



HOUSING FOR ALL!!!

NEWS FROM THE NEW MEXICO COALITION
TO END HOMELESSNESS

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My Year of Service as a VISTA Volunteer

By Brie Darland, VISTA Volunteer



Brie Darland, VISTA Volunteer

The months before I started my service for AmeriCorps, I was frustrated at the amount of poverty and homelessness in our community. I tried to find ways to get involved, and stumbled upon an ad for a VISTA Volunteer at the New Mexico Coalition to End Homelessness. When I started my year of service for AmeriCorps, I wasn't entirely sure what to expect. I knew that I would be working in an office environment, and that I would be working on a social issue that I was very passionate about: homelessness. My year started off with a 3-day Service Orientation in Phoenix, where hundreds of VISTAs gathered together to learn about the AmeriCorps VISTA program. This was a very special moment for me, to look around and see hundreds of others taking an oath to serve their community along with me. It really convinced me that I was about to launch into a year of meaningful service, and that I was going to be doing something to make a difference.

As I started my service, I learned about how complicated the issue of homelessness is. I didn't realize that there were so many agencies and people working together to make a difference for those that are experiencing homelessness. I also learned that there are many different issues involved with homelessness that aren't really discussed, such as affordable housing. The biggest realization for me was just how many people experience homelessness, and just how limited the resources are to help the

people that need them. Nothing breaks my heart more than answering the phone, speaking to a kind-hearted man or woman who is asking for housing assistance, and telling them "unfortunately, there just aren't enough resources, so I can't tell you how long you'll have to wait, it's just a matter of when something opens up."

And still, as a Coalition we carry on, doing the best that we can to help people experiencing homelessness in whatever way we can. I spent my year contributing in as many ways as I could through work at the Coalition. I organized fundraising events which helped to spread awareness of homelessness and to fund the Coalition's housing and advocacy efforts for people experiencing homelessness. I assisted in the organizing and planning of the Coalition's 5th annual "Housing for All" conference, which brought service providers together from all over the state of New Mexico to network and discuss best practices. I was also able to organize additional training sessions for case managers and SOAR Representatives.

As my year of service comes to an end, I am even more convinced in my belief that if you don't like the way something is in your community – do something about it. Get involved. Go out and find out what is going on in your local community, because when we all work together for change we are far more likely to succeed.

The Coalition Develops its Advocacy Priorities

by Lisa Huval, Associate Director



Participants in the advocacy retreat.

Earlier this year, Coalition members gathered in the bright, sunny meeting room at New Life Home's Sundowner Apartments to develop our 2016-2017 advocacy agenda. Participants covered the windows and wall space with potential advocacy priorities, which we then narrowed down to several Tier 1 priorities (meaning the Coalition will take the lead on getting these implemented) and several Tier 2 and 3 priorities (meaning we will support the work of other organizations).

The Coalition will continue to advocate for increased state funding for permanent supportive housing and rapid rehousing, because we know these programs help people exit homelessness permanently. The Coalition has increased state funding for these types of program by over 50% over the last several years. We know this may be a challenging priority for the 2017 legislative session because state revenue forecasts are down, but we will continue to urge legislators to invest in proven solutions to homelessness.

The Coalition will also focus on several non-budget related Tier 1 priorities this year. We will pursue strategies that will make it easier for people experiencing homelessness to obtain a state ID or Driver's License, which is often a critical first step for obtaining housing, benefits and employment. We will also develop strategies for decriminalizing homelessness in New Mexico. These are both new issues for the Coalition to focus on, so we are currently talking to our members and learning from our national allies in order to figure out the best way to move forward on these.

At a national level, our membership has asked us to lead a joint advocacy effort with other communities across the country regarding HUD's new chronic homeless definition. HUD has a national goal of ending chronic homelessness by 2017, and thus is requiring local communities to prioritize federally funded Permanent Supportive Housing for households that meet their definition of chronic homelessness. Yet many vulnerable populations do not meet this narrow definition, which means they are not being served. As far as we know, the Coalition would be the first organization to bring communities together from across the United States to advocate with HUD on this issue.

"Not Just for the Birds" Auction Helps Birds and People

By Hank Hughes, Executive Director

NMCEH held its first every birdhouse auction called "Not Just for the Birds" on Sunday, June 12. The idea for the auction was hatched by Peter Chapin, a local artist who serves on our Advisory Board. Thanks to the many generous artists of all ages, we had just over 100 birdhouses and related items to auction. Thanks to the hard work of the committee that organized the event there was great publicity beforehand and the event went off without a hitch. Some 200 people showed up and every item received a bid. The event made a little over \$11,000 with 75% of that to be distributed as grants to our members and 25% to underwrite our work advocating for better government policies. Sweetwater Harvest Kitchen is also donating a portion of the proceeds from their June cash sales to this same NMCEH fund. Thanks to all who participated!



Participants of the Birdhouse Auction

Our Sincere Gratitude Goes Out to These Individuals & Organizations

Thank You to Our Individual and Business Supporters (since last newsletter)

Charmay Allred
Monica Baca
Teresa Brobeck
Gina Bryant
Mr. Thomas and June Catron
Rep. Gail Chasey
Dougherty and Associates
Christine Dutro
Mrs. Patricia Ferguson
Mark & Bernadette French
Ms. Mari Grana

Ms. Dolores Herrera
Louis & Georgianna Hoffmann
Mr. Jerome Janicke
Heidi Jordan
Mallory Kucala
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W.J. Mulligan
Mr. Bill Panagakos
Robert Schwartz
Ken & Martha Simonsen
Aaron Taylor

Christine Trujillo
Madeline U'Ren
Vera Westbrook
Ms. June Wiley
Santa Fe Real Estate Scene, LLC
Santa Fe Title Company
Kitchen Dimensions Inc.
David Rosen and Christopher Rocca
at Sotheby's International Realty
5 Star Burgers

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Lynn Love, San Juan County Partnership
KC Quirk, Crossroads for Women
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Maria Morales-Loebl, El Refugio
Angela Merkert, CLN Kids
Roger Martinez, Taos Men's Shelter

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Birdhouse Auction Committee:

Abigail Adler, Lisa Arnold, Leslie Barclay, Betty Baxter, Karen Beall & Dale Haworth, Peter & Honey Chapin, George Cox, Gordie Holloway, Hank Hughes, Joy & Phil LeCuyer, Sana Morrow, Sabrina Pratt, Mary Ristow, Ramona Sakiestewa, Kristin Watson

Advisory Board:

Abigail Adler, Tom Ageson, Peter Chapin, Gloria Holloway

Veterans Helping Homeless Veterans:

Mike Barr, Revell Carr, Tom Ageson, Chris Calvert, Mark French, Raphiel Benjamin.

A Special Thank You To:

- All the **wonderful artists** who donated their time materials and talents to making birdhouses for our auction and the **wonderful bidders** who bought the birdhouses.
- The auction sponsors: **David Rosen and Christopher Rocca at Sotheby's International Realty, James Hart Photography, Kitchen Dimensions, La Fonda on the Plaza, Patricia Ferguson, Santa Fe Real Estate Scene, Wild Birds Unlimited.**
- **Sweetwater Harvest Kitchen** for donating part of the proceeds from their June cash sales.
- **The Santa Fe New Mexican** and the **Albuquerque Journal** for publicity about the auction.
- **The Scottish Rite Temple** for hosting the auction at a discount.
- **Coro Santa Fe** for providing beautiful music at our auction.
- **Andy Merriell and Associates** for free printing.
- **Mission Linen and Uniform** for table cloths for the auction tables.
- The **McCune Charitable Foundation** for their generous support.
- **Sundowner Apartments** for providing space for our policy and advocacy retreat.
- **Sisters Paint and Wine** and **Krazy Lizard Taqueria** for providing the space, activity, and dessert for A Creative Way to End Homelessness fundraising event.

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



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Creating housing for everyone through:

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

After Years Without One, Randy Peifer Finds a Home

By Hank Hughes, Executive Director



Randy Peifer

Toward the end of our conversation at a local fast food place, Randy Peifer notices a woman he knows who looks like she needs some help. He offers her some money to buy a hamburger and she gratefully accepts. In the parking lot I ask why he is so generous when he has so little. "If you can help someone, you do," he says. His generosity makes my day.

In 1980 Randy Peifer joined the U.S. Navy and served for eight years. After leaving the Navy he worked on the railroad and then hitchhiked across the country for a year, traveling from San Francisco to West Palm Beach, Florida. After that he began a period of 25 years of being homeless off and on. His struggle for stability was set back during that time when a car hit him as he was walking to a friend's house. He was in a coma for two weeks and still suffers from the injuries he sustained.

Randy is one of 926 homeless veterans in New Mexico who have been housed since early 2015 in the coordinated effort between the NM Coalition to End Homelessness, our member agencies and the Veterans Administration. In May of 2016 the VA provided Randy with a VASH housing voucher which allows him to rent a modest apartment in Santa Fe. He pays the part of the rent affordable to him with his disability benefits and the VA pays the difference.

"The best thing about having an apartment is you can lock your door," says Randy. "When you are sleeping on the street you have to sleep with one eye open, not knowing who or what is going to walk up on you."