



ABOVE Rosie Sanchez and YDI Head Start Children. Mr. and Mrs. Claus is Chris and Sharon. COURTESY PHOTO



INSET Rosie Sanchez, Ernestine Sanchez (Mother in-law) Moises Sanchez (husband). COURTESY PHOTO

A Lifetime of Love and Learning: Celebrating Rosie Sánchez

A Heartfelt Retirement Tribute to a Questa-Area Icon

BY ERNESTINE PADILLA

For more than three decades, the children of Questa and the surrounding Northern New Mexico communities have been blessed by the warmth and dedication of Rosie Sánchez. Having retired this year, Rosie leaves behind a legacy of education woven into the very fabric of our community—touching at least three generations of local families.

The Journey of a Community Teacher

Rosie’s journey began in 1993 at Mesa Vista when her youngest child entered Head Start. At the time, she was a stay-at-home mom who volunteered in the classroom until she was asked to apply for a Teaching Assistant (TA) position—a role she held for about three months. When a long-time teacher of 20 years left, Rosie stepped into the lead teacher position, and the rest was history. That transition launched a full-time teaching career—one that changed countless young lives.

Rosie quickly found an invaluable mentor in Marla Velarde, now a colleague at YDI Arroyos Del Norte. Marla

took Rosie under her wing, supporting her through those critical early years. Their professional bond blossomed into a lifelong friendship that has spanned 32 years of shared service. When Rosie announced her retirement on June 30, 2025, the tears they shed together spoke volumes about the deep connection and shared history between these two dedicated educators.

A Deeply Rooted Connection

Teaching in a small, close-knit community meant Rosie’s life was interwoven with her students and their families. “I was viewed in the community differently,” Rosie reflects. “You see people at church, weddings, the store, and sports events. This made for a strong connection, and I received a lot of respect.”

Rosie’s deep knowledge of local families allowed her to truly reach her students—whether by recognizing a struggling parent who needed help finding literacy classes or offering a much-needed hug to acknowledge a child’s presence. Her commitment was profound: every day, she made a point to reflect and

ensure each of her students had been personally acknowledged.

Her dedication extended far beyond the school day. Rosie maintained an open-door policy for parents and always welcomed families to her home if they ever needed anything. These relationships often continued long after students moved on. Today, her legacy carries forward through her daughter, Jackie, who also teaches at YDI.

Her Legacy and Light

Rosie hopes her former students remember that she was there for them every single day—teaching them essential self-help skills, patience, and love. Her greatest reward was seeing her children “excel and flourish,” knowing she played a part in helping them succeed and stay in school.

Her daily dedication was extraordinary. At one point, she ran double sessions, teaching a total of 34 children alongside her teaching team. Throughout her career, she served a vast area, working with children from Amalia, Costilla, Cerro, Red River, Questa, San Cristóbal, and Valdez.

Rosie’s advice to new teachers perfectly sums up her career: “Make sure you enjoy being around kids. If you win their love, the kids will learn and do their best.”

Dedication and Achievement

Rosie’s professional journey is also a testament to determination. While raising her family, she began college in 2000, often bringing her daughter Jackie—then 11, and now a teacher at YDI—with her to class. It took a decade, but Rosie proudly earned her bachelor’s degree: an inspiration to her community and a testament to her family’s unwavering support.

Thank You, Rosie!

Youth Development, Inc. (YDI), her colleagues, and the families of Northern New Mexico celebrate the remarkable career of Rosie Sánchez. She is a valued educator, friend, and colleague who has truly been a blessing to us all.

We extend our heartfelt thanks to her husband, Moises Sánchez, and her entire family for their support and for sharing Rosie with the community for so many years.

Rosie, we miss you dearly but wish you the very best as you enjoy your retirement—spending time with family and finally doing all the things you want to do!

With love and gratitude from your community and the staff at YDI.



ABOVE LEFT Gloria Martinez Foster Grandma, Rosie Sanchez, Joelle Pacheco and Vanessa Wilson. ABOVE RIGHT Marla Velarde, Lisa Saltzman, Rosie Sanchez, Hilda Vigil, and Vanessa Wilson. COURTESY PHOTO

