

The Chair

An old wooden chair sits beside her desk. It has sat there for years and experienced some of the same things this woman has experienced. Not only has the chair seen this woman grow, but has served as a home-away-from-home for many students who have come seeking her guidance.

The chair sits beside the desk of Kay Arellano, the former administrative business assistant for the Department of Natural Resources Management (NRM) in the College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources.

“Students said they would like to carve their initials in the chair because they spent so much time here,” Arellano said laughing, “but if they did, there would not be a chair left.”

Arellano began working for the NRM department in August 1976. She said when she first arrived, the place where her desk and the chair currently sit was just dirt. The basement had not been fully built because the building had only been in existence for three years.

Not only has she seen structural progress take place, but has witnessed the department grow as well.

“It went from Range and Wildlife to Range, Wildlife, and Fisheries to now Natural Resources Management,” Arellano said.

Arellano was loyal, not only to Texas Tech, but to the NRM department for 36 years. She consistently worked full-time for the department until she officially retired from her job in January 2012.

However, Arellano was not gone for very long.

Arellano said she took off the time she was required to but could not wait to come back to her job. She said she never had any intention of retiring forever.



Even though she does not hold the same title she held for over three decades, she does continue to help students and faculty like she always did.

One of Arellano's primary functions in the department is to connect students with faculty advisers and help students register for classes.

Alisa Chandler, a NRM major from Kaufman, Texas, said she is one of the students who has benefited from Arellano's advisement.

"She always stays up-to-date with what classes are popular and available each semester," Chandler said. "She also makes sure you have the best schedule every semester because she really seems to care about your happiness."

Chandler recollects a time when she went to see an adviser to plan her classes for the upcoming semester. She was not aware but Arellano happened to be listening in the next room to insure everything was going well.

Chandler said she and her adviser were having trouble picking some classes and were not sure what would be the best choice.

"All of the sudden I heard Ms. Kay yell from the other room 'I got a class just for her and it is not full yet,'" Chandler chuckled. "I am so glad she was listening because I ended up really enjoying that class."

Arellano's academic advising philosophy centers on making time for informing and encouraging students. She believes in putting students first before other work and in focusing on each individual student.

Renee Dillon, the current senior business assistant for the NRM department, was trained by Arellano when she began working for the department four years ago. She describes Arellano as humble, kind, and most of all, a maternal figure for the department.

"A lot of kids in this department kind of view her as a mom-away-from-home," Dillon said. "It's like she's a counselor almost. Even after they graduate, they come back to see her."

Because Arellano is viewed as a mother figure in the department, she does not limit herself to only advising students about academics but said she will also advise them in other important areas of their lives.

"Students will come and sit and talk about anything," Arellano said. "Whether its school or if its girlfriends, boyfriends or life in general. And I may not say a word, and generally I don't. But just being here for them to talk, I think has made a big difference for a lot of people."



Kay Arellano's hard work was recognized when she received The President's Excellence in Academic Advising Award in

Arellano's maternal instinct is a special quality not easily found on such a large campus. However, there is another quality that stands out to everyone who comes in contact with this woman – humility.

"She's never going to brag about herself," Dillon said as she mentioned a prestigious award that Arellano received.

In 2009, Arellano received The President's Excellence in Academic Advising Award. The award was created and first offered in the spring of 2006 to emphasize the importance of academic advising.

But true to her personality, Arellano did not boast about the glamour of the award and ceremony, but rather the components that went into the preparation of the award.

"This isn't as special to me as what went before it," Arellano said as she pointed to her award.

She said in order for her to receive the award, former students and colleagues had to write letters to a committee nominating her for the award. The letters written spoke of Arellano in a bright light and mentioned all of the importance she has contributed to the department.

After she was presented with the award, Arellano had the opportunity to read the letters submitted on her behalf.

"It was overwhelming to me to read what people had said about me because I was just doing my job," Arellano said.

Arellano does not know how much longer she and the chair will be with the department, but she is sure of one thing; as long as she is there, students will continue to inhabit the chair. **T**

Amy Kress

Garland, Texas

