



## Promoting Literacy

### First Gentleman pushes reading

Sunday, January 29, 2012 at 5:45 pm (Updated: January 29, 5:55 pm)

By Lupita P. Gonzales  
For the Optic



Art Trujillo/Optic photo

Members of the Literacy Council of Northeastern New Mexico welcomed the state's First Gentleman Chuck Franco to the annual literacy fair Saturday at the Abe Montoya Recreation Center. The fair featured some 25 literacy-related booths. Franco is an honorary member of the New Mexico Coalition for Literacy. Shown, from left: Merry Kravatz, Barbara Perea-Casey, Brown Bear, Chuck Franco, Dorothy Maestas and Carol Winkel. Not pictured: Janet Remenyik.

Chuck Franco, New Mexico's "First Gentleman," made the rounds at this year's Literacy Fair, meeting the folks and noting the variety of organizations supportive of literacy development in Las Vegas.

"I am impressed at what I see here today...so many programs in a city this size..." Franco told the group. "Everyone seems to be enthusiastic about literacy."

Franco is an honorary member of the board of the New Mexico Coalition for Literacy and an active advocate for improving literacy. He said his interest in the literacy situation was piqued when, during his work in law enforcement, he was assigned to work with the gang unit.

"They needed a better foundation to get them out of this lifestyle," he said.

Franco retired from his 30-year career in law enforcement in 2009, and in December of 2010 was approached by Rosina Boyd, who at that time was the state president of the New Mexico Coalition for Literacy Board.

"I offered my services to be of help," he said. "Since then I have visited various programs throughout the state."

He also underscored Gov. Martinez' interest in improving New Mexico's low education status as "48th in the nation." He said she is concentrating on shoring up strong literacy development in the schools in the elementary years.

"She is opposed to social promotion and supports the idea that in the first through third grades, children must learn to read, while from the fourth grade onward, they read to learn. The governor asked me to let you know that she is 100 percent behind literacy programs."

He emphasized, "Susana and I think the same way on this issue. Enhanced literacy will prepare our kids for better jobs. It's our responsibility to be sure that they develop their reading skills. We want to help them improve their lifestyles."

Franco is determined to make a difference. He said he receives invitations from many groups. "I will be assisting at programs. If my schedule allows it, I'll be there," he said.