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NEWS RELEASE

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NM Public Education Department Announces 2017 New Mexico Teacher of the Year

SANTA FE, NM – Today, Secretary of Education Hanna Skandera announced Stephanie Gurule-Leyba as the 2017 New Mexico Teacher of the Year. Gurule-Leyba is a medical sciences teacher at Capital High School in Santa Fe Public Schools. Skandera joined students and staff at Capital High to surprise Gurule-Leyba with the award.

“Mrs. Gurule-Leyba is a dedicated champion for students and she represents the very best of our teachers across the state,” said Secretary Hanna Skandera. “She has impacted hundreds of lives during her twenty years of service and demonstrates the excellence in teaching each and every day that this award recognizes. I’m so proud to have her in New Mexico, sharing her passion for science and medicine, and inspiring students to reach their full potential.”

Gurule-Leyba is in her 21st year of teaching at Santa Fe’s Capital High School, where she teaches medical sciences in the school’s Medical Sciences Academy, where she also serves as department Co-Chair. Throughout her career, she also taught biology, chemistry, earth and space science, human anatomy and physiology, physics, and life skills classes. Initially destined for a career in the medical field, Gurule-Leyba developed a passion for teaching while enrolled in a teaching elective course in college and decided to dedicate her enthusiasm for science and medicine to New Mexico’s students. Gurule-Leyba holds a bachelor’s degree in biology and a master’s degree in counseling and education from New Mexico Highlands University.

Building on her enthusiasm for sharing science with her students, Gurule-Leyba started the Scrub Club summer program to offer students in grades 4 – 8 a hands-on, exciting experience in science and medicine. Gurule-Leyba enlists current and former students to help as counselors, and since founded in 2012, Scrub Club has impacted more than 700 students with fun and enriching opportunities.

Gurule-Leyba was among 9 semi-finalists considered for the recognition of New Mexico Teacher of the Year. All candidates were required to submit a resume, essay, three letters of recommendation, and demonstrate professional and community engagement. A committee of state and local education leaders reviewed the semifinalists’ applications. The committee chose the top two highest-scoring applications for the final selection.

In the Spring of 2017, Gurule-Leyba will be recognized alongside other state Teacher of the year in Washington, D.C. During this time, the National Teacher of the Year will be announced by the President of the United State and the Council of Chief State School Officers. The National Teacher of the Year is chosen from among the State Teachers of the Year by a selection committee representing major national education organizations.

The New Mexico Teacher of the Year Program has recognized outstanding teachers across the state since 1963. All New Mexico school districts and charter schools are invited each year to nominate an outstanding teacher for this award. Each year's honoree represents New Mexico in the National Teacher of the Year competition.

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