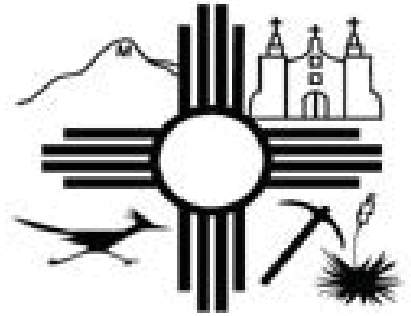


# City of Socorro

111 School of Mines Road  
Socorro, New Mexico 87801

Phone (575) 835-0240 www.socorronm.gov



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## Socorro's Summer Youth Employment

### Program: putting kids to work

Sixty of the city's youth are taking advantage of the 19th year of Socorro's Summer Youth Employment program. They're engaged in quite a diversity of tasks, from shelving books at the library to moving classrooms at Cottonwood Valley Charter School to doing general maintenance at a wildlife refuge.

The program started in 1992 with nearly 70 youth. That first year the City tried to put them all to work in City Hall. There were so many it seemed they spent the summer bumping into City workers and each other. The next year the City opened the program to any entity that needed temporary part time student help, with the City picking up the tab.

The National Radio Astronomy Observatory has been on board since the beginning, hiring from 2 to 7 students to work at the Very Large Array. The students ride the shuttle out to the Array every day and work in the warehouse or auto shop or for the safety program. Safety Officer James Sullivan acts as supervisor. One of the last tasks the students do for him each summer is to write their own letter of recommendation, stating the work they did and what skills the job required. Sullivan edits the letters and then signs and returns them so the students have a reference in hand when they apply for future jobs.

The program also has employee loyalty. Shannan Griego was one of the first students to work in the program. For two summers she worked at the concession stand at the City pool. Her last summer she worked at the library. Eventually she went to work for

the City as a fulltime employee and currently works as an administrative secretary in the gas department. Her daughter, Dezirae Armijo, is spending her first summer in the program working at the animal shelter.

Over the course of the years the program has gone through changes, working first with kids ages 14 to 20 and then youth from 16 to 19. At times there have been two summer sessions, but this summer there is one 6-week session and students work 20 hours a week. The City spends about \$60,000 a year on the program and usually place every student who applies.

City Clerk Pat Salome emphasizes that these are real jobs, not a social program or recreation. Youth who don't take the responsibility seriously can be fired, and their slots given to others who want to work. Employers are encouraged to help the students develop a good work ethic and give them a taste of "going to work every day." The \$1.5 million dollars the City has put into the program since 1992 seems like a lot of money, but spread out as minimum wage to 60-70 kids a summer, it's a good deal for students and employers alike.

"We've tried to keep up with it, it's money well spent," says Salome.

## Employee Anniversaries

**Lorenzo Alvarado**

**20 years**

### City Council

Mary Ann Chavez-Lopez

Nick Fleming

Gordy Hicks

Toby Jaramillo

Donald Monette

Michael Olguin, Jr.

Ernest Pargas, Jr.

Peter D. Romero

Ravi Bhasker, Mayor

Pat Salome, Clerk



Dezirae Armijo works at the animal shelter through Socorro's Summer Youth Employment Program.