

## The Youngest caver

Lynda Sanchez/for the Ruidoso News  
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(Garrett Jorgensen helps to map Fort Stanton Cave in October 2010. Pete Lindsley photo.)

### Teen delves deep into education

After Garrett Jorgenson turned 16 last year, he joined a special group of cave explorers and scientists working on the science and hydrology of Fort Stanton Cave and the surrounding Karst region in Lincoln County.

"He is an amazing young man," observed one caver from Denver.

I personally, can vouch for that. As a former educator, it is always a pleasure to observe young people participating in an exciting venture like the Fort Stanton Cave Study Project.

While the project has been in existence for more than four decades, Garrett possibly is the youngest caver participant, who has returned expedition after expedition during the last two years and is an asset to the mission.

Garrett also is the youngest caver to make it in as far as the famed Snowy River Passage. He is strong and has a great attitude.

His willingness to do any chore assigned has endeared him to the entire group of about 100 dedicated cavers, who converge four times a year at their headquarters on the Fort Stanton/Snowy River National Conservation Area in Lincoln County.

He lugs sacks of cement, water jugs, steel gate materials, digs, explores, does cave surveying and mapping as well as attending the nightly debriefings during which each group reports their research and accomplishments for the day.

Sometimes he returns on special assignments like the ground-penetrating radar endeavor in mid July when cavers were searching for anomalies beneath the surface that might lead to other cave passages.

Garrett is home schooled and lives in Edgewood.

His parents believe his participation during these expeditions gives him a range of experience especially in the science arena that other young people would never receive.

The list would include biology, hydrology, geology, resistivity studies of landforms, archaeology, history, micro biology and the thrill of new exploration and discoveries in the "land beneath our feet" in Lincoln County.

Asked what his favorite studies are, Garrett grinned and said geology, and perhaps chemistry and physics.

His teachers and/or mentors include some of the top scientists in the Southwest, such as bat biologists from the University of Arizona; physicists and aerospace engineers, geologists, computer experts, photographers and cavers who have devoted years to this project. Several work at Sandia Laboratories.

Garrett has learned a life lesson about dedication and perseverance. He understands that hard work brings success and a feeling of camaraderie at all levels.

His smile is big, and he sets a great example for his peers and that is to get involved, learn and contribute.

For more information about the project, contact project board member Lynda Sanchez at 575-653-4821, or project director Steve Peerman in Las Cruces at [gypcaver@comcast.net](mailto:gypcaver@comcast.net)

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