

DOUBLE PLAY: TWO NMDVR PARTICIPANTS WORK FOR THE ISOTOPES

If people want to spend the spring and summer working for the Albuquerque Isotopes Triple-A baseball team, the organization will try to find a spot for them. So, when New Mexico Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Program Manager Cara Benta met with team representatives last winter to find employment for program participants, the team was more than happy to partner with NMDVR.

“We try to be inclusive,” says Isotopes General Manager John Traub. “It doesn’t matter age or ability. We want to make sure people feel they are included and feel welcome to be part of what we’re doing here.”

Elijah Schroeder works in the “Fun Zone” and Hilario Hernandez is part of the cleaning crew, both in stadium operations. “We look for people who are going to represent the organization in a positive manner,” Traub says, adding Elijah and Hilario fit well into his team’s lineup. “They’re young; they’re dedicated; they take the job and the opportunity seriously; they’re dependable and enthusiastic. That’s what we hope for with all of our employees.”

Schroeder recently graduated from Volcano Vista High School in Albuquerque and is planning to begin studies at Central New Mexico Community College this fall. “I needed valuable work experience,” says the 18-year-old. “This was the best option for me, and the pay’s not bad.”

He appreciates that his supervisors are accommodating to his needs, and the job allows for a flexible schedule. He also likes to take advantage of the employee discount at the concession stands.



Elijah Schroeder at one of the rides in the Isotopes Park Fun Zone.



Hilario Hernandez (right) with his Isotopes supervisor Jon Thelander.

Hernandez says, “I thought it would be a fun and interesting job. The game is pretty interesting.” The 18-year-old graduate of Valley High School adds he would consider doing it again next year.

Taking the family out to the ball game is discretionary spending, so management’s goal is to provide a quality day or evening for the more than half-million people who come out to see the top farm team of the Colorado Rockies play each year. Says Traub, “We’re not hiring people to play second base. We leave that to the major league club. We look for people to work in support roles to put on the best entertainment and fan experience possible.”

It takes a lot of people to run an operation like the Isotopes, including New Mexicans with disabilities. “We try to be representative of the community around us. We’d be doing a disservice to the community if we weren’t interested in all people who are looking to work here.” Traub adds, “They have to be able to do the job, of course, and take the job seriously.”

Elijah and Hilario have stepped up to the plate all season.

For information about hiring participants for your organization, contact the nearest NMDVR office. There are two dozen locations across the state: dvr.state.nm.us/locations/.

The New Mexico Division of Vocational Rehabilitation helps individuals with disabilities find suitable employment. To do so, NMDVR partners with employers seeking to enhance their workforce. Vocational rehabilitation is a voluntary program supporting people who want to work. With a long history of success and proven methodology for making the best fits, NMDVR is committed to helping participants thrive in their communities. For more information, visit dvr.state.nm.us or call 505-954-8500.

The Vocational Rehabilitation program receives 78.7% of its funding through a grant from the U.S. Department of Education. For federal fiscal year 2025, the total awarded is \$24,099,900. The remaining 21.3% is funded by state appropriations and transfers from the Commission for the Blind and Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing.

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