PER gives Sandia very good to excellent ratings

By Sue Major Holmes

NNSA has given Sandia ratings of very good to excellent in its mission work and singled out its science, technology, and engineering objectives as exceeding expectations in fiscal year 2014. NNSA’s Annual Performance Evaluation Report (PER) also said Sandia performed above expectations in managing its core nuclear weapons mission and its broader national security mission.

The PER assessed how Sandia Corporation performed from Oct. 1, 2013, through Sept. 30, 2014, on five basic objectives defined in a Strategic Performance Evaluation Plan, taking into consideration Sandia’s self-assessment and program reviews, peer reviews, external reviews, and customer reviews from NNSA’s program, functional, and field offices.

Sandia received ratings of very good to excellent in mission, very good in contractor leadership, and good in operations support.

“I’m pleased to see that our sustained effort in managing the Nuclear Weapons mission is described as ‘above expectations’ despite funding uncertainties,” said President and Labs Director Paul Hommert. “I’m equally pleased to read that Sandia ‘continues to excel’ in executing its non-nuclear weapons missions and in performing work ‘above expectations’ for a broad range of customers. Indeed, these acknowledgments and the ‘excellent’ rating for the performance objective known as Science, Technology & Engineering and Other DOE Missions point to the role each of you plays in making Sandia an exceptional institution in service to the nation.”

— Sandia President and Labs Director Paul Hommert

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Noting the report identified areas for improvement and highlighted the importance of full implementation of Engineered Safety, he added, “We will use all feedback as a basis for continuous improvement.”

The ratings on five performance objectives:
- Science, technology, engineering and other DOE mission objectives: excellent
- Nuclear weapons: very good
- Broader national security: very good
- Leadership: very good
- Operations and infrastructure: good

Strengthening science, technology

NNSA said Sandia’s handling of research strategies and investments, numerous technology advances, science and engineering breakthroughs, and mission results earned its excellent rating in science, technology, and engineering. The PER said Sandia further strengthened its science and technology base to ensure science-based stockpile stewardship and provide the technical basis for the annual stockpile assessment.

“Sandia’s unique mission responsibilities in the nuclear weapons program have prompted revolutionary SRTE approaches to address stockpile stewardship challenges, and Sandia is ensuring investments in research are transformative, innovative, leading edge, and of high quality,” the PER said. It singled out as

(Continued on page 3)

Annual assessment from NNSA lauds Labs’ mission work

Sandia President and Labs Director Paul Hommert

Annual assessment from NNSA lauds Labs’ mission work

annual assessment from NNSA lauds Labs’ mission work

Sandia continues to boost NM economy through business programs

By Nancy Salem

Sandia spent nearly a billion dollars on goods and services in fiscal year 2014 and New Mexico businesses received more than 36 percent of the total, according to the Labs’ latest economic impact report.

Of the total of $961.8 million Sandia spent last year, New Mexico businesses received $362.4 million. U.S. small businesses were awarded more than 47 percent, or $455.7 million in Sandia contracts, and New Mexico small businesses received $240.6 million, or 5.5 percent of the small business total.

While total spending and spending with small businesses and New Mexico businesses all declined

(Continued on page 3)

Looking back

Underground nuclear weapons testing in the United States in the 30 years before it ended in 1992 meant burying a device, detonating it, and measuring the results. Get a glimpse of this essential part of Sandia’s history in a brief story on... page 3.

An on-site service dog

When Michelle Karler, manager of Diversity, Inclusion, Equal Employment Opportunity, and Affirmative Action (Dept. 3011), suggested a service dog to Rob Mitchell to help deal with the effects of PTSD, he decided to give it a chance. See page 8.
The Employee Recognition Awards program honors individuals and teams whose work or contributions in support of Sandia’s mission and values have been exceptional. Nominations for the award will be accepted through May 31.

The ERA program recognizes excellence in five categories, four for individual nominees and one for teams. Individual achievements that could be considered include:

- **Technical Excellence**, which recognizes individuals whose innovative and predictive, science-based engineering capabilities contribute to the transformation of Sandia’s business practices and provide solutions to national security problems.

- **Exceptional Service**, which recognizes commitment and efforts to implement and proactively seek improvements to the organization, and/or Sandia’s reputation while enabling others to succeed.

- **Leadership**, which honors employees who have demonstrated exceptional creativity, courage, and integrity in leading others to the successful accomplishment of Sandia’s work. This is also the category to acknowledge an individual for demonstrating exceptional personal skills, modeling and reinforcing key behaviors and attitudes that are aligned with Sandia’s organizational values.

- **Sandia Values, Ethics, and Integrity**, which recognizes individuals who have exemplified Sandia’s values and demonstrated the highest standards of integrity and business ethical conduct.

- **The Team category** recognizes teams whose exceptional contributions are critically enabled by teamwork, and models the values of people working together toward a common goal, proactively looking for, and acting upon, opportunities to improve, while being fully accountable for their performance.

Eligibility criteria for nominees include:

- **Individual nominees** must be current, regular, Sandia employees on roll since Dec. 31, 2013.

- **Contractors and non-employees** (e.g., industry colleagues) cannot be team members listed in an ERA nomination. If contractors and non-employees contribute to the work supported for which a team has been nominated for an ERA, Sandia management can recommend to the employer of the contractor/colleague that the individual receive recognition from his or her company for the work.

- **Team representatives** must be current, regular, Sandia employees on roll since Dec. 31, 2013.

- **Nominations** are for accomplishments between Jan. 1 and Dec. 31, 2014.

- **Last year’s winners** for the 2013 calendar year are not eligible to win for 2014 calendar year. However, an individual winner last year can be on a winning team this year and can be nominated for team representative.

Nomination forms with detailed instructions are available from Sandia’s internal web at http://info.sandia.gov/era. Each contractor or offsite contractor, also listed via the link. Any current, regular Sandia employee may nominate individuals or teams. A separate nomination form must be submitted for each individual and team nomination. A combined total of 122 individuals and teams will receive Corporate Employee Recognition Awards. Individual recipients and designated representatives for winning teams will be recognized at a Corporate Awards event Saturday, Aug. 22, in Albuquerque.

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**Employee recognition awards nominations**

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**The Sandia LabNews is distributed in-house to all Sandia employees and on-site contractors and mailed to all Sandia retirees. It is also mailed to individuals in industry, government, academia, nonprofit organizations, media, and private life who request it.**

**Retirees (only):** To notify of changes in address, contact Benefits Dept. 3332, Customer Service, at 505-844-4237, or Mail Stop 1021, Sandia National Laboratories, Albuquerque, NM 87185-1021.

**Others:** To receive the Lab News or to change the address (except retirees), contact Michelle Fleming, Media Relations and Communications Dept. 3651, 505-844-4902, email meflemi@sandia.gov, or Mail Stop 0165, Sandia National Laboratories, Albuquerque, NM 87185-1655.

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**NOMA awards**

From Sandia’s 2015 ERA winners, Paul Homburt and his deputy directors will select from one to four nominees that will represent Sandia in the Lockheed Martin Corporation’s Employee Recognition Awards program. This prestigious annual awards program honors 50 individuals and teams across the Lockheed Martin Corporation who have made outstanding contributions to Lockheed Martin Mission Success. The NOVA award categories are the same as Sandia’s process.

NOVA award winners can also participate in an awards ceremony and other fun activities. This year’s event will be held on Tuesday, June 30, 2015, at the Santa Fe Convention Center. Sandia employees interested in attending the event should contact the Lockeed Martin Corporation’s Human Resources Group for more information.

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**That’s that**

Yo!

In a world where the Twitter tweet seems the last word in minimalist communication, 140 characters or less that it is your thinking, feeling, or planning at the moment — there’s a new guy in town. And as far as this guy is concerned, Twitter users are suffering from a bad case of logorrhoea — excessive wordiness.

I’m talking about Yo, a smart phone app that bills itself as “the simplest and most efficient communication tool in the world.” Of course you say it is simple: Yo want you to touch base with a friend? You don’t have to do anything so time-consuming, boring, and 20th-century as actually writing a message. Just so much as tap your device once. List the name of individual you want to contact. The target of your interest gets a nice, friendly Yo from you. It is, as the company describes it, “a single-tap, zero character communication tool.”

Allow me to pass along some of the official Yo promotional language so you can get the idea of how easy and versatile this is: “Yo is a 140-character habit.” Yo says. “Maybe you’re 140-character shy.” Yo adds. “Yo has been my meeting, come by my office” — Yo. “Are you up to Yo.” Yo says.

The possibilities are endless.

As Ron Popeil, the consummate pitchman, might say, “It’s just that easy.” He might say, too, “But wait. There’s more!” Except that in the case of Yo, I don’t think there’s much more to it. Reportedly the developers are adding some new features, but they’re all based around the open the app and tap” concept. The idea is, emphatically, “less is more.”

I take small issue with Yo’s claim that the possibilities are “endless.” I’d be inclined to say more like “limited.”

Granted, some tech-savy types have figured out how to use Yo as a switch to initiate an action — like turning on the lights before you walk into your house. And it’s being used by some businesses to alert you to new content on their websites. But for most users, Yo is Yo.

Yes, Yo has been in the news. For comments attached to a news story about Yo, one wag proposed that the app should allow you to send other messages with one tap. His suggestions included “Dude?,” “Dude . . . Dude . . . Dude . . . Dude.” In the universe of Yo, that’s ball high.

I’m not knocking the app, which I’m sure could be fun . . . for a few minutes. Yo’s launch last year generated a buzz of interest and interest . . . Was this going to be a Twitter or Facebook killer? It doesn’t appear that way. Those who opted that it represents the final exclamation point on the end of Western Civilization can stand down. Most people, it seems, still seem to want to be out occasional tweet or text message. For a while, Yo was pretty high up there in the top app store download ranking, but interest seems to be waning. My hunch is that people, sentimental fools that we are, realized you can’t get a message that says “Yo, I’m thinking of you!” a lot more or less than a generic Yo. That’s a bit too much like pulling up to your girlfriend’s house and honking the horn. Not the most romantic way to start the evening. And her dad — trust me — will be out.

Maybe there’ll be a turnaround for Yo (and I hope so; I like tech startups to succeed) but my guess is that this may be a case where — with apologies to Yogi Berra — Yo’s future is all downhill.

In the arena of minimalist communication, Twitter and Yo have nothing on the old masters. A story that may be apocryphal holds that the wildly popular 19th century French novelist Victor Hugo, who wrote millions of words published in books fat enough to be doorstops, also holds the record for the world’s shortest correspondence. According to this story, Hugo, who was in exile on the British Isle of Guernsey for reaction to the release of his latest novel, speaking out against Napoleon III, telegrammed his publisher “?” demanding the reaction to the release of his latest novel. Lee Miskreables. The reply: “!”

Could he have said it better myself.

See you next time.

— Bill Murphy (Ms 1468, 505-845-0945, wmurphy@sandia.gov)
Looking back . . .

Testing underground was a hard way of life

By Stephanie Hobby

Underground nuclear weapons testing in the United States in the 30 years before it ended in 1992 meant burying a device, detonating it, and measuring the results. Tests were massive, expensive, and needed 24 months and 100 people to design and set up. Paul Raglin, senior manager of Infrastructure and Investments (Dept. 1210), was a test director for the Defense Nuclear Agency in the 1980s and oversaw many of the shots at the Nevada Test Site.

“Sandia fielded a number of different diagnostics to support the tests and fielded all the experiments for components as part of the effort to ensure components would survive such intense environments,” Paul says.

Some tests were done in a long pipe, pumped to exoatmospheric conditions 10^-6. The device would be at one end with the instruments for the experiments at the other and at intervals through the pipe. Building the test beds cost roughly $50 million, not including the experiments.

“Today we rely on modeling and simulation coupled with testing at critical above-ground facilities,” Paul says. “We have come a long way in our ability to understand some of the complexities, thanks to advances in computing technology and the sophisticated computational models that we now take for granted.”

The Laboratories’ proposed Short-Pulse Accelerator and Reactor Center would provide critical radiation environments for model validation that previously could only be done in an underground test.

It was a hard way of life. Engineers lived in a remote test facility in Nevada for six months, and operations ran around the clock. “But being able to do things that couldn’t be done anywhere else was very rewarding,” Paul says.

“There was, and continues to be, a strong sense of mission.”

PER results

(Continued from page 1)

noteworthy Sandia’s 12 research challenge areas focusing on national security needs that position the Labs to respond to emerging threats. The Labs earned the very good rating in its nuclear weapons mission by meeting or exceeding more than 99 percent of its program work “despite the funding uncertainties caused by the continuing resolution and FY2014 lapse in appropriations,” the report said.

Sandia performed above expectations by negotiating work with program sponsors, increasing the level of quality to ensure safe, secure, and reliable weapon performance and transportation, and providing cost-effective operations, the report said. Its coordination with NNSA federal program managers and contract support led to a disciplined approach that mitigated risks and put priorities on critical work, the PER said.

“I’m pleased to receive positive feedback acknowledging Sandia’s Nuclear Weapons efforts in meeting Annual Assessment, Limited Life Component Exchange, and Stockpile Modernization deliverables, as well as our contributions to increased scientific understanding and innovation necessary for the current and future stockpile,” said Deputy Labs Director and Executive VP for National Security Programs Jerry McDowell.

“I’m proud of Sandia’s accomplishments and demonstrated ability to meet deliverables while providing cost effective risk mitigation and timely responses to technical challenges.”

Meeting the mission

“Overall, Sandia had increased communication and risk mitigation to help NNSA meet their mission despite losing almost the entire first quarter due to funding issues beyond their control,” the PER said.

And it said Sandia continues to excel in its broader, non-nuclear security mission. “Sandia continually exceeds many customer expectations by providing unique, superior solutions to current and anticipated national security threats,” the PER said.

The PER said the Labs’ overall rating in the broader mission was affected by an accident that temporarily suspended explosive operations and impacted at least 42 programs and projects.

NNSA said Sandia provided very good leadership in supporting the direction of the DOE/NNSA mission.

“When challenges arose, Sandia leadership showed great responsiveness and engagement and used issues as an opportunity for continuous improvement both at Sandia National Laboratories and across the enterprise,” the report said.

Sandia met performance criteria and overall technical performance requirements in operations and infrastructure, the PER said. It cited examples such as demonstrating accountability for mission and management controls, assuming that mission commitments are met with high-quality products and services, and maintaining excellence as a 21st century government-owned, contractor-operated facility. Sandia exceeded expectations in several areas of operations and infrastructure. For example, Sandia exceeded expectations for managing an effective Safeguards and Security (S&S) program, which included exceptional resource planning and execution, and maintaining a highly self-critical assurance program. Sandia significantly exceeded expectations in improved life-cycle management, and has significantly reduced chemical, hazardous, and nuclear material inventories.

“I appreciate the recognition of the excellence demonstrated in business operations and infrastructure projects and services,” said Deputy Labs Director and Executive VP for Mission Support Kim Sawyer. “I am extremely proud of the Mission Support team. Mission delivery motivates us each and every day. The feedback we received calling for improvements in work planning and controls across the Laboratories is part of our continuous improvement journey.”
After 65 years at Sandia, Harold Rarrick turns in his badge

“I was just a kid when I started. I did a few things different but not a lot. I spent 50 years not knowing what I was going to do the next day, what the next new challenge would be. That was a big part of the appeal and that part I wouldn’t change at all.”

Like many of his contemporaries, Harold didn’t set out to work in the nuclear weapons enterprise. Rather, he ended up in weapons work almost by chance. He’d been asked to set up a health physics organization. Health physics is the physics of radiation protection. It was the job of Harold and his team to ensure that workers at the weapon testing, it became clear that there were risks that needed to be addressed more effectively. In 1957, Harold remembers walking in the vault, all designed to make the site as secure as possible.

As the Cold War ramped up, and with it the scale of weapon testing, it became clear that there were risks that needed to be addressed more effectively. In 1957, Harold remembers walking in the vault, all designed to make the site as secure as possible.

“One of the challenges was to make sure that the workers were safe. That was a huge part of what I did. We needed to make sure that the workers were safe and that the public was safe.”

Harold describes his work during this time as “real stressful, but addictive.”

“I think that in his career Harold was destined to be a road warrior, operating away from the Mother Ship in Albuquerque. In 1970, he was named Division Supervisor of Range Operations at the Tonopah Test Range. During his stint at TTR, Harold created the position of test director, a role that still exists to this day and has proved invaluable to Sandia’s weapons mission.

“Fifty years not knowing what I was going to do...”

By Bill Murphy

Harold holds a certificate of appreciation for his many years of service as a senior mentor in Sandia’s Weapon Intern Program. It will soon find pride of place among the many other commendations Harold displays on his Sandia trophy wall. (Photo by Randy Montoya)

(Continued on next page)
functions, for most of the 1970s Harold was the program manager for reimbursable test programs, providing technical and financial management for non-Sandia customers, including the Defense Nuclear Agency, the US Air Force, US Army, US Navy, NASA, and other DOE laboratories using Sandia test facilities in Albuquerque and Tonopah. He also spent more than a decade in the Nuclear Safeguards organization and the Development Test Directorate, making important contributions to the Labs’ nuclear weapon mission.

A highlight of this period was his involvement in the Uranium Mill Tailings Remedial Action program, during which he planned, arranged, and managed two international conferences on the subject.

As the Cold War wound down, Harold became more deeply involved in environmental assessments and restoration. His personal, often first-hand knowledge of Sandia's weapon test history made his insights invaluable during this period, keeping him engaged and occupied right up until his retirement in 1993.

**Staying involved**

But retirement didn’t mean the end of his involvement. After working as a consultant to DOE on environmental issues for several years in the 1990s and consulting with Sandia’s corporate archivist, Harold was asked to become a senior mentor for the then-new Weapon Intern Program.

That role re-energized him as he relished sharing stories about Sandia’s weapons heritage with the next generation of weaponeers from the national laboratories, the military, and federal agencies.

The mentor role was a perfect fit for Harold. He was so proud to be a part of the program that his wife sewed on patches of each intern class and embroidered “Harold - Senior Mentor” on every one of the shirts he wore for each intern class.

In recognition of his role in the Weapon Intern Program, Harold was one of several senior mentors honored in 2003 with the US Air Force Award for Exemplary Civilian Service.

Sandia was more than a job for Harold; it was a place to grow, to learn, to test his own limits. “Everything was new. We were doing things nobody had ever done before,” he says. “We had to get smart fast and one way we got smart was that we worked with smart people. There weren’t many dummies at Sandia.

“I was just a kid when I started,” he reflects. “I'd do a few things different but not a lot. I spent 50 years not knowing what I was going to do the next day, what the next new challenge would be. That was a big part of the appeal and that part I wouldn’t change at all.”

Finally, almost exactly 65 years after getting his clearance to work in the weapons complex back when Harry Truman was president, Harold gave up his badge, dropping it in the receptacle box outside Sandia’s badge office at the IPOC building. It was a bittersweet moment, but one he was ready for.

“It got to where I was pushing myself to go in,” he says. “I was worn out, but I loved the work. I loved Sandia.”
compared to FY13 — by $12.8 million, $58.6 million, and $46.5 million, respectively — “Sandia remains a driving force in New Mexico’s economy,” says Don Devoti, manager of Small Business Utilization Dept. 10222. “We continue to set aggressive small business and supplier diversity goals and work diligently to meet or exceed those goals.”

**Small businesses, diverse suppliers wanted**

Sandia reaches out to local businesses through a variety of programs. It holds public forums with suppliers and civic leaders to discuss contracting opportunities and lists contracts on its Business Opportunities website. It supplies small and diverse business owners with information on doing business with Sandia and seeks qualified suppliers.


Sandia’s overall economic impact in 2014:
- $1.6 billion was spent on labor and non-contract-related payments.
- $961.8 million went to contract-related payments.
- $61.5 million went to the state of New Mexico for gross receipts taxes.
- $71.9 million was spent through procurement card purchases.

The Small Business Act mandates that federal contractors use small businesses, including those that are small disadvantaged, owned by women or veterans and service-disabled veterans, and small businesses in impoverished areas — called Historically Underutilized Business (HUB) zones. The Small Business Utilization Department oversees those mandates and negotiates small business subcontracting goals with NNSA.

“Looking ahead to FY15, Sandia procurement and our small business team are driven to exceed all our negotiated small business and supplier diversity goals, the standard by which our program is measured,” Don says. “We will continue to build upon our successes with HUBZone, veteran, service-disabled, and small disadvantaged businesses, where we exceeded our goals last year, to drive future success.”

Sandia President and Laboratories Director Paul Hommert echoed the Labs’ full support of the Small Business Act. “Sandia has a long and distinguished record of encouraging and partnering with highly qualified, diverse small business suppliers who assist us in achieving our national security mission,” he says. “We are fully committed to continuing this track record.”

Sandia also helps the state’s economy through the New Mexico Small Business Assistance (NMSBA) program, established by the state Legislature in 2000 to help companies receive technical support from the Labs. In 2013, the Sandia NMSBA provided $2.4 million in technical assistance to 194 New Mexico small businesses in 29 counties. Since 2000, it has provided more than $26 million in assistance.

Sandia employees gave more than $6.2 million in 2014-2015 to the United Way of Central New Mexico, making Sandia the largest corporate contributor to the agency. That will be reflected in the 2015 economic impact report.

Sandia employees also contribute their time as volunteers, supporting STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) education through a variety of community programs, such as family science and math nights and engineering challenges, that reached thousands of students.

“**My small business team and our entire procurement organization are driven to exceed our small business and supplier diversity contracting goals. We will continue to engage, value, and partner with suppliers to make a difference in our local, state, and national economies.**”

—Don Devoti, manager Small Business Utilization Dept. 10222
How to submit classified ads

DEADLINE: Friday noon before week of publication unless changed by hol-
iday. Submit by one of these methods:
- Email: Michelle Fleming (classified@sandia.gov)
- FAX: 505-844-6061
- MAIL: MS 1468 (Dept. 3651)
  7700 San decento Ave. SE, MS 1468

INTERNET WEB: On internal web
  http://tinyurl.com/ktc5llq

How to submit classified ads

Because of space constraints, ads will be

1. Limit 18 words, including last
day, email address, or phone number;

2. Include organization and full name
with the submission.

4. Type or print ad legibly; use
accepted abbreviations.
5. Include phone number.
6. We will not run the same ad more than
three times, depending on length of the address.
7. No “for rent” ads except for em-
ployees on temporary assignment.
8. No “for sale” ads except for em-
ployees of student-aged children of employees.
9. No motorcycles.
10. Housing listed for sale is available
without regard to race, creed,

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Family pet takes on new role to help Army veteran with PTSD

By Valerie Larkin

On Dec. 27, 2004, Rob Mitchell (4021) was driving through Sadr City, Iraq, with the US Army’s 1st Cavalry Division, headed toward a nearby base exchange where he and his team planned to buy snacks and CDS. He was behind the wheel of the third Humvee in a three-vehicle convoy when everything suddenly turned brown.

“It was like I’d driven into a sandstorm. I didn’t hear anything, see anything, or feel anything. Everything was just brown,” he recalls. The dust settled, and he realized his convoy had been hit by an improvised explosive device, an IED.

Rob’s best friend, a gunner in the second vehicle, was killed. Rob had survived the third IED Rob had survived during his year in Iraq.

A life changed by anxiety

Upon returning to the base after the explosion, a debriefing was about to begin when Rob found himself on the floor. “My whole body was shaking, and I couldn’t stop. That was the first time I had experienced what I live with today, which are panic attacks,” he says. Rob hadn’t sustained any physical injuries, but he had walked away with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), a condition that has affected every day of his life from that point forward.

Although the frequency of the panic attacks has lessened over time, the father of two still lives with constant anxiety. Keeping that anxiety from building into a panic attack is a daily struggle, especially when any number of everyday experiences, from driving under an overpass to seeing trash on the side of the road, can trigger debilitating fear, shaking, numbness, or dizziness, among other symptoms.

“Nothing seemed to cure it necessarily, but a lot has helped. I’ve come a long way in 10 years of dealing with it. Support has been the biggest help — from friends, family, and battle buddies who have been through the same things I’ve been through. Playing my guitar has been one of them. Nothing is a be-all, end-all. There are battles every single day. I win some, and I don’t win others. You just hope you win more than you lose," Rob says.

In the decade since he returned to the States from Iraq, Rob has tried various therapies, from individual and group counseling to eye movement desensitization and reprocessing. When Machelle Karler, manager of Diversity, Inclusion, Equal Employment Opportunity and Affirmative Action Dept. 3011, suggested a service dog to Rob, he decided to give it a chance.

In 2014 he called Paws and Stripes, an Albuquerque nonprofit that matches shelter dogs with veterans living with PTSD and traumatic brain injuries. The organization teaches the veterans to train the dogs to become service animals in an eight-to-12-month process.

A new tool in the toolbox

“I went to Paws and Stripes because I decided I needed another tool to help deal with the PTSD. You can’t build a house with just a hammer. You have to try everything at your disposal to get through it,” Rob says.

Paws and Stripes provides the dog and the training to the veteran at no cost, but the program has a lengthy waiting list. Rob moved up the waiting list by raising nearly $6,000 to help pay for his dog’s training. The contributions he received for Hunni came from Sandians. “It makes me feel really good knowing the type of support I have here. The support of Sandia is unsurpassed,” he says.

Paws and Stripes also can teach the veteran to train his or her pet dog if it meets certain criteria. Rob’s dog Hunni, a 4-year-old, 65-pound Rhodesian Ridgeback mix, was evaluated against the criteria, and she was determined to be a good candidate. Rob and his family had rescued Hunni from Animal Humane New Mexico three years ago, and in the last year Hunni has taken on a new role as Rob’s service dog.

“She made the transition pretty smoothly. At first it was a little difficult for her to understand that she was no longer the pet. When we’re training, and when she’s working, no one else can interact with her except me, unless they ask permission first. Hunni needs to get used to not interacting with people everywhere she goes; she basically needs to be a ghost,” Rob says.

Rob and Hunni attend three weekly training sessions, which include group and individual skill-building activities with the dogs, as well as classes that educate the veterans about how a service dog can help allay their symptoms.

Service dogs can help their human companions through PTSD symptoms in many ways, such as retrieving medications at the onset of a panic attack, calling their attention to an elevated stress level, waking them from nightmares, or providing mobility assistance.

“Hunni’s job is to help alert me when my stress and anxiety levels start reaching a point that I need to pay attention to them,” Rob says. Hunni can read Rob’s subtle physical signals, and if she fusses with her nose harness or acts excited, that is her cue to Rob that he needs to mitigate his anxiety.

“Happy Hunni helps too. “The tactile response alone can be calming enough to help turn it around if I start freaking out, to get that affection, that unconditional love,” Rob says.

Through further training, Hunni will be able to help Rob identify and avoid his panic triggers, and also to get help if Rob needs it during a panic attack.

Bringing Hunni to Sandia

At the end of January, Hunni will take a test to demonstrate she has the basic skills necessary for operating in a public environment, such as sitting, staying, and obeying commands. After she passes the public access test, Rob can bring Hunni to work.

Rob works as the Environment, Safety, and Health coordinator for centers 400 and 700, having joined Sandia in 2013 as a member of the Wounded Warrior Career Development Program, which makes certain Sandia jobs available to combat-wounded veterans on a one-to-three-year term.

When she comes to Sandia, Hunni will shadow Rob throughout the day, attending meetings, visiting customers around the campus, and working in Rob’s office in Bldg. 802. She will lie in a crate in Rob’s office, and when not needed, she will stay in her bed in the office of a team, and others to ensure all facets of Hunni’s presence on campus were considered.

“I’ve put my heart and soul into this for him, and I am so excited to see this come to fruition for him and for his family,” Machelle says.

“We wanted to make sure we could pave the way in a process for other veterans or Sandians who are considering having service dogs. We wanted to help lay the groundwork for other people who want to have service dogs, and I think we’ve done that,” Rob adds.