



Isabella Montano
TEACHER: MS. BERARDINELLI
GRADE 02

CITY OF ALBUQUERQUE

A Senior I Know

ESSAY CONTEST WINNERS

ONE
ALBUQUE
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Angel Montoya
acmontoya@cabq.gov

DEPARTMENT OF SENIOR AFFAIRS

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Message from the Mayor

Dear Albuquerque families,

For over four decades, the City of Albuquerque, in collaboration with Albuquerque Public Schools and a dedicated committee of retired educators, has championed the importance of intergenerational relationships through the “A Senior I Know” Essay Contest. This tradition invites school-aged children in grades 1-5 to share their stories of older adults who have made an impact in their lives, creating lifelong memories and traditions.

The significance of this annual contest lies in its ability to foster connections between generations, instilling in our youth a profound appreciation for the wisdom and experiences of those who have paved the way for them. Witnessing the evolution of this event into a cherished community tradition for countless Albuquerque families has been truly remarkable, as it has forged enduring memories and meaningful bonds across ages.

This year, the response has been overwhelming, with over 900 entries pouring in from young writers across our city. The selection showcased here represents the pinnacle of each grade category, methodically chosen by our valued panel of judges. These narratives range from the humorous to the heart-rending, illustrating the profound impact of these relationships on our community.

To our winners, congratulations on your outstanding achievement. To the seniors who generously shared their stories, we extend our heartfelt

Above: Anna Sanchez, Director, the Department of Senior Affairs.

Top: Timothy M. Keller, Mayor, City of Albuquerque. Left: A child at a local playground.

appreciation. We also commend the teachers, principals, and the dedicated “A Senior I Know” committee for their unwavering support of this program year after year. As we celebrate this project coinciding with Older Americans Month, let us come together to honor the connections made between generations that enrich our lives and continue to make Albuquerque the best place for families.

Sincerely,

Timothy M. Keller, Mayor and

Anna M. Sanchez, Director
Department of Senior Affairs



Meet Our Judges

Ginger Grossetete

FOUNDER OF “A SENIOR I KNOW” ESSAY CONTEST

In 1981, I attended a workshop at the National Council on Aging annual conference that included information about a project whereby elementary students wrote compositions about seniors they knew. I thought the idea had great potential and decided we could turn it into a contest in our local elementary schools. “A Senior I Know” was born.

The contest was launched in 1982 and was very well received. Thousands of students have participated in the contest over the years and we have received numerous comments from teachers thanking us for providing the opportunity for their students to participate in this wonderful community project. The success of this project has been personally gratifying to me and I look forward each year to reading the amazing stories written by the winners. Let’s hope the contest continues for generations to come.

Judy Koskovich

I taught 1st Graders in APS for 33 years. Each year was delightful! Reading and creative writing were my favorite “delights!”

Right (from left to right): The Judges: Ginger Grossetete, Judy Koskovich, Anita Sterchi, Sue Fickel, Barbara Polka-Chenoweth, Marge Peters, John Johnson, Carol Jenkins, Carol Johnson, Alicia Meade, and Arnie Tice.

Watching those children realize they could read and write... PRICELESS! Being able to continue seeing this “magical happening,” by judging these “Senior Essays” for over 16 years, is a great joy for me!

Marge Peters

I moved from Florida to Albuquerque 33 years ago and was employed by APS for 22 years. I taught kindergarten, third, and fourth grades, which entailed the full grade level curriculum. I met Gay Blech when she taught at Oñate and was involved in this contest.

She knew I would be interested in helping with it if ever the need arose. My most memorable year teaching was the year I taught a third grade in which I had two visually impaired students and a German only speaker.



Sue Fickel

I have been a judge for the “A Senior I Know” Essay Contest for 28 years. I do enjoy getting the perspective of the students on what they think comprises “Senior Citizen” as I am in that category. The stories are interesting, enlightening and in many cases amusing. I am a retired teacher, counselor and administrator from APS, and will look forward to judging in the future.

Barbara Polka-Chenoweth

I am a rookie at judging this composition contest. Sue Fickel, a dear friend from church, asked me to partner with her this year.

Prior to moving to Albuquerque, I was a substitute teacher and taught 5th and 6th grade in

Michigan, where I was raised. I also taught 2nd grade in Houston. In 1983, I was hired as a Cognitive Language Development teacher working with kindergartners and 1st graders in Albuquerque. Later, this program became Early Childhood Literacy. Eventually, I worked with 1st graders as a Reading Recovery teacher. Before retiring after teaching for 36 ½ years, I worked with K-5 students in my role as a reading interventionist.

Carl Sagan said, “One of the greatest gifts adults can give—to their offspring and to their society—is to read to children.” It touches my heart to see my 15-month-old grandson looking at his board books concentrating on the pictures as he turns each page. He

Leadership

Timothy M. Keller,
Mayor, City
of Albuquerque



Kevin Sourisseau
Chief Operations Officer

Anna M. Sanchez
Director, Department of Senior
Affairs

Angel C. Montoya
Recreation Division Manager,
Department of Senior Affairs

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CABQ.GOV

loves his books and having them read to him.

Arnie Tice

I grew up in Albuquerque. My family moved here from Colorado Springs when I was 4 years old. I was part of Onate Elementary School for 20 years. I started as a volunteer when my children attended Onate. I worked on staff for nine years, first as an educational assistant and then a teacher.

My degree is in Early Childhood Multicultural Education. I was fortunate to be able to teach kindergarten and then teach a second and third grade combination class. Working with children, raising children, and being around children always creates a plethora of memories. I am looking forward to reading the essays and participating as a judge.

Alicia Meade

I have lived in Albuquerque for 37 years. I moved here after college to begin my teaching career. I taught Special Education for 30 years. The last several years I worked primarily with 4th and 5th graders.

I was fortunate to have team taught with another teacher, so I was able to focus on math and science.

I taught at Onate Elementary School my whole career, and was lucky to find a place that I could call “home” for that long. My own two children went to Onate. I retired in 2017 and now I am enjoying my retirement.

John Johnson

I have lived in Albuquerque most



of my life since 1957. I taught for 18 years in Albuquerque Public Schools. I taught 5th grade which included all subjects. A special memory from my teaching days was when my 1994-1995 5th grade class organized a party at the gym several years after they left my school. Sixteen of the students attended, and they were still the same kind, caring people I remembered. It was like magic.

Carol Jenkins

I have lived in Albuquerque for 64 years. I was a teacher for 39 years total. I taught preschool through 4th grade, but most of my teaching was in kindergarten. I taught kindergarten for 29 years and loved it. My special memory is working with children in their “Squiggle Books.” I loved to see their creations and hear their stories.

I especially enjoyed their “invented” spelling as they learned to spell and write their own stories.

Carol Johnson

I was born in Albuquerque and have lived here most of my life.

I taught elementary school for 27 years. The majority of the years were as a 2nd grade teacher, but I also taught kindergarten and 1st grade. I taught all the subjects.

I loved the smiles and hugs of the students. I enjoyed helping them learn and accomplish new things.

Now that I am retired, the smiles and hugs come from my four grandchildren.

I love spending time with them and watching them learn new things. I am blessed to have them in my life!



The Winners

Here are this year's winners of the 2024
A Senior I Know essay contest.

GRADE 01

2024
A Senior I Know Essay Contest

Name: Juniper Brown
Grade: 1 Age: 7 M or F: F
Teacher: Lisa Sebastian
School: Menard Day School

The senior citizen
I know is my
grandma. When I'm
with her we set
up tea party's
together. Then we
make cupcake's.
And then we



Timothy M. Keller, Mayor

Scott Elder, Superintendent

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Above: Juniper Brown
TEACHER: MS. SEBASTIAN

2024
A Senior I Know Essay Contest

Names: Juniper Brown
Grade: 1 Age 7 M or F
Teacher: Lisa Sebastian
School: Menando Day School

pretend to be
fancy people and
go to our tea
party. Then we have
a pleasant conversation.
Next we say goodbye,
Last we leave.
The end!



Timothy M. Keller, Mayor

Scott Elder, Superintendent

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Above: Juniper Brown (Continued)
TEACHER: MS. SEBASTIAN



2024
A Senior I Know Essay Contest

Name: Colten Heiny
Grade 1st Age 7 M or F
Teacher Donna Berardinelli
School: Sandia Base Elementary

My
Title: Senior I Know



Above: Colten Heiny
TEACHER: MS. BERARDINELLI

2024
A Senior I Know Essay Contest

Name: Colten Heiny
Grade 1st Age 7 M. or F.
Teacher Donna Berardinelli
School: Sandia Base Elementary

Title: My Senior I Know
My senior citizen's name is Rodolfo Reyes Jr. and he is my grandpa. He was born in Elgin Illinois in 1960. My grandpa has been married 45 years and has 5 children and 25 grandkids. He lives in Minnesota and I love to visit him. My favorite thing to do with my grandpa is play bingo because I get to spend time with him. My grandpa is the best! I love my grandpa.



Timothy M. Keller, Mayor



Scott Elder, Superintendent

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Above: Colten Heiny (Continued)
TEACHER: MS. BERARDINELLI

2024
A Senior I Know Essay Contest

Name: Ethan Johnson
Grade 1st Age 7 MX or F
Teacher Ms. Lucero
School: Holy Ghost Catholic School

Title: MY Grandma

A Senior I know is my Grandma
MY Grandma is so nice if we do
something good she will take us to
the zoo. At the zoo we see
reptiles and penguins. Then we get
ice cream and a special snack.
After, my grandma takes us home
and we will watch T.V together
sometimes my grandma takes me to
the movies. We even get to go to
olive garden or the jump park.
my Grandma is the best!



Timothy M. Keller, Mayor



Scott Elder, Superintendent

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Above: Ethan Johnson
TEACHER: MS. LUCERO

2024
A Senior I Know Essay Contest

Name: Ethan Johnson
Grade 1st Age 7 M X or F
Teacher Ms. Lucero
School: Holy Ghost

Title: Penguins at the Zoo
with Grandma



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Scott Elder, Superintendent

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Above: Ethan Johnson (Continued)
TEACHER: MS. LUCERO

2024
A SENIOR I KNOW ESSAY CONTEST

Name: Annie Luan
Grade: First 1st
Age: _____
Gender: Female
Teacher: Ms. Jennifer Findell
School: Manzano Day School

My special senior citizen is my
Grandma. My Grandma is so special
because she is loving and kind.
My Grandma is loving and kind
because she some times cookes
yummy food. I get to talk to her
on the phone because she
lives in China!

Above: Annie Luan
TEACHER: MS. FINDELL

2024
A Senior I Know Essay Contest

Name: Isabella Montano
Grade 1st Age 7 M. or F.
Teacher Donna Berardinelli
School: Sandia Base Elementary

Title: My Senior I Know
My senior citizen's name
is Pegina Silva and she is
my grandma. She was born
in 1962 in Albuquerque
which was a long time ago.
She has been married 17 years
and has 4 children. My grandma
and I like to go fishing
together. My first time fishing was
special because I caught a big
fish with my grandma. I also like
to have pillow fights with her.
She is so fun! I love my grandma.



Timothy M. Keller, Mayor



Scott Elder, Superintendent

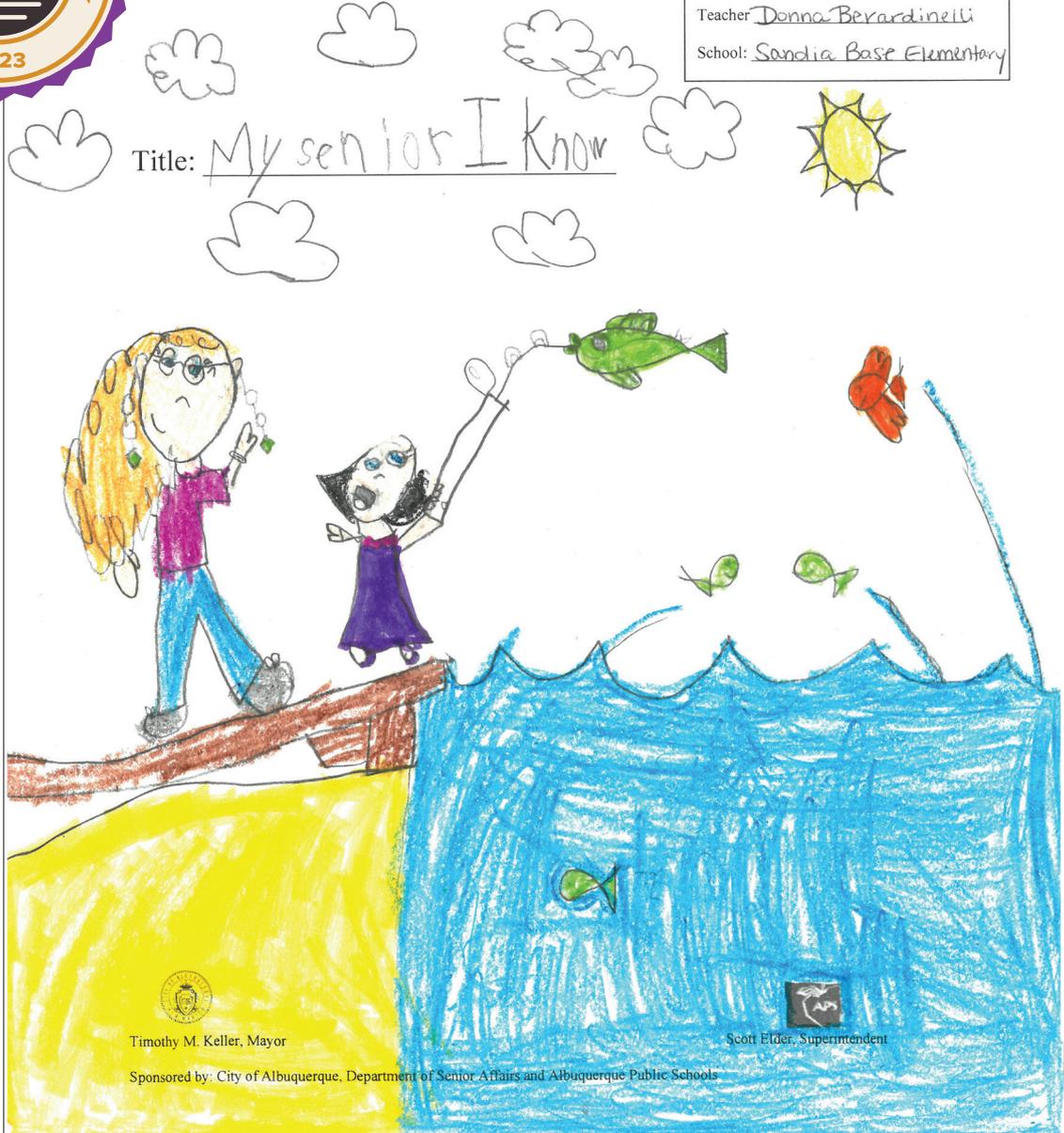
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Above: Isabella Montano
TEACHER: MS. BERARDINELLI



2024
A Senior I Know Essay Contest

Name: Isabella Montano
Grade: 1st Age: 7 M_ or F_
Teacher: Donna Berardinelli
School: Sandia Base Elementary



Above: Isabella Montano (Continued)
TEACHER: MS. BERARDINELLI

2024
A Senior I Know Essay Contest

Name: Henry Tolbert
Grade 1 Age 7 M or F
Teacher Lisa Sebastian
School: Mangano Day School

When I have a sleep
over at Mimi's house
we stay up till 8 or 9
o'clock. When we watch a
movie Mimi covers me
in a blanket. In the morning
we make french toast.
And we both like art.



Timothy M. Keller, Mayor

Scott Elder, Superintendent

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Above: Henry Tolbert (Continued)
TEACHER: MS. SEBASTIAN

2024
A Senior I Know Essay Contest

Name: Henry Tolbert
Grade 1 Age 7 M or F
Teacher: Lisa Sebastian
School: Margaret Day School

Title: _____

She likes to take
me to a museum. After
we go to lunch at
Panara.



Timothy M. Keller, Mayor

Scott Elder, Superintendent

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Above: Henry Tolbert (Continued)
TEACHER: MS. SEBASTIAN

GRADE 02

2024 A Senior I Know Essay Contest

Name: Michael Butler.Grade 2 Age 10 M X or F Teacher Mrs. SmithSchool: Sandia Base Elementary

Title: My Loving Grama

My favorite senior citizen is my Grama. Me and my sister call her Grama. Grama was born on July 2, 1967 in Bronx, New York. Grama's father was Tom, and her mother was Joan. My Grama had six siblings. There were three sisters and three brothers. My Grama's spouses name is Michael. My Grama has been married for 22 years. My Grama had two children. Their names are Michael and Daniel. My Grama is fun because she takes me places. My Grama's hobbies are sewing and building furniture because she likes to fix things. My grama like traveling and driving places. She likes playing games. My Grama's occupation is retired which gives her freedom to do whatever she wants. She can go see family whenever she wants. My Grama's most memorable event is getting married and the birth of her children. I chose my senior citizen because she loves me and she is very sweet.



Timothy M. Keller, Mayor



Scott Elder, Superintendent

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Above: Michael Butler
TEACHER: MRS. SMITH

2024
A Senior I Know Essay Contest

Name: Alma Chavez
Grade 2nd Age 8 M or F
Teacher Miss Kirsten Wiener
School: N.S. La Conquistadora Academy

Title: Grandpa

My grandpa was born on August 28, 1952 in Chihuahua, Mexico. He has eight siblings. Some times when he was eight he had to sit under the donkey to keep dry when it was raining. He would go to the mountains and pray and when he was done praying he would find money and then go to the store and buy candy. He would drink milk from the cows. His favorite colors are yellow and blue. His favorite food is red chili with pork. His favorite animal is a horse. He has been doing stucco for over 50 years. He has eight kids. He came from Mexico and went to a place were he was working and made alot of money and he was so happy he said God blessed him. He has been to Silver City and Rio Daso and Las Vegas. He goes camping with us in the woods. My grandpa would go to the shed with me and get me a coke. My grandpa wants me to obey my parents and to be a good girl. I love my grandpa because he gives me tamales and he is a great cook. He is the best.



Timothy M. Keller, Mayor



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Above: Alma Chavez
TEACHER: MS. WIENER

2024
A Senior I Know Essay Contest

Name: Alma Chavez
Grade 2nd Age 8 M_ or F
Teacher Miss Kirsten Wiener
School: N.S. La Conquistadora Academy

Title: Grandpa



Timothy M. Keller, Mayor

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Above: Alma Chavez (Continued)
TEACHER: MS. WIENER

2024
A Senior I Know Essay Contest

Name: Amelia Mares
Grade 2 Age 7 M_ or F ✓
Teacher: Mrs. Kowalski
School: Sandia Base

Title: My grandma
The Senior I know is my grandma because she always visits me and some times she will bring me a present. Her name is Maria Lara. Maria Lara was born in March 24, 1972 in TEXAS. She has two brothers and three sisters. Victor and Yolanda Gonzalez are her parents. Her occupation is a front office coordinator and she likes that she gets to interact with people. She loves to ride her bike because she loves to be outdoors and stay active. Mexico is her favorite place to visit because of the delicious food. Her favorite food is chile. My grandma's most memorable event was the birth of her four children. The



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Scott Elder, Superintendent

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Above: Amelia Mares
TEACHER: MRS. KOWALSKI

2024
A Senior I Know Essay Contest

Name: Amelia Mares
Grade 2 Age 7 M or F
Teacher Mrs. Kowalski
School: Sandia Base

Title:

Joy she felt was
inpeccable every time.
That sounds amazing! This
is the senior I know!



Timothy M. Keller, Mayor



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Above: Amelia Mares (Continued)
TEACHER: MRS. KOWALSKI

2024
A Senior I Know Essay Contest

Name: Zoya Rana
Grade 2nd Age 8 M. or F. F
Teacher Mrs. Ortega
School: Manzano Day School

Title: My Wonderful Grandma

A Senior citizen I know is my grandma. My grandma is very special to me. She owns a hospital right next to her house, called the Rana Hospital. My grandma's last name is Rana and so is my dad's. My dad passed it on to me and my brother. The story about my grandma is that a long time ago in 1947 when India and Pakistan got their independence, my grandma along with her family were part of the biggest migration in world history, which included killings and riots. About half of her older family including two of her older sisters were killed. My grandma and her parents got separated and it took days for them to reunite from being homeless in this situation as a seven year old kid. My grandma worked hard to fight barriers. Then my grandma went to medical school and became a doctor. I actually call my grandma 'Dad'. My grandma is now 85 years old. She now lives in a pretty big house in Pakistan and people go to her hospital all the time. Some homeless people go there and my grandma treats the homeless people for free. My grandma is wonderful! She is my role model.


Timothy M. Keller, Mayor

Scott Elder, Superintendent

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Above: Zoya Rana
TEACHER: MRS. ORTEGA

2024
A Senior I Know Essay Contest

Name: Zoya
Grade 2 Age 8 M_ or F_
Teacher mrs. ortega
School: Manzano Day School

Title: My wonderful grandma



Above: Zoya Rana (Continued)
TEACHER: MRS. ORTEGA

2024
A Senior I Know Essay Contest

Name: Eros Soto
Grade 2 Age 8 M or F
Teacher Gretta Valenzuela
School: Holy Ghost Catholic School

Title: LIZ,
First, she likes to wakeboard and likes the lake. Second, she likes to sew and makes blankets for me and my cousins to. Third, she was born in Silver City and she is 65. Fourth, she goes to all my games and cheers loud for me. Fifth, she also makes all my birthday cakes for me and my cousins. Sixth, she is always happy and nice and a little bit loud. Seventh, she goes to church every Sunday. Eighth, she likes to do board games with me and my sister. Ninth, she likes to do puzzles also. Tenth, she is funny and laughs hard when she laugh. Eleventh, she likes to play frisbee and likes to watch my games.



Timothy M. Keller, Mayor



Scott Elder, Superintendent

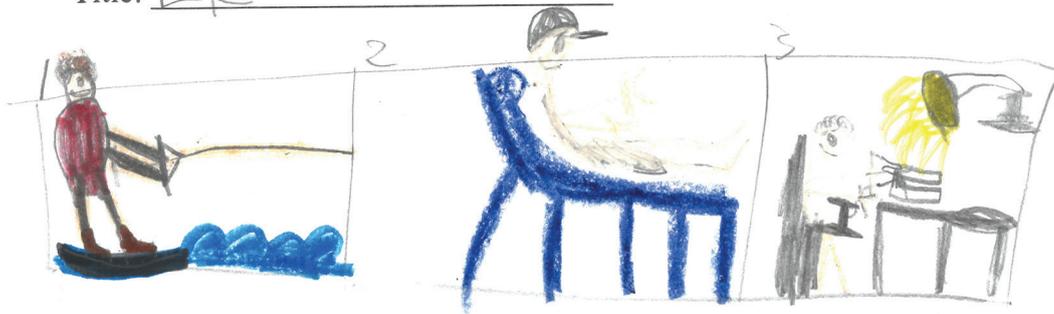
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Above: Eros Soto
TEACHER: MS. VALENZUELA

2024
A Senior I Know Essay Contest

Name: Eros Soto
Grade: 2 Age: 8 M X or F
Teacher: Gretta Valenzuela
School: Holy Ghost Catholic School

Title: Liz



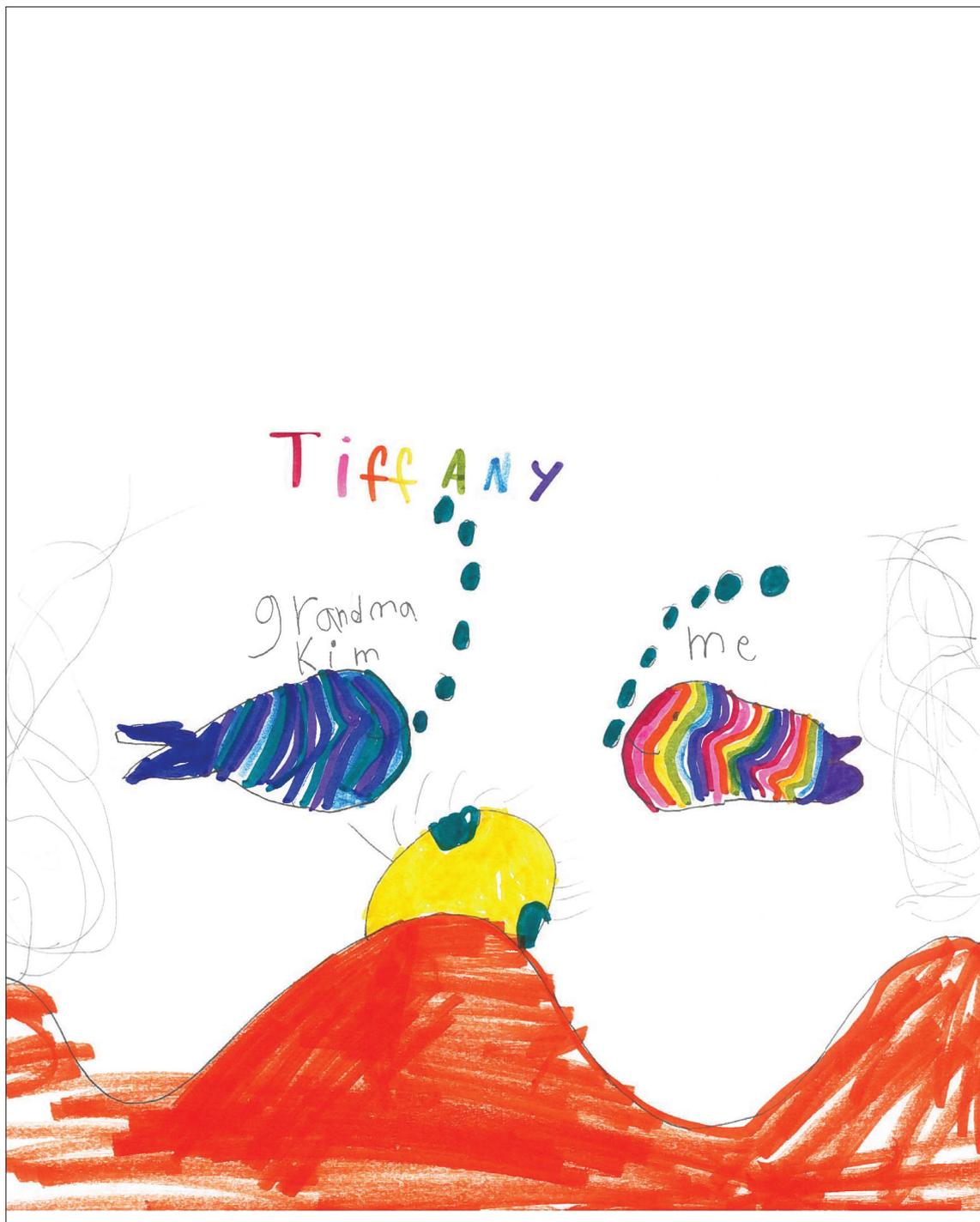
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Above: Eros Soto (Continued)
TEACHER: MS. VALENZUELA



Above: Tiffany Vuong
TEACHER: N/A

2024
A Senior I Know Essay Contest

Name: Matthew Willis
 Grade 2 Age 8 M or F
 Teacher Miss Swoboda
 School: Shepherd Luth.

Title: Grandma's Life of Wonder.

once upon a time there was a grandma. She was born in October. She only had 3 channels on tv and no video games. Instead, she played fun games outside with her siblings. Her dad was a marine. She grew up in California. She learned a lot about the ocean and the animals that live in it. She loves to bake. She learned to bake pies, cookies, cobblers, and cakes. She also learned to play the piano.

When she grew up she married my grandpa. They had four kids. She went to college to become a nurse. I love my grandma because she lets me bake with her. She does funny things and plays tricks on me. She gives the best snuggs. That's why I'm glad to have my grandma.



Richard J. Berry, Mayor



Raquel Reedy, Acting Superintendent

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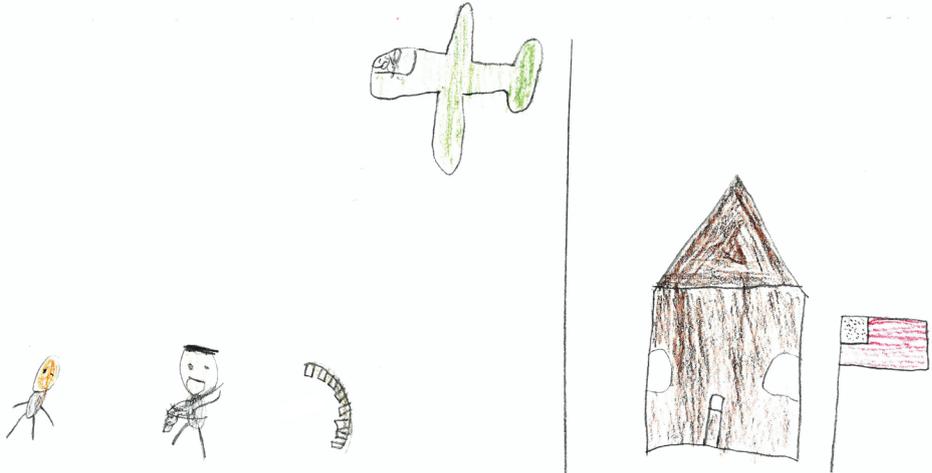
Above: Matthew Willis
 TEACHER: MS. SWOBODA

GRADE 03

2024
A Senior I Know Essay Contest

Name: Gilbert Baca
Grade 3rd Age 8 M/F
Teacher Mrs. Monessa Valenzuela
School: N.S. La Conquistadora Academy

Title: My Grandpa's Story



Timothy M. Keller, Mayor



Scott Elder, Superintendent

Sponsored by: City of Albuquerque, Department of Senior Affairs and Albuquerque Public Schools

Above: Gilbert Baca
TEACHER: MRS. VALENZUELA

2024
A Senior I Know Essay Contest

Name: Gilbert Baca
 Grade 3rd Age 8 M/ or F
 Teacher Mrs. Morena Valenzuela
 School: N.S. La Conquistadora Academy

Title: My Grandpa's Story

My grandpa is the favorite of all. His name is Johnny Phillip Madrid Jr. His birthday is August 19, 1942. He is 81 years old. He is a very nice man. When my grandpa was young, he liked horses. One time when he was too young to get up on the horse, his uncle tried to get him up on the horse. His uncle slipped and fell to the ground. My grandpa fell on top of his uncle. Then they looked at each other and started laughing.

My grandpa was in the Army and was an infantry and a missile man. He did two tours in Korea in the Demilitarized Zone. While in the military my grandfather traveled many places: Korea, Cambodia, Germany, Spain, France, Holland, New York, Minnesota, California. He crossed the Pacific Ocean twice, crossed the Atlantic Ocean, crossed the English Channel, and crossed the Indian Ocean three times. He also traveled to Japan three times and Australia once. My grandfather was a well traveled man. My grandpa was a steel worker and worked at a high school. He did JAS which means in school suspension. My grandpa has five children. He has three sons and two



Timothy M. Keller, Mayor



Scott Elder, Superintendent

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Above: Gilbert Baca (Continued)

TEACHER: MRS. VALENZUELA

2024
A Senior I Know Essay Contest

Name: Laing
Grade 3 Age 9 M/ or F/
Teacher: Miss Brock
School: Shepherd Lutheran School

Title: About Great Grandma moon baby

My dad calls her grandma moon baby because of a song she sang to him. My great grandmas real name is Nellie Elizabeth Diesel. Her age is 91 and she was born in Sedgewickville Missouri. She is one of 8 kids that was raised on a farm. They grew and raised all the road and all the animals for the family. They sewed and knitted all their clothes. She got her first ready made dress at the age of 13 and she got pneumonia at 13. She learned how to drive in a one ton truck with no brakes.

She was married at 16 and had 4 kids at age 21. Her husband became 100% disabled and they moved to New Mexico for his health in 1970. He died in 1990. She remarried in 2004 and he died in 2012. She loves to play with her grand kids and great grand kids. She goes to church every Sunday. She has fun when her family is around. We love our great grandma moon baby.



Richard J. Berry, Mayor



Raquel Reedy, Acting Superintendent

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Above: Laing Diesel

TEACHER: Ms. Brock

2024
A Senior I Know Essay Contest

Name: Tatiana Griego
Grade 3rd Age 9 M_ or FX
Teacher Mrs. Monessa Valenzuela
School: N.S. La Conquistadora Academy

Title: Baila! Baila!



Timothy M. Keller, Mayor

Scott Elder, Superintendent

Sponsored by: City of Albuquerque, Department of Senior Affairs and Albuquerque Public Schools

Above: Tatiana Griego
TEACHER: MRS. VALENZUELA

2024
A Senior I Know Essay Contest

Name: Tatiana Griego
 Grade 3rd Age 9 M_ or FX
 Teacher Mrs. Monessa Valenzuela
 School: N.S. La Conquistador Academy

Title: Baila! Baila!

Have you ever seen a dance in Old Town with colorful skirts swirling? If you have, it is probably Baila! Baila! I am writing about an impressive lady. Her name is Israella Garcia. She founded Baila! Baila! I met her when I started dance about two years ago.

She is the eighth out of 12 children! When she was little, in the evenings, her dad used to tell her stories when he was watering the trees. Her favorite was a story about the "Blue Star". She said, "I want to go to the "Blue Star" and her dad said "No, you can't go because if you do go you'll never be able to come back."

Miss Israella's favorite color is blue. Her favorite food is enchiladas. Her hobbies are sewing, singing, and cooking.

Miss Israella has two children. During her life she owned three businesses. The first one she owned was a restaurant. Then it was an exercise place. Finally, she started the dance studio she owns now. It's been open for 35 years!

My Senior helps the city become more beautiful. This is because she started Baila! Baila! The dancers dance beautiful dances in Old Town, at church fiestas, at the Balloon Fiesta and many more places.

Miss Israella has traveled lots of places with dancers. They have even danced in Hawaii, Mexico, London, Japan, and all around the world. I wish everybody knew a lady like that!



Timothy M. Keller, Mayor



Scott Elder, Superintendent

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Above: Tatiana Griego (Continued)

TEACHER: MRS. VALENZUELA

2024
A Senior I Know Essay Contest

Name: Leann Mai
 Grade 3rd Age 8 M or F
 Teacher Mrs. McCallon
 School: SY Jackson

Title: A Senior I Know Is...

A senior I know is my grandma. I love to write about her because she is kind, loving, and willing to help others when needed. She is 60 years old. Her birthday is in July. She lives in an apartment with my grandpa and my uncle. She was born in Vietnam, and of course, she speaks Vietnamese. She used to own a business where she sold food for cows. She cooks awesome food. You would be amazed by how good her food is. She is learning how to speak English, and we like to help her. She works at Wendy's, and when we are in a rush on a busy day or can't decide on what to eat, we go there. She makes the to-go for us and we are grateful! She always hugs us and loves us. Her real name is Nhung, Nguyen. She brings joy to everyone!

My grandma is wonderful!
How about yours?



Timothy M. Keller, Mayor



Scott Elder, Superintendent

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Above: Leann Mai
 TEACHER: MRS. MCCALLON

2024
A Senior I Know Essay Contest

Name: Esther
Grade 3rd Age 9 M or F
Teacher Ms. Anne
School: Montessori 1

Title: My Great Grandpa

My great grandpa is awesome!
I am pretty sure that he is somewhere
around or in between 80 and 90.
He is one of my most favorite family
members to hug. He is the record
oldest in my family. He is the master
at dominos! He taught me how
around when I was 6, 7 or 8.
He has a cute dog. Her name is Ruby,
I think she is 4 or 5. His favorite football
players are the cowboys. At his house
I learned how to play the card game
golf. My aunt taught me how at his
house. He has a really cozy house.
He also has a blow up football
cowboys player. He is always
super friendly. He has a
piano I can play. He also has
a backyard garage. He's working
on fixing it. And he has an
RV. I've been in it a few times.
He's so fun and awesome.



Timothy M. Keller, Mayor



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Above: Esther Penner
TEACHER: MS. ANNE

2024
A Senior I Know Essay Contest

Name: Samuel Sch
Grade 3 Age 8 M or F
Teacher Mrs. Smith
School: Sy Jaxson

Title: My Best Friend

Mrs. Roxanne Lind is my very good friend also. She is my baby sister but I call her my friend. In my opinion she is very kind and thoughtful. She means more to me than anything (other than my mom and dad). She used to play with me a lot. Sometimes she would fill a baby pod and watch us play. It was so fun. I have had many sleepovers at her house. They are really fun. We would watch movies and take walks to see her neighbors holiday decorations. She says that she is going to retire in 2024 because she wants to spend more time with her Great-Granddaughter Raily, but she says we can still visit. Once when I did not go to school my parents would take me to Mrs. Roxannes house. I would play with my friends: Parker Gabaldon & Jace and Lyra Van Ness. They are good friends. Parker goes to the school I go to.



Timothy M. Keller, Mayor



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Above: Samuel Schmehi
TEACHER: MRS. SMITH

GRADE 04



Above: Xavier Aguiniga
TEACHER: N/A

2023 A Senior I Know Essay Contest

Name: Emily Connors
 Grade 4 Age 10 M or FV
 Teacher Mrs. Martin
 School: Sandia Base

Title: My Wonderful Nana: An Essay

My Nana is one of the best and bravest seniors in the world. Her name is Zsuzsanna which is a Hungarian name, in English it means Susan. She was born in a small town in Hungary called Rábatótfalu.

Nana fled to America in the 1950's when she was just 12 years old. Before fleeing Hungary, she remembers being forced to wear a red scarf to school to mark herself as Hungarian, this was because her country was under Russian rule. Nana told me that students were forced to learn Russian in school but she refused in protest. These are just some of the reasons I think my Nana is so brave.

Since Nana is an elder, she has lots of advice for the younger generations. She always tells us that kids should go outside more and spend as much time as they can with family instead of playing video games. She said her favorite holiday is any holiday that she gets to spend with me and my brothers because she loves us and is proud of us for all we have done so far in life. One funny memory I have with Nana is when I saw her and we were both wearing the same sweater! We laughed about it and I hugged her.

Nana loves to watch golden-age Hollywood movies, which is one of the reasons I think she is so cool. Nana still wants to travel all over the world and explore new places. She thinks that one of the advantages of being a senior citizen is that she gets discounts at lots of stores, other than that she said there aren't many advantages.

All in all, I've learned a lot from my Nana. I respect her because she is my elder and love her very much. She is one of the most important people in my life and my favorite senior in the world. I imagine meeting her would be like meeting Taylor Swift because she is just that spectacular!



Timothy M. Keller, Mayor



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Above: Emily Connors
 TEACHER: MRS. MARTIN

2024
A Senior I Know Essay Contest

Name: Rosario Chavez
Grade 4th Age 10 M_ or F ✓
Teacher Mrs. Monessa Valenzuela
School: N.S. La Conquistadora Academy

Title: My Grandma's Story



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Above: Rosario Chavez
TEACHER: MRS. VALENZUELA

2024
A Senior I Know Essay Contest

Name: Rosario Chavez
 Grade 4th Age 10 M or F
 Teacher Mrs. Monessa Valenzuela
 School: N.S. La Conquistadora Academy

Title: My Grandma's Story

My senior is my Grandma. Her name is Patsy Marquez she was born on December 14, 1947. She had 7 children but 1 passed away. Tijiquee New Mexico was where my Grandma was born. She would love playing outside with his siblings.

My Grandma is very important to me because when my mom and dad go out to eat. She lets me help her make enchiladas. I love eating at the table with my Grandma. She also lets me sit in her bed and watch a cartoon which is really fun.

My Grandma's favorite color is purple. Her favorite animal is an elephant. Her favorite food is enchiladas. She loves making enchiladas especially for a holiday. She also always make mashed potatoes which she loves.

My Grandma told me this funny story. She said "One day me and my sister were playing in the snow. When we heard the wind, we started screaming. We ran to our dad, we were always afraid of the wind. We thought it would take us away. When the wind went away we would always go back outside and



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Above: Rosario Chavez (Continued)
TEACHER: MRS. VALENZUELA

2024
A Senior I Know Essay Contest

Name: Rosario Chavez
Grade 4th Age 10 M or F ✓
Teacher Mrs. Monessa Valenzuela
School: M.S. La Conquistadora
Academy

Title: My Grandma's Story
Make a snow angel.

She used to work at alot of jobs but her favorite was driving school buses. She loved driving kids to school. When they would misbehave she would say "You stop that! I'm going to tell your mom". Then they would always sit down. When the children would get to school, they would say "I'll be good next time Mrs. Marquez". Then she said, "I know you will".

My Grandma's favorite memories as a child were when she would sit next to the fire and eat peanuts. She would also love to play in the snow with her sisters. Now, my Grandma loves going on vacations. When someone would ask her "Do you want to go on a vacation?" she would always be packed and ready to go immediately.

My grandma is very special to me. I wish everyone could have a grandma like mine.



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Above: Rosario Chavez (Continued)
TEACHER: MRS. VALENZUELA

2024 A Senior I Know Essay Contest

Name: Molly Gonzales
 Grade 4~~th~~ Age 10 M or F
 Teacher Mrs. McCallon
 School: Sy Jackson
Elementary

Title: My Grammy

My Grammy is Victoria Doreen Gonzales. She is a huge inspiration to me. She does lots of art like drawing, painting, stained glass, theater, singing, and acting. You name it she'll do it and she doesn't care about what the world thinks about her. We share lots of the same interests and sometimes we do art together like painting, drawing, and singing. Yet only recently I learned that right after high school she got married and raised 5 kids. Only when she was 45 did she go to college. She got a degree in business administration. Getting a degree opened many opportunities for for her and she loves me very much! Even though she inspires me through her art she also taught me. though life may get busy, its never to late to get a good education.



Timothy M. Keller, Mayor



Scott Elder, Superintendent

Above: Molly Gonzalez
 TEACHER: MRS. MCCALLON

2024
A Senior I Know Essay Contest

Name: Tomás Griego
Grade 4th Age 10 M ✓ or F
Teacher Mrs. Moreessa Valenzuela
School: N.S. La Conquistadora Academy

Title: Mr. Madden



Above: Tomás Griego
TEACHER: MRS. VALENZUELA

2024
A Senior I Know Essay Contest

Name: Tomás Griego
Grade 4th Age 10 M or F
Teacher Mrs. Monessa Valenzuela
School: N.S. La Conquistadora Academy

Title: Mr. Madden

I know a very interesting person. His name is Mr. Madden. He is important to me because he helped me learn to serve Mass.

He was born on September 12 in Quincy, Illinois. He grew up in Illinois. When Mr. Madden was eleven, he and his brother were on a soccer team. His team was not expecting to win but they did win the championship. Besides sports, he liked fishing because he grew up on the Mississippi River.

Once he was at his family farm with his brother. They decided to walk around in the hog pen. One of the hogs was huge. It was about four feet tall. That big hog decided to chase them. Mr. Madden said it scared the daylights out of him! He said he never ran faster in his life.

When he grew up, he went to school and studied



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Above: Tomás Griego (Continued)

TEACHER: MRS. VALENZUELA

2024
A Senior I Know Essay Contest

Name: Tomás Griego
Grade 4th Age 10 M or F
Teacher Mrs. Mercedes Valenzuela
School: N.S. La Conquistadora Academy

Title: Mr. Madden (cont.)

aeronautical and astronautical engineering. He says it has to do with spacecraft and aircraft. He now works with high energy lasers.

He has lived in Albuquerque since 1997. He likes it here for a lot of reasons. One big reason is the green hills.

Mr. Madden is very interesting. He traveled all over the United States. He even traveled to China, Russia, Britain, Czech Republic, France, Holland, Mexico and several other countries.

Here is some good advice Mr. Madden gave me: "Everything you do, keep praying. The prayers will help you along!" I am happy that I know Mr. Madden and that he helps me with serving Mass. I am thankful that I know him!



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Above: Tomás Griego (Continued)
TEACHER: MRS. VALENZUELA

**2024
A Senior I Know Essay Contest**

Name: Gideon
 Grade: 4th Age: 9 1/2 M, Y or F:
 Teacher: Amina Dunn
 School: WVCCS

Teacher Amina Dunn

Title: Gilbert Eniegos Is my grandpa
My grandpa is the P.E. teacher at WVCCS
depot. He encourages students to try new
things and to reach new goals. He claps for
them. He expects good behavior from all the
students at his school. He is my teacher so he
treats me like a student at school.

As my grandpa he is so nice. He has toys
for my sister and me at home. I had a
birthday party at his house. He ordered a Bouncy
Castle. He got me the one thing I wanted for
Christmas - a skateboard.

I go with him to games and to the park.
He expects me to use Manners and be
kind and not be selfish. He tells me to be
grateful and nice and thank people. My
grandpa always expects the best from me.

I don't always want to try new things.
He encourages me. at f-ball and soccer
practice he records and claps for me.



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Above: Gideon Lagoda
 TEACHER: MS. DUNN

2023
A Senior I Know Essay Contest

Name: Orion Solano
Grade 4 Age 9 M or F
Teacher Mrs. Martin
School: Sandia Base

Title: My Very Interesting Nana!

My Grandma is so interesting and super nice. She was born in Las Vegas in 1960 and her name is Janet. Her parents used that name because it was easy to spell but I still call her my Gram Grams because I like how it sounds. I can't wait to tell you all about how great my Gram Gram is!

My grandma is a wonderful person. One reason I love her is because she tells funny jokes. I think she got that from me because I'm like a clown! She told me to try new things and work hard, also get smart and don't have bad friends. I will try my best to follow grandma's advice because I think it will help me have a good life in the future.

When she was younger, she used to play with her friends, they would ride bikes, play games and have water fights! Grandma says that these are some of her best memories from when she was younger. Grandma told me that her parents were strict. She and her sister had to do lots of chores, they had to clean the backyard together and had no option. But she said they got it done together as a family. When she was done doing chores, she had a toy she liked to play with, it was called the clackers. It had plastic balls on it that when they hit together, they made a clack like sound. Her other favorite toy was a jump rope. She said she liked it so much because if she was alone, she could play with it, or if she was with friends she could play with it too, so really it was nice to have around.

One funny memory Gram Gram remembers is when she was playing tag with her sister. I think she took too hard of a turn and fell in a ditch and rolled down the hill into lots of mud! Her happy memory was that she played hide and seek. The hiders were her and her sister and the seeker were their twin dog's! Unfortunately, her sad memory was that her dog passed away from a virus. This is what my grandma did during her childhood and tells me what I should do in my life.



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Above: Orion Solano
TEACHER: MRS. MARTIN

2023
A Senior I Know Essay Contest

Name: Orion
Grade ____ Age ____ M__ or F__
Teacher _____
School: _____

In summary, my grandma is awesome! I don't see her all the time but that does not mean I don't love her. You should really meet her, she is kind, funny and wonderful. She also had one of the most interesting childhoods I've ever heard of! I hope we can make lots more good memories together.



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Above: Orion Solano (Continued)
TEACHER: MRS. MARTIN

GRADE 05

2024 A Senior I Know Essay Contest

Name: Chance Benton
 Grade 5th Age 11 M, X or F
 Teacher Mr. Chacon
 School: Holy Ghost Catholic School

Title: My Grandma

My grandma's name is Connie Gonzales. She was born on August 26, 1953 in NM. Me and my grandma live right next to each other by a dirt road and she loves it there.

My grandma has lots of interesting things about her. My grandma has 2 sons, 1 daughter, 5 grandkids, and 1 great grandson. She comes from a really big family. My grandma worked when she was 15 until she graduated college when she was 21. Then she worked until she was 65. When she was younger she really loved school. She also likes to clean the house and work in the backyard.

My grandma impacted my life by teaching me to save my money and to help people. My grandma told me it doesn't matter how old you are, you can still do anything. She told me how to be when you have a big family and lots of problems. She taught me how to handle that.



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Above: Chance Benton
 TEACHER: MR. CHACON

2024
A Senior I Know Essay Contest

Name: <u>Pierson David Gambill</u>
Grade <u>5</u> Age <u>10</u> M <u>X</u> or F <u> </u>
Teacher <u>Mrs. Smith</u>
School: <u>S.Y. Jackson Elementary</u>

Title: My Uncle Mike, A Brief History

My Senior I Know essay is about my uncle, Michael (Mike) Gambill. He grew up in a small farming town called Vandalia, Ohio. Vandalia is on the plains but near the forest. Mike lived next to a cow pasture. Sometimes the cows would escape their pasture. He never knew how they escaped, but every time they did his mom would walk the cows - like walking a dog- all the way back to their farm.

Mike went to a Catholic elementary school named St. Christopher's and was taught by nuns. After he graduated elementary school, he went to the local high school, Vandalia Butler High. He started working as a teenager in the fields with the farmers, along with his younger brother Steve, to help his mom because his dad and mom broke up and the family needed extra money.

While he was in high school, Uncle Mike wanted to work at the annual Trap Shoot Tournament. Trap Shooting is where people shoot clay discs with shotguns. He needed to be at least 14 years old to work there. His younger brother Steve also wanted to work at the Trap Shoot, but Steve was too young. During Uncle Mike's interview, Uncle Steve came in and said he wanted to work too. The man asked Steve how old he was, and he lied and said he was two months younger than his brother. The man didn't know who to believe, but he knew that brothers had to be born at least nine months apart. The man sent them both away, so neither of them got the job that year.

After high school Uncle Mike graduated in business from the University of Arizona, and then worked hard to open a sales and marketing business, which sold everything from beef jerky to fire arms. He made remarkable progress and earned enough money to help support his family. Uncle Mike's favorite thing to do when he was younger was to go hiking in the forest. He would explore, hike, and forage all throughout the day and sometimes even after dark. He would come home only when he felt hungry and needed to shove some food in his mouth.

Thank you for listening to my Senior I Know essay about my Uncle Mike.



Timothy M. Keller, Mayor



Scott Elder, Superintendent

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Above: Pierson David Gambill
TEACHER: MRS. SMITH

2024 A Senior I Know Essay Contest

Name: Sydney HeinyGrade 5 Age 10 M_ or F xTeacher Mr Dietz & Mrs. HudsonSchool: Sandia Base Elementary

Title: My Grandma

The senior citizen I chose to interview is my grandma. Her name is Ida. She was born in Carrizo Springs Texas, on June 22, 1963.

As a kid, my grandma would play games with her siblings. Some of the games she would play were football, paddle ball, and marbles. My grandma's dad died very young. Her mom had to raise eight kids by herself! My grandma's mom never drove but always made sure that they made it to church, doctors appointments, and school. My grandma would always listen to her sister, so one night she snuck out with her sister, her sister told her to help her through the window. My grandma helped her through the window, but she hopped right into bed leaving my grandma outside. My grandma got caught by her mom and got in trouble.

My grandma's first job was babysitting. It paid three dollars an hour. She graduated high school even though she got married young. Looking back my grandma wishes she had known there was no rush to get married so early.

Growing into adulthood she gave birth to five kids: my mom, my two aunts, and my two uncles. She now has twenty-seven grandkids (including me). Some of her favorite memories with us are spending time in a cabin on the lake and making tortillas.

I love my grandma and spending time with her. She worked hard to be where she is today and she still does. This is why I chose to interview her, because she's hard working.



Timothy M. Keller, Mayor



Scott Elder, Superintendent

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Above: Sydney Heiny

TEACHER: MR. DIETZ & MRS. HUDSON

2024
A Senior I Know Essay Contest

Name: Kate Kesler
Grade 5 Age 10 M or F ✓
Teacher Mrs. Smith
School: S.Y. Jackson

Title: A Senior I Know

My grandma is one of the most amazing people I know. There are many things that I admire about her; she loves reading, she takes care of her physical body, and is very kind.

My grandma and I love to read. When she reads a good book, she tells me about it, and I do the same. This is fun because my grandma likes to read as much as I do. My grandma has good ideas for books to read, and when she shares book ideas with me, that helps me have a wider selection of books to choose from. We sometimes talk about books, and that helps me connect with her more.

She and my grandpa are very active, physically. Even as they get older, they have been able to walk miles around Washington DC with my family, hike an icy trail of the Grand Canyon with us, go to the Balloon Fiesta and hike to the top of the Sandias. I want to be healthy, like them, so when I'm older I'll be able to be more like them.

My grandma's very kind. When I was almost eight, my siblings and I stayed at their house while my parents were on a trip. My parents got back right before my birthday. My grandma made me a loaf of bread. Just so you know, her bread is the best bread ever. Even though it's said all grandmas are kind, I think that my grandma goes well over and beyond that.

These experiences with my grandma makes me think that she's awesome, kind, and shares things in common with her, and that helps me connect to her more.



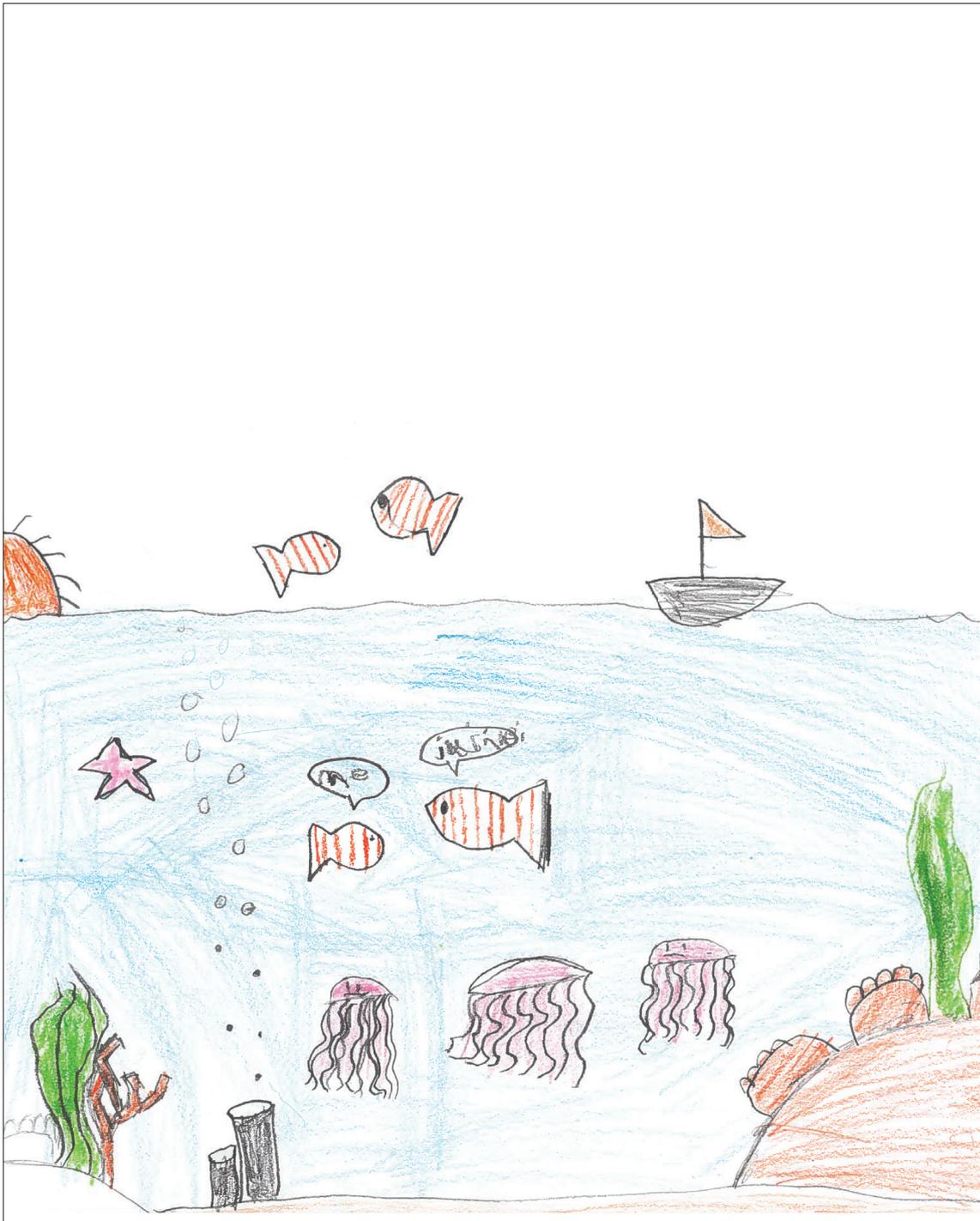
Timothy M. Keller, Mayor



Scott Elder, Superintendent

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Above: Kate Kesler
TEACHER: MRS. SMITH



Above: Teclo Munoz
TEACHER: N/A

2024
A Senior I Know Essay Contest

Name: Landon Luna Sanchez
Grade 5 Age 11 M x or F
Teacher: Mr. Dietz & Mrs. Hudson
School: Sandia Base Elementary

Title: My Amazing Senior

My Grandma, Paula was born in San Miguel, El Salvador, in October 1959. She lives in Orlando, Florida and works at Kennedy Space Center as a janitor.

When my Grandma was a kid she didn't have a lot of money and she had a lot of siblings growing up, but she still was happy and made the most of it. She looked up to her mother because she was a girl and she was a nice woman. My grandma's parents always worked hard to give my grandma food and a house and what impressed my grandma was that her parents never fought in front of her.

My grandma is a funny person. She is always making people laugh and she always talks about selling her house. She says stuff like, "I like my house but I want to sell it and get a house that is one story instead of two stories."

My grandma has a tradition that she does with us where on New Year's Eve at midnight we eat 12 grapes and then make 12 wishes for the New Year. When we're done we drink a glass of apple cider. My grandma likes seeing me and my sister. She says that she'll never forget when she first held me and any moment after that.

So, as you can see, my grandma is a happy and amazing person even though she has gone through stuff that was challenging.



Timothy M. Keller, Mayor



Scott Elder, Superintendent

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Above: Landon Luna Sanchez
TEACHER: MR. DIETZ & MRS. HUDSON

2024 A Senior I Know Essay Contest

Name: Annastin
 Grade 5 Age 11 M_ or F F
 Teacher Ms. Sam
 School: TMEMS

Title: My opa

When my Opa (grandpa in Dutch) was 5 years old, he moved to a very small dairy farm in Texas. Because they immigrated from the Netherlands, his family and anyone he knew didn't speak English. He was put in kindergarten and knew no English. No one was able to understand anything he said or educate him in any way, because it wasn't a popular language that anyone knew. My Opa couldn't understand or learn anything because he couldn't speak the same language as his teachers and peers. Because he couldn't communicate, he wasn't able to pass kindergarten several times in a row. He was forced to teach himself a language he didn't know anything about, while his teachers weren't able to help him either. This impacted him in so many ways as he grew up and continues to learn every day. Though my Opa was and IS very smart, he faced many challenges that will last forever. This simply was because he was unable to effectively communicate and understand what his school was trying to teach him.

His story has taught me the importance of the need and benefits of being independent and hard work. My Opa is very inspiring because he has worked his whole life doing manual labor, because that was the only way he could be successful while being so behind in education. He works hard every day but still finds time to learn and grow with me, the things he couldn't learn in school himself. My Opa may not be rich, he may not be famous, he may not have a degree, but he is my hero and has taught me things that aren't always in school books.



Timothy M. Keller, Mayor



Scott Elder, Superintendent

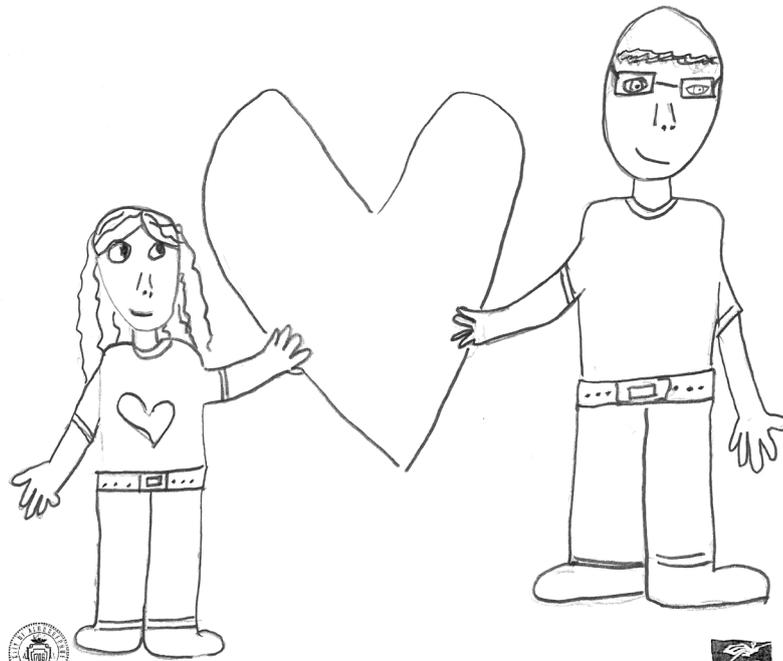
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Above: Annastin Singleton
 TEACHER: MS. SAM

2024
A Senior I Know Essay Contest

Name: Annastin
Grade 5 Age 11 M_ or F F
Teacher Ms. Sam
School: TMEMS

Title: OPA



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Scott Elder, Superintendent

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Above: Annastin Singleton (Continued)
TEACHER: THE MONTESSORI ELEMENTARY
AND MIDDLE SCHOOL (TMEMS)

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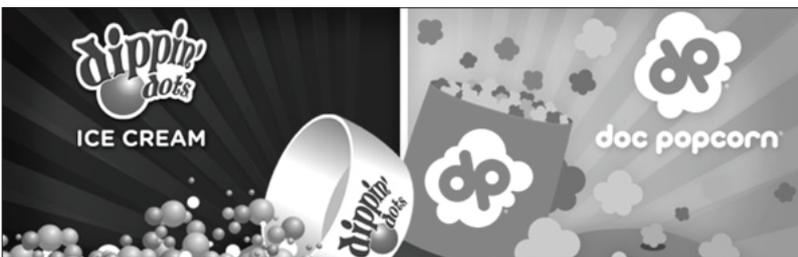
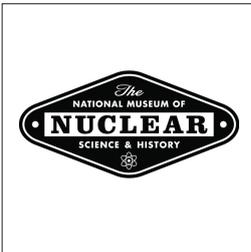
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**A Senior I Know Winner List
GRADE 1**

STUDENT	SCHOOL	TEACHER	PAGE
Juniper Brown	Manzano Day School	Ms. Sebastian	8-9
Colten Heiny	Sandia Base Elementary	Ms. Berardinelli	10-11
Ethan Johnson	Holy Ghost Catholic School	Ms. Lucero	12-13
Annie Luan	Manzano Day School	Ms. Findell	14
Isabella Montano	Sandia Base Elementary	Ms. Berardinelli	15-16
Henry Tolbert	Manzano Day School	Ms. Sebastian	17-18

GRADE 2

Michael Butler	Sandia Base Elementary	Mrs. Smith	19
Alma Chavez	La Conquistadora Academy	Ms. Wiener	20-21
Amelia Mares	Sandia Base Elementary	Mrs. Kowalski	22-23
Zoya Rana	Manzano Day School	Mrs. Ortega	24-25
Eros Soto	Holy Ghost Catholic School	Ms. Valenzuela	26-27
Matthew Willis	Shephard Lutheran Elementary	Ms. Swoboda	29

GRADE 3

Gilbert Baca	La Conquistadora Academy	Mrs. Valenzuela	30-32
Laing Diesel	Shephard Lutheran Elementary	Ms. Brock	33
Tatiana Griego	La Conquistadora Academy	Mrs. Valenzuela	34-36
Leann Mai	S. Y. Jackson Elementary	Mrs. McCallon	37
Esther Penner	Montessori ONE Academy	Ms. Anne	38
Samuel Schmehi	S. Y. Jackson Elementary	Mrs. Smith	39

GRADE 4

Emily Connors	Sandia Base Elementary	Mrs. Martin	41
Rosario Chavez	La Conquistadora Academy	Mrs. Valenzuela	42-44
Molly Gonzales	S. Y. Jackson Elementary	Mrs. McCallon	45

**A Senior I Know Winner List
GRADE 4 (CONTINUED)**

STUDENT	SCHOOL	TEACHER	PAGE
Tomás Griego	La Conquistadora Academy	Mrs. Valenzuela	46-48
Gideon Lagoda	Arroyo del Oso Elementary School	Ms. Dunn	49-50
Orion Solano	Sandia Base Elementary	Mrs. Martin	51-52

GRADE 5

Chance Benton	Holy Ghost Catholic School	Mr. Chacon	53
Pierson David Gambill	S. Y. Jackson Elementary	Mrs. Smith	54
Sydney Heiny	Sandia Base Elementary	Mr. Dietz \ Mrs. Hudson	55
Kate Kesler	S. Y. Jackson Elementary	Mrs. Smith	56
Landon Luna Sanchez	Sandia Base Elementary	Mr. Dietz \ Mrs. Hudson	58
Annastin Singleton	The Montessori Elementary and Middle School (TMEMS)	Ms. Sam	59-60

**Winners
FRONT AND BACK COVERS**

Isabella Montano	Sandia Base Elementary	Ms. Berardinelli	Front
Colten Heiny	Sandia Base Elementary	Ms. Berardinelli	Back

Other Featured Artists

Xavier Aguiniga	Manzano Mesa Elementary	N/A	40
Teclo Munoz	Manzano Mesa Elementary	N/A	57
Tiffany Vuong	Manzano Mesa Elementary	N/A	28



Colten Heiny
TEACHER: MS. BERARDINELLI
GRADE 01

CITY OF ALBUQUERQUE

2024 A Senior I Know Essay Contest Winners
Department of Senior Affairs

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