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COMMERCIAL REAL ESTATE

New Mexicans to Know: Lynette Montoya wants to create space for Latino entrepreneurs



Image: Latino Hotel Association



By Jayme Sileo
Data Reporter , Albuquerque Business First
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A Santa Fe native, Lynette Montoya started in the real estate industry more than 25 years ago. She credits her first hotel sale in

1998 as the catalyst for what set her on the path to specialize in that sector.

With her first transaction under her belt and eager to learn more, Montoya signed up for an industry conference. “I walked in, and I am short and Hispanic, ... and I was like, what am I doing here?”

Despite her enthusiasm, Montoya felt out of place. She described her first conference as “a sea of white men in gray suits.”

She held onto those early experiences throughout her career and in 2015 joined the Latino Hotel Association as its president and CEO.

Today, Montoya and her team provide resources and opportunities for Hispanics and Latinos in the hospitality industry. Webinars and networking events create connections between new entrepreneurs and financial professionals, contractors and other hotel owners.

“All the different Hispanic and Latino cultures is something that I absolutely love,” Montoya said. And traveling across the country gives her ample opportunity to meet people from every background.

“You see so many different Latinos in my job,” she said. “Being from New Mexico is so different than being from any other state. Latinos in the U.S., from Florida to California to Washington to New York, we’re all so different.”

Montoya recently fostered a relationship between the Latino Hotel Association and the U.S. Hispanic Chamber of Commerce. Together, in partnership with Ethnifacts, the organizations released the Latino Hotel and Entrepreneurship Investment Report to highlight the Latino workforce across the United States.

The report found Latinos to be a critical part of the hospitality industry and the economy at large with nearly a quarter of hotel, motel and resort desk clerks identifying as Latino. But, the report stated, Latinos make up only 14% of managerial positions.

Montoya hopes to not only see more Latino hotel managers and owners, but more Latinos at every level of the hospitality industry.

“I want more Latinos to be getting some good jobs at these corporate offices, because I need more friends out there,” Montoya said. “I need more Latinos out there that are thinking like I’m thinking. That we need to help others in this industry. I know they want to, no matter who they are.”

Albuquerque Business First recently caught up with Montoya to talk about Santa Fe and what she has planned for the Latino Hotel Association.

The interview was edited for brevity and clarity.

Albuquerque Business First: When you aren’t busy running the Latino Hotel Association, what are some of your favorite things to do around New Mexico?

Lynette Montoya: I can honestly say I love being in Santa Fe and spending time at home. We love fine dining in our lovely town, and we love New Mexico dining. I have a granddaughter in New Mexico, and I spend as much time with her as I can. We have two older granddaughters in Denver so we go to Denver as much as we can, as well. My sons are in Los Alamos, Phoenix, Denver and Indiana. It’s busy. Four boys and three granddaughters.

What are your favorite spots in Santa Fe? We often walk around the Downtown area, sometimes we’ll take them to Canyon Road, the Chimayo, kind of just the norm. For my mother’s birthday we went to Geronimo’s. ... I can go on about restaurants. ... Shopping, that’s the big one. We are shoppers. I just think that’s the great thing about living here is that even though it’s a small town, it’s so rich with culture.

In your career, what is your proudest accomplishment? Well, I think it was the segue to this job. When I sold the St. Anthony hotel in San Antonio, Texas, that was the point when I realized this is an incredible industry, and even though I don’t look like

anybody else doing this, I'm going to keep doing it. It was a really exciting time. I've just had a great run with hotel brokerage, but I knew that it's very hard, believe me. When I was asked to take this position, I thought it was just the perfect job for me because the passion of seeing the faces shift in ownership just has totally inspired me and continues to inspire me. It's just truly a labor of love and of helping people create wealth for their families.

What are your goals for the future of the Latino Hotel

Association? A lot more events. Which is not going to be easy, but there's just so much to learn. I want to make it more accessible, really create that educational opportunity and find the best ways to do that. We're sharing, we're getting people together, we're educating the best we can, but how do we push them to the next level? It's a challenge. It truly is a challenge.

What would you say to younger entrepreneurs just starting out in

this industry? Find a property. Evaluate and learn everything you can about that property. Learn everything you can about what the financing opportunities would be. Look at all the studies that need to happen, the inspections that need to happen. Learn every step of the process, then everything just becomes a system. Once you set up your system to look at your possibilities, just do it.

What do you hope to accomplish in a year?

We got the report done so, to see those numbers really shift in the next year. I know it's not going to take just a year, but to see those numbers really shift and for people to really pay attention to that report and for people to look at this industry, especially Latinos, to really look at this industry, as an opportunity.

What else do you want people to know?

This organization exists. It's in New Mexico. Since I'm out of state all the time it doesn't really occur to me that we need people to know about it in New Mexico. ... I think that New Mexico has some of the most amazing Latinos in the whole U.S. ... I would like more time to connect with the amazing people of this state, to let them know what we're up to.

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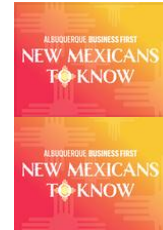
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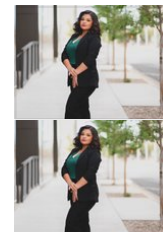
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