



HOUSING FOR ALL!!!

NEWS FROM THE NEW MEXICO COALITION
TO END HOMELESSNESS

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Camp Hope is fighting homelessness in Las Cruces

by Stephanie Lefebvre, Office Manager

In November 2011, with the support of Mesilla Valley Community of Hope, three determined homeless individuals initiated an arrangement with the City of Las Cruces temporary allowing homeless people to camp on a piece of property owned by the city. The initiative was named Camp Hope.

Camp Hope, was created as a temporary response to the shelter needs of the Las Cruces homeless people, offering an immediate solution to isolation, providing safety in numbers and a sense of community. While people stay at Camp Hope, they encourage and support each other in the process of acquiring work, housing, financial independence such as SSI or other supportive financial benefits.

While city officials and local homeless agencies are working on developing more housing solutions to end homelessness in Las Cruces, Camp Hope made it through the winter and now hosts 50 men and women (The City of Las Cruces capped occupancy at 50 to ensure security).

The homeless residents have formed a leadership council, established rules, enforced alcohol and drug consumption prohibition and organized around the clock security shifts.

A hundred yards from the camp, at Mesilla Valley Community of Hope, homeless people can take showers, wash their clothes, receive their mail, and meet with social workers helping them find health care, housing, and financial solutions.

The men and women of Camp Hope come from a variety of backgrounds and are homeless for various reasons. The average age is 50, the oldest person is 72, six men are veterans, two men are handicapped and use a wheelchair, many have been diagnosed with post traumatic or/and bipolar disorders. Matt Mercer, one of the camp leader, is 38 years old and has been homeless multiple times since at age 18 he became the victim of a hate crime. Matt says he "finds a sense of purpose and a form of healing helping others at the camp and working with the City of Las Cruces, the homeless service agencies and the community at large to better the life of those who are still homeless".

The New Mexico Coalition to End Homelessness salutes the committed work and community organizing efforts of an inspiring group of men and women!



*A few tents at Camp Hope in Las Cruces where 50 people currently live while working on exiting homelessness.
Photo courtesy of Camp Hope: <http://hopevillagelasruces.wordpress.com/gallery/>*

Our Sincere Gratitude Goes Out to These Individuals & Organizations

Special Thanks to:

-Piñon Fast Print for discount printing services.

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The sponsors for our April 26 Conference: Gold: **The Department of Family and Community Services of the City of Albuquerque**, Silver: **NM Mortgage Finance Authority, Moye Waters and Associates, and PNM Copper: Optum Health and Century Bank.**

Senator Nancy Rodriguez of Santa Fe for championing the addition of \$3 million to the NM Housing Trust Fund during this year's legislative session.

Senator Peter Wirth of Santa Fe for sponsoring Senate Bill 9 which would have required out of state corporations to pay state income tax.

Congratulations to:

The six nonprofit agencies which were awarded funding from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development for new supportive housing projects for homeless people in March:

New Life Homes, Catholic Charities of Central NM, Santa Fe Civic Housing with Interfaith Leap, St. Elizabeth Shelter, The Housing Trust, and Youth Shelters

Our Individual Supporters we forgot to thank in our December 2011 newsletter:

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Advisory Board and NM Veterans Helping Homeless Veterans Raise Record Amount of Money for Mini-Grants

by Hank Hughes, Executive Director

The Advisory Board of NMCEH and the related committee, NM Veterans Helping Homeless Veterans, raised a total of \$37,983 for the New Mexico Coalition to End Homelessness in the last year. Of this total \$11,220 will be used to support the advocacy efforts of NMCEH to convince local state and federal governments to pursue policies that end homelessness. The remaining \$26,763 will be distributed to agencies that are doing a good job of providing housing and services to homeless people in New Mexico. Funds raised by the Veterans committee will go solely to assist homeless veterans.

New Center for Homeless People in Santa Fe

by Hank Hughes, Executive Director

The Santa Fe Resource and Opportunity Center, ROC for short, opened in the final months of 2011 and has been steadily increasing the number of services available. The ROC serves as the permanent home for the Interfaith Community Shelter, which is open every night during the coldest months of the year to give everyone who needs it a warm meal and a warm place to sleep. On Tuesdays and Fridays during the day St. Elizabeth Shelter operates its resource center for homeless people at the ROC with a mid-day meal and other services including a legal clinic. Santa Fe Community Services is offering needle exchange and help applying for SSI. La Familia offers it Health Care for the Homeless program, Life Link offers mental health assessments, and homeless court happens at the ROC once a month.

The ROC grew out of the Santa Fe Plan to End Homelessness which called for a one stop center where homeless people could access a variety of services under one roof. The campaign to purchase and renovate the old Pete's Pets building on Cerrillos Road to serve as the ROC was spearheaded by a group of volunteers associated with the Interfaith Shelter Group. Vahid Mojarrab, a local architect, volunteered to be the architect and to coordinate the renovations. Guy Gronquist and Ray Masterson recruited other volunteers to assist with the renovations. In addition to regular volunteers a number of homeless and formerly homeless people were recruited and paid to assist with the renovations.

The City of Santa Fe provided \$1 million to purchase and renovate the building. Recently the New Mexico Legislature committed \$111,000 to finish the kitchen and other renovations needed to make the facility fully functional.

**NMCEH Sponsors Conference in Albuquerque
Housing for All in Changing Times
April 26 at the Indian Pueblo Cultural Center
For more information go to www.nmceh.org**

The New Mexico Coalition to End Homelessness



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- *Vibrant nonprofit housing programs*
- *Fair government policies*
- *And public knowledge of real solutions*

Success at 2012 Legislature

by Lisa Huval, Policy and Advocacy Director

Our priorities during the 2012 legislative session were to protect and increase funding for programs that help people end their homelessness. As we headed into the 2012 legislative session, we were not sure what to expect. The state had some extra revenue for the first time in several years, but it was still not clear how the programs that serve people experiencing homelessness would fare.

As it turns out, we had a very successful session. Funding for General Assistance, homeless assistance funding, Transitions (a housing voucher program for youth transitioning out of foster care/ juvenile justice system) and Linkages (a housing voucher program for people with mental illness) was maintained at FY12 levels. The Legislature allocated \$3 million to the New Mexico Housing Trust Fund – the first time in several years that the Trust Fund received any funding. These funds will be used to construct affordable homes for low income New Mexicans. We also helped secure \$111,000 in capital outlay funding for a new drop-in center in Santa Fe for people experiencing homelessness.

We also supported Senate Bill 9, which was sponsored by Senator Wirth and would have closed the tax loophole that allows some out-of-state corporations to avoid paying taxes on the profits they earn here in New Mexico. Making sure that out-of-state corporations pay their fair share is critical to generating the revenue we need to fund the programs we care about. SB 9 passed the Legislature, which was a huge victory but it was vetoed by the Governor.



Senator Mary Kay Papen, Abel Covarrubias (Jardin de los Niños, Board Member), Hank Hughes (NMCEH, ED) Allison Kuper Smith (former Jardin de los Niños Board Member), Shirley Jaquez (Jardin de los Niños, ED), after discussion on the Housing Trust Fund and SB78

One reason we were successful this year is because of strong participation in our Lobby Day. On January 25th sixty people from across New Mexico, including Albuquerque, Santa Fe, Taos, Gallup, Socorro, Roswell, Las Cruces, Las Vegas and Farmington, gathered in Santa Fe for our 6th annual lobby day. Our members met with their legislators, educating them about homelessness in their districts and urging them to support solutions to homelessness.