

## **Tom and Jerry's School of Public Health**

As members of the NW Region public health team, we had the honor of working very closely with both Jerry Montoya and Tom Scharmen. We were fondly referred to as “Jerry’s Kids.” Here are a few comments from some on the team about what it meant to them to be in the “Tom and Jerry’s School of Public Health.”

- When meeting with Jerry and or Tom I knew to expect a great conversation and get tons of valuable data while doing so. They both were extremely passionate about what they did, and it showed in every conversation, every laugh, and every meeting.

Diana Lopez, Health Promotion Specialist

- Jerry was such a “dad” – constantly grilling us on the 10 Essential Public Health Elements and what they meant regarding our everyday work with communities. He also grilled on the mission and value statements of NMDOH, which clearly states: “assure safety net services for all people in New Mexico.” – he and Tom both felt at times that parts of our population were left out of the state’s priority areas. Tom always believed this was a key reason why the data “telling the story” supported the need for collective action to comprehensively share data and address needs of our more vulnerable population. They both taught the importance of population public health; its improvement only accomplished through the lens of Health in All Policies (HIAP) by directly addressing the Social Determinants of Health.

Michelle Pacheco, Regional Community Health Improvement Coordinator

- To be part of Tom and Jerry’s school of public health is to always remember the importance of community engagement.

Becky Jones, Health Promotion Specialist

- Like all good mentors, Jerry and Tom were enthusiastically present to share their knowledge and support for where I was currently at. There was never any pressure to take on more than I was ready for, but they knew how to entice me with the next step and that made it exciting to grow. Their method of guiding from the side was deliberate and I cherish that approach.

Diana Good, Health Promotion Specialist