation through participating in its monthly classes. These classes are open to all Luna County residents. The program allows for the distribution of child safety seats to families who meet program requirements.

The program has five car seat technicians certified by the New Mexico Department of Transportation and Traffic Safety Division. The certified technicians are Barraza, Zalenna Pinon, Magali Gomez, Mirna Cordova and Yolanda Ruiz. The car seat distribution began in 2001. Parents as Teachers, formally known as Healthy Start, is now the authorized car seat distributor.

The agency holds monthly car seat classes at on the fourth Friday of each month at the Community Health and Well Being Complex, located at 205 E. Hemlock next to the New Mexico Department of Health clinic. English classes begin at 9:30 a.m. and Spanish is held at 10:30 a.m. The program asks for a \$20.00 donation that reverts back to the Safer New Mexico Now Program to assist with program sustainability. Luna County PAT receives referrals from all agencies within the community, especially from law enforcement.

Contact (575) 546-9254 for more information.

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