

Continued Commitment to Learning and Education Underpins a Science and Technology-based Economy for Los Alamos

By: Bill Wadt

Last month Min Park penned a superb article on the shared vision and partnership needed between the County, the Laboratory, and non-profit economic development entities such as the Los Alamos Commerce and Development Corporation (LACDC) and the Regional Development Corporation to sustain a science and technology-based economy for Los Alamos. This month, I want to build on Min's picture by focusing on another critical factor for success, namely, continuing our individual and collective commitment to learning and education.

Investment in learning and education underpins the questioning, innovative environment that sustains vibrant science and technology. The federal government for over sixty years recognized the importance of quality schools to the vitality of Los Alamos National Laboratory through its significant support of the Los Alamos Public Schools, which currently receive \$8 million per year as codified in the new contract with Los Alamos National Security, LLC. Ten years ago the Department of Energy, in partnership with our Congressional Delegation, the University of California (UC), the Laboratory, and Los Alamos, took a very creative step to expand the investment in learning and education through the creation of the Los Alamos National Laboratory Foundation. In ten years the Foundation has invested \$19 million in schools and non-profits that serve Los Alamos and its neighboring counties and pueblos and have given out \$1.3 million in scholarships to over 350 students. Moreover, with expert financial management from UC, the Foundation has grown its endowments to over \$58 million.

Eight years ago, the citizens of Los Alamos were provided the opportunity to invest in education and learning through the initiation of regular bond and referendum elections to raise capital funding to support the physical and technological infrastructure of the public schools. In a month, voters will have another opportunity to affirm their commitment to the future of our children and the community by support a referendum to raise \$7 million over the next four years for important safety and facility upgrades to our aging school buildings.

More recently, the LANL Foundation retained the Clements Group, national experts in raising funds for educational institutions, to help school districts in the region learn how to raise funds from the private sector to augment their often austere operational and capital budgets. This effort is part of the LANL Foundation's Major Gifts Campaign to raise significant additional resources for our First Born Program, our Endowment for Educational Enrichment, and for the Los Alamos Employee Scholarship Fund. One of the most active and successful pupils of the Clements Group has been the Los Alamos Education Foundation, which is quickly becoming an effective partner of the LANL Foundation to raise funds for our local schools to meet the challenges of preparing the next generation for the rigors of the 21st century. With a very generous bequest of a Los

Alamos resident, we have already raised over half a million dollars for the Los Alamos Schools.

The last ten years have seen significant investment by the DOE to replace and upgrade aging facilities and infrastructure at the Laboratory. In parallel, downtown Los Alamos has benefited from significant investments from the business community and the major property owners. The County, too, has made some significant investments. If you were here 10 years ago, think about how much more attractive and pedestrian friendly the Central Avenue / Main Street nexus is now than it used to be. By continuing partnership between the County, the business community, the non-profit community, the schools, UNM-LA, and, of course, the DOE and the Laboratory and active engagement of citizens, we can make the most of current opportunities, such as the Trinity Redevelopment Project, and develop new ones that will make the community an even better place to earn a living, raise a family, and have fun.

The most recent reports list Los Alamos as having the highest median household income of any county in the Nation. We have clearly benefited from the tremendous investments the Federal Government has made here in national security science and technology over the past 63 years. We are now in a position and have the mechanisms to augment those ongoing investments with personal and private sector contributions to improve our local and regional economy and quality of life. It is time for all of us to take up the challenge, whether it is volunteering at our schools, embarking on an entrepreneurial venture, or supporting a local non-profit. Through our individual and collective efforts to support and invest in education and learning, we can build the environment and infrastructure it takes to grow, attract, and retain the talent it will take to strengthen our science and technology-based economy.

Bill Wadt is a member of the boards for the Los Alamos Commerce and Development Cooperation and Los Alamos National Laboratory Foundation and a manager at Laboratory.