

Sam DeFillippo Resigns from City position to work full-time for [PlaySafe](#) .

Longtime city employee resigns

By Jay P. Tharinger
Observer staff writer

Sam "Butch" DeFillippo, who has held about 10 different positions with the City of Rio Rancho over the past 16 years, submitted his resignation last week. He's going into business for himself.

In his most recent position, DeFillippo served as resource management supervisor for the Parks and Recreation Department, overseeing the park maintenance division and Keep Rio Rancho Beautiful. A resident of Rio Rancho since 1972, he began working for the city as a lifeguard in 1982. For several months in late 1996, following the resignation of Stan Ford, DeFillippo also served as acting director of the parks department.



Sam "Butch" DeFillippo

He submitted his resignation Friday afternoon. "I wanted to spend some more time with my son as he starts his school career," DeFillippo said. Five-year-old Christopher began kindergarten at Chaparral Elementary this week.

DeFillippo has embarked on a new career as well. In January of this year, he and Hep Prezzano created PlaySafe,

a recreational consulting and services company. Its list of clients currently includes municipalities and agencies from New Mexico, California and Colorado, "and we've gotten calls from as far away as New Jersey," he said.

PlaySafe inspects playgrounds to make certain they meet federal safety standards, as well as comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act. If the playgrounds are found to be substandard, "we try to help our clients find funding to repair them... then we will do the work," DeFillippo said.

One of PlaySafe's largest clients, he said, is the Albuquerque Public Schools district which maintains about 90 playgrounds. Most of them currently don't meet the federal guidelines, "but they (APS) are being very progressive," DeFillippo said. PlaySafe's other clients include playground equipment manufacturers and several neighborhood associations within New Mexico.

Rio Rancho's playgrounds -- many of which DeFillippo helped establish -- are up to federal standards, he said.

"I spent 16 years in Rio Rancho and will miss it," he said. "It was an exciting time of my life."

Government employees are often labeled incompetent, DeFillippo said. "But that truly isn't the case with the people I worked with in Rio Rancho."

"Butch has a personal stamp on most of the recreational projects in Rio Rancho, and he should be proud of that," said parks department director Ed Chismar. "We had a good personal and professional relationship... and I miss him already."

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