



## Administrative Office of the Courts

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 12, 2026

Court of Appeals to display artwork of middle school students who practice restorative justice

ALBUQUERQUE – The state Court of Appeals will host an exhibition of artwork by students who follow restorative justice principles to resolve conflict and reduce harmful behavior at their middle school in Albuquerque.

About 20 students in the Circle Keepers program at Garfield STEM Magnet and Community Middle School will display their art from noon to 1 p.m. on Wednesday, March 18, in the foyer of the Court of Appeals Building, which is next to the University of New Mexico School of Law.

The artwork reflects the experiences of students in grades 6 through 8 who learn communication and conflict resolution skills as Circle Keepers to repair harm and build relationships within their school community. The students help facilitate relationship building circles, which serve as a foundation for restorative practices.

“The exhibition offers an opportunity for the Judiciary and law school students to learn about the school’s success with restorative justice practices as an alternative to a punitive approach to disciplinary problems,” said Judge Kristopher Houghton.

Restorative practices at the school during the past five years have significantly reduced suspensions and referrals for violent behavior, according to Garfield Restorative Practices Coordinator Erin Chávez.

“Our students are developing the skills to advocate for their needs and resolve conflicts in peaceful ways,” Chávez said. “The student Circle Keepers play a huge role in building a compassionate culture where everyone feels safe, welcome, and valued. I feel lucky to be a part of a school community that values and prioritizes this work, and I hope we can be a model for other schools throughout the district.”

The Court and the Office for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion at UNM Health Sciences collaborated in hosting the exhibition.

“We know that there are important health and legal aspects to restorative practices, and who better to lead us than our youth,” said Dr. Anthony Fleg, director of community wellness for the Health Sciences Center’s DEI office.

Judge Shammara Henderson said, “I hope the school’s Circle Keepers are inspired to consider a career in the law by meeting with judges and other legal professionals.”

Chief Judge Jacqueline Medina said, “I’m looking forward to meeting the students and learning more about this innovative program.”

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GARFIELD STEM MAGNET &  
COMMUNITY SCHOOL

# CIRCLE KEEPERS: LESSONS ON RESTORATIVE JUSTICE



Come learn about how a group of Garfield middle schoolers became “Circle Keepers!” These young leaders transformed school discipline into an opportunity to build community. Employing restorative practices, the Circle Keepers responded to harmful behavior by addressing the impact of the harm through understanding, building and repairing relationships, and fostering a sense of community.

**WEDNESDAY, 3/18/26**  
**FROM 12-1 PM**

**AT THE**  
**NEW MEXICO COURT OF APPEALS**  
**2211 TUCKER AVE NE, ALBUQUERQUE, NM 87106**



**HEALTH SCIENCES**

OFFICE FOR DIVERSITY,  
EQUITY & INCLUSION

*Hosted by The New Mexico Court of Appeals and  
UNM's Health Sciences, Office of Diversity, Equity & Inclusion*