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Sandians give beds, decor for fresh start Page 10

Inspiring tomorrow's quantum innovators

QCaMP equips students and educators with essential tools for a quantum-powered future.

By **Kylie Engleman**

This summer, the QCaMP team expanded its efforts to reach students and educators and equip them with the knowledge and ability to teach various topics in quantum physics. Launched in 2022, QCaMP began as a virtual weeklong program that drew 32 students and 20 educators. After the success of its first year, the initiative grew into longer in-person camps and one-day sessions for educators and college students. Now,

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QUANTUM COLLABORATION — Two students team up on a project at the 2025 QCaMP for students. **Photo by Craig Fritz**

Innovating cyber defense for our nation's security

By **Ariana Stern**

CYBER DEFENSE — Senior Scientist Kelcey Tietjen is part of Sandia's cyber security team. **Photo by Craig Fritz**

In a world increasingly reliant on technology, the risk of cyber incidents looms large, threatening the very fabric of our interconnected lives. Amid this chaos, Sandia is a leader in defense against cyber threats, thanks in large part to individuals like Kelcey Tietjen. As a senior scientist, Kelcey has established himself as an expert in the global fight against cybercrime.

A journey begins

Kelcey began his career as an intern at Los Alamos National Laboratory, where he worked in mechanical engineering and systems engineering. After earning a bachelor's degree from the University of New Mexico, he pursued graduate studies in high-tech crime investigation at George Washington University.

His career took a pivotal turn when he joined a cybersecurity company that sent him around the globe to assist with cyber incident response. He often worked over 80 hours a week tackling some of the most severe incidents in support of national security. His career path eventually led him to roles at Bechtel and Apple

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EDITOR'S NOTE: Please send your comments and suggestions for stories or for improving the paper. If you have a column (500-800 words) or an idea to submit, contact the Lab News editor at labnews@sandia.gov.

Field of dreams

By **Magdalena Krajewski**

Amy Matteucci was just 8 years old when she planted her first seeds.

"I was a Camp Fire girl, and we earned a badge for gardening. I started a black-eyed pea plant, and it just went bananas," Amy, an engineering program lead at Sandia, said.

Amy still remembers the sense of accomplishment she felt watching that plant grow, from seed to sprout to flower and finally harvest.

"I was so proud of that first crop. I pulled the peas off the plant, threw them into this giant silver bowl, and later, after we prepared them and I had my first bite, I remember thinking they were the best black-eyed peas I had ever tasted because they were mine," Amy said. "And from then on, I was hooked."

Deep roots

The gardening bug ran deep in Amy's family. Growing up in Texas, her grandparents were prolific gardeners, growing okra, corn, peppers and as she called them, her grandmother's "crazy tomatoes." Amy's mother took to flowers, known for her annuals and roses. And her brother, who refused to eat veggies, would grow "the most amazing vegetable gardens."

As Amy grew older, she continued to garden, taking after her mom, growing flowers wherever she could.

"Even in college while living in these tiny apartments, I would have pots of flowers," she said. "And in almost every home I've ever lived in, I've made it a

IN BLOOM — Amy Matteucci, an engineering program lead at Sandia, shows off a bouquet of her freshly grown dahlias. **Photo by Craig Fritz**

priority to have plenty of flower beds."

But gardening isn't just about growing something beautiful. For Amy, it's also a form of therapy.

"Starting something from nothing, take a seed, some dirt, add a little water and watch it grow. It's a spiritual experience, a form of therapy, to see that direct benefit of effort," she said. "It's a powerful confidence builder."

Dahlias and potatoes

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Amy got into the "dahlia side of Instagram." Already a feracious plantswoman, she suddenly found herself fixated on the tuberous perennials, specifically the Ball Dahlia.

"I noticed this flower in my feed. It had this uniquely decorative shape, the petals arranged in perfect folds. I was obsessed," Amy said. "Dahlias are grown underground, like a potato, and in some ways, they're robust the same way a potato is. When you touch them, they're very firm. You can squeeze them and they'll keep their shape. They're really strong flowers."

THE DAHLIA — Known for its stunning variety and intricate petals, this vibrant bloom symbolizes elegance and strength. **Photo by Craig Fritz**

Unexpected changes

Around this same time, Amy's life took an unexpected turn.

In 2022, she learned that her mom was sick. She had been diagnosed with acute myeloid leukemia and was in the hospital with a fever.

"My mom told me not to worry, but as soon as I got off the phone, I threw some clothes in a bag, headed to the airport and asked for the quickest flight home," she said. "My parents didn't know I was coming, and shortly after I landed, my dad called to tell me they were putting mom on a ventilator. I told him I was on my way to the hospital from the airport — and he just broke down."

Amy spent eight weeks in Texas caring for her mom. They would sit together and talk about life, their past and Amy's future.

"Watching her in those final days was surreal because in so many ways, I thought my mom was too tough to die. I think like a lot of kids. We think our parents are immortal, but she wasn't; none of us are," she said.

AMY'S FARM — In 2024, Amy went from growing dahlias at home to leasing an eighth of an acre at the Rio Grande Community Farm. **Photo by Craig Fritz**

The next chapter

As Amy grappled with what it meant to lose her mother, she also began to understand she was entering a new phase of life: stepping into the role as matriarch for her family while saying goodbye to her own.

"For so long I was just focused on raising my daughter and work," she said. "There wasn't much time to do anything that was just for me."

But now with her daughter graduated from college and retirement on the horizon, Amy pondered what she wanted from this next chapter. Turns out she'd already found what she was looking for.

"When I came back to New Mexico after my mom passed, I decided I was going to start growing dahlias," Amy said.

She started at home in 2023, planting about 150 tubers in her yard. Unlike sunflowers or marigolds, which are grown from seeds, the preferred way to plant dahlias is by planting tubers, which are the underground storage organ of the plant.

Growing opportunities

Her home garden flourished as did her network within the dahlia community, both on social media and, more formally, through the American Dahlia Society. Amy learned more about farmers who were growing larger quantities and of potential business opportunities within these circles.

"I realized that this could be a viable business to supplement my eventual retirement," Amy said. "When my mom passed, she left my brother and I some money that she had inherited from her father — literal seed money that they had both worked so hard to save and put aside."

Empowered by what her mother left her, both physically and in spirit, Amy was able to lease an eighth of an acre from the Rio Grande Community Farm in 2024.

"It's been a big learning curve, planting on a farm," she said. "Growing at home gives you a pretty controlled environment, but it's totally different on a farm. The enormity of growing on a field is a challenge on its own, and then you have the environmental logistics. It's a lot of trial by fire."

On the farm, she planted 10 times as many tubers as she had the previous year at home. That first year was hard, but Amy said every time she encountered a hurdle — something going wrong or not working the way she had hoped — she imagined a field full of blooming dahlias. That imaginary field kept her going.

"In August, I started pulling back the shade cloth, and I could finally see everything. It wasn't in full bloom yet, but there was the whole field, the live plants, and I had this moment of awe, like this is what I had been picturing," she said. "A few weeks later, I was standing back in the field, dahlias blooming around me, and I was just overcome with feelings. I was so proud of myself, and I felt my mom's presence there with me. It was really beautiful."

"Losing my mom, growing dahlias, being in the farm — these experiences have given me a deeper connection to the world around me, the soil, the seasons, the weather. I can't control that one day I'm going to die, and I can't control that I'll lose my flowers after the first frost, but I can control how I spend the seasons I have and how I enjoy the flowers in bloom."

QCaMP

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in 2025, QCaMP for teachers has grown to include 131 educators across eight states, with plans for continued growth nationwide. The student program had another successful year, reaching 39 participants. Overall, QCaMP has engaged a total of over 490 participants.

QCaMP aims to increase the number of students pursuing careers in quantum information science across the U.S. To lay a solid foundation in quantum studies and to build students' confidence in STEM, the team recognized that it is essential to first equip K-12 teachers with the tools needed to prepare their students. This mission led to the development of QCaMP for educators.

The 2025 QCaMP for educators, held from June 16-20, hosted participants from 14 cohort locations across Arizona, California, Colorado, Illinois, Louisiana, New Mexico, New York, Missouri and Pennsylvania. During the four-day program, attendees explored the fundamentals of quantum information science, covering topics such as superposition, entanglement, polarization, qubits and probability.

"QCaMP offers unique resources and training opportunities that can equip educators with the tools they need to effectively teach complex quantum concepts," said Community Relations Specialist Deb Menke, who is part of the QCaMP team. "This outreach not only strengthens the educational framework but also builds a robust pipeline of talent ready to tackle the challenges of the future in quantum research and application."

THUMBS UP — Students collaborate in groups during a session at QCaMP 2025. **Photo by Craig Fritz**

While QCaMP for educators has expanded significantly since its inception, there remains a strong demand across the U.S., particularly in small, rural areas. The QCaMP team is committed to finding sustainable ways to expand while ensuring a positive and impactful experience for the communities they serve. Currently, the team is working to renew the QCaMP program for an additional five years, with the goal of expanding to 25 states during that time. To learn more about QCaMP or to get involved next summer, please reach out to QCaMP@sandia.gov.

FIVE MINDS, ONE MISSION — Five students join forces to tackle a challenge during an exercise at the 2025 QCaMP. **Photo by Craig Fritz**

Cyber defense

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before landing at Sandia.

Throughout his journey, Kelcey has confronted high-stakes challenges, including uncovering financial theft and navigating multi-billion-dollar lawsuits. At Sandia, he has been a pivotal force in empowering our community partners and government entities to effectively combat and manage cybercrime.

A global mission

"Site assists are my bread and butter," he said.

When asked how cyber assist opportunities arise, Kelcey highlights the importance of his long-standing presence in the cyber community, which has fostered a strong network.

"Word of mouth spreads fast," he said. "Unfortunately, there is no bat signal, but there is a connection through the Cyber Center of Excellence where stakeholders can more formally reach out for help."

Participating in cyber assists allows Sandia to support the broader community while gaining valuable insights into attacker behavior, such as their movement patterns and tactics. This knowledge enhances Sandia's ability to coordinate incident response efforts and better prepare for future threats.

Building a community

Beyond his technical expertise, Kelcey educates others on cyber incident response. He teaches a graduate course at New Mexico Tech on incident response and is actively involved in the TracerFIRE program, which simulates real-life incidents for college students. He empowers individuals throughout the nuclear security enterprise, equipping them with the knowledge they need to participate in incident response.

"One of the best things about Sandia is the wide scope of cyber professionals we have; the breadth and depth of expertise is impressive, especially with site assists. There's a strong bench of talent we can lean on for support," Kelcey said.

A vision for the future

As Kelcey continues his mission, he remains committed to staying ahead of the ever-evolving landscape of cyber threats. He is particularly excited about exploring exploding technologies like artificial intelligence and generative AI, viewing them as new challenges to tackle. Two key questions hold his attention: how can we better detect when AI is being abused, and how can we leverage AI as an ally to accelerate our incident response capabilities?

With a focus on innovation and collaboration, Kelcey Tietjen exemplifies the spirit of Sandia in the ongoing fight against cybercrime.

Get to know Kelcey

Q. What do you like to do when you're not helping make the world more secure?
A. I'm an avid pickleball player! I used to play rugby, but I've since made the switch to pickleball, and I love it.
Q. What do you love most about Sandia?
A. The constant influx of new challenges and innovations. Whether it's the implementation of a new cloud service or advancements in operational technology, there's always something new being integrated into the ecosystem.

ON THE COURT — Senior scientist Kelcey Tietjen played at the United Pickleball Association New Mexico state championships.

Photo courtesy of Kelcey Tietjen

Igniting a spark: A STEM summer camp

By **Spring Booth**

"If you don't know, you don't know. Exposure is key; students need to know what options they have and what careers they can pursue," Dan Houck said on why he volunteered to teach students about renewable energy at a STEM-focused summer camp.

Several Sandians echoed this sentiment as they shared their time and expertise with 25 students who attended the camp. In partnership with Explora, an Albuquerque science center and children's museum, Sandia engineers introduced students to different types of renewable energy sources and grid integration and systems control technologies using a combination of lectures and hands-on activities.

Expanding on last year's success, Explora offered two camps this year: one in June for junior high students and another in July for high school students. Each day focused on a specific technology with lectures and activities geared toward different age groups. Explora's Carlos Gonzalez ran the camp assisting Sandia's engineers with their demos and activities.

POWER PLAY — Campers examine a 3D model that shows how renewable energy sources are integrated into the electric grid. Sandians Rachid Darbali-Zamora, center, and Raquel Valdez, right, with Explora's Carlos Gonzalez. **Photo by Craig Fritz**

Mechanical engineer Dan Houck, intern Danial Anwaar-Maximo and mechanical engineer Jon Berg taught campers about the various engineering disciplines involved in designing wind turbines. Armed with CDs, paper, popsicle sticks and hot glue guns, the campers set out to create their own wind turbine rotors, tested their designs with a box fan, measured how much voltage was generated, then redesigned and tested again. They learned how blade angle and weight impacted energy output, plus the tradeoffs of different design choices and importance of reiteration.

ENERGY SHUFFLE — Raquel Valdez, standing, and Kelley Ruehl teach campers how to play a card game that illustrates how to balance electricity on the grid. **Photo by Craig Fritz**

Electrical engineer Dan Riley's session on photovoltaics brought the sun's energy to the forefront. Campers learned about the pros and cons of solar energy, then designed and built solar-cell-powered cars. Using a 3D-printed frame, they soldered a small solar cell to a tiny engine. Once they attached wheels, they were ready to race. The students tested their cars on the sidewalk outside of Explora's X-studio classrooms.

Systems engineer Miguel Lebya's introduced campers to concentrated solar energy. Inspired by Archimedes' legendary death ray, and with much coordination from Miguel, students used hand mirrors to focus sunlight in one spot. Miguel

used a thermometer connected to an app to display the temperature change on the whiteboard. The highlight of the day was roasting marshmallows and hot dogs on a solar concentrator dish. Students learned that marshmallows burst into flames at 400 degrees Celsius and that the dish was able to reach 1,000 degrees Celsius. For one session, Miguel was joined by mechanical engineer Kathryn Small, who spoke about conducting tests and observing chemical reactions at Sandia's solar oven, using concentrated solar to reach temperatures of 3,000 to 4,000 degrees Celsius.

Later in the week, mechanical engineer Kelley Ruehl and systems analyst Raquel Valdez guided younger campers through the world of water power. Joined by electrical engineer Jorge Leon-Quiroga for the high school camp, students used copper wire, fishing bobbers and magnets to reverse-engineer wave energy kits, measuring energy output with voltmeters. Kelley asked campers to draw their own designs for wave energy converters, illustrating the challenges and innovations in harnessing marine energy. These discussions highlighted the potential of marine energy to power homes and communities, especially in coastal areas.

The last day of camp was dedicated to grid integration, led by electrical engineer Rachid Darbali-Zamora, Raquel Valdez and Jorge Leon-Quiroga. Rachid shared his personal story of experiencing a three-month power outage after a hurricane in Puerto Rico, emphasizing the importance of stable electricity. The campers learned about microgrids and the importance of battery storage. They then played a card game developed by Rachid, Raquel and Jorge called "Keep the Lights On," where they balanced renewable energy sources against various threats to the grid, including squirrels, who have been responsible for several historical outages.

Throughout the camp, the presenters emphasized the significance of STEM outreach to show students their career possibilities.

"I am a mechanical and ocean engineer by training and have been working on marine energy R&D for over a decade," Kelley said. "But growing up in Ohio, far from the ocean, I didn't know what marine energy was, or that Ocean Engineering was a career field until I started applying to graduate schools."

Rachid echoed this sentiment, saying, "Programs like this help break down barriers and build bridges between the national labs and the communities we serve."

Raquel expressed her hope that the campers would see themselves in the volunteers from Sandia, inspiring them to pursue careers in science and engineering.

This work was funded in part by the DOE Water Power Technologies Office and was supported by Sandia's Community Involvement office.

BLOWN AWAY — Sandian Dan Houck and Explora's Carlos Gonzalez test a camper's model wind turbine rotor design. **Photo by Spring Booth**

RIDE THE WAVE — Raquel Valdez helps students test their wave energy kits. **Photo by Spring Booth**

SOLAR RACE — Dan Riley helps campers solder an engine to a solar cell. **Photo by Spring Booth**

Sandia picks Louisiana university as solar research partner

By **Kelly Sullivan**

Sandia has designated the University of Louisiana at Lafayette as its sixth Regional Test Center for Emerging Solar Technologies.

The Regional Test Center program provides a state-of-the-art technical platform, enabling performance studies of emerging photovoltaic technologies across multiple climates.

Established by the DOE Solar Energy Technologies Office, these elite centers allow for rigorous evaluation of proprietary technologies under realistic field conditions to support commercialization of high-efficiency solar technologies, such as panels, as well as new applications, such as roof-integrated solar.

Each center has a common infrastructure, including world-class meteorological instrumentation, high-resolution monitoring equipment and operating protocols to ensure data quality. Since the program's inception, the Regional Test Centers have supported more than 30 companies.

"The RTC program supports the development and validation of U.S.-made solar products and helps ensure U.S. research and development leadership in solar energy research and deployment," program lead Laurie Burnham said.

The announcement was made April 25 during a ceremony at University of Louisiana-Lafayette to dedicate Antoun Hall, a 45,000-square-foot facility housing the university's Solar Energy Lab that has the tools and technical capabilities to support the new center. Located on a six-acre solar field adjacent to Antoun Hall, the university's Research Park, the center will support industry-funded studies as well as research. Sandia chose the site for its high heat and humidity, as well as the location's potential for severe weather events, such as hurricanes.

Sandia is also partnering with the university on the DOE-funded project, "Strategies and Technologies for Operationally Resilient and Maximally available Solar," or STORMS, which aims to develop tools and best practices for predicting, mitigating and responding to extreme weather.

Sandia and University of Louisiana researchers will evaluate the resilience of solar racks and fasteners to hurricane-force winds to support best practices and new codes and standards. As a parallel effort, Sandia will expose electrical connectors to the high heat and humidity at the Louisiana center, comparing results with a matched experimental setup at Sandia.

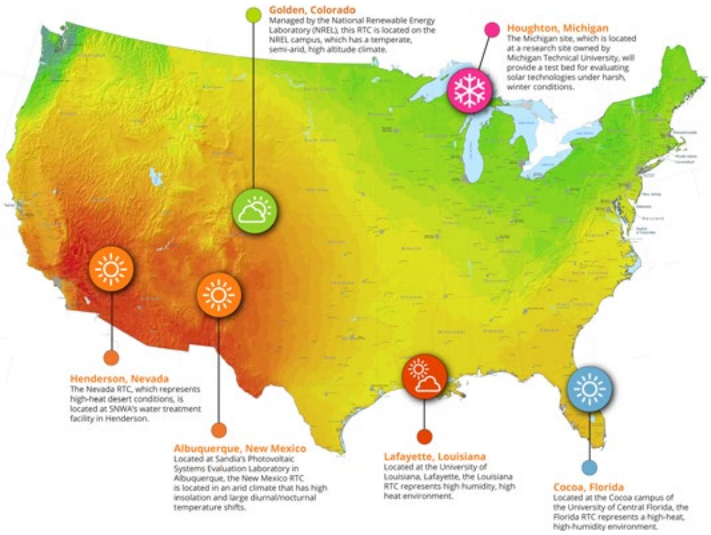
University of Louisiana-Lafayette said it will also leverage the Regional Test Center to support workforce development for those choosing a career in the photovoltaic industry. The country's largest manufacturer of solar components, First Solar, plans to begin operations at its New Iberia, Louisiana, site by the end of 2025, and will need a well-trained workforce. Many of those workers are expected to receive training through the university.

"University of Louisiana has the passion, the technical excellence and the dedicated staff needed to support this partnership; Sandia has the know-how and technical capabilities to drive change," Laurie said. "Together, we will help grow the supply of American energy, drive innovation in the solar sector and expand opportunities for the students and workers of Louisiana."

Learn more about Sandia's Regional Test Center facilities and capabilities and the University of Louisiana-Lafayette's solar research, training and curriculum.

CENTER CEREMONY — From left, University of Louisiana-Lafayette Dean Ahmed Khattab, UL-Lafayette Provost Jaimie Hebert, First Solar Chief Operations Officer Georges Antoun, UL-Lafayette Program Director Terry Chambers, Sandia project lead Laurie Burnham, UL-Lafayette President Joseph Savoie, UL-Lafayette Vice President Ramesh Kolluru and Lafayette Mayor-President Monique Boulet celebrate the unveiling of the sixth Regional Test Center at the University of Louisiana-Lafayette.

Photo by Doug Dugas, University of Louisiana at Lafayette



NATIONWIDE STUDIES — Sandia's six Regional Test Centers are located where they can take advantage of a variety of climate conditions.

Graphic by Sandia Creative Services

Sandia hosts NM senator

SYSTEMS BRIEFING — Sen. Martin Heinrich, center, visits the Brayton Cycle facility on a tour hosted by Darryn Fleming, principal mechanical engineer of Advanced Nuclear Concepts, on Aug. 8. During his visit, Heinrich met with Labs leadership and toured the Nuclear Energy Systems laboratory.

Photo by Craig Fritz

ON THE GO — Sen. Martin Heinrich, right, talks with, from left, NNSA Sandia Field Office manager Daryl Hauck, Sandia Government Relations manager Erik Ridley, Sandia Government Relations officer Jason Jarvis, Heinrich's State Director Edward Tabet-Cubero and Labs Director Laura McGill between tour stops on Aug. 8

Photo by Craig Fritz

Sandians build beds, decorate apartment for Saranam family

By **Katherine Beherec**

Armed with toolboxes and shelf paper, Sandians volunteered over three days to prepare an apartment for a family in need through partnership with nonprofit Saranam. On Aug. 2 and Aug. 9, groups of volunteers outfitted the apartment with essentials and décor. On Aug. 8, a volunteer group from Sandia's Workplace Improvement Network constructed two twin beds for the apartment.

Saranam, a nonprofit organization based in Albuquerque, offers a two-year program that provides families with housing, food, education and job training to break cycles of generational homelessness. This approach helps families escape from homelessness and poverty permanently with a 76% success rate, according to Saranam's website.

On July 28, prior to the decorating days, Community Involvement Specialist Roberta Rivera received keys to the three-bedroom, two-bathroom apartment and began organizing donations and shopping for items on lists provided by the nonprofit.

The first group of volunteers prioritized cleaning the space and assembling furniture, such as accent tables and dressers. A volunteer was tasked with removing stickers from new items, a few Sandians assembled flat-packed furniture and others prepped the kitchen before it was stocked. The second group of volunteers assembled the remaining furniture, hung curtains and art, and ensured the apartment was ready for its new residents' arrival.

From blueprints to beds

Systems research engineer Michelle Williams mobilized a group of volunteers to build five beds for Saranam — two of which were used in the newly furnished apartment. Michelle, who is part of her division's Workplace Improvement Network, or WIN, funded the project with a $1,000 Super WIN grant that could be used for a project that benefits a nonprofit.

Michelle's father builds beds for children through the Rotary Club in her hometown in Minnesota so when Albuquerque Mayor Tim Keller visited Sandia in March, his talk on homelessness in the city inspired Michelle to build beds for children in Albuquerque. She reached out to Community Involvement Manager Katrina Wagner for information about local nonprofits.

GOOD MEASURE — Labs Director Laura McGill, right, measures shelf liner for kitchen cabinets during a volunteer day with Saranam on Aug. 2. Laura, electrical engineer Rachid Darbali-Zamora, left, and executive strategy professional Deidra Soto prepared the kitchen before it was stocked.

Photo by Katherine Beherec

Katrina introduced Michelle to Saranam. She determined they could build five twin beds within their budget. Michelle's dad shared his blueprints, which are beds built with brackets that will allow families to disassemble and move them to a new, permanent residence when they complete the two-year program.

Michelle partnered with WIN representative Brendan Nation to ensure continual progress on the project. They worked at the Air Force Research Lab Maker Hub, where they accessed a suite of tools and woodworking equipment, as well as necessary training to prepare the wood.

The WIN team spent the grant on materials to build the beds and five sets of bedding. A local mattress store donated new mattresses. The Jemez Mountain Bear Paw Quilt Guild made and donated six quilts to cover the beds.

Saranam placed the three additional beds in three other apartments at the same complex. Michelle hopes to build beds to furnish new housing that Saranam has built in west Albuquerque. She would also like to expand training at the Maker Hub to more Sandians.

"Now that we've gone through the process and we know what works, what doesn't work and what we would change, I know that we can make them even better for the future," Michelle said.

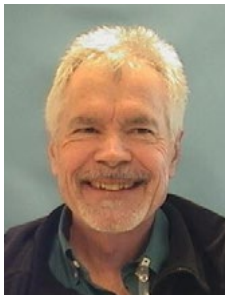
BUILT WITH LOVE — Senior counsel Mark Dodd builds a bed outside the Saranam apartment on Aug. 8.

Photo by Katrina Wagner

Mileposts


Cathy Ottinger Farnum 45


David Vehar 45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