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WNMU PRESIDENT JOHN COUNTS REACTIVATES DISPLACED WORKERS ASSISTANCE TEAM

SILVER CITY, N.M. – Western New Mexico University President Dr. John Counts has reactivated the Displaced Workers Assistance Team (DWAT). Upon hearing the news of the impending reduction of workforce for Teleperformance, Counts called an exploratory, working meeting on the WNMU campus for university, and Teleperformance representatives, as well as local, regional, and state organizations to discuss the ways WNMU can render assistance to the workers facing possible displacement.

Sam Terry, Teleperformance's Human Resource representative, explained that Sprint, Teleperformance's client, was consolidating its call center sites which include two in Canada that have recently shut down. "Hopefully we can get another contract so that Teleperformance can continue serving our community," said Terry.

"It's important that Western New Mexico University leave no stone unturned in doing what it can to help Teleperformance and its employees," said Counts.

Attending the meeting were WNMU President Counts and members of his staff, Terry, State Senator Howie Morales, State Representative Rudy Martinez, as well as individuals from the Department of Workforce Solutions, New Mexico Economic Development Department, New Mexico Partnership, SW Workforce Development Board, the Southwest Council of Governments, Grant County, the Town of Silver City and Village of Santa Clara, and the Silver City-Grant County Chamber of Commerce.

The team of over twenty individuals met to discuss what opportunities are available for assisting Teleperformance. "It is critical to have the community involved to discuss these important issues facing our region and I am pleased with the great spirit of cooperation displayed by all the participants," said Counts.

Chamber of Commerce President Floyd Robertson and other community leaders expressed their gratitude towards Counts on his quick decision to call such a meeting. "I'm glad to see this meeting. I think we are a step ahead of staying away from some of the problems that have existed in the past. This is a good meeting," said Robertson. Mark Remington with the Department of Workforce Solutions echoed Robertson's comments. "I appreciate Dr. Counts how quickly you got this meeting going," he said.

He referred to the similar situation Grant County faced when Phelps Dodge and Stream International laid off workers in past years. The original Displaced Workers

Assistance Team was then set up, and remained in existence for over two years, to assist employees in a wide variety of areas.

Chris Farren, Vice-President for Student Affairs at WNMU suggested that a survey of all employees be done first to decide what approach the university could take in creating courses or training programs for the unemployed. The Department of Workforce Solutions expanded this notion to include a comprehensive assessment of all potentially affected Teleperformance employees.

Those assessments will help determine which employees want to keep employment in Silver City or head in other directions such as continuing their education at WNMU. Individuals representing Workforce Solutions and WNMU plan to visit the site to conduct these assessments in the near future.

The Displaced Workers Assistance Team will meet again at a date to be determined as more information is available.

Located in Silver City, New Mexico, Western New Mexico University has served the people of the state of New Mexico and its surrounding areas as a comprehensive, regional, rural, public coeducational university since 1893 and caters to a student body diverse in age, culture, language and ethnic background.

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