



Rio Arriba Leadership Summit addresses challenges, opportunities

July 6, 2016

Two-dozen community leaders gathered on the seventh floor of the [Santa Claran Hotel](#) on June 27 for the second Rio Arriba Leadership Summit, hosted by the [Rio Arriba County Commission](#).

After a welcome and call to order by Commission Chair Alex Naranjo, the afternoon unfolded into a productive conversation about the opportunities and challenges facing businesses and organizations in and around [Rio Arriba County](#)—the 5,896 square-mile county that’s home to more than 40,000 people, including residents of the city of Española and many tribal nations.

Topics of the day included the forthcoming Food Hub initiative to bring healthy food to the Española area, new leadership training for community leaders, and the expansion of [Redi Net](#) across the region. “We need fiber in new areas,” said one participant. “Kids need good internet to compete in the world going forward.”

Los Alamos Executive Director Dave Lyons, Director Charlie McMillan, CPO Director Kathy Keith.

This message of better equipping—and educating—area youth was one voiced throughout the afternoon, particularly in relation to preparing students for possible work at Los Alamos National Laboratory. Kathy Keith, director of the Lab’s Community Partnerships Office, outlined a new program that will do exactly that:

Los Alamos’s proposed Community Internship Program, scheduled to launch in the spring of 2017, will provide paid internships to area students to work at local businesses. These students will also enroll in professional development courses, during which they will learn skills such as how to write a resume. “We think this is a win-win for everybody,” said Keith, noting that the program has already been operating successfully on a small-scale level in Los Alamos and Las Vegas, New Mexico. “Students might not be coming to work at the Laboratory tomorrow, but they’re getting the experience.”

Laboratory Director Charlie McMillan, who was the summit’s honored guest, agreed. “We need people who are well prepared,” he said after explaining that, currently, the Laboratory’s biggest challenge and its biggest opportunity are the same. “Many of our workforce is going to be retiring in the coming years,” he said. “This is an opportunity to build the Laboratory.”

Many community leaders responded to the internship program announcement with excitement and asked to be kept abreast of any developments.

In the final session of the afternoon, a student showcase, McMillan spoke about the value of a STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) education, explaining that during the life of a degree, a STEM degree is worth \$1 million more than a non-STEM degree—exciting news for the 20 kids from area schools who showed off their robots, electric cars, and business plans to the community leaders at the end of the day.

The student showcase at the Rio Arriba Leadership Summit on June 27.

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