

Appleseed This Week

New Mexico Center Appoints New Executive Director

Joins Policymakers to Promote New Report in Santa Fe

January 23, 2009 - Appleseed proudly welcomes **Jennifer Ramo**, newly appointed executive director of **New Mexico Appleseed**, whose introduction fittingly coincides with yesterday's release of a powerful new report on the state's public education system.

An attorney and long-time public servant, Ramo has an impressive background in promoting social justice and equality for underserved communities. While employed at the White House Office of National Service, she helped to create AmeriCorps, a network of service programs that impel Americans to meet the nation's critical needs in education, public safety, health, and the environment. She was also awarded a fellowship in public affairs from Coro, an organization that shares Appleseed's commitment to civic engagement, and she has practiced law in both New York and Louisiana.

In her role as in-house counsel to a large cable television network, Ramo engaged in constitutional litigation on the role of cameras in the courtroom. She also won that network's public interest award for her service to 9/11 victims and their families. As a third generation New Mexican, her early focus will be on education reform and immigrant rights, two pressing needs throughout the state.

As one of her first engagements, Ramo joined a number of prominent policymakers on Jan. 22 at the Santa Fe Capitol Rotunda in support of New Mexico Appleseed's new report on parent involvement in education. Compiled after months of dedicated research, *Striving for the Best: New Mexico's Need to Strengthen Parent Involvement in Public Schools* includes four concrete recommendations by which to improve student achievement throughout the state.

Chief among these recommendations is increased funding to school districts in support of parent involvement programs. An abundance of research demonstrates that such programs, when effectively implemented, boost the performance of both students and schools, particularly in districts representing large populations of low-income and non-native-English-speaking families.



Presenters and special guests at the event included State Senator Cisco McSorley, the founding executive director of New Mexico Appleseed; New Mexico House Education Committee Chair Rick Miera; New Mexico State PTA President Angela Gonzalez-Carver; and the state's Assistant Secretary of Education Jim Holloway.

A number of influential education organizations also are throwing their support behind *Striving for the Best*. In a letter of endorsement, Larry Fuller, director of education programs at Parents Reaching Out, pledged his organization's cooperation in implementing Appleseed's recommendations. Meanwhile, Gonzalez-Carver also endorsed the report, stressing the need for parents to serve as "our children's first teachers."

The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) is anchored on the simple and well-documented concept that parent involvement is essential to the success of students. NCLB establishes state, district, and individual school requirements designed to promote a cooperative link between parents and the classroom.

"Enlisting parents' participation in their children's education is fundamental to achieving greater success in the classroom," said Appleseed Executive Director **Betsy Cavendish**. "Appleseed's work shows that higher levels of parental involvement allow students to get the most out of their schooling."

While increased funding is essential to helping school districts promote parental involvement, several other steps, identified in the report, are also imperative. Model programs, endorsed by and available from New Mexico's Public Education Department (PED), will facilitate the integration of parental involvement into the everyday life of a school. Likewise, more extensive collaboration with PTAs and other parent organizations, as well as the refinement of information provided to parents by the PED, will foster an environment in which students can reach higher levels of achievement.

Striving for the Best can be downloaded on the [publications page](#) of Appleseed's website.

For more information on Appleseed, visit www.appleseednetwork.org. To support the work of Appleseed, donate [here](#).

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