Hope in the Desert
by Hank Hughes, Executive Director

Desert Hope is the name of the new permanent supportive housing project being developed by the Mesilla Valley Community of Hope, the City of Las Cruces, and the Las Cruces Housing Authority. The proposed project will renovate an older apartment building into 36 new units for people with a disability who have been homeless.

The Las Cruces area currently has some 200 chronically homeless people with disabilities in need of housing. That is more people who are both homeless and disabled than anywhere else in New Mexico except for Albuquerque. The Desert Hope project grew out of the Supportive Housing Toolkit series of workshops that NMCEH sponsored in the spring of 2017 with HUD funding through Enterprise Community Partners and funding from the Lineberry Foundation.

Desert Hope is one of several projects that are moving quickly forward from the Toolkit process.

The others that are planning to be built in 2018 are in Silver City, Socorro, Gallup, and Farmington.

Santa Fe also has a new permanent supportive housing project under development that was started before the Toolkit Workshops.

Nicole Martinez, Executive Director at Mesilla Valley Community of Hope, and Michael Nitsch, Balance of State CoC Project Manager, at site of Desert Hope.

The 16 Staff members of the NMCEH met for a one day retreat on December 1st. This was the first time all of us had the opportunity to meet at once! Back row, left to right: AJ Johnson, Kevin Arthun, Stephanie Lefebvre, Mark Oldknow, Hank Hughes, Roman Seaburgh, Rebecca Poe, Julie Jaquez, Michael Nitsch, Ben Ofoma. Front row, left to right: Donna Trainer, Bee Chavez, Lisa Huval, Victoria Cruz, Hana Gossett, Lisa Maury.
Housing for All Conference Brings Us Together for the Sixth Time

by Stephanie Lefebvre, Office Manager

The 6th Housing for All Conference, hosted by the Coalition on October 26th, was a great success. With over 220 participants attending this year, the MCM Elegante Hotel, in Albuquerque, turned out to be a venue the vast majority enjoyed and approved of.

Those in attendance learned from eleven different workshops such as Social Inequities, Brain Injury 101, Veteran Homelessness, Sex Trafficking, etc. This year, three round table discussions were added to invite everyone to share their knowledge, voice their concerns, and come up with ideas to move forward.

Our plenary speaker, Angie Walker from the City of Rockford, Illinois, had plenty to share about Rockford being the first US city to officially reach functional Zero for veteran homeless and chronic homelessness. Our keynote speaker, Reverend Alvin Herring, of Kellogg Foundation, had fired everyone up with his talk about racial injustice and his vision about how to overcome it.

Last but not least, the Coalition recognized 10 deserving individuals for their outstanding service to New Mexicans experiencing homelessness.

NMCEH thanks everyone who attended the conference. A special thank you to our speakers. We are grateful for the time and effort you took to share your thoughts and experiences with us!

VISTAs Working to Make Holiday Season Better for Those in Need

by Rebecca Poe, VISTA Lead

The holidays may be upon us, but NMCEH’s AmeriCorps VISTAs are still busy assisting their host sites.

Jeremy Yazzie is our VISTA at Albuquerque Health Care for the Homeless. He has been creating social media posts and newsletter content in support of their #GivingTuesday event.

Katelynn Conway is doing her year of service at Youth Shelters and Family Services of Santa Fe. Katelynn sent out their annual appeal, and her organization has already received thousands of dollars from multiple donors. Youth Shelters and Family Services had multiple partner organizations, including La Montanita and the Labs, agree to do donation gift drives. Santa Fe’s Meow Wolf committed to a gift of $5,000, as well as contributing in-kind donations. The folks at Meow Wolf -- who are very generous to Albuquerque’s Casa Q as well -- also set up a drive with Santacafe in downtown Santa Fe to support the mission of Youth and Family Services.

Katherine Irwin is serving at St. Elizabeth shelter. She is assisting with their annual volunteer appreciation party, with over 100 volunteers attending. Casa Familia, one of St. Elizabeth’s programs that provides shelter and services to families in need, recently acquired a donor willing to match funds for a new mini-van, which is desperately needed.

Rebecca Poe is the new VISTA Lead for NMCEH, meaning she helps place VISTA volunteers at our member agencies. She is currently recruiting for AmeriCorps VISTA members to join our NMCEH team. We are also always looking for new member agencies to host VISTA members. Contact Rebecca at rebecca-p@nmceh.org or Hana Gossett at hana-g@nmceh.org for more information.
Our Sincere Gratitude Goes Out to These Individuals & Organizations

Thank You to Our Individual and Business Supporters (who donated since previous newsletter)

Admiral Jon Barr
Jean Bergeron
Sallie Bingham
Margaret Blackburn
Jeremy Campbell
Connie Chavez
John Clubbe
Susan & Patrick Conway Oliphant
Nancy Dahl

Five & Dime
Rebecca Frenkel
Sara Garmon
Stephen & Lynn Gibbs
Stephanie Greene
La Fonda on the Plaza
Patricia Lollar
Paul Margetson

Frank Mulholland
Richard and Rachel Fund, New Mexico Community Foundation
Stanley Robb
Mona Ruark
Sonia Velasquez
Stephen Verchinski
Violet Crown Cinema

Special Thanks to:

Enterprise Community Partners and the Lineberry Foundation for supporting our Toolkit for Supportive Housing project to jumpstart new permanent supportive housing projects throughout New Mexico.


The generous businesses that contributed to our veterans campaign this fall: Violet Crown Cinema, The Santa Fe New Mexican, Christus St. Vincent, Owings Gallery, Tomasita’s Restaurant, Sommer, Karnes & Associates, LLP, Five and Dime, La Fonda on the Plaza, Hotel Santa Fe, Alex Safety Lane, Campbell & Associates.

Advisory Board:
Abigail Adler, Peter Chapin, Peter Glankoff, Gloria Holloway, Betty Baxter, Karen Beall

Board of Directors:
Nicole Martinez, Co-Chair, Mesilla Valley Community of Hope
Alexandria Taylor, Co-Chair, Valencia Shelter Services
Carol Luna Anderson, Treasurer, The Life Link
Deborah Tang, Secretary, St. Elizabeth Shelter
Celeste Trujillo, Community Against Violence
Liz Reynolds, Health Care for the Homeless of Santa Fe
Lynn K. Valdez, Cion Housing Services
Linda Stone, First Nations Community HealthSource
Mary Ann Chavez Lopez, El Camino Real Housing Authority
Lynn Love, San Juan County Partnership
Henrietta Correa, Homeless Advocate
David Sisneros, Heading Home
Connie Chavez, Barrett Foundation
Ann Shaw, Advocate
Sylvia Sieland, Advocate
Joe Berenis, Interfaith Shelter
Meryl Lieberman, Casa Milagro

Veterans Helping Homeless Veterans Board:
Mike Barr, Revell Carr, Tom Aageson, Chris Calvert, Mark French, Raphael Benjamin.

Staff:
Kevin Arthun, Coordinated Assessment Connection Specialist
Bee Chavez, Coordinated Assessment Connection Specialist
Victoria Cruz, Data Analyst
Hana Gossett, Project Coordinator
Hank Hughes, Executive Director
Lisa Huval, Associate Director
Julie Jacquez, HMIS Project Manager
AJ Johnson, Coordinated Assessment Intern
Stephanie Lefebvre, Office Manager
Lisa Maury, Project Manager
Michael Nitsch, Project Manager, Balance of State CoC
Benjamin Ofoma, HMIS Data Quality Coordinator
Mark Oldknow, Program Director
Rebecca Poe, VISTA Lead
Roman Seaburgh, Coordinated Assessment Director
Donna Trainer, Coordinated Assessment Connection Specialist

Member Organizations and Individuals: For a list of our 77 members, please go to www.nmceh.org.
Community Joins Forces to Help Veteran

by Hank Hughes, Executive Director and Donna Trainer, Coordinated Assessment Connection Specialist

At the end of a meeting in Santa Fe where the Santa Fe homeless agencies figure out how to house the remaining homeless veterans, one of the members brought up the plight of Steven Graf. Steven is an 80-year-old Marine Corps, Korean War era veteran who was on the verge of homelessness again.

He had been homeless in the past, but for seven years Steven had been taking care of an 83 year old woman who is seriously disabled. In exchange for his help, he was provided a room in her apartment. The caretaking work was becoming too much of a burden on his own health, since he has recently been diagnosed with dementia, and his aging friend was on the verge of moving to a nursing home. Steven was once again at serious risk of becoming homeless despite not only his service to our country but his dedication to helping his client for the past seven years.

Steven receives a small VA pension, but did not have enough money to afford the $2,500 move-in costs to a skilled nursing facility in Colorado. His situation did not fit into any of the existing programs for assistance. Those present at the meeting could not bear to think of an 80 year old veteran with dementia living on the streets, so they put their heads together. The local Veterans for Peace agreed to handle money collected for Steven. A Go Fund Me online campaign was set up to collect donations from individuals with Steven’s consent and assistance. Life Link, St. Elizabeth Shelter, and the Interfaith Shelter found funds to help. The Veterans Administration made all the arrangements with the veterans’ home in Colorado. NMCEH helped behind the scenes to coordinate the effort.

Within a couple of months all the funds needed were raised, and Steven was on his way to his new home where he would receive the care he needs.

Meanwhile Santa Fe and Las Cruces continue to house homeless veterans as they become homeless, at a rate that meets the definition of effectively ending veteran homelessness. As with the special case described here, it is team work that makes this possible.