

New Mexico State University News Release

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June 9, 2009

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DNA lab at NMSU maps ancestral origins

Discovering where your ancestors originated is now as easy as swabbing your cheek with a Q-tip. An Ancestral Origins DNA kit, capable of mapping anyone's ancestry, is now available at The Genetics Testing Laboratories (GTL) at New Mexico State University's Arrowhead Business and Research Park.

The lab compares DNA submitted by a customer to DNA databases around the world. GTL then produces a map showing how strongly the client's DNA matches the profile of an anthropological region. Each map is broken into three major sections: population matches, native region matches and strength indicators. A green marker shows the best match, yellow shows a good match and red means that no match or a weak match was made.

"We're running at least one of these a day," said Kenneth Brown, network and systems administrator with the lab. "People like genealogy, figuring out their past. It seems to be pretty popular."

A recent client was New Mexico State Senator Mary Kay Papen. She was adopted and told her mother died while giving birth. She never knew for sure from where her family had come and brought her children and grandchildren to hear her test results - a very strong match to southern Europe.

"I'm very happy I did it," Papen said. "Growing up, I was always curious. This is great understanding where you came from. It's part of who you are."

Garrey Carruthers, dean of the NMSU College of Business and vice president for economic development, had his DNA run through the database as well and received his results shortly after Papen. His strongest matches were in northern Europe, which correlates with family stories of British and German ancestors.

GTL is part of a group of DNA and forensic testing businesses spun off from NMSU in 2005 and still partially owned by the university. GTL's sister company, the Forensics Testing Laboratory, also uses the test for law enforcement purposes. By running the DNA through their database, they can easily narrow down a field of suspects, eliminating those of races not matching a profile.

The Ancestral Origins DNA test kit is available at the Web site www.gtldna.com. Results typically take about a week.

-30-

Photo is available at
http://ucommphoto.nmsu.edu/newsphoto/papen_genetic_origins.jpg

CUTLINE: Kenneth Brown, left, a network and systems administrator for Genetics Testing Laboratories, shows New Mexico State Senator Mary Kay Papen, seated center, and her daughters the results of her ancestral origins test. (NMSU Photo by Justin Bannister)

-30-
