

*The latest news from Luna Community College*

Second Volume 6, Issue 23

December 1, 2023

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# Raphael D'Amato is leading Luna's Wildfire Resiliency Training Center

**Editor's note:** On April 6, 2022, the Hermit's Peak Fire began as a result of the Las Dispensas prescribed fire on the Pecos/Las Vegas Ranger District of the Santa Fe National Forest. By April 9, 2022, the Calf Canyon fire had been detected but was not officially declared a wildfire until April 19. These two wildfires merged to create the Hermits Peak/Calf Canyon Fire on April 22, 2022.

This wildfire has been identified as the worst disaster in New Mexico history. The immediate land and property destruction has been devastating, and the long-term impact of this catastrophe could potentially reshape northern New Mexico communities through the significant loss of livelihoods, cultural connections and way of life.

Luna is implementing a Wildfire Resiliency Training Center that will provide the local community with the skills they need to restore the land they know and love. Using local personnel will not only provide a committed, on-site workforce, but also will make it possible for fami-



**Raphael D'Amato**

lies whose income has been incinerated to develop alternative livelihoods, providing the means to remain in the community to rebuild their homes and property.

Luna Community College recently hired Raphael D'Amato as its Wildfire Resiliency Training Center Director. The following is a one-to-one interview with D'Amato.

**What is your official title?**

Director of the Wildfire Resiliency Training Center.

**When did you start here at Luna?**

I began on Nov. 6, 2023.

**How have your first weeks on the job been like?**

My first weeks on the job have been wonderful. The work done by everyone involved prior to my taking this position is nothing less than remarkable! I'm very encouraged by all the help and what I see as "green lights" from everyone at Luna as well as from all the collaborating/partnering agencies.

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## Luna to participate in City of Las Vegas' holiday events

Luna Community College will be participating in the City of Las Vegas' upcoming light parade on Saturday, Dec. 2 and the Lights on the Gallinas on Saturday, Dec. 9. Luna's theme for both events will be "Love on Ice."

The following is information on the City's upcoming holiday events.

The Electric Light Parade is expecting a record-breaking number of

entries showcasing an array of colors and displays.

The parade will follow the usual City of Las Vegas route, starting at Second St. and Baca and ending at the Plaza Park. Attendees can expect to see the Grinch and mascots from local schools taking part in the parade. Lights on the Gallinas will take place on Dec. 9 where local businesses will

set up lights on the river walk from Bridge Street to Independence Ave.

The season will end with "Santa in the Park" on Dec. 15, 2023, where Santa will be present to give local children their Christmas gifts.

For more information on these and other events, call Chuck Griego at 505-454-1401.



3390 Peachtree Road NE, Suite 1400 | Atlanta, GA 30326 | P. +1.404.975.5000 | www.acennursing.org

## PUBLIC NOTICE OF UPCOMING ACCREDITATION REVIEW VISIT BY THE ACEN

The Luna Community College wishes to announce that it will host a site visit for continuing accreditation of its associate degree nursing program by the Accreditation Commission for Education in Nursing (ACEN).

You are invited to meet with the site visit team and share your comments about the program in person at a meeting scheduled at 1:00-2:00 P.M. on Wednesday, January 24, 2024, in the auditorium LO-1 of the Allied Health Building located at 366 Luna Dr., Las Vegas, NM

Written comments are also welcome and should be submitted directly to:

Dr. Nell Ard, Interim Chief Executive Officer  
Accreditation Commission for Education in Nursing  
3390 Peachtree Road Northeast, Suite 1400  
Atlanta, GA 30326

Or email: [nard@acennursing.org](mailto:nard@acennursing.org)

All written comments should be received by the ACEN by January 9, 2024



366 Luna Drive  
Las Vegas, NM  
505-454-2500  
[luna.edu](http://luna.edu)



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## MISSION

Luna Community College is dedicated to providing accessible, innovative and integrated learning experiences that prepare students to compete at the forefront of their chosen fields and to lead in their communities

# Luna baseball coach Eric Wright says fall semester was great

Luna baseball coach Eric Wright and his student-athletes recently culminated their 2023 fall season. The following is a one-to-one-interview with Coach Wright as he provides insights on his baseball team.

**What is your official title?**

Head baseball coach

**When did you start here at Luna?**

I started July 31, 2023

**How has your first semester on the job been like?**

The first semester has been great, working with players has been exciting, they work hard and listen and the team has made big strides in their development this semester.

**What is your coaching philosophy?**

I have three simple things I try to do every day: 1. Recruit ball players 2. Help players figure out what they need to work on, give them the drills to get better. 3. Stay out of the way of their progress.

**What is a successful day for you and your baseball team?**

A successful day is the team getting better at what we are trying to accomplish.

**How important is it for your student-athletes to not only be competitive on the field but in the classroom as well?**

They are student-athletes, I take more pride in their academic accomplishments than anything on the field.

**How has your team adapted to you as a coach and**



Luna Baseball Coach Eric Wright oversaw team workouts at the Gerald Ortega Wellness Center.

**how have you adapted to your new team?**

The players have done a great job learning and working on what I think is important to win baseball games and I have learned a lot from the players on how to make them better.

**Your team workouts seem to be very organized and competitive. What grade would you give your team based on field performance for the fall semester? And why would you give your team this grade?**

I give the team a B. This grade comes from how fast the team picked up on what was important in my philosophy and worked hard to be in such philosophy every day.

**Although you've only been at Luna a short time, how do you think your team will do in the spring season?**

I think the team has the ability to be very competitive this spring because they saw the results when we played each game and were successful at all the little things you need to do in baseball.

**What type of student-athlete will you be recruiting?**

I always want to recruit ball players, the player that knows the game and works hard every day to get better at the game.

**Any final message you would like to share?**

I hope everyone comes out to watch these young men play games this spring.

# Marcelino Molinar says Luna is a great place to succeed

Marcelino Molinar wants to be a sports broadcaster one day and he is taking his first step at Luna to reach his goal.

“Luna is great place to succeed,” says Molinar a 2023 Mora High graduate. “I know people who have graduated from here and gone on to do well.”

Molinar is majoring in media arts. As part of one of his media arts classes, Molinar uses a school camera to fulfill his photograph assignments.

“I really enjoy my classes,” says Molinar. “I really enjoy taking pictures of nature and the Santuario. It’s peaceful and enjoyable.”

Although, Molinar says he likes all his classes and instructors, Molinar is really fond of two of them.

“Mr. Terrance Garcia is a good man,” says Molinar and Ms. Baca (Kimberly Baca) is very supportive.”

Garcia leads the media arts program and Baca is an established instructor in criminal justice.

A typical day for Molinar begins with a 9 a.m. classes and visits to the tutoring lab.

“One of the best places at Luna is the ACE lab,” says



**Marcelino Molinar has a goal of being a sports broadcaster.**

Molinar. “The tutors do a really good job. Overall, Luna is a fun adventure that brings me joy and laughter.”

Molinar says that he is appreciative of his parents Ivan and Loretta.

“They have always been hard-working people and they have inspired me to do my best and never give up,” says Molinar. “They remind me that life will always bring challenges, but to overcome them.”

In his spare time, Molinar enjoys watching the NFL and cattle ranching.

“The Green Bay Packers is my favorite team,” says Molinar.

Perhaps one day, Molinar will be a play-by-play announcer in the NFL. Molinar says that Divine intervention is important to him.

“God comes first more than anything,” says Molinar. I thank Him every day. He has a plan for all of us; we have to be patient.”

Molinar also believes in being kind to people.

“The best thing to do is make someone smile; one smile to a person can change someone’s day,” says Molinar.



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Creating Opportunities  
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# Raphael D'Amato...

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## What do you like the most about Luna and your job here?

The people! Their enthusiasm, their support and especially their sincerity to see this endeavor succeed and offer any help towards that end.

## What are your general plans for the center, short term and long term goals?

General plan: regarding wildfires (and all the consequences that accompanies them) I see it as working towards an improvement “before, during and after” fire.

...i.e.: “Preparation, Mitigation, Restoration.”

Short-term: get folks and students “on-board” to improve understanding, training, recruitment, qualifications and getting those folks into paying positions where they can actually help with every phase; before during and after fires.

Midterm: better communication and coordination between all agencies, partners and personnel, especially during the emergency response aspect.

Long-term: succeed in making a noticeable, quantifiable difference for New Mexicans communities towards better preparation, better mitigation and better restoration. I see this as more a “circle” than a straight line (i.e.: better restoration now, following the HPCC fire, will circle-back towards better preparation for the next “tantrum” (for lack of a better term) that Mother Nature throws us.

## Can you tell us a little bit of yourself and your background and your experience with wildfires?

My principal background is in specialty design, fine woodworking, architecture and engineering (as well as music). I made a mid-life lateral career shift to computer network engineering (not a huge leap, since engineering is basically engineering) and I worked in that field in France and the Middle East for about 7 years.

I moved to New Mexico in 2005 and realized the serious need to be part of fire service (...I thought “either join and be helpful, or get kicked-out” during fires, so I signed-up). I've served as a volunteer firefighter for San Miguel County for 12 years including as Chief of Rowe FD for better than 6 years. I also had 6 years with New York Fire as a structural “interior” firefighter. That was invaluable experience, which I was able to bring back to New Mexico and share with our firefighters here.

Shortly after I had just “cut my teeth” on the essential basics of firefighting (structural, wildland and all other normal emergency response). I was thrown head first into the



Raphael D'Amato

Tres Lagunas Fire in my district. It quickly went from our initial volunteer response to a full-blown Type-1 incident. I learned a lot in short order (as one would when the fire is rapidly approaching one's home). Besides seeing everyone working day and night without respite, I was thoroughly impressed seeing over 1,000 people from different agencies work so seamlessly together.

## When do you think you will be ready to offer classes for students?

Classes are already scheduled (now in partnership with State Fire and USFS) beginning as soon as this December and also throughout the following months (as is normally done prior to our historical “fire season”). And we plan to extend all those trainings to be offered throughout the year, instead of “cramming” every year before the wildfire season is upon us (which means a lot of training during the holidays... which is not always convenient for folks).

## What credentials or certifications will be available for students?

To begin, the training certifications will align with all fire and emergency service partners (through mutual collaboration) as well as additional “extra trainings” we at Luna are already setting up. The details of the “end-goal” (meaning higher education accreditation) are presently in progress and will align with the goals and positions that are and will be available towards our (and our partners) goals with respective job position placement.

All this towards preparation, mitigation and restoration. And as far as the students are concerned; the goal is to recruit, train, certify, and see them earn credits towards diplomas in the wide range of environmental science and fire science. And not just for “employment” positions, but more importantly, for “leadership roles” (be it private sector or government positions). We have good leaders working on this already, but more “hands-on” leadership is definitely a must in my humble opinion.

## Any final message you would like to relay to the public?

We are truly doing this to get everyone involved to help in any way they feel their efforts will be best utilized be if front line, upper management/leadership, and/or community participants.

Reach-out to me and Luna. This is in everyone's interest and every single person can bring something to the table. I want to see every community member find something here where they could best give their input, efforts and experience, so we can all become part of the solution for the betterment of all. The sum of our efforts together will definitely be greater than the individual parts.



Luna Community College

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*Winter*

# LCC *Festival* **FUNDRAISER**

Proceeds go toward providing LCC students, staff, and community members with better opportunities.



**Luna Community College**

Media Arts & Film Technology Building  
366 Luna Drive  
Las Vegas, New Mexico 87701

**December 9th, 2023**

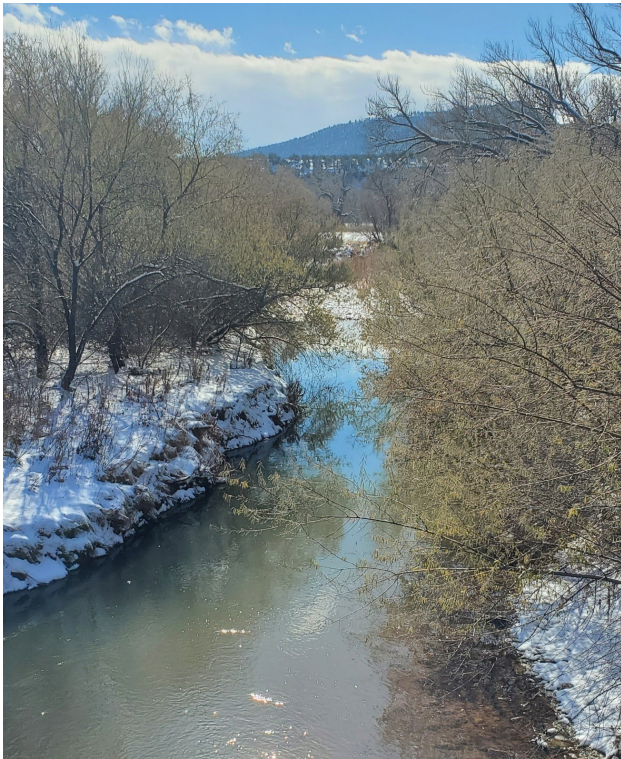
11:00 am – 4:00 pm

**Vendors:**

Please call us at (505) 454-5337  
to participate in this event.  
Space Fee: \$25



Dr. Bernadette Maldonado's Drawing 2 students recently took a field trip to Montezuma. Pictured are Amanda Encinias, Nick Estacio and Isaiah Baca.



This picture of the Pecos River, shows the first snowfall of the season last week.



Luna's  
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Please contact Kimberly Baca  
at 505-454-2540 or via email  
at [kbaca@luna.edu](mailto:kbaca@luna.edu)



# Emergency Medical Technician EMT – Basic

12 Hour Certificate – one semester

12 Students max

The Certificate in Emergency Medical Technician - Basic prepares individuals to sit for National Registry EMT certification exam.

DATES: January 16 – May 10, 2024

## CLASS TIMES

Monday and Wednesday 5:30-9:30 PM

Fridays 4:00-8:00 PM

For more information about registration details, fees and requirements **Contact:** Allied Health and Public Service Department at Luna.

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Linder, Director, 505-454-5387 Ext: 1404 [clinder@luna.edu](mailto:clinder@luna.edu)

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Supported by the Northern NM Workforce Integration Network (WIN) grant with Integrated Education and Training (IET) Adult Education and a WIN Navigator

