Our Santa Fe with Dr. Herbold

**Andrew:** Good evening and welcome to our Santa Fe. I'm your host Andrew Lovato, and each week I explore the city difference, past, present, and future with my fascinating guests. And this evening I am pleased to introduce Dr. Herbold superintendent of. New Mexico School for the Deaf. Welcome to the show.

**Dr. Herbold:** Thank you.

**Dr. Herbold:** I'm really happy to be here.

**Andrew:** Well, let me first of all mention that we have a couple of interpreters in the studio who are interpreting for our radio show for Dr. Herbold. And so if you hear a bit of a lag, that's what the setup is. And we're just gonna jump right into it. First of all, I wanna say what a gem.

**Andrew:** The School for the Deaf is here in Santa Fe. Just the campus itself is so beautiful on Cerrillos Road and so much a part of our community and has been so much a part of our community for so long that, it's just a pleasure driving past it and looking at the beautiful grounds that you keep and the beautiful buildings and so much going on there.

**Dr. Herbold:** I'm not gonna disagree with you. It is beautiful. We have four historical buildings on campus and the campus has been there really since its origin there, I believe. Our school this year is celebrating our hundred and 40th anniversary. But the campus itself is about 130 years old. It was a one room schoolhouse on Manhattan, originally downtown, and then it was located to where it is currently.

But yes, we love our campus. It is beautiful. I completely agree.

**Andrew:** You've served so many people over the years, so many generations of new Mexicans. Yeah. And there's such a rich tradition at the school.

**Dr. Herbold:** Yes. It's actually a little bit wild how our school got started. There was a deaf person from Wisconsin, his name is Lars Larson. He was just a deaf guy. He became deaf at maybe age 11 from some kind of illness, back. That was a long time ago. And he was very frustrated with deaf education that there weren't opportunities available.

And for some reason he heard that there was no school for the deaf in New Mexico, and he decided with his wife and a horse and a carriage to head west, and they picked up a kid in Oklahoma who is technically our first student in New Mexico, this little girl. And then. Went around the state asking people if they knew of any deaf children that needed to go to school and picked them up.

His wife fed the kids, you, they used their own money for a couple of years, paying for everything to get it started supporting the students, and then the legislature was a territorial legislator at that time. We weren't even a state yet, decided to fund the school. And so NMSD, the New Mexico School for the Deaf is actually the very first public school in New Mexico, publicly funded school.

So it's a bit of cool history.

**Andrew:** That is amazing.

You probably have students who come back to the school every probably often to just say hi and, bring their families by to look at the dorms and to look at the classrooms and talk about their days at the school.

**Dr. Herbold:** Yeah. Sometimes we do. Not all the time, but it happens. Our campus is vastly different than it was back then. There's been so many renovations that have happened.

The historical spirit is certainly still there, but the dorms we now call cottages and they're different buildings. Oh. We still have the names of the building remain the same.

Cartwright was the girls' dorm and Connor was the boys' dorm building, but they functionally are very different. So Connor's now a career tech building and our family housing program and apartments are in Cartwright. We have families that come and stay for our very youngest children that live far away in New Mexico, early that can come and live on campus for a couple years.

And New Mexico. School for the deaf doesn't just serve Santa Fe. It's a statewide service. We also have early intervention. They serve children, babies around in around the state, in their homes. We also have an outreach program where we serve children who decide for whatever reason not to attend our school on campus.

Maybe they live too far, they wanna stay at home rather than the dorms, whatever the reason may be. Then we go to their districts. We have grown into quite a large statewide agency and since the inception of this school, and I think that Lars Larson must be very proud of us and how we're doing today.

But when you asked me about students coming back, yes, we always do have some that come, like for homecoming this year is going to be special because it'll be a hundred and fourth anniversary, so we're expecting a pretty good group of alumni to come and they come full of their stories. There are a lot of ghost stories that they share.

And they ask about people, if they still know if that ghost is around or whatever.

But yeah, I learn something from them and I very much enjoy when they do come back. A fair number of alumni also come back and work at the school and become our employees and a variety of facil positions, facilities teaching positions.

Maybe they go to college and come back. And what's special about our school. Is that it's a place where any deaf person can come in and have access, full access without having to have an interpreter alongside. It just makes everything easy to have that visual communication and it's so valuable.

**Andrew:** So the students who come to your school are there age ranges that you serve Earth?

**Dr. Herbold:** Yes. We actually start early intervention starts with babies. So once they are identified as deaf or heard of hearing, we have a referral system through the state, through the Department of Health. And so we are in their home supporting families from the very beginning on whatever their needs may be, what kind of education choices they wanna make, we support them through that.

Sometimes there's audio, technology they wanna use, and we help them navigate all of those questions. And then on our campus, we serve 18 month. They start a full school day and I know that seems a little bit crazy to have them start a full school day, but of course they have nap time and everything.

If they, instead were going to a daycare where they didn't have la language access. Instead they come to our campus and they start learning language from the very beginning. 'cause we know. That they need that early access to language to develop critical thinking skills and world knowledge.

And it's critical for the rest of their education. And so we're very passionate about starting them young at 18 months and then they go all the way up through graduation from high school.

**Andrew:** Wow. Amazing. Yeah. I I. I sometimes see students from the school that are walking to various places in town and they seem so happy.

That's the one thing that strike me is just the joy and the community. It seems like you keep a really happy campus.

**Dr. Herbold:** Yes. No, campus is perfect, of course, but yes, we definitely are grateful that our kids are with us. They love their families. Most of our students do commute daily. About a third of our students live too far to do they live in Hobbes or Silver City, or Las Cruces or Gallup. So we really serve.

All of the state four corners areas, we have students from them. So then they always go home on the weekends. And that was very different too. They didn't have those opportunities. We didn't have their transportation abilities back then that we do now. So it's much faster to get them home than it used to be.

So they of course, go home on the weekends. But we value family involvement as well. Our kids, a lot of people think, that deaf children must be quiet, for example, but they're not. They love to talk. They communicate in all different ways, just like any other young, teenager or kid. And of course teenagers have drama just like anywhere else.

They have boyfriends or girlfriends or they break up and they're upset and that is normal teaching, teenage experiences, and that's what we want for them. We value that and people don't realize that for relationship building and learning how to interact with other people when they go out in the world, how critical that is.

They need to have those skills. So it's a really important part of our school.

**Andrew:** Which leads me to a question I wanted to ask you. From your experience and also working with the students, how do deaf students interact with the world? How do they experience a world that might be a little bit different from hearing folks?

**Dr. Herbold:** Sure. That's a good question. So deaf children, and I'm deaf myself, I would say it varies. There's no one size fits all. There everything has a continuum. So some deaf people use spoken language, some can hear some things. Some deaf people really can't hear anything. It hugely varies and their experiences range as well.

So my personal experience that I have deaf parents and grandparents, which is rare, about 5% of deaf children have deaf parents. Most deaf parents who ha have hearing children, and most deaf people have parents who can hear. It depends. It depends whether their parents learn sign or don't and how they, if they navigate through oral pathways or written language.

And today we have so much technology available and that's a huge benefit. So on my phone, I have an app, live transcription. And so if I go to a restaurant. You used to have to ask people to write things down and now I just turn on my app and they speak into it and it transcribes what they're saying and I look and I can answer.

So it makes things much more easy. I can imagine that advancing and becoming even easier down the road as technology changes. But we strongly see the world through our eyes. We are visual. It means a lot to us to be able to see things. That's how we access information. I think that's the key to our school and our program is that we value the visual part.

Classrooms are set up in a way that supports that, it's not set up in rows, the seatings, because then you don't have eyes in the back of your head to see people communicate behind you. You can't see everybody who's talking, for example, so we have tables and chairs set up in a semicircle.

So that everyone has visual access, just things like that. There's a lot of consideration behind all those choices. But other than that, deaf children are normal. They're just like a hearing child anywhere they go. They have desires, hopes, dreams, just like anybody else.

**Andrew:** Sure. And you also talk about lifelong learning as being one of the goals of your school.

This, I think this is so valuable, especially in the day and age that we live in. The idea that learning doesn't stop once you graduate from high school. It's spurring on that love of learning past graduating from the school for the death that you infuse in your students.

**Dr. Herbold:** Absolutely.

I think every school really wants that and values that, but we have to think about lifelong learning and what does it take to be a lifelong learner. Yeah, curiosity, that interest in wanting to learn new things and openness to new ideas is an important part of that. And that's a challenge in today's world with social media when you're being fed so much information or misinformation at times.

So we really have to be discerning about what's true and what's not, and be able to think for ourselves. And all of that is accessed through language. If you don't have a good language base. Then you won't be able to be a good lifelong learner if you won't be able to, access information or read information.

And that's really the core of our program is access to language, reading and writing, and also American sign language. Many of our students use spoken language as well. They absolutely do. So it's a real mix, and we provide them as many of the tools as possible for them to access everything.

**Andrew:** Great.

And I suppose also just keeping up with modern technology is very important.

**Dr. Herbold:** Oh, yes, definitely. And with AI even, it's been very interesting. I think we're at we're at a crossroads in education for sure. And how AI should be used or the boundaries of it are, I think all of us, whether you're deaf or hearing, we're all having to figure this out together.

**Andrew:** Sure we're going through that same issue here at Santa Fe Community College as well trying to balance and navigate ai. So that's a very good point. A lot of Santa fans are familiar with the school through the James A. Little theater and the performances and the events that have gone on there.

And I understand that in the future. There is a plan to bring the theater back to its, to using the technology and staging events like it was before. COVID.

**Dr. Herbold:** Oh yes, exactly. We love our theater. It was built in. 1980s, I'm not positive the exact date, but it's, at least 40 years old and it hasn't really been, had a major renovation until now. There was really infrastructure work that needed to be done. The hvac, the boring stuff actually, but then also the front of the house, so the bathrooms are being renovated, all of that.

So we're very excited about that. But we have a part that is remaining unfortunately. So our AV system, our audio vis visual really needs to be updated for both hearing access and just general sound system. The visual system, the lights and the costs have gone up just like crazy after COVID, just like all construction.

So we're seeking funding for that. Our current construction construction project will be done in a few weeks, so we're hoping to at least be able to, rent it out, maybe do. Like basic kind of things with it. It's going to be basic compared to what we really want to do, but at least having it be open for some local schools or public organizations, things like that.

I'm told all the time that they know, people know our campus because their daughter had ballet recitals there. Or whatever. Lots of things like that. People remember going when they were small and seeing plays there. We have rented out our theater and leased it to community for a long time, and we definitely do plan to go back to that.

I saw a couple of press newspaper articles on the website, people asking about when it will be open, and we are trying our best to get it open. We're the second largest theater in Santa Fe and so we realize there aren't a lot of other options for theatergoers in Santa Fe. So we want to welcome people back to our campus and hopefully that will happen soon.

**Andrew:** Oh, that's exciting. I have my memories of being at the campus, at the theater as well. So it's really a part of Santa Fe in many ways. Another as, another aspect of the student experience in all schools is athletics. And you have a very vital athletic program at the school for death for the deaf.

I understand.

**Dr. Herbold:** Yes we do, and we very much value it. And not just athletics, but any kind of competition. Like we have academic Bowl where our students compete on a national level against other school programs for the deaf all around the country. We have a middle school competition called Battle of the Books, where they read books and answer questions and they're getting given a set of books and then they compete based on those books.

Sometimes the questions are really hard. I've read the books and I'm thinking, I don't remember that detail, but a lot of kids do. So we have battle of books and we also have a middle school robotics team, and we were actually the state champions last year for New Mexico and robotics. We're very proud of that team.

**:** Of kids. They went to the International Robotics Competition in Dallas. Even we were 64th. That was our place, but it was out of about 500 teams oh, that's good. Hey, not bad. Yeah. The top three teams were Chinese teams, so that was really interesting for me looking at the technology and the exposure that they had.

So it's really important that they get those opportunities. We have typical SP sports as well. Football, volleyball, basketball, track, all of that.

**Andrew:** Yeah. So a really full experience for students it becomes like a world it's an environment where people grow and thrive.

**Dr. Herbold:** A lot of people don't realize the value of being able to communicate with your coach, for example, or your teammates.

Things like that. Oftentimes people think, oh, a deaf child, could play on, at another school on their football team, and they could do well, they could even be the star of the team. At the same time though, being able to have full communication with everyone and be able to talk about what they're doing on that level is just so valuable.

So it's a really nice thing that NMSD can provide to our student body.

**Andrew:** Yeah, and learning teamwork, I think is another important aspect.

**Dr. Herbold:** Yes. Definitely,

**Andrew:** Because students will graduate eventually from the school and they'll go out in the world and they'll be entering the workforce.

They'll be starting families and all of the skills that they need to take with them are things that are probably taught at the school and they learn from a very young age sometimes.

**Dr. Herbold:** Yeah. So sometimes. How would I say it? What? I'm a parent. So when I was a parent of very young children, I found myself thinking a lot about language access.

My children are deaf as well, and even if they were hearing though, I would still communicate with them through sign language. But I do remember just little things like my son always leaving the refrigerator door open and I would tell him, close the door. He's what, three years old probably at that time.

And then finally one day he asked why we have to close the door. And so I got to explain that the food will spoil and it wastes a lot of electricity. I taught him so much in one minute through that one little thing happening, and a lot of kids don't have that access to communication like that at home.

And they miss out on all of those opportunities. It's not just regular instruction that they get at our school, but lots of other information that ca that kids miss, that incidental learning that happens when they're hearing about a parent discussing their taxes or whatever it may be. They miss out on all of that kind of thing at home.

And so we find ourselves wanting to provide that for our students.

**Andrew:** And I can imagine that information and that learning becomes very important. Once students become independent and they have to make their way in the world, and all of these little details that they may have missed are necessary to lead a normal life.

**Dr. Herbold:** Yeah, exactly.

And I think about how children navigate the world, and obviously that's a little different for everybody. But how do you navigate a world if you don't understand it? I think about that a lot and how I, I've met a lot of people and sometimes I think about that. It's very tough for them because that person didn't have access to language until much later, perhaps.

So in trying to explain things, it's more difficult. It's not impossible. No. They can still learn, but it's more frustrating. And I know that if they had access from birth to language, it'd be a different story. So that's really my passion and everybody at this school wanting to make sure that kids are in a good place to a place to thrive.

**Andrew:** Sure. And learning how to adapt to a work world out there and to folks that aren't deaf and finding a way to train others or help others to understand how to communicate better. And perhaps how to work in a way that makes them more productive is probably important as well.

**Dr. Herbold:** Yeah, definitely.

**Andrew:** Yeah. I'm sorry, you were going to say,

**Dr. Herbold:** I would like to introduce another person we have here in the room. This is Amanda Luhan and she is our new development and community relations director. We were trying to remember the title, so we're very excited to have her with us. She is a native new Mexican and she will be helping connect an NMSD to the community through those relationships.

And we'd love to see the community more involved in our school.

**Andrew:** Oh, that's great. Welcome.

**Amanda:** Thank you. Thank you so much. I'm really happy to be here. Most important, I am very excited to be back to New Mexico. I worked at NMSD for several years and I went to get some education and I was thinking, you know what?

Something's missing. And it was that I wasn't at NMSD, you know that NMSD is still at my heart and so I'm happy to be back.

**Andrew:** And you're Native Santa Fean also correct?

**Amanda:** I am. It's true. Born and raised.

**Andrew:** That's great.

**Amanda:** Yes. Happy to be back home as well. So both to Santa Fe and back home at NMSD. I feel both of them are home for me.

**Andrew:** Oh, that's super. It's so exciting. Yeah. Yeah. We're, running a little short on time here. We only have a couple of minutes and I wanted to first of all just mention that you. Your school is open to taking donations. Correct. If someone wanted to say to help with a donation to renovate the theater or something of that sort they can get on your website and find out how to do that.

**Amanda:** Absolutely. Yes. If somebody's interested in donating to the school, we would be very welcome to that and very grateful to them. So keep in mind that we do have a website. It's www dot nsd dot K12 do NM us And if you go to the main menu, there's gonna be an option for giving.

And what's really neat with technology these days is it's just a couple clicks away and you can choose which fund or endowment you'd like to donate to. And really if somebody's interested in donating you can think through, you know what Dr. Herbold just mentioned, which program you're interested in donating to.

Do you wanna support the theater? Do you wanna get that open for us and make sure people can use it? That type of thing. Absolutely.

**Andrew:** Thank you Dr. Herbold for being on the show. The time just flies by and I knew that would happen.

I know. Best of luck and best of luck with the hundred and 40th anniversary.

That sounds very exciting. I,

**Dr. Herbold:** yes, thank you. We're very excited as well.

**Andrew:** And thank you listeners for tuning into our Santa Fe on KSFR 1 0 1 0.1. I'm your host, Andrew Lovato. Please join me again next week, Thursday at 6:30 PM Until then, buena suerte.