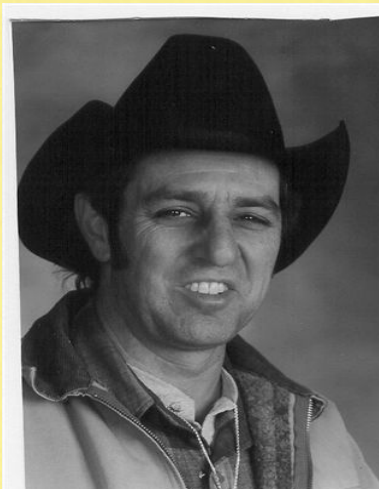


**2009 Millie Santillanes Education Award: Nick LaRue, Teacher, Madison Middle School  
Albuquerque, New Mexico**

Nick LaRue is a Summa cum laude graduate of the University of New Mexico. He is a mid-school New Mexico history teacher and describes himself as a political activist who once considered becoming a priest. He received a small Scholarship from the NASA space consortium and graduated with honors.



He became an Eagle Scout at age 15 and had backpacked much of the Gila Wilderness and still feels God put him on this earth to find every back road in New Mexico.

His first job was a tour guide for the Museo de San Elizario in Texas and it provoked an unending love of history. The area was once home to Spanish garrisons and many forays to the north were launched from the Presidio.

When he taught at Garfield Middle School in the North Valley he sponsored Wild Friends and with the help of his students and others Memorial 50, the Wildlife Violator Compact was read on the floor of the legislature. It resulted in a Western crackdown on poaching of big game. He and his students also built a wildlife habitat that is still part of the community.

Mr. LaRue came to our attention from a project at Madison Middle School when they studied the Rio Puerco Valley. He and his students were inspired by the writings of Nasario Garcia who has written extensively about New Mexico and the Rio Puerco.

He and his students traveled to the area and explored the ruins of the four old villages, fields and graveyards. They also studied Spanish history including escudos and the students drew and described their own from what they had learned. Their research was published in the Albuquerque Journal.

Each of his classes this year have finished creating five books on New Spain and the world as it existed in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

**Teacher in Action**

by Conchita Lucero

*Los Canzino.r program inspired by teacher Nick LaRue*

Reaching students is a process of creativity and imagination. One can not expect to get children interested in a subject that does not inspire a passion in the teacher. **Nick La Rue's** passion for New Mexico history was demonstrated during the program he sponsored entitled Los Caminos. John and I went to Madison Middle School February 13, 2009 to see the program and were pleasantly surprised at the projects and knowledge of the students. It was quite impressive and the students had a variety of projects using their talents to construct Santos, maps, tin work, churches and even a dress.

Comments by Joe Sabatini past director of Special Collections Library when told Nick had been selected for History Teacher of the Year. "Outstanding! I knew Nick when he taught at

Garfield MS. He made a vacant lot in the schoolyard into an ecological habitat for hands-on science instruction. He also was helpful about after-school "mid-school initiative projects."

Getting to know Nick I am sure he is the type of teacher that will be long remember by his students for inspiring a knowledge and understanding of others and history. Congratulations to Nick and students on their history project.



**Photo** Conchita Lucero presenting Nick and students with a photo album of escudos and flyers with items brought in 1598