

# RATON ~ NEW MEXICO NEWS

## HU Environmental Geology Student Awarded Grants to Study Galisteo Basin

Special to The Chronicle-News

Las Vegas, NM - New Mexico Highlands University environmental geology graduate student Richard Ashu was recently awarded three grants to fund his master's thesis research in the Galisteo Basin in north-central New Mexico.

The grants include \$1,300 from the New Mexico Geological Society, \$400 from Sigma Xi, a scientific research society, and \$2,000 from the American Association of Petroleum Geologists.

"The goal of my research is to identify the structure of hydrocarbon traps in parts of the Galisteo Basin," Ashu said. "My research is novel because I'll be using four different approaches, including magnetic, gravity, seismic and geological mapping. We'll use Kingdom geophysical modeling software and ArcGIS software to create a 3-D model. The Kingdom software is a new geophysical data reduction tool that gives us better interpretive assessments."

A hydrocarbon trap is an area in the subsurface where oil and gas might accumulate. Ashu said there is evidence of petroleum in the Galisteo Basin. His research will try to identify the geophysical characteristics and signals of the different geologic structures, which will help locate the hydrocarbon traps.

"The Kingdom modeling software will help estimate the hydrocarbon potential in the Galisteo Basin," Ashu said. "We will develop maps of the studied areas and come up with a

model that can be used in other locations that have hydrocarbons."

Highlands University environmental geology professor Michael Petronis chairs Ashu's master's thesis committee. Geology professor Jennifer Lindline and chemistry professor David Sammeth are also on Ashu's thesis committee.

"Richard is excellent academically," Petronis said. "I'd say he's in the upper 10 percent of students I've taught. He's very quick to grasp complex geophysical concepts and operation of the various instrumentation. All these research grants Richard managed to secure demonstrate how serious he is about his graduate studies. These grants also show that other experts in the geophysical exploration field recognize his knowledge on the subject."

Ashu, 27, is from Cameroon and earned an undergraduate degree in geology from the University of Buea, Cameroon. He also earned a master's degree in engineering geology at Vrije Universiteit Brussel, Belgium. Ashu learned about Highlands University from a friend who is a geologist in England.

Petronis said he was impressed with Ashu's academic credentials when Ashu contacted him about pursuing his master's degree in geology at Highlands, with a focus on geophysical research.

"Richard's extremely high G.P.A. and extensive background in mathematics, physics and geology really made him stand out," Petronis said. "He's



Photo courtesy of NMHU

Richard Ashu

been very proactive with his education."

Ashu said he will complete his master's degree in environmental geology from Highlands in spring 2010 and is already researching doctoral programs in geophysics. In the meantime, he said he appreciates the academics at Highlands.

"Highlands is very conducive to studying and it's been a wonderful opportunity for me," Ashu said. "I'm getting a solid foundation for my professional career here. I'm learning how to use more modern research instruments that I've never used before. This is what prospective employers will require me to know in the future."

Ashu added that the personal contact he has with professors at Highlands is important academically.

"I also appreciate how the professors are friendly and helpful," Ashu said.

## Raton Arts Council Hosts Local Art and Wine Festival

Special to The Chronicle-News

The Raton Arts and Humanities Council (RAHC) announces the second annual Raton Art and Wine Fest to be held this Saturday, June 6, at the Raton Convention Center. The Art and Wine Fest began last year to celebrate the 20th anniversary of the founding of the RAHC and is planned to continue as an annual event. The event features wine tastings of some of northern New Mexico's favorite wineries as well as a celebration of the visual and performing artists of the Raton community.

The Art and Wine Fest will be open at the Convention Center from 12:00 noon through 7:00 pm on Saturday. The festivities will begin with a live art auction at 12:30 pm. The auction will include dozens of pieces of artwork donated to the Arts Council over the past year featuring many pieces from the estate of Ken and Nellie Laird. The works have all been priced with exceptionally low opening bids, and the live auction is expected to be one of the best opportunities this year for local art patrons to find outstanding work at bargain prices.

In addition to the live auction, over 100 items have been donated by local businesses and individuals to be included in a silent auction. The silent auction will run all day and will be highlighted by the sale of "vinarelli" paintings from six local and regional artists. The vinarelli is an Italian word for a watercolor that is painted with

wine instead of water. Some of our best watercolor artists from Raton and Trinidad have donated their time and their final creations to the Arts Council. Visitors to the Art and Wine Fest will be able to watch the artists as they paint live throughout the day. Visitors may also bid on the artists' final creations.

Of course, the main attraction of the Wine and Art Fest will be wine tastings of three favorite New Mexico Wineries. The participating wineries this year are Black Mesa Winery from Velarde, La Chiripada from Dixon, and Santa Fe Vineyards. Each winery will feature up to a dozen varieties of their best wines, with complimentary tastings all day as well as wine available for sale.

Black Mesa Winery's fancifully named wines include Coyote, Antelope, Conejito White, and Black Beauty. The blends are recognized both locally and internationally. The winery creates New Mexico wines that reflect the characteristics of the surrounding New Mexico countryside.

La Chiripada Winery is nestled in the small town of Dixon. It is a traditional southwest style winery and vineyards. The winery's signature wines, Special Reserve Riesling, Embudo Red and Rio Embudo Red Reserve Selection, are made from grapes grown at their vineyards in the Rio Embudo Valley. La Chiripada stresses the regionality of their product and are sensitive to the unique cuisine of northern New Mexico.

Santa Fe Vineyards has recently partnered with Estrella Del Norte Vineyard to continue their fine winemaking tradition. The Vineyard's selection ranges from traditional chardonnay, merlot, and white zinfandel to unique creations such as their Indian Market Wine, Muscat Dessert Wine, and Rojo Dulce.

The Raton Wine and Art Fest will be the largest signature fundraising event for the RAHC this year. The organization is entering its 21st year continuing its mission "to encourage and strengthen the cultural life of the area, providing residents, whether trained or untrained in the arts, with opportunities for artistic participation, self-expression, education and enjoyment." The Council is the largest arts organization in northeastern New Mexico with over 300 members and was recently ranked by the New Mexico Department of Cultural Affairs as one of the top arts councils in the state.

Admission to the 2009 Raton Wine and Art Fest is limited to those 21 and over. The \$10 admission ticket includes a souvenir commemorative wine glass, all day access to the wine tastings, light hors d'oeuvres, live and silent auctions, "vinarelli" artists painting, and live entertainment all day. The admission benefits the year round arts programming and educational activities of the Raton Arts and Humanities Council. Tickets are available at [www.ratonarts.org](http://www.ratonarts.org) or (575) 445-2052.

## The future of Ag at RHS

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es at night.

"We've renovated and expanded those buildings to accommodate these programs," says Willden. "These will not be the shops of 25-50 years ago; they'll be the shops of the 21st century - less of a shop, more of a lab." He describes workshops that integrate modern technologies, not only into the equipment but into the walls themselves: translucent wall panels will admit light and reduce the demand for electricity.

The focus will shift from livestock and farm business management, Willden explains. "The Ag program is going to be the cornerstone of the renewable energy program." If that sounds like a radical shift, it may also be a realistic one. "We have very few actual Ag kids left here," Mark Honeyfield says. "It's the shifting nature of agriculture. John Malone and Ted Turner don't have kids at RHS." He points out that much of the land in the region is now owned by the two billionaires, a shift from the smaller family ranches of old.

"Clayton and Des Moines still have viable Ag programs," Honeyfield continues, "but our population isn't the same. At the Five States Livestock Auction, I'm the young guy." Honeyfield is 50.

"We have a handful of Ag kids here at RHS. Ag's basically become an elective, and that's true not just here but all over the state. And over the years I've been here, there's been less and less electives offered. The only way these courses can be viable is to give academic credit.

The courses will look different in the new program. Last fall Superintendent Willden traveled to Arizona State University in Tempe to begin developing a joint effort involving Raton Schools, Luna Community College, and ASU to develop a Renewable Energy (RE) program at RHS. Willden was joined in Tempe by Raton businessman Larry Stolarczyk of Stolar Engineering and Raton school board member Stephanie Jansen, each of

whom traveled separately at their own expense. The Raton contingent met and began planning with Dr. A.M. Kannan of ASU's Polytechnic campus at Gilbert, AZ. Kannan is now assisting in the design of a new curriculum with new courses.

RE students will complete a rigorous prescribed curriculum. In the senior year they'll select between a vocational focus and an engineering focus. The former will send graduates directly into the marketplace with LEED certification, fully trained to work in the burgeoning sustainable energy market. With its wealth of sunlight and wind, northeastern New Mexico is primed to be a hotbed of renewable energy generation. That means jobs and a new local economy, as well as new land use.

RE students selecting the engineering track for their senior year will continue on to universities, where they'll train to design and run the new high-tech energy systems. Engineers often leave college, Willden says, strong in math and science but lacking "on-the-ground skills" in the field. Raton's RE engineering graduates will have both. Willden excitedly fills a sheet of paper with the new curriculum, which should be launched in August, 2010.

Over their four years at RHS, RE students' math courses will be Algebra I, Geometry, Algebra II, and Calculus, in that order. Science courses will be Physical Science, Biology, Chemistry, and Physics. There will be an English elective in Technical Writing. And there will be four years in an RE curriculum to include Ag Mechanics, Welding & Fabrication, and RE I. The senior year offers a choice between RE II-Engineering and RE II-Vocational with LEED certification.

Willden continues by mapping out boxes on his paper, showing various units of study. The history of man and energy. Fossil fuels. Alternative exploration. Solar. Wind. Hydro. Hydrogen.

The new RE courses will

require staffing; presumably, Amanda Armacost's position will be refilled in a different form, probably in August 2010. Willden called in RHS teacher Richard Main to explore the possibility of Main taking on the job. Main is uniquely qualified: he currently teaches both woodshop and physics and chemistry at RHS. He also coaches football and track. Main asked, somewhat rhetorically, "What do you want me to give up?"

Main is excited by the new program, but he doesn't think he's right for it. "To do this right, it needs the versatility of an Ag teacher and someone with the time to devote to it. This is going to be one of the most valuable programs ever offered at this school." He hopes the new Ag/RE teacher will be someone young and energetic enough to build the program for many years. Main, who is beginning to look ahead to retirement, has offered to help as a consultant.

"Mr. Willden is looking for a young engineer with a desire to teach. We need someone smart enough, and with good communication skills. We need someone to re-gear our kids, give them a push. We need a long haul person on this."

Main explains his excitement about the new curriculum. "Now, our top students get a curriculum that never puts their hands on machinery, never gets them making things or fixing

things. They plan, they draw, but they don't produce. That's not just this school, that's the world in general. It doesn't have to be that way."

He continues, "The energy industry is losing money because they can't get their machines fixed in the field. We need workers who can go and evaluate a system, figure out what's wrong with it, then fix it themselves, not fill out a report for someone else to take care of it. This is a new kind of education, learning both ends of the spectrum."

The Ag program at RHS is not going away, but it's entering a new world.

## Workshops promote savings, greening

Special to The Chronicle-News

ALBUQUERQUE, NM - The New Mexico USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is sponsoring a series of sustainable agriculture workshops that point the way to less energy use, less pumping of water, lower labor requirements, and less need for fertilizers and pesticides on the farm. The workshops will be hosted in Las Cruces, Albuquerque, Santa Fe, Shiprock, Clovis, and Tierra Amarilla over the summer.

"The science of sustainability can really help farmers cut costs and improve crop production," said Rudy Garcia, NRCS agronomist. "It is a matter of taking soil quality information

and using an integrated approach that applies data from soil, water, and plant tissue testing."

The workshops take participants through the science of soil biology and interpretation of data, followed by hands-on field demonstrations. This analysis enables farmers to evaluate their soil, water, plant, and other resource needs, and encourages the application of best management practices.

"The workshops are timely because in this bad economy we are all worried about costs, and at the same time we are thinking green," said Garcia.

The workshops are scheduled in:

**June 3 - Las Cruces**

**June 24 - Albuquerque**

**July 15 - Santa Fe**

**August 12 - Shiprock**

**August 26 - Clovis**

**September 23 - Tierra Amarilla**

These workshops are attracting the attention of U.S. Foreign Service staff who are interested in agricultural advances for developing countries that suffer from drought and poor soils.

Farmers can sign up for a workshop by contacting the local NRCS field office at the locations that are hosting one of the events.

## COLFAX COUNTY CALENDAR

■ June 5 - 9:00 am to 2:30 pm. The Citizens for the Developmentally Disabled will be holding a benefit Rummage & Bake Sale. Friday and Saturday. For more information

please call 445-5674 - 230 4th Avenue, Raton

■ June 6 - 7:00 am Lake Maloya/Sugarite Canyon State Park Kids Fishing Derby June 6th Contact Info (575) 445-5607 -

Lake Maloya, Sugarite Canyon State Park, East of Raton

■ June 6 - 12:00 pm Raton Arts & Humanities presents-- "2nd Annual Wine and Art Fest" Saturday June 6th at the Raton Convention Center. Wine tasting, silent auction, live auction and artists painting with wine. Tickets \$10 each and participants must be over 21 - Raton Convention Center



Photo courtesy of Columbian Elementary

Columbian Elementary School's 3rd grade class had a spelling bee. The first place winner was Dylana Martinez and second place was Sarah Valdez.