

## EDUCATION BRIEFS

### Supreme Court to hear case in Albuquerque for educational program

**SANTA FE** — Students will have an opportunity to watch an oral argument on a case involving a public school when the state Supreme Court convenes in Albuquerque next month for a program to help young people learn about the law and courts.

The argument on April 29 at Central New Mexico Community College marks the fourth year of the Court's Rule of Law Program. The court will convene at 10 a.m. in CNM's Smith Brasher Hall. Students may attend in person or watch the proceedings virtually through a livestream. A Spanish translation of the livestream will be available.

"Our goal is to help students understand the role of the court system in resolving disputes and how our society functions within a framework of laws," said Justice David K. Thomson, who organized the program for civic education.

During the oral argument, attorneys will present their legal positions and respond to the justices' questions. After the argument, court members will deliberate privately while attorneys for each side of the case remain to answer students' questions. If the justices reach an agreement during their deliberations, the court will return to announce a decision.

The case before the court involves a lawsuit brought against Albuquerque Public Schools after a high school teacher called a Navajo student a "bloody Indian" during a

class in 2018 on Halloween. The student, McKenzie Johnson, was dressed in a costume and had fake blood on her cheek. The incident occurred after the teacher allegedly cut off part of the braided hair of another Native American student.

Johnson sued the school district in 2020, alleging violations of the New Mexico Human Rights Act, which prohibits discrimination by anyone in places of "public accommodation." A district court dismissed the lawsuit, concluding that the school district and the teacher were not public accommodations within the meaning of the law. The Human Rights Act defined public accommodation as "any establishment that provides or offers its services, facilities, accommodations or goods to the public, but does not include a bona fide private club or other place or establishment that is by its nature and use distinctively private."

The state Court of Appeals overturned the ruling last year, revived the lawsuit, and the school district appealed, asking the Supreme Court to resolve the legal dispute over whether public schools are subject to the Human Rights Act. Last year, the legislature changed the anti-discrimination law to apply to governmental entities. Still, the case before the Supreme Court involves the statutory provisions in effect when Johnson brought her legal claims.

"The presentation of the case will illustrate the approaches taken by courts to discern the meaning of a state statute and apply the law to particular factual situations," Thomson said. "The judicial process can

demonstrate for students that there are reasonable positions on both sides of an issue and the most effective method of resolving disputes is through civil discourse, careful deliberation, and adherence to the rule of law."

The Supreme Court Law Library has prepared materials for teachers and students that outline the issues in the case. Any school or class interested in attending the oral argument should contact Tamara Mitchell, [suptdm@nmcourts.gov](mailto:suptdm@nmcourts.gov), to learn more.

The case is *Johnson v. Board of Education for Albuquerque Public Schools*, et. al., S-1-SC-39961.

### Book grants available for Title I elementary schools in Native communities

**FARMINGTON** — Eve's Fund for Native American Health Initiatives has announced it now offers literacy grants to Title I elementary schools serving primarily Native American communities in Arizona, New Mexico, and Utah. The grants will fund the Magic Tree House and Merlin Mission books and their nonfiction Fact Tracker companion volumes.

Eve's Fund, in partnership with well-known children's

book author Mary Pope Osborne through her "Classroom Adventure Program," is encouraging schools to apply now, in time for them to launch the for the fall semester.

Each school will receive approximately 250 books in sets of 10 or more titles, chosen by its teachers based on its current curriculum focus and the students' needs. The sets contain 20 copies of each book (or additional copies if needed), so teachers have enough copies for every student in their class. The book series covers various engaging and educational subjects that can be incorporated into multiple curricula, including language and visual arts, STEM, social studies, history, nature, and the environment.

"What is unique about our program is that each child has his or her copy of every selected title as the class reads it together and discusses the story," said Helen Pino, the Eve's Fund literacy program liaison. She added, "Teachers in each school chosen for these grants also have access to free downloadable resources, including lesson plans, interactive quizzes, recommended reading levels, and curriculum subjects covered by each title."

Eve's Fund president Barbara Crowell Roy added, "The teach-

ers love watching their students improve their performance in reading and other academic subjects through these wonderful books. Best of all, the kids love the Magic Tree House series and are always eager to read the next title."

Eve's Fund has provided nearly 7,000 Magic Tree House books to 20 elementary schools in and around the Navajo Nation. Thanks to the ongoing partnership with Mary Pope Osborne's "Classroom Adventure Program" and with the generous support from the Friends of Eve's Fund, the program was recently expanded to include schools in other tribal communities.

Please write to Eve's Fund at [info@evcrowellsfund.org](mailto:info@evcrowellsfund.org) to apply for this literacy grant.

### New Mexico, Utah students selected for Daniels Scholarship Program

**DENVER** — The Daniels Fund announced its 2024 class of Daniels Scholarship Program recipients. Twenty-three New Mexico and 19 Utah high school seniors were selected as 2024 Daniels Scholars, among 209 students across New Mexico, Colorado, Utah, and Wyoming

who were accepted into the program.

Daniels Scholars may use their scholarship at any accredited nonprofit college or university anywhere in the United States. Daniels Scholars have their total cost of attendance covered at partner schools in New Mexico, Colorado, Utah, and Wyoming and up to \$100,000 over four years if they choose to attend a school outside the four-state region. Students are selected for their strength of character, leadership potential, commitment to serving the community, and academic potential. As the living legacy of Daniels Fund founder Bill Daniels, Daniels Scholars embody the values he most cherished.

"We are thrilled to support the educational aspirations of this tremendous group of young people," said Hanna Skandera, the Daniels Fund's president and CEO. "They represent the next generation of leaders, and we can't wait to see the amazing things they will accomplish with this opportunity."

With this year's announcement, more than 5,000 students have received the Daniels Scholarship. At any given time,

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"Book grants available for Title 1 elementary schools in Native communities," published in the Navajo Times on Thursday, March 28, 2024.

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