

Juan de Oñate holds career fair

Written by By Bernie Dotson Sun Correspondent
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Oñate's fifth graders organize entire affair

The fifth grade class at Juan de Oñate Elementary School peered into their futures Feb. 10 – and got a kick out of what they saw.

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They spoke to a retired firefighter, got some hands on experience about restaurants, learned about what a school nurse does, and got up close and personal with a Medal of Honor recipient at Oñate's Career Day.

"There are a lot of choices for what you want to do when you grow up," Makayla Williams, 11, said during the one-hour event held in the school's gymnasium. The fifth graders set up and organized the event and Williams was a co-chairperson. "This gives us a chance to see what the professional world is like," a very astute Williams said.

Williams and her classmates spoke with professional representatives from the greater McKinley County area. Asked about the Career Day, Williams said, "It's fun and interesting. I'm learning a lot."

The kids, all under 12 years of age and under the direction of school principal Kristen Bischoff and fifth grade teacher Charity Martinez, considered lives as soldiers, civil servants, horse farriers and restaurateurs, among other career choices.

"We're exposing the kids to different career paths," Bischoff said. "We want to let them know what options are out there so they can begin exploring."

Asked if fifth grade was a little too early to learn about careers, Bischoff said "No." Michelle Burrola, recreational manager at the city of Gallup, said she fielded questions on all kinds of things that not only dealt with recreation, but life questions, too. Burrola, a career city employee, said she answered questions about and gave information on the use of CPR, first aid and sportsmanship.

"The range of questions was incredible," Burrola said. "I think some of these students might go into the recreation field as a career after college."

Ken Riege, the general manager at Comfort Suites in Gallup and a U.S. Air force veteran,

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appeared at the Career Day with fellow veteran and Gallup native Hershey Miyamura. Miyamura, 91, served in the U.S. Army and fought in World War II and the Korean Conflict.

Miyamura High School on Board Drive in Gallup is named after Hershey Miyamura as is an Interstate 40 interchange. Miyamura is a decorated war hero, holding the nation's highest honor for valor – the Medal of Honor.

“Some of these kids have said they’ll be going to Miyamura High School one day and here we have sitting right here the guy who the school is named after,” Riege said. “That’s education within itself.”

Among those that participated in the Career Day were the city of Gallup, Earl’s Restaurant, and Hector Corral of Laroc Refrigeration, Inc.

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