

Teacher of the month thought she was being pranked

Written by By Dee Velasco For the Sun
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Cecille Perales enjoys a little TLC

Each month, Camille's Sidewalk Cafe in Gallup, chooses and recognizes one local teacher within the Gallup area for the "Teacher of the Month" award. Teachers are nominated by students and those who feel they deserve the recognition for their determination to help local students become more than they expect. Camille's presents this teacher with an award for excellence in teaching. This month's winner is Cecille Perales.

Upon hearing the good news about being nominated for "Teacher of the Month," Perales thought it was a prank.

"At first, I didn't believe it was real (laughing), I used to be a prankster and my natural thought if this was a prank. It started to sink in when I looked online and realized that Camille's really does this (laughing)."

Perales whose title is a Lecture 1, has been teaching nursing for the past four semesters at UNM-Gallup branch. Originally, from the Philippines, her nursing career began when she took on her mother's dream as a child. At first, she wanted to be a doctor. Then, in high school she decided to become an engineer. Her mother wanted to be a nurse when she was younger, but never got the chance, so in a way Perales fulfilled that dream.

"I'm glad that I did become a nurse, it's a good field to get into," she says. "It's a practical choice and I started nursing school when I was about sixteen. I guess it's a part of my cultural and the parental expectations."

Her two other siblings are nurses as well. According to Perales, nursing is a helping profession. There's gratification when you see somebody get better, or at least feel better. It's part of the way a nurse communicates with patients, by creating a positive impact on their welfare.

Having graduated in the Philippines with her Bachelors of Science and Nursing, she was

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recruited to work at Rehoboth McKinley Christian Health Care Services.

Perales says she has always enjoyed teaching others, even in school where she would help fellow classmates. When the chance to step away from the bedside, and go into the teaching field came along, she took it. She says that passion to teach has always been inside her.

“I’ve always enjoyed teaching, I’ve always felt that fulfilling need even as a young child. That’s why nursing was a fit for me, because I’ve always wanted to teach.”

When asked what is the best thing about coming to work as a teacher, Perales says it’s the students having that goal of becoming a nurse, as she did. She says to help them succeed is what is really gratifying; helping the students reach their goals and meeting them half way. She says it’s hard because she wonders if she could have done better.

“I look at myself as an instructor and wonder what could I have done better,” she says. “I know my students have their own responsibilities. They’re adults and this is a college setting. But I always try to see if I didn’t reach everyone in the class. I want to at least try, I don’t want to dismiss anything. There’s always room for improvement.”

When it comes to challenges, Perales says she is concerned about the “burn-outs.” With nursing you work at bedside and there is going to be burn-out, because you’re not just dealing with disease states, but you’re dealing with emotional responses of the patients and families, and that can take a toll. But you can go home and someone else takes over.

With education you have to prep, you have to read a lot, and you take work home almost every day, weekend, all the time.

“That’s the biggest burn-out. Getting this recognition was something needed and it just came out of the blue to which I say thank you, and that somebody appreciated my efforts.”

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If you're interested in nominating your favorite teacher for "Teacher of the Month," contact Camille's Sidewalk Café at (505) 722-5017 or stop by at 306 S. Second Street in Gallup.

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