

THE BUZZ



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WHAT'S INSIDE...

**2026 New Mexico State Spelling Bee action • How your words impact the conversation • Why journalism matters to Gens Alpha and Z
Introducing a new app - be the first to know! • And more!**

ALBUQUERQUE
JOURNAL

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Welcome to the New Mexico spelling bee

Dear Readers and Spelling Bee Participants,

We hope you enjoy this celebration of the exceptional spellers who took the stage last weekend at the 2026 New Mexico State Spelling Bee. District champions from across our state competed with an extraordinary command of language, making their families, communities, and all New Mexicans proud. We are both inspired and grateful.



William P. Lang, Publisher

While the Albuquerque Journal has sponsored the state spelling bee with Scripps since 1953, this year holds special significance: The Albuquerque Journal is celebrating 100 years of local ownership by the Lang family. In conjunction with this 2026 commemoration, the spelling bee enables us to spotlight the power of reading, writing, and language mastery through some of our state’s most talented young minds.

Spelling bee competitors’ abilities extend far beyond spelling. They possess dedication, resilience, and grace under pressure. These skills accelerate reading fluency, support vocabulary development and foster confidence in communication, opening doors both personally and professionally. Whatever path their futures take, they will undoubtedly continue to benefit from the precision and confidence that comes with linguistic excellence, as we show in articles throughout this special section.

We congratulate all of the bee participants - past and present - and are honored to acknowledge a few of them here.

Sincerely,

William P. Lang
Publisher

THE BUZZ



2026 SPELLING BEE COVERAGE 4

FROM BEE TO BLOG AND BEYOND 6

TEEN PERSPECTIVES 10

SCROLL SMART 11

CELEBRATING 100 YEARS 12

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**MEET THE
2026
NEW
MEXICO
STATE
SPELLING
BEE
FINALISTS**



Luca Ardelean
5th Grade
Onate
Elementary
School



Tesnime Ata
7th Grade
Mountain View
Middle School



Aadit Balwan
7th Grade
Albuquerque
Academy



Genesis Behrend
7th Grade
Our Lady of the
Assumption
Catholic School



Max Berger
8th Grade
Albuquerque
Academy



Dru Cadol
6th Grade
Cottonwood Valley
Charter School



Julian Colmenero
6th Grade
Cottonwood Valley
Charter School



Elijah Earp
8th Grade
Jal Junior Senior
High School



Grace Finch
8th Grade
Hoover Middle
School



Zedekiah Iburan
5th Grade
The Montessori
Academy



Hannah Li
8th Grade
Los Alamos
Middle School



**Desmond
Meiklejohn**
6th Grade
Coronado
Elementary School



Alejandro Najera
8th Grade
Washington
Middle School



Christy Neilson
5th Grade
Rehoboth
Christian School



Mohammed Rahma
5th Grade
North Star
Elementary School



Amari Robinson
7th Grade
Rio Rancho
Middle School



Bethany Schroeder
7th Grade
Saint Therese
Catholic School



Eli Sepulveda
6th Grade
Saint Thomas
Aquinas School



Eleanor Shuler
7th Grade
Portales Junior
High School



Cuillena Spacek
6th Grade
Hills Academy



Lindy Swift
8th Grade
Tony Hillerman
Middle School



Hilkihah Taji
8th Grade
Hozho Academy



Eric Tran
8th Grade
Jefferson Middle
School



Sahana Vinodh
8th Grade
Desert Ridge
Middle School



Chamonix Willmon
7th Grade
Heights Middle
School



Hannah Li, 13, Los Alamos Middle School, spells her word during the 79th annual New Mexico State Spelling Bee at CNM's Smith Brasher Hall on March 21. Jessica Baca/Journal

Los Alamos eighth-grader claims New Mexico spelling bee crown

Hannah Li of Los Alamos bests 24 others to win New Mexico State Spelling Bee

Matthew Reisen / Journal News Editor

For Hannah Li, the third time was a charm. After just missing the top spot the past two years, the 13-year-old from Los Alamos Middle School won first place March 21 in the New Mexico State Spelling Bee.

Li spelled “biquintile” and “hygrometer” in the championship round to best Max Berger, who took second place after misspelling “dysautonomia,” which is a disorder of the nervous system. Cuillena Spacek, of Hills Academy in Farmington, took third after misspelling “sonobuoy,” a sonar system used to detect submarines.

In late May, Li will head to the Scripps National Spelling Bee in Washington, D.C., to go against the best in the country.

The bee began at 9 a.m. Saturday inside Smith Brasher Hall at Central New Mexico Community College in Albuquerque. The competition saw 25 contestants from all corners of the state challenged to spell words including “chupacabra,” “du jour” and “asgard.”

Throughout the morning, the number of competitors was whittled down — felled by “en masse,” “diocese” and “clavichord,” among other words — until only Berger and Li remained on the stage.

The pair took turns failing to spell words like “ibis,” “taffeta,” “viridity” and “pulmonate” before Li bested her opponent in the 30th round.

Despite spending the better part of her childhood studying words, Li was at a loss for the

right one to describe how it felt to win.

“It’s like, the feeling of knowing all your work paid off,” Li said with a wide grin, holding tight to her trophy. She said the past two state competitions, in which she placed second and third, only fueled her determination to win.

Li said although she couldn’t study as much this year due to other activities, including speech and debate, she switched up her strategy by learning the spelling patterns of different languages — hoping it would pay off when it came to spelling dictionary words, the ones the competitors were not able to study beforehand.

When asked if she was worried during the hourslong competition, which saw children and parents alike tugging their hair and burying their

faces, the eighth-grader replied, "Not really."

Li, having competed in her last spelling bee, said it is important not to get discouraged. She said, "Just like keep trying. I wanted to win the past couple years but I couldn't, so just keep trying and you'll reach your goal."

Berger, of Albuquerque Academy, had never come so close to first place, having reached fifth twice before in the state bee.

"I'm always coming up short. Second place is a huge achievement, nonetheless," he said. "It could hurt a little bit. I mean, you're right there, but it still feels amazing — I've done so much, worked so hard at this."

Spacek, having lost last year, said third place felt pretty good. She said this year she studied harder.

"I did more words, way more words than last year," Spacek said.

Of the words she spelled correctly Saturday, "sectarian" was the one that caught her off guard. Spacek said she used the skills she has learned to figure it out in the moment.

Spacek, a sixth-grader who hopes to be a scientist someday, said it will be her last year competing in the bee. Her father, who beamed proudly next to Spacek, chimed in with a laugh: "Too much studying."

Wen Feng, Li's father, said he was unable to be too stressed during the final rounds because he had to text constant updates to her mother and a couple friends on how she was doing. He added, "That kept me busy."

"But it might be a lot of pressure for Hannah," Feng said.

He said, before the state bee and regardless of the outcome, the family had planned a trip to the East Coast this summer. Now, Feng said giddily, they have to figure out what sights to see in the nation's capital — and hope to come home with another trophy.



Cuillena Spacek, 11, Hills Academy, spells out her word on her hand during the 79th annual New Mexico State Spelling Bee at CNM's Smith Brasher Hall on March 21. Jessica Baca/Journal



A paid internship program designed for New Mexico high school students.

Image provided by Acoma Pueblo

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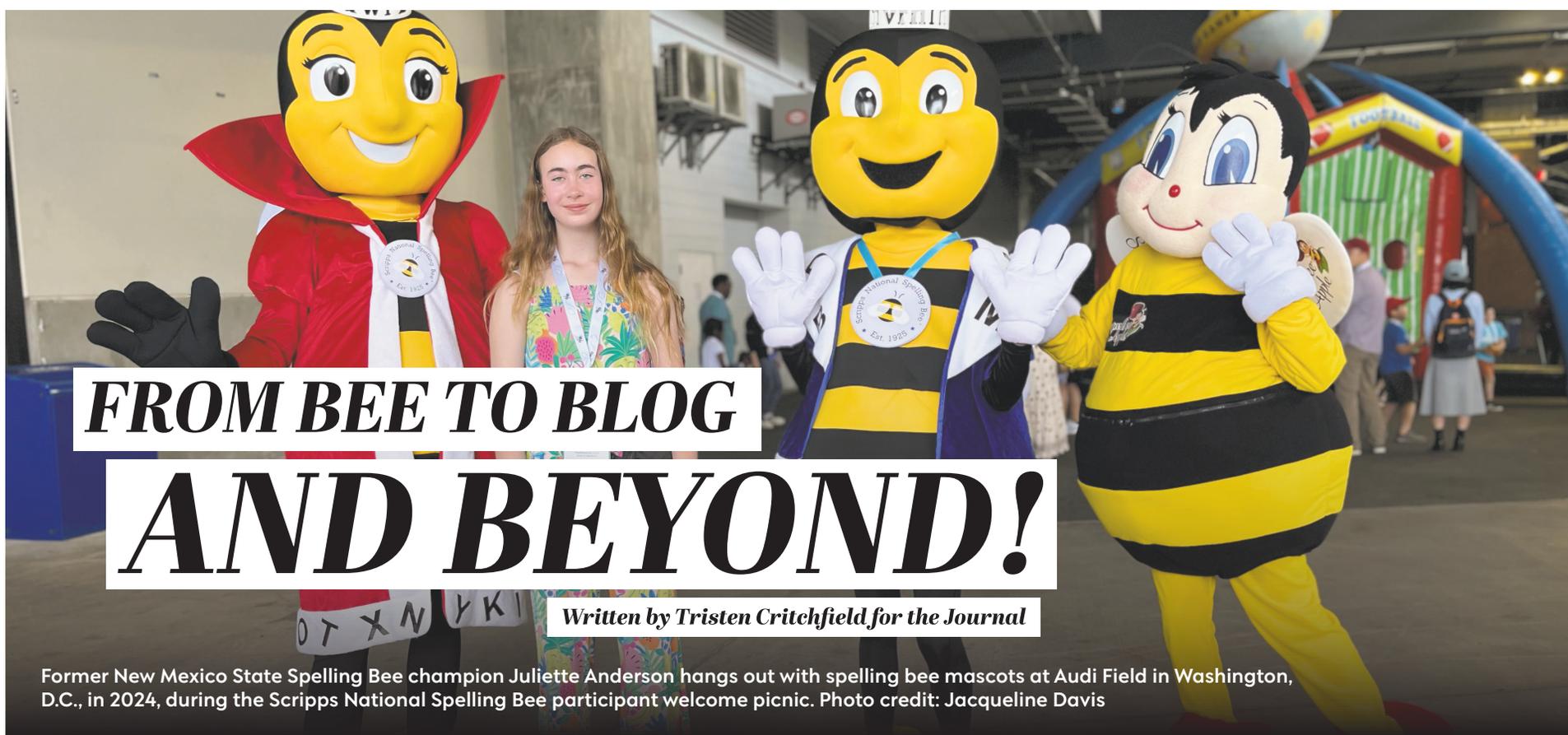
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FROM BEE TO BLOG

AND BEYOND!

Written by Tristen Critchfield for the Journal

Former New Mexico State Spelling Bee champion Juliette Anderson hangs out with spelling bee mascots at Audi Field in Washington, D.C., in 2024, during the Scripps National Spelling Bee participant welcome picnic. Photo credit: Jacqueline Davis

Juliette Anderson entered the 2024 New Mexico Spelling Bee with relatively modest expectations for placing among the top contestants. So, she certainly had no concept of just how far a single spelling bee would carry her.

Yet, in just the two years since that competition — and largely because of it — Anderson has become a blogger, a published poet, a spelling bee competition official, and soon, an event coordinator. She is building an entire world out of her love for words at an age when most teenagers are still boomeranging about their interests.

In this sense, Anderson's story is less about an event or a trophy than an illustration of what's possible for pre-teens and teens who show up, who participate, even against the odds. For Anderson, the bee experience illuminated her passion for language, opening a path for it to spread into other corners of her life.

"It never really occurred to me that winning was actually a possibility," said Anderson, who was a seventh-grader at Santa Fe Preparatory School at the time. So tempered were her hopes that she recalls making a deal with a friend who agreed to buy her a gift if Anderson could just finish in the top 24. Twenty-five students competed.

However, as other contestants began to

stumble on words and get eliminated from the competition, it became apparent that Anderson would be receiving more than just a friend's congratulatory token — she had a serious chance at first place. Through it all, she never allowed herself to think too far ahead.

After 40 rounds, Anderson claimed the win by correctly spelling the words coulrophobia (fear of clowns) and vizierial (relating to the office or authority of a vizier, which is a high-ranking officer in some Muslim countries). Anderson received a gold glass trophy as well as a few bee-decorated gifts as prizes.

"It was definitely very nerve wracking," said Anderson's mother, Jacqueline Davis, who watched from the audience. "Her composure is pretty amazing. You would never know she was nervous when you watch her spell."

Anderson went on to compete in the Scripps National Spelling Bee in Washington, D.C. She was eliminated in the quarterfinals with the word Catoctin, which is a mountain range in Maryland. Anderson mistakenly spelled it with Ks.

From a young age, it was clear that Anderson was well above average in all things reading, writing and spelling. After competing in spelling bees since the third grade, she developed the ideal blend of study habits, word recollection and competition savvy to be the last person standing

in 2024.

"For the remainder of seventh grade, it definitely made me feel more confident in myself because I've never had very high esteem," Anderson said. "It's also just shown me I can do hard things if I work hard ... And I feel like it's just really shown me how much I love words and languages. It's really become a passion for me."

Though her days of competing are over, Anderson remains connected to the spelling bee — and words in general — in other ways.

As a high school freshman, she launched the Busy Bees Blog (busybees.blog) during her school's winter break last year. Its goal is to help the next generation of spelling bee contestants find their footing through study tips and strategies. Anderson even offers an advice form for those who might have specific questions not covered in the blog.

In a post authored on Feb. 6, Anderson advises prospective spellers to make studying fun by selecting their favorite words, similar to having favorite friends: "Throughout your studies, you are going to get to know each word pretty well, almost as well as kids your age know their friends," she wrote. "If you find words that catch your eye, you will soon fall in love with these words, and have fun memorizing their definitions and learning to spell them as quickly

as possible!”

Anderson then shares her personal favorites: Makgadikgadi Pans (a salt pan in Botswana), Llullaillaco (a dormant stratovolcano on the border between Argentina and Chile), Ouagadougou (the capital of Burkina Faso in Africa), and agathokakological (a rare adjective, dating back to 1834, that describes something composed of both good and evil).

Among her strategies for studying, she writes: “Always start studying with the easier words. Although these words may bore you to tears, just remember that these are the words that will come up first in a spelling bee, and if you make a mistake on an easier word, there is no point in having studied the harder words.”

As of late February, Anderson said she had about 10 subscribers, a group primarily composed of teachers and family members.

“I (wanted) to start a project — something that’s academic, something that combines a few of my interests and something that other people can benefit from and something more long term,” Anderson said. “The first thing I thought of was a spelling bee blog because that’s the most important thing to me.”

Anderson has remained involved in the spelling bee circuit in other ways, as well. In 2025, she served as an audio recorder for the New Mexico Spelling Bee. In that role, she was responsible for generating official documentation of the proceedings to ensure the event’s fairness and integrity. Even in this silent role, she said, she couldn’t help but spell the words in her head as they were called out.

Next year, Anderson will coordinate the spelling bee for Santa Fe Prep. She’s already well into the planning stages.

“I have a lot of ideas about sparking interest,” Anderson said. “I’m going to give out pizza because that’s what they did when I was competing. I made a pizza order form already. I’m trying to think about which teachers to ask to be officials.

“I’m hoping to do a lot of planning over the summer just so I don’t have to do that on top of all my homework. I think it’ll be really fun.”

Anderson is also an aspiring poet. Last summer, she self-published a book of poems titled “Growing Up in Verse.” Another, titled “Someday Soon,” was accepted by the global publishing initiative 1455 as part of the Young Poets Anthology, a professionally published book showcasing selected submissions from writers younger than 21.

“A lot of (her writing) does come from spelling-related words,” her mother said. “She found a lot of good material from (the experience).”



“It definitely made me feel more confident in myself because I’ve never had very high self-esteem,” Anderson said. “It’s also just shown me I can do hard things if I work hard.”

The 2024 New Mexico State Spelling Bee champion, Juliette Anderson, stands in the Hall of Champions outside of the Maryland Ballroom at the Gaylord Hotel DC, where the 2024 Scripps National Spelling Bee took place. Photo credit: Jacqueline Davis



Juliette Anderson with 2015 National Bee Champion Vanya Shivashankar, who in 2025, became the first female pronouncer in the history of the Scripps National Spelling Bee. Photo credit: Jacqueline Davis

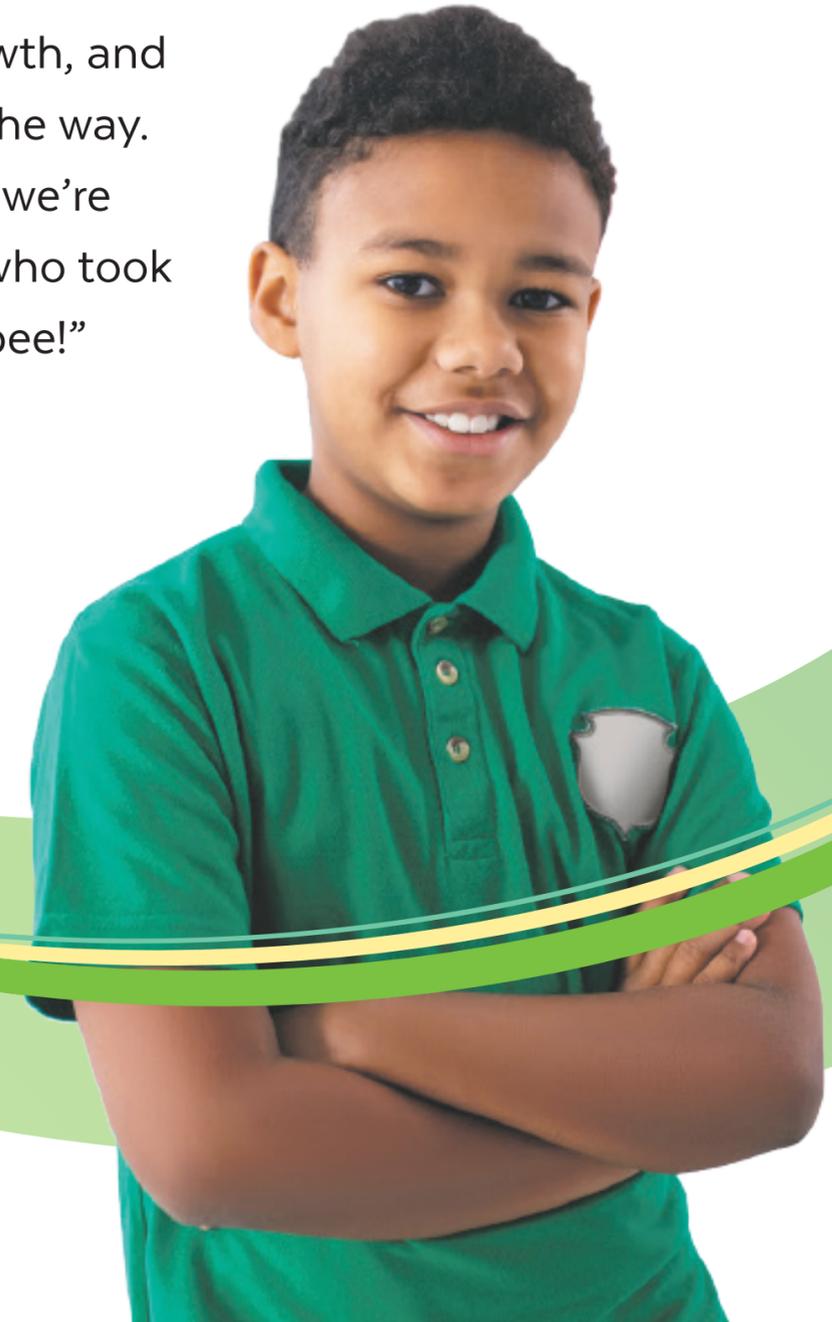


Juliette Anderson with Dr. Jacques Bailly, the “voice of” the Scripps National Spelling Bee at the annual event picnic in 2024. Bailly was the national spelling bee champion in 1980. Photo credit: Jacqueline Davis

Congratulations to the spelling bee winners and participants!

“For 90 years, we’ve been proud to stand beside educators and students — supporting learning, growth, and opportunity every step of the way. From all of us at Nusenda, we’re celebrating every student who took part in this year’s spelling bee!”

Michelle Dearholt, Nusenda President/CEO



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TEEN PERSPECTIVES

It's easy to feel like the world is happening around you — and that you're not part of it. That happens to adults, too. And we don't have to worry about homework, morning bells, extracurriculars and a shift at Dion's on top of it.

But your voice matters, and it's time we give you a platform for it.

I'm the Opinion editor at the Albuquerque Journal, and I sift through what seems like countless letters to the editor, op-eds and Speak-Ups every week. I decide which among them should get published. Often, those that get chosen do so because they offer a fresh perspective that could change our way of thinking, or at least make us consider another perspective. Most of them are written by elected officials, business executives, religious leaders, educators and other professionals.

Many of them are about you — students in Albuquerque. Whether you're at the college level or younger, you might be surprised how much time adults spend thinking about you, your wellbeing, and what we as a community can do better to help you succeed.

Recently, the Journal received a collection of op-eds from Volcano Vista High School journalism students as part of a class assignment. The submissions showed they were more aware of current events for which many adults would give them credit. They were concerned about a potential cellphone ban in schools, Immigration and Customs Enforcement activities, the allocation of state resources for college stadium upgrades and other policies that are top-of-mind for policymakers across the state. The submissions were researched, thoughtful and meaningful.



Ryan Boetel
Journal
Opinion Editor

It made me think that too much credence is given to titles and years of experience. The younger generation is going to inherit the economy and world that we professionals leave for you, and we shouldn't dismiss your suggestions for making it better.

So this is our call to action: Students, please write to us your thoughts and opinions about how we can make this community and state better. We're hoping to launch a regular series of your submissions in our Opinion section every month or so. It will be composed of pieces written by students of any grade level who have thoughts or ideas about how we can make our education system or city operate better. I'm thinking of calling it "Classroom Corner," but I'm open to suggestions.

If you consider that the News section of the paper is the news of events: what happened to whom, when, where and why, then the Opinion section of the paper can be viewed as the news of ideas: what could be better or what is not working for whom, how, when and why.

We're eager to learn about and see the world with a fresh pair of eyes. It's changing rapidly and you're at the forefront of that change. Many of the leaders in our community — in business, politics, education or engineering — were educated in a world that didn't have social media, artificial intelligence and human-caused climate change. We could use a readjustment.

This isn't a homework assignment. Don't fret about grammar, page length and subject-verb conjugation. We have editors here, and we need to do something to earn our paychecks. This is about your ideas. We want to read them. We want to learn from them. And we want to share them.

Please send your submissions to:
students@abqjournal.com.



Scroll Smart:

How to spot facts in a feed full of noise



We live in the loudest information era in history. News alerts flood our phones at all times of day, TikTok breaks top stories, group chats debate headlines, and trending topics change by the hour. For Gen Z and Gen Alpha, social media is often the front page of the world. But when everything feels urgent, how do you tell what's important and true — and what's just noise?



Madison Sikes
For the Journal

I spent nearly the first two years of my post-college career in journalism. While I wasn't a reporter and hardly ever wrote anything myself, I was in a role equally important as the writers.

If you've ever received a breaking news alert on your phone or scrolled past a social media post from The Washington Post, The New York Times or a local newspaper explaining a major story, that kind of work is what I did. I took what's reported in the newsroom and turned it into content you may have seen on social media.

In that kind of role, I saw firsthand how quickly information travels and how easily it can be misunderstood.

That's how I know that media literacy is no longer something to take lightly. It's a survival skill. So, how do you stay informed without getting misled? It starts with slowing down and paying attention to a few simple things.

Check the source, not just the screenshot

An infographic on your feed or a reposted screenshot to a friend's Instagram story may seem important, but it will never hold the same weight as a fact-checked, reporter-written article from a verified news source.

That's not to say all the things you see from non-verified news sources are untrue. There absolutely are people out there who only take credible information for their content. But there are also plenty who do not. It's important to not only know the person providing the content but

also to know where they are getting it.

If you're ever on the fence, go online and do your own fact-checking using a recognized news organization with a real reporter's name attached to the story. Credible journalism includes accountability. Reporters have editors. Publications issue corrections when they get something wrong. Random social media posts don't always have those safeguards.

Separate headlines from facts

Headlines are designed to grab your attention, especially on social media. Clickbait headlines that rely on exaggeration, mystery or shock value to lure in readers are usually from non-credible sources. It is not uncommon for these headlines to be misleading, incomplete or even fully false.

Real journalism tries to avoid sensationalism as much as possible, to stick to facts that have been independently verified, and to seek comment from multiple sources and perspectives. The headline is intended to reflect key verifiable details that can easily be found within a comprehensive article.

However, a headline never gives you the full story no matter how credible a source may be. It's imperative you read the full story or post for more context to have complete understanding for what you learned from the headline alone.

Beware of emotion-first content

News found on social media can make you feel a wide range of emotions. And that's OK. Oftentimes, the news you're reading is about something happening in your own town or is affecting people you know and love. Even if it isn't a topic that relates to you directly, it can feel heavy.

If your immediate reaction is fear, anger, sadness or even overexcitement, it may be a good indicator to slow down. Having strong emotions doesn't necessarily mean the information is false, but it does mean you may be acting on impulse. If that impulse leads you

to share the information, and it turns out to be false, you're further pushing a fallacy.

Emotion can be a part of storytelling. But it should never replace facts.

Understand your algorithm

Your social media feeds are incredibly personalized, whether you realize it or not. You aren't seeing a neutral list of the top stories at any given moment. You're seeing what you have trained the platform to think it knows what you want to see.

This is where access to information can get incredibly tricky. Naturally, you're going to engage with content you enjoy and believe in. This can create something commonly referred to as an "echo chamber" where you are only being fed content that aligns with, or "echoes," your own beliefs.

This isn't all bad. Your social media is intended to be just that — yours. It makes sense that you engage with what speaks to you. But don't just scroll and react. Take a minute to seek out reputable news beyond what an algorithm thinks you want to see. Check credible sources, whether on social media or on a news outlet's official website, and break free from the echo chamber of what you already know.

Algorithms chase engagement. Journalists chase the facts, following a news cycle that constantly evolves with verified updates and fresh reporting. Staying curious and intentional about where you get your information is how you take control of the noise.

Social media isn't going anywhere, and neither is the flood of information it brings. The good news? You have the tools to navigate it. A little curiosity, a bit of skepticism and a habit of fact-checking can help you cut through the clutter. The next time a breaking news alert pops up or a viral post lands in your feed, you'll know exactly how to handle it — and maybe even teach someone else how to do the same.

100 years and the Albuquerque Journal is just getting started

What's happening now is for you.

Here's a milestone worth spelling out: C-E-N-T-E-N-N-I-A-L. As in, the Pepperday/Lang family has owned and operated the Albuquerque Journal for a centennial. It was in 1926 that Thomas M. Pepperday purchased what was The Albuquerque Morning Journal and transformed it into the local paper as it's known today.

One-hundred years ago, even 40 years ago, news arrived once a day, folded in half, tossed on home porches. Readers would walk out in bathrobes and slippers, carry the paper to the breakfast area and read the dense, tiny type, with almost no photos and zero color. Any updates would have to wait for 24 hours. There was no internet. No smartphones. No streaming.

Generation after generation of Albuquerque Journal readers trusted the paper, talked about it, clipped stories from it and when they wanted to share something, they mailed those clippings to friends and relatives. For 100 years, through world wars, myriad tech advances, the rise of the 24-hour news cycle, social media, and the Covid-19 pandemic, your state's newspaper of record has delivered the day's stories to you.

That's genuinely rare. Most local papers have been swallowed by media conglomerates or just withered into irrelevance.

How is the Journal thriving?

The Journal is carrying its legacy forward with products that not only give you something worth showing up for at any time, anywhere. It's also delivering more than headlines.

Want to be the first to know? Get news alerts throughout the day on your phone the moment something breaks. Interested in your school's sports team? The Albuquerque Journal has podcasts featuring prep athletes, coaches and game coverage you can listen to on the way to practice. The new jrnl+ app includes subscriber access to local perks and deals at places you probably already go. Stories can be listened to, not just read. Live-streamed town halls put local leaders in front of you to answer real questions about things that actually affect your lives. The first one held earlier this month largely focused on crime among young people.

That's podcasts, interactive content, community events, member rewards, and an app built for how you actually consume information. You can view and share this story from your phone, too.

This is not your grandparents' newspaper — even though it literally was your grandparents' newspaper.

What hasn't changed — and shouldn't

The Albuquerque Journal still has the largest newsroom in New Mexico. It employs trained journalists whose job is to chase down information from credible sources, then independently verify it and give you the story without spin or bias. You've probably scrolled past a hot take on TikTok or a blog that had you fired up. Best case is that buried somewhere in that content

was a fact that came from a reporter who actually showed up, asked questions and verified the answer. Journalists are often the original source, even when they don't get the credit. However, much of the time, that information has not been rigorously verified. (See our Scroll Smart story about media literacy on Page 11.)

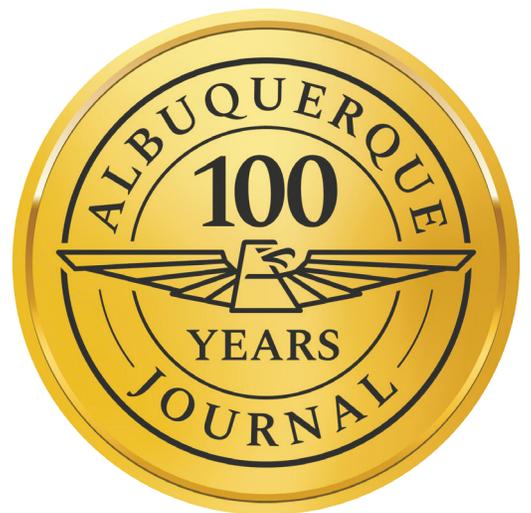
The difference is that a real newsroom with experienced editors, standards and a century of accountability is designed to give you the full picture, not the algorithm-friendly slice of it.

In a world drowning in content, that's not nothing. That's actually everything.

You're the generation that's going to inherit some genuinely complicated problems. You're also the generation that asks why louder than most. Journalism runs on that instinct. It could even be a career you'd be interested in.

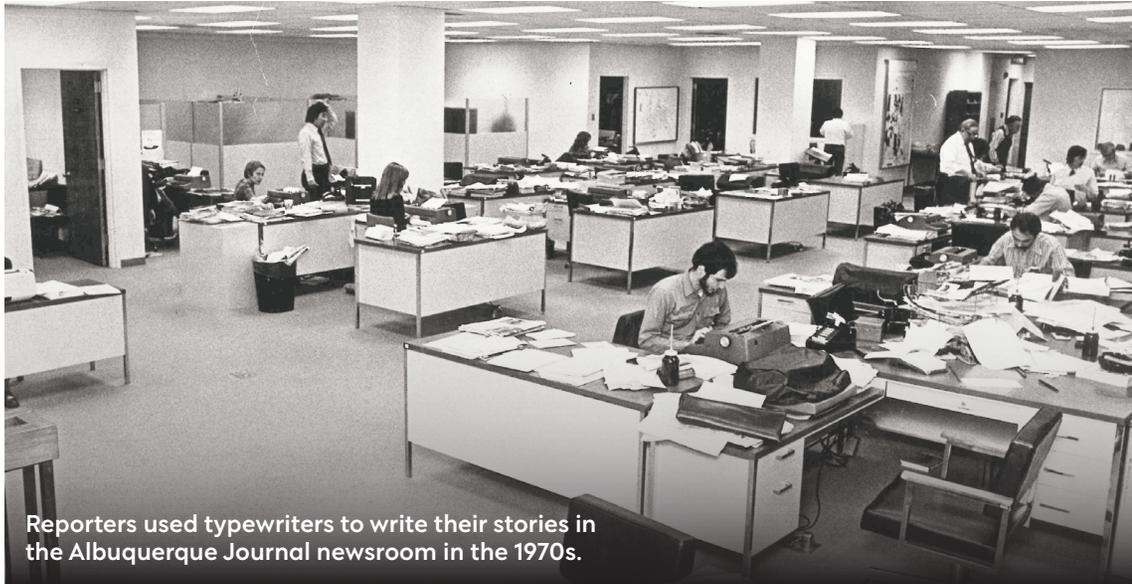
The Albuquerque Journal isn't just celebrating 100 years of what it was. It's celebrating its first 100 years while building its next 100 and beyond with you and for you.

Scan the QR code below to download the jrnl+ app and explore Albuquerque Journal podcasts, town halls and interactive content.



ALBUQUERQUE
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Reporters used typewriters to write their stories in the Albuquerque Journal newsroom in the 1970s.



Jay Wyche, Albuquerque Publishing Company pressroom foreman, checks the paper as it comes "hot off the press" in the early 1970s.



Today, the Albuquerque Journal provides news in a variety of formats, including podcasts. Here, podcast host Gino Gutierrez talks with Journal reporter Nakayla McClelland.

SHOUTOUTS!



Congrats Tasi.

You represented Bandelier so well and your Banda community is so proud of you! You worked so hard on studying and represented our school so well at the district bee. You showed great sportsmanship.

Go Tasi!



Congratulations Louie!

From Mom, Dad, Ivan, and The Ducks.

You worked very hard to achieve this goal and we are so proud"



All that reading has paid off!

From Raks and your family!

SPONSORED CONTENT

Nusenda celebrates 90 years of investment in New Mexico education

When Maurine Grammer, a secretary at Albuquerque Public Schools, helped found a small credit union out of her office in 1936, she probably didn't envision that 90 years later the institution she helped create would be sponsoring spelling bees, teaching high schoolers about personal finance and reading to elementary school students across New Mexico. But that's exactly the kind of organization Nusenda Credit Union has grown into.

From Day One, educational programming and support hasn't been just a priority; it's been part of the organization's DNA, said Sara Keller, Nusenda's chief community engagement officer. As the title sponsor of the 2026 New Mexico State Spelling Bee — a partnership that dates back to 2018 — Nusenda has found a natural home for that educational commitment.

"Our roots are in public education, so that's why these programs resonate so deeply for us," Keller said. "It's part of who we are."

Keller, who participated in spelling bees as a child, views these events as bee-ing about far more than orthography. (O-R-T-H-O-G-R-A-P-H-Y: the art of writing words with the proper letters according to standard usage, according to the Merriam-Webster Dictionary.)

"Spelling bees are about so much more than spelling," she said. "They teach life skills, confidence and provide an opportunity to learn public speaking — things that may be intimidating for a lot of folks. The bee stretches that side of young people and exposes them to something beyond an academic accolade, to soft skills that are often hard to get through real life experience."

"The skills I have been able to take from the spelling bee into my life were not planned but have really paid off in ways that I never would have expected."

In an era of autocorrect and artificial intelligence, she adds, "it's nice to have something rooted in foundational educational principles."

That same philosophy drives Nusenda's broader educational work, which spans from early childhood through college and into the workplace. At the heart of it is a dedicated Financial Capability Department staffed by educators, including former APS teachers and administrators who work directly with schools, students and community organizations across

the state to build real-world financial skills.

Nusenda's program numbers tell a compelling story. According to the organization's website, 967 students have completed a dual credit, college credit or APS personal financial literacy course sponsored and taught by Nusenda, since 2015; in 2023 alone, more than 8,500 students, teachers and administrators participated in financial literacy presentations led by Nusenda staff; since 2004, 240 high school students have been hired as Nusenda interns, gaining hands-on experience in the financial services industry.

One signature effort is a dual credit program offered in partnership with local public schools and community colleges. Known as Financial Services Career Exploration in the Albuquerque area and "Banks and Your Money" in the Las Cruces metro area, the courses teach students personal finance, economics and career exploration in financial services — all while earning college credit.

Nusenda also collaborates with organizations like the Golden Apple Foundation and the New Mexico Jump\$tart Coalition for Financial Literacy to expand educator resources and provide professional development. In coming weeks,

the credit union will also launch CU Reads, a collaborative statewide initiative in which credit union employees across New Mexico visit elementary school classrooms to read aloud to students. The program is designed to spark early, age-appropriate conversations about financial literacy, planting the seeds of money awareness in the youngest learners.

"We believe education is the foundation of what develops lifelong learners and successful adults," Keller says. "Because we're rooted in education and committed to financial capability, we really love opportunities that bring both of those initiatives together."

Though the credit union's name has evolved through the decades — launched as Albuquerque Public Schools Federal Credit Union, transitioning to New Mexico Educators Credit Union in the 1980s, and adopting the name Nusenda Credit Union in 2015 — its commitment to education has remained constant.

To learn more about Nusenda Credit Union and its educational initiatives, or to apply for funding, visit nusenda.org.



Nusenda partners with other local credit unions to foster financial literacy and financial education in elementary and middle school classrooms. Photo credit: Armani Lewis

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Pamela Chavez,
Thank you so much for your dedication to everyone participating in the state Spelling Bee.

We are fortunate to have such a caring and deeply devoted leader.

All my best, Debi R.



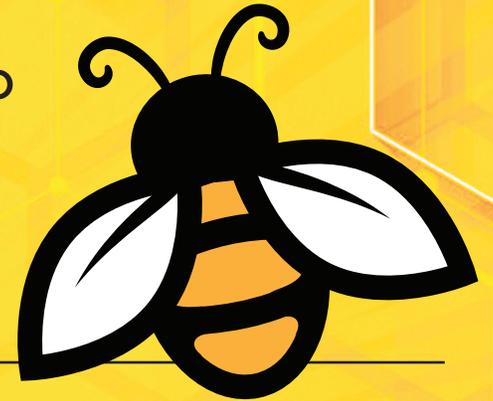
10 WINNING WORDS FROM A HISTORIC NM STATE SPELLING BEE

The 2025 NM State Spelling Bee lasted 40 rounds! An average state bee lasts 15-25 rounds.

Apophyge
Corrigenda
Cotoneaster
Denigratory

Gesellschaft
Mediatrix
Naugahyde
Puparium

Risorgimento
Tersanctus



10 WORDS THAT HAVE STUMPED NM STATE SPELLING BEE SPELLERS

At the New Mexico State Spelling Bee level, there are 350 words taken from the Scripps National Spelling Bee official study resource called “Words of the Champions.” Spellers study it rigorously throughout the school year. Another 150 words are from the Merriam Webster Unabridged Dictionary, the official dictionary of all Scripps spelling bees.

The words at left are what the students were asked to spell and are shown spelled correctly. The spellings of the words in the parentheses show how the students misspelled them.

Boudin (Budin)
Chancel (Chancil)
Caudal (Cattle)
Emmetropic (Emitropic)
Fomentation (Foamentation)

Pallescens (Palescent)
Puritan (Puritain)
Shrapnel (Chrapnel)
Scrumptiously (Scrumptiosly)
Successive (Sucessive)