SANDIA LABNEWS
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Swift offers IT service at new location **Page 5**

Connecting Sandia's expertise strengthens a credible and reliable deterrent

By **Kenny Vigil**

During his more than 20-year career at Sandia, Jeff Brewer has focused on nuclear safety.

"Very early in my Sandia career, I started working part time on weapon safety," Jeff said.

Sandia hired Jeff as a risk analyst for commercial power reactor safety. His background and training in systems engineering and human factors aligned well with Sandia's nuclear deterrence mission.

"I began working part time on unique signals methodology," Jeff said. "That is how humans provide intent to use nuclear weapons, whether in aircraft, at launch facilities on land or in submarines, and how those actions are turned into information structures, which are then used by safety devices inside weapons."

In 2010, he transitioned fully to weapon safety.

Now a senior scientist, Jeff is a domain chief engineer for nuclear safety and chief of the Nuclear Safety Technical Expert Network.

"High levels of safety are necessary to have a credible deterrent available and ready at all times," Jeff said.

Resolving technical roadblocks

Sandia has six Technical Expert Networks, or TENs, which provide a framework to help the Labs resolve technical roadblocks faster and accelerate work to meet delivery commitments.

Jeff was tapped to establish the Nuclear Safety TEN. One of the most challenging aspects was figuring out a structure for the network, he said.

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EXPERT CONNECTIONS — Sandia senior scientist Jeff Brewer sits in front of his whiteboard that details some safety technology development efforts at Sandia. Jeff established Sandia's Nuclear Safety Technical Expert Network in April 2024. **Photo by Craig Fritz**

From music to metals

THE SCIENTIST — Meg McCarthy is a computational materials scientist and researcher in metallurgy at Sandia. **Photo by Craig Fritz**

Sandia scientist shares how she overcame self-doubt to pursue her dream job.

By **Magdalena Krajewski**

Meg McCarthy credits a quarter-life crisis for lighting the fire she needed to make the career change that would lead her to Sandia.

"I wasn't a great student," Meg said. "If it hadn't been for music, I probably would have dropped out."

Meg didn't drop out, and her musical talents helped her get into college, but within a few years, she realized she didn't want to be a professional musician.

After college, Meg moved to Europe, where she taught English for six years. "It was a cool career; the traveling was great, but teaching wasn't for me," she said.

Now in her mid-twenties, Meg was looking to start over.

Starting over

"As I thought about what to do next, I kept wishing I had done better in school," she said. "As a kid, I loved reading science fiction, building computers and playing video games. In college, I worked as a

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Susan Esfahani's passion for excellence

Meet Sandia's newest Fellow

By **Kenny Vigil**

When electrical engineer Susan Esfahani started her career at Sandia more than three decades ago, she never imagined she would one day hold one of the Labs' most prestigious positions. In January, Susan, a senior engineer in nuclear deterrence, was named a Sandia Fellow.

"It's a tremendous honor," Susan said. "I never thought I could make it into a position like this. Over the years, I have worked with many amazing engineers who I owe my thanks for making our projects a success and enabling me to receive such a promotion."

The Sandia Fellow position, originally called the Senior Fellow when it was created in 1986, is a rare honor. Susan is the 22nd Sandian to become a Fellow and joins the ranks of 11 other current Sandia Fellows.

"I have never been afraid of technically challenging programs. It has always been a personal challenge for me to see if I could learn enough quickly and rise to the moment," Susan said. "When the task feels overwhelming, I always start burrowing down to improve my technical depth and understanding of the problem, searching for the simple and elegant solution. I try to always choose action and focus my attention on solving my top issues holding back progress."

SANDIA'S NEWEST FELLOW — After dedicating 36 years to working on national security programs, engineer Susan Esfahani has been named a Sandia Fellow. Now, she hopes to share her skills and passion for excellence with the next generation of Sandia engineers. **Photo by Lonnie Anderson**

Susan's early days at Sandia

In her 36 years at Sandia, Susan has designed, built, tested and delivered many electrical products for nuclear deterrence systems and other projects.

"While I only formally transferred once, center reorganizations allowed me to try many different jobs," she said.

Her first job at Sandia was programming war-reserve production testers. Once she was comfortable programming, she joined the Sandia Airborne Computer group, or SANDAC, to expand her expertise. SANDAC was a ruggedized modular multi-processor flight computer used for navigation, guidance and control. Her first module had a few subtle flaws that she struggled to find. Susan quickly learned an important lesson.

"If you want to earn the respect of your peers and compete, deliver products that perform flawlessly," she said.

The importance of the mission

Susan's family has a long history of military service. Her father, two uncles, both sons and two nephews were Army Infantry, and one nephew was in the Air Force. When her oldest deployed to Syria, it reminded her of the importance of Sandia's mission to the security of U.S. troops.

"The nation needs us. The threats are real, and our products are vitally important to deter our adversaries," she said.

A history of excellence

Susan is particularly proud of her work on P19, a high-consequence safety and security program on which she was the lead systems engineer. The team delivered diamond-stamped hardware in 13 months for overseas installation.

"The entire Sandia team came together to deliver systems, components, testers, production and installation," she said. "It was the best of times and the worst of times. Every day, we encountered new obstacles to overcome. The dedication of the entire team and working long hours to solve problems enabled us to keep moving forward one painful step at a time. I wasn't sure we could ever make the delivery until we did."

The high point for Susan was witnessing the final overseas installations for the operational systems.

Other technical areas Susan supported include nine years designing hypersonic electronics, five years developing advanced firing sets and conventional hard target fuzing, seven years designing radiation-hardened application-specific integrated circuits, or ASICs, and a year rescoping the electrical architecture for the Mobile Guardian Transport.

"ASICs were the most technically challenging, hard target fuzing was the most fun and hypersonics taught me how to be a system engineer," she said. "I have had the great fortune to work and learn from many great engineers throughout my career at Sandia."

On assignment with the Navy

After about 32 years at Sandia, Susan sought a new perspective as the customer and worked for the Navy as part of an inter-personnel agreement assignment. Her role was in the Technical Division of Strategic Systems Programs in Washington, D.C.

FELLOW SPOTLIGHT — In January, Susan Esfahani was promoted to a Sandia Fellow, a highly prestigious position. Susan is pictured holding a Mickey Mouse mug she's used for 30 years, a gift from a co-worker after their visit to Disneyland.
Photo by Craig Fritz

That 18-month assignment came during the COVID-19 pandemic. She was encouraged to work remotely but obtained permission to report on-site to integrate and meet as many people as possible.

"Every morning as I drove onto the base, I thought to myself what an honor and privilege it was to work with the Navy directly," she said. "I learned to really appreciate how lean and hard the Navy works and how much they do for us."

Sharing her passion

Now, a few months into her new role as a Sandia Fellow, Susan is working on her plans and goals. But she is sure of one thing.

"I have a passion for delivering products," she said. "It's not an accident when a system works. It's an extraordinary amount of hard work and attention to detail."

Susan plans to share her energy, passion and knowledge with Sandia's up-and-coming engineers.

"I love excellence in engineering," she said. "I'm hoping I can guide and support our young engineers in what engineering excellence looks like."

Nuclear safety

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

He spent time identifying the correct experts, whose primary roles at Sandia are already heavily focused on safety.

"The experts were here; they just weren't connected," Jeff said. "Having the right experts connected allows us to provide trusted advice about high-consequence systems."

These high-consequence systems include, but are not limited to, nuclear weapons.

The Nuclear Safety TEN has 43 people on the organizational chart. Another 55 Sandians, whose names are not listed on the chart, are considered partners and can also be tapped to support the identified subject matter experts.

Most of those seeking the TEN's help have approached a subject matter expert, and then Jeff evaluates the request to ensure it's in the nuclear safety purview. If it is, the experts get to work.

"For the most part, it's usually just a limited number of people who need to engage on a particular topic or issue," Jeff said. "We can usually address it with a small number of people."

Input for a credible deterrent

The Nuclear Safety TEN has been very active since it launched in April 2024.

"One topic in weapons that's rapidly evolving is the way we evaluate safety risks within and across weapon systems," Jeff said. "We have some new techniques that we've been piloting on different systems and the TEN has been very helpful in supporting the expansion of that activity."

The TEN has also been called to support peer reviews, including for the Sea-Launched Cruise Missile – Nuclear Program, or SLCM-N, which is in the feasibility and design options stage.

"Because of the pace of that program, they're having to make some very important safety-based decisions on a relatively compressed timeline so they can begin realizing that program," Jeff said.

The TEN is also providing its expertise to external partners.

"We've had multiple engagements with the Air Force, particularly the Air Force Safety Center and the Air Force Nuclear Weapons Center on different topics related to nuclear weapons," Jeff said. "We've also had engagements with Lawrence Livermore and Los Alamos national laboratories as well as our colleagues in the United Kingdom at AWE Nuclear Security Technologies."

The feedback and advice the Nuclear Safety TEN is providing is based on ensuring the U.S. has a reliable, credible and effective deterrent, and the TEN is structured to support high-consequence systems across all of Sandia's major program portfolios.

"The right balance of high levels of safety and other aspects of surety enable you to accomplish the national security mission," Jeff said. "They allow your system to be ready to perform its core functions whenever it's needed and be effective when it's called upon."

Starting over

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

stagehand and was fascinated by the science and technical aspects of how audio and lights worked on stage."

Even when it came to music, Meg thought of performance like a scientist.

"You have all of these components that have to come together at a specific time and place to make music," she said. "Otherwise, it's just noise."

Meg loved science and was fascinated by those who worked in scientific fields, but over the years, she convinced herself, incorrectly, that she wasn't smart enough to be a scientist. However, as Meg contemplated her future, she kept circling back to all the what-ifs and decided there was no harm in giving science a shot.

"What was the worst that could happen?" she asked. "I started slow, retaking eighth- and ninth-grade math classes and collecting some credits online for things I had missed in high school."

A different approach

Meg was in Germany at the time and was not having luck finding affordable American textbooks to help her on her journey, so she turned to what she could find in the German libraries.

"Their approach to math and science was different from what I learned in school," she said. "It seemed more top down and big picture; instead of asking what happens if you add a negative number, they ask, why do we have negatives numbers at all? This was an approach to learning I understood; it clicked. I had been so hard on myself for how poorly I did in school, but I guess I just needed a different environment, a different approach."

Meg took online courses to replace the physics, chemistry and calculus classes she missed in high school. Each course took a few months, but the more she learned, the more her confidence grew, as did her momentum.

Becoming a scientist

She enrolled at the Hamburg University of Technology and pursued a degree in General Engineering Science. Near the end of the program, Meg and her husband decided to move back to the U.S., where she planned to pursue her master's.

"My parents live in Southern California, so I applied to a few schools in that area," she said. "University of California, Irvine, saw my application, and the director reached out to see if I wanted to try a Ph.D. My first thought was, 'What would I do with a Ph.D.?'"

It turns out a doctorate would help Meg get "the jobs I had dreamed about."

"I didn't realize it at the time, but I really wanted a career in research," she said. "Having a job where you could research things like moon bases, space elevators, how to make products more environmentally friendly, designing things that could be reused instead of creating

more waste — these were the coolest jobs ever, in my opinion."

Meg earned her doctorate from UC Irvine in materials science and engineering, where she specialized in metals. And sure enough, that degree helped her get her dream job at Sandia.

"I just call myself a scientist," she said. "But technically, I'm a computational materials scientist and a researcher in metallurgy. I get to figure out how things, specifically metals, react and behave atom by atom, piece by piece."

"We'll heat things up, poke them, squish them and do all kinds of simulations to see how the tiniest changes in material can affect behavior on a much larger scale," she said. "It's a lot like music — the specifics of how a single chord is played, the tone of a flute, the beat of a drum — how individually they collectively change the entire sound and mood of a song."

Piece by piece sounds a lot like how Meg approached her career journey.

"Because of how I did in high school, I assumed I was not smart enough to pursue science and closed myself off," she said. "But once I got older, I had this nagging sense that I could have done better, and so I tried. I opened myself up, took some risks, and decided I was okay with being embarrassed. In the process, I discovered that bit by bit, I could become a scientist. And so, I did."

Swift IT service with a smile

Sandia's IT bar adds second location, storefront option

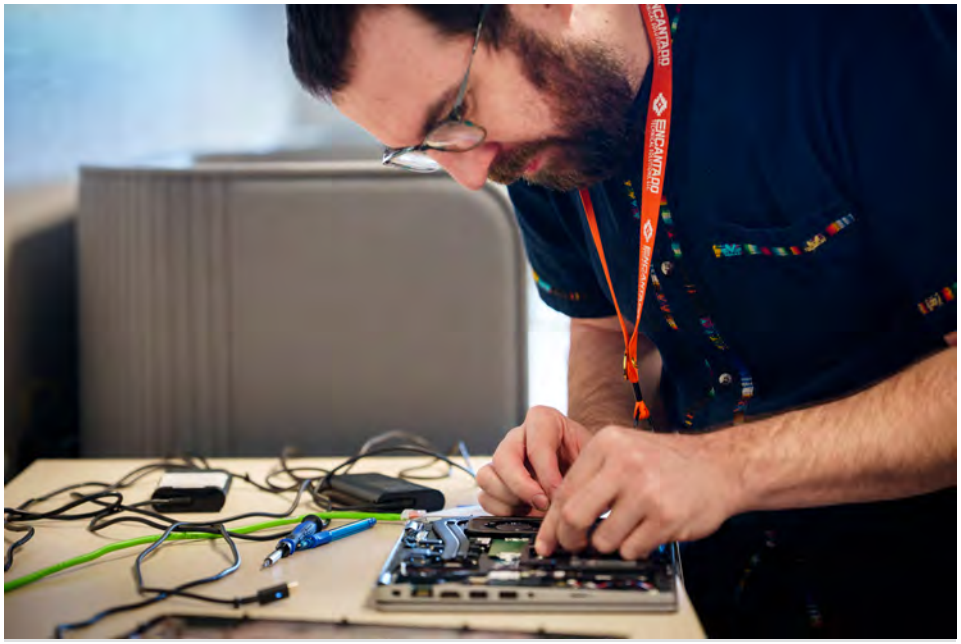
By **Mollie Rappe**

Imagine returning to work after a lovely vacation and trying to reboot your computer, only to be greeted by a black or blue screen. Now what?

If you have an unclassified laptop and are in the Albuquerque area, you can bring it to one of the two Swift IT Bar locations for in-person assistance. One is at the Innovation Parkway Office Center, and the other is on base in Building 801. In California, the Swift IT Bar is in Building 915. For classified systems or heavy desktop computers, it's best to call the Corporate Computing Help Desk, commonly known as CCHD.

"Swift is an IT walk-up facility where you can get support for your Windows, Macintosh or Linux computer, as well as your iPhone and iPad," said Goldie Mitchell, service manager for Swift. "You can get hardware and software support, and peripherals. It is first-come, first-served, so no appointment or prior ticket is needed."

When you arrive at the Swift IT Bar, you'll check in with the concierge, who will record your issue and add you to the queue. You can have a seat on the couches until a technician is available. The team aims to keep wait times below five minutes, though mornings and noon wait times can be a bit longer, said Christian Orehek, Encantado team lead. Wednesdays and Thursdays are typically less busy, he added.



BATTERY MECHANIC — Encantado technician Zachariah Bassett works on a Sandia laptop at the Swift IT Bar in Building 801. **Photo by Craig Fritz**

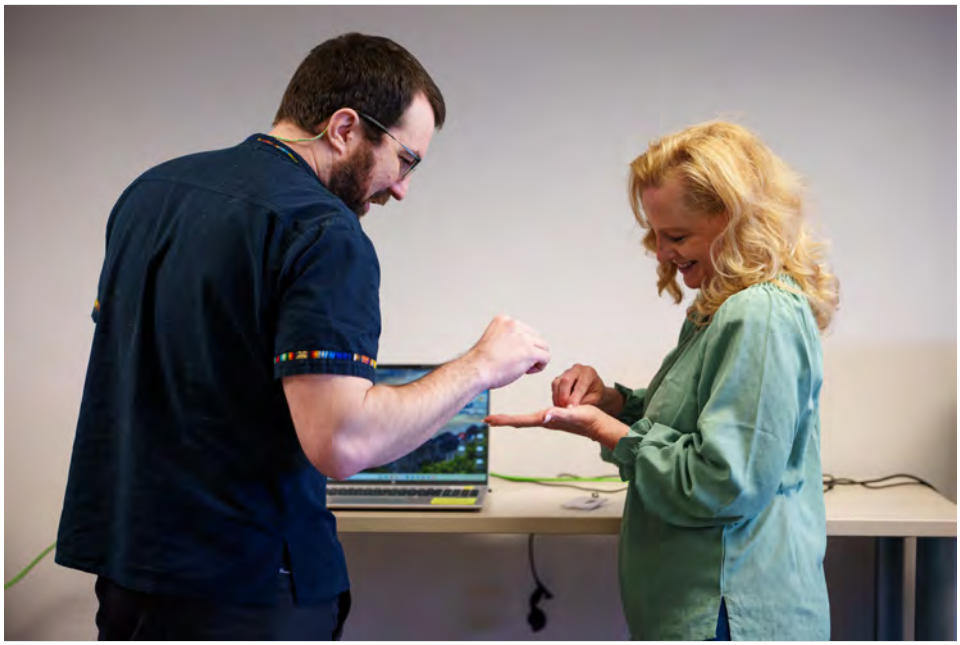
The computer support technician will take you to the sunlit laptop service room, diagnose and fix your computer and address any other IT concerns. If your Sandia iPhone is malfunctioning, a Mobility technician can look at it. If your password has expired, a Password Administration satellite office within the IPOC Swift IT Bar can help.

"If it's broken, you can just walk in and we'll cover it," Christian said. "We're a one-stop shop for phone problems, new computers, and expired passwords. We do it all. It takes some of the guesswork out of getting IT support."

The two Swift locations in New Mexico are staffed with subcontractors from Encantado Technical Solutions.

Speedy shopping at Storefront

The Swift Storefront, located at the IPOC location, opened in June 2024. In partnership with Sandia's approved



SWIFT SERVICE — Encantado technician Zachariah Bassett, left, and Sandia senior administrative assistant Carrie Devonshire examine a small object found in her laptop during a visit to the Swift IT Bar in Building 801. **Photo by Craig Fritz**

small-business vendors Holman's Inc. and Wildflower International, the storefront offers about 10 models of desktop computers and laptops from Dell, HP and Apple, as well as peripherals like headsets, webcams, badge readers, keyboards, mice, docking stations and monitors.

"You can come in, look at the options, buy one, and get set up usually the same day," Goldie said. "If you come in at 4 p.m., we'll need overnight; if you come in at 8 a.m., you'll usually have your new computer by lunchtime. This is especially beneficial for remote workers or folks visiting from the California site."

A technician at each Swift IT Bar specializes in setting up new computers and reimaging old ones for new users. All equipment is pre-approved and meets Sandia requirements, with pricing the same as through the Just-In-Time vendor system, but without the wait, Mitchell said.

"Having on-site inventory and not needing to wait for vendors to process orders really helps reduce downtime customers would otherwise experience," added Amanda O'Neill, manager overseeing Swift.

Janet Laros, an office administrative assistant and recent Swift IT Bar customer, praised the prompt service.

"The Swift IT Bar is an amazing resource," Janet said. "When my laptop died, I went to the Swift IT Bar and walked out 30 minutes later with a brand-new laptop ready to use. I've since sent two employees to them."

Excellent service at a second location

While getting to touch a new laptop or headset before purchasing it is a clear perk, the main mission for Swift is solving Sandians' IT problems.

"I'm really proud of the service we offer," Christian said. "We strive to make this a comfortable place to learn. Half of what we do is fixing and the other half is educating. We're here to help and make it comfortable and sometimes fun. I'm glad we can take some stress out of people's day."

Goldie agrees.

"People appreciate the face-to-face interaction and having techs there to help them get up and running," she said. "We have an amazing group passionate about customer service. CCHD and Computer Support Unit technicians are excellent, but face-to-face interaction with IT is a real winner."

A second New Mexico Swift IT Bar, in Building 801, opened in December 2023. In February, this location began offering support for Linux computers, Goldie said.

"Getting a second, on-base location is a huge accomplishment," she said.

According to Amanda, in January, the Swift IT Bars in New Mexico and California assisted more than 900 people with their IT issues.

Service hubs during CrowdStrike

Exceptional IT service isn't just the objective for ordinary days at Swift; it's also the mission during major incidents.

For example, the Swift IT Bars served as hubs during the CrowdStrike outage, a faulty security update that caused millions of Windows computers globally to be stuck on a blue screen of death, which Goldie described as "the Super Bowl of IT."

On Friday, July 19, and over the weekend, remote and telecommuters were instructed to bring affected laptops to the nearest Swift IT Bar, which were staffed with technicians from across the IT service center. Other IT and cyber professionals also picked up thumb drives with the fix before walking the Labs and restoring computers in unlocked offices and cubicles, Amanda said.

"It was an all-hands-on-deck situation," Orehek said. "I'm really proud of how the Swift team and the greater service center pulled together. Nobody was having 'fun' turning on their computer to a blue screen, but we tried to serve with a smile and turn it into a positive experience."

According to Goldie, the Swift IT Bars and the exceptional teamwork restored more than 14,000 computers, enabling Sandia to get back to work faster than any other DOE lab.

Goldie and her team are working to soon allow administrative assistants to purchase from the Swift storefront on behalf of the staff they support and are exploring how the Swift IT Bars can best serve new employees.

"I can't wait to see where it goes in the coming years as we continue to innovate," Goldie said. "We have reduced procurement time by weeks and are getting customers up and running much faster.

From homeless to hopeful

Sandians help HopeWorks build community garden

By **Kim Vallez Quintana**

"I was sleeping on the sidewalk, on a piece of cardboard, not far from here," James Freeman said as he spoke about the journey that brought him to the nonprofit HopeWorks.

"I arrived here on a bus about nine years ago. I had a few hundred bucks in my pocket and thought I would be able to find work quickly and support myself. It didn't happen that way."

Freeman is one of thousands of people HopeWorks, formerly St. Martin's, has helped over the past 40 years. "I stayed at all the shelters at one point or another, but found so much love, kindness and compassion at HopeWorks," he said.

Today, Freeman has a home of his own, a bachelor's degree in social work, a goal of earning a master's degree, and a seat on the board of the organization that helped change his life.

Sandia wants to help create more success stories by supporting the HopeWorks' latest project: a community garden.

Turning dirt into hope

"People here got really excited about it after hearing that it was really going to happen this year," HopeWorks Development Director Mitchie Benavidez said.

HopeWorks staff had long envisioned transforming a vacant, dirt- and weed-filled lot on its campus into a community garden — a place for healing and hope. "I think it can be an escape. Not just for clients, but for staff too. An out-of-the-way place where they can tend to the garden or do their work," Benavidez said.

The challenge was securing funding. That's where Sandia's community involvement team stepped in.

"I got to meet James on a recent tour of HopeWorks and felt so inspired by his story of overcoming homelessness," Sandia Community Involvement Manager Katrina Wagner said. "I wanted Sandia to be a part of this garden to see firsthand the amazing work HopeWorks does in our community."

HOPEFUL JOURNEY — James Freeman stands outside Hope Village looking at the streets where he once slept. Now a board member of the organization, James works to help others facing hardships. **Photo by Kim Quintana**

BEFORE AND AFTER — Sandia volunteers help transform an empty lot into a new community garden at HopeWorks. **Photo by David Lienemann**

Sandia secured funds to pay for plants, tools and supplies, but the biggest help came in the form of Sandia volunteers who spent April 25 digging, plowing, shoveling, cutting, raking and planting.

"I've always wanted to do an outreach event," said Vinh Ton-That, a year-round Sandia intern. "I live around these parts, so I see homelessness day to day. Doing garden work or yard work is the least I can do."

Vinh was joined by fellow intern Angel Serrano, who grew up in Albuquerque. "HopeWorks helps the community in such a special way, especially when it comes to the mental health aspect that can be part of homelessness," Angel said. "Growing up here, I didn't think Sandia did community involvement events like this. I thought they just did science. It's cool to be part of something like this."

A place to reflect and work

The new garden sits outside of Hope Village, a 42-unit housing complex located on Third Street near Mountain Road in downtown Albuquerque. The village houses clients making significant strides toward rebuilding their lives, while providing safe housing, mental health services, employment counseling and other critical resources as they help rebuild their lives.

"I can see the clients really taking ownership of that space," Freeman said. "They already have a flower garden in the clubhouse, and they have chores like watering and feeding the plants, making sure they get enough sunlight."

Sandia volunteer Kara Komula said she didn't know much about the project when she first signed up but was quickly moved by its mission. "Once they told us the story and mission, I thought it was really incredible and an amazing resource."

Kara is grateful for the opportunity to volunteer through Sandia. "It really does make the community a better place and the more volunteers we have, the bigger the impact," she said.

HopeWorks staff said they're thankful for the partnership.

"The community garden just made sense, and for Sandia to step in and really want to be part of this program was a win-win for us," Benavidez said.

A CAREER OF SERVICE — Retiring Community Involvement Manager Amy Tapia spent some time in her last week at Sandia cutting weeds along with intern Angel Serrano to clear space for new plants in the HopeWorks community garden. **Photo by David Lienemann**

Mileposts

Kyu Paek 35

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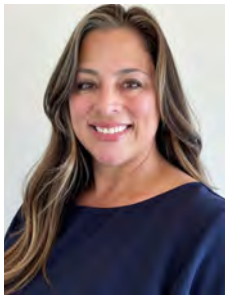

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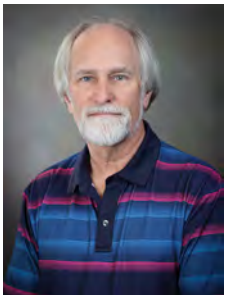


Michael Trahan 26

Sandia postdoc shines at National Lab Research SLAM

By **Sophia Horowitz**

Sandia postdoctoral researcher Michael Leveille wowed the audience at the National Lab Research SLAM on March 5, competing against 16 other early-career researchers. In three minutes and with a single slide, he delivered a compelling presentation on his innovative work, "Blend Green and Flow Clean: Hydrogen in Gas Pipelines," ultimately clinching the top spot in the Environment category.

Michael's presentation focused on introducing hydrogen fuel into natural gas pipelines.

Hydrogen is produced by splitting water and could be generated abundantly on U.S. soil. By using existing natural gas pipelines to deliver hydrogen, the U.S. could extend its domestic energy supply.

"I work on hydrogen material compatibility, which is important to ensure that our gas lines operate safely and reliably when we decide to put hydrogen in them," he said. "There's a big push to put hydrogen into our gas pipes to avoid building an entirely new energy infrastructure."

Hydrogen differs from natural gas at a molecular level, making it essential to study how it interacts with pipeline materials. Michael examines the microscopic structure of plastic polymers as they are exposed to hydrogen and natural gas blends. So far, he hasn't found any signs of damage.

NATIONAL RECOGNITION — Michael Leveille's experience at the National Lab Research SLAM highlights the importance of pushing boundaries in science communication. **Photo by Blaise Douros**

Michael said the National Lab Research SLAM was an enjoyable event that showcases diverse research and represents what national laboratories do for the country. He advised anyone considering a career in science communication to take the plunge, even if they are hesitant.

"The SLAM series progressed from a local competition to a regional event and finally to the national competition, but in the beginning, I barely signed up in time to compete because I wanted to focus on research and because I was nervous," he said. "I had to push myself into it but look where I ended up. I'm so glad I took that first step because the journey that followed has been so rewarding and has taught me a lot about science communication that will no doubt continue to help me throughout my career. So, take the leap — you never know where it will take you."

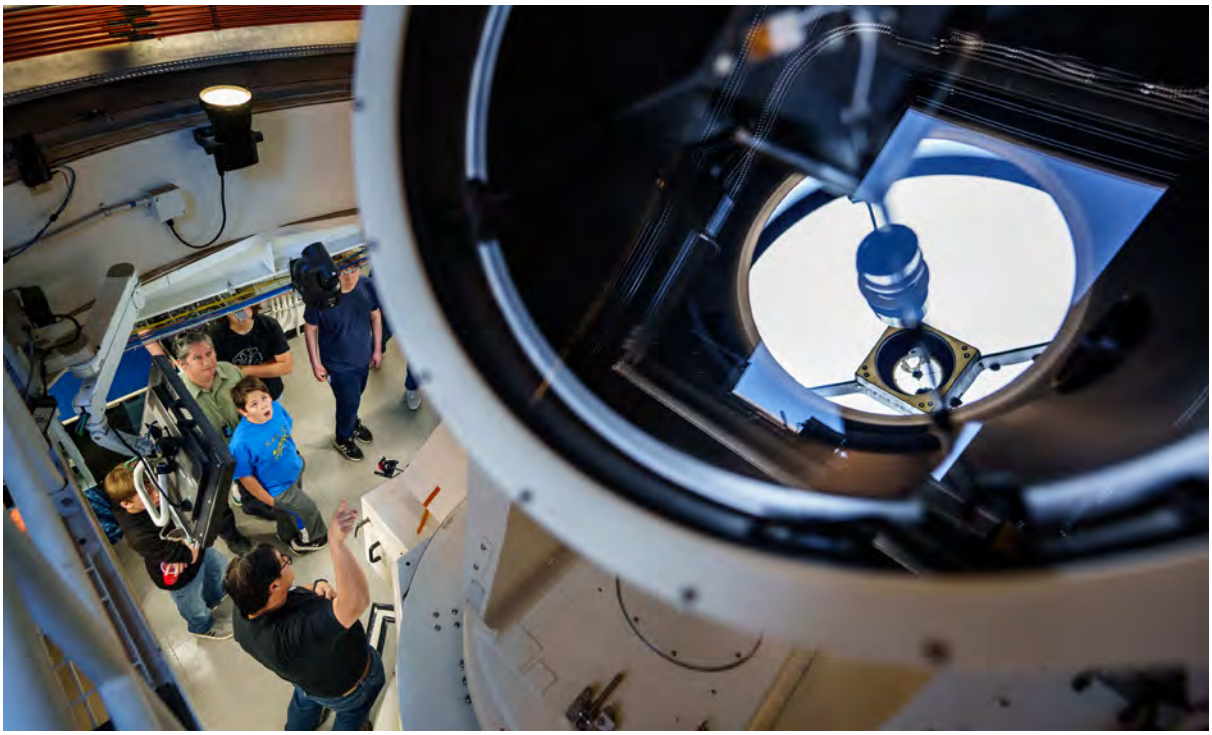
Sandia's Academic Programs postdoctoral lead Tracie Durbin said the National Lab Research SLAM is a vital opportunity for scientists to connect and communicate their research effectively.

"The National Lab Research SLAM is an excellent platform that showcases innovative research and fosters community among scientists," she said. "It empowers researchers to share their work engagingly, bridging complex concepts with public understanding. Participating in the SLAM can transform careers by encouraging scientists to develop essential communication skills."

To learn more about the event, visit the National Lab Research SLAM site.

Where fun meets awe

NM Kids Day draws 2,165 visitors



GIANT LASER — Carlos Aragon, left, and his son Diego learn about Sandia lasers at the Laser Applications Facility, or LAZAP, during a Kids Day tour on April 24. Nearly 1,200 Sandians invited students in grades 5-12 to Kids Day in Albuquerque. **Photo by Craig Fritz**

GAME ON — Samuel Huerta competes against his mom, Miranda Torres-Huerta, in a game of Jenga at the Sandia Culture booth, stationed at Hardin Field during Kids Day at the Labs. **Photo by Craig Fritz**

DOT FIND — Alexis Montoya, center, looks for a hidden point tracked by GPS alongside her mom, Celia Montoya, left, and Sam Blaine during an activity hosted by the Sandia Infrastructure and Civil Engineering team during Kids Day on April 24. Sandians hosted 75 activities during the full-day event. **Photo by Craig Fritz**