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**- Tony Mendoza
La Tienda of Hobbs
manager**

La Tienda of Hobbs manager Tony Mendoza, left, talks to Alonzo Mendoza and Roman Salazar, right, as they stock a shelf with paper towels. Tony, a part-time student at New Mexico Junior College, stresses education to his employees.
RICHARD TROUT/NEWS-SUN

La Tienda manager pushes education

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NEWS-SUN

La Tienda of Hobbs manager Tony Mendoza does more than simply tell his employees it's important to get a good education.

He shows them how to do it by doing it himself.

Mendoza, 43, is in his third year as a part-time student at New Mexico Junior College. He plans to eventually receive a master's degree in business management — possibly from Eastern New Mexico State — after graduating from NMJC.

After being raised as a youngster in Higginbotham, Texas, and going to high school in Seminole and Denver City, Mendoza joined La Tienda's Denver City store as the produce manager in 1986.

By 1989 he was promoted to third assistant in Denver City. When he transferred to the Hobbs store in April 1990, Mendoza started as assistant manager. On Jan. 1 he became store manager.

For three years, Mendoza has been taking two business courses per semester while working full time and then some.

Mendoza usually works 60-70 hours a week, arriving at 7 a.m. and going home at 7 p.m. on most days. When he gets home it's time to hit the books despite

being exhausted and sleepy on many occasions.

"Sometimes I have to stay up late doing my homework for my next class period," he said. "It's hard. I squeeze it in every chance I get and every break I have. Sometimes I want to go home and just give up and not do it. But you've got to dedicate yourself and just do it. It's a sacrifice you make."

Meanwhile, Mendoza's grocery store duties include ordering groceries, supervising employees, hiring and training staff and overseeing each of the store's departments — produce, dairy, market, bakery and grocery.

Roman Salazar is one of the store's most recent hires. He started as the assistant manager a week ago.

"He's been a really good boss," Salazar said about Mendoza. "He's really easy-going and easy to get along with and he tries to explain things to you. He's very professional."

Patience and dedication are responsible for his rise up the ladder at La Tienda, Mendoza said.

"Sometimes it seems like you're not making any headway or moving up the ladder, but you have to be patient," he said.

Mendoza noted he tries to emphasize the importance of education to the many teenagers and young

adults who work at La Tienda. Sometimes he hires high school dropouts, but he encourages them to return to school for a GED.

La Tienda is flexible in allowing employees to adjust their work schedules for classes, he said.

"A lot of times it seems hard and frustrating and you want to give up, but just keep on going and it will eventually pay off in the long run. It just takes dedication."

The manager said he plans to remain in the Hobbs area because his parents, two brothers and two sisters live in Denver City. He is married to Virginia Mendoza, department secretary at NMJC's Pannell Library.

Regarding what gives him the greatest satisfaction working at La Tienda, Mendoza said meeting new customers.

"You get to know a lot of different people from different ethnic backgrounds," he said. "I enjoy treating my customers and taking care of them, and hopefully they'll come back to the store."

In the meantime, the manager and part-time student will continue stressing education to his staff.

"I look at that as the one important thing in life that you have to do," Mendoza said. "The more education you can get, the better off you are."



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