



HOUSING FOR ALL!!!

NEWS FROM THE NEW MEXICO COALITION
TO END HOMELESSNESS

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New Coordinated Assessment System Creates Housing Success Stories

by Brie Darland , AmeriCorps VISTA Volunteer



In 2014, the Coalition launched a statewide Coordinated Assessment System, with the goal of helping those experiencing homelessness obtain permanent housing quickly and efficiently. Earlier this fall, I met with Milé and Linda Simon, Program Manager, to hear the story of how Milé obtained housing through the Sandoval County Permanent Supportive Housing Program using the Statewide Coordinated Assessment System.

Milé enlisted in the Marine Corps when he was much younger, but unfortunately he was injured during basic training, prohibiting him from remaining in the military. He has battled homelessness off and on throughout his life. He described some of the

basic difficulties of being homeless, such as figuring out how to prepare nutritious food and finding a safe place to park his car, use the bathroom and take a shower.

When asked if he had ever received housing assistance in the past, he told me of his prior experience with a housing program. Milé and his wife were able to get housing assistance through another supportive housing program. He described his feelings about the housing circumstances by saying, "I thought it was good that they helped us out, but they put us in the middle of a fire. I eventually had to leave that place because of too many issues and problems and dealing with everybody." Milé mentioned that although it is difficult to be homeless, at times it is better than being in a toxic location. "I was happy to get out of that situation," he said. After leaving the housing program Milé and his wife lived out of a van for awhile and then out of a storage unit. They struggled to meet their daily needs, and unfortunately his wife passed away.

A few years later, after living out of his van again, one of Milé's friends told him about Linda Simon and the Sandoval County Permanent Supportive Housing Program (SCPSH). Milé was hesitant at first because of his previous experience with housing programs but he decided to give it a shot when he learned that SCPSH uses a Housing First approach. Linda conducted the common assessment tool that our Coordinated Assessment System uses, which identified him as being a high priority for Permanent Supportive Housing. Without the Coordinated Assessment System, it may have taken a year or longer to obtain a housing subsidy through the old "first come, first served" model. The Coalition's Coordinated Assessment System staff, working with Linda Simon, was able to provide Milé with a housing subsidy voucher in less than two weeks. Milé and Linda looked at several apartments, until Milé found his next home. Tucked behind a house was a small private casita with enough parking for his van and walking distance to the bus route and local amenities.

Not only was Milé able to obtain housing, but because of the Coordinated Assessment System and the partnership with housing agencies he was able to get the support in a way that was best suited for his needs. "I tell people that I know that if it wasn't for your program that I might not be there. I couldn't afford it. All my check would go for the rent. I mean, I don't know what would be left for electricity after rent, but you have to pay that too. So... what do you eat on? You can't live off of air!"

NMCEH Advocates for More Supportive Housing

by Lisa Huval, Associate Director



Melissa Marcoline from the NM Human Services Dept., Carol Luna Anderson from LifeLink and Monica Abeita from the Mortgage Finance Authority stand outside the Interim Legislative Health & Human Services Committee room at the Capitol Building, where Carol, Monica and NMCEH Executive Director Hank Hughes presented the findings of the Senate Memorial 44 report.

During the upcoming legislative session, NMCEH will be advocating for \$4.5 million in new, recurring state funding to expand supportive housing statewide. This ambitious proposal is based on the fact that we have several successful models for ending homelessness in New Mexico – including the New Mexico Linkages Program, Albuquerque Heading Home, SOAR, Housing First, and Rapid ReHousing – and a significant investment in these proven solutions will result in real, measurable decreases in homelessness in our state.

We know that investing in supportive housing is a cost-effective solution to homelessness. We estimate that under our proposal, expensive public resources costs could be reduced by \$6 million annually which is more than the proposed cost of the program. But more importantly, investing in supportive housing will help people end their homelessness permanently. A \$4.5 million investment would reduce homelessness among single adults with disabilities by 25% and would also mean that every family who accessed emergency shelter in a year could quickly exit the shelter into permanent housing.

Over the last few months, NMCEH staff and members have been meeting with key legislators, particularly those who sit on the appropriations committees, to ask for their support. We have found strong bi-partisan support from legislators, who appreciate that there is solid data on both the outcomes and cost-effectiveness of supportive housing. We have also participated in the Senate Memorial 44 Work Group, which has been working under the leadership of the NM Human Services Department to develop a comprehensive strategy for addressing homelessness in New Mexico. Hank Hughes, NMCEH Executive Director, helped to present the report to the Interim Legislative Health and Human Services Committee in November.

Our Sincere Gratitude Goes Out to These Individuals & Organizations

A Special Thank You to:

Nat Owings and **the Owings Gallery** for hosting our fundraising reception for Veterans Helping Homeless Veterans.

Michael McGarrity for his thoughtful talk at our Veterans Helping Homeless Veterans reception.

Dorothy Masey and **Collected Works Bookstore** for providing books for Michael McGarrity to sign at our reception and for donating the profits to our veteran's campaign.

Melissa Marcoline, Supportive Housing Coordinator at the New Mexico Human Services Department for all her work this year to plan for making the most efficient use of State resources to house homeless people.

The **Veterans Administration Staff in New Mexico**, **Goodwill Industries of NM**, the **Veterans Integration Center**, and **other member organizations** for working hard this year to house all the homeless veterans we can find.

Kevin Hoover, **Eva Nevarez St. John**, **Melissa Marcoline**, **Natalie Michelback**, and **Anita Dunmar** for helping to review Continuum of Care grants as part of the Balance of State Impartial Review Committee.

Ari Herring, **Paul Lanier**, **Jonathan Mathis**, **Dennis Plummer**, **Michael Robertson**, and **Julie Skelton**, for helping to review Continuum of Care grants as part of the Albuquerque Independent Review Committee.

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For a list of our 77 members, please go to
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- *Vibrant nonprofit housing programs*
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New Mexico Is Ending Veteran Homelessness

by Hank Hughes, Executive Director



Santa Fe Mayor Javier Gonzales announces that Santa Fe is on the verge of ending Veteran homelessness at the Veteran's Day Parade.

In November 2014 the members of the New Mexico Coalition to End Homelessness made a commitment to join the Zero: 2016 initiative with its dual goals of effectively ending veteran homelessness and chronic homelessness. Our goal for 2015 was to reduce veteran homelessness to the point where no veteran who was homeless would have to wait more than 30 days to be rehoused.

One year later we are in a position where we can see that we will reach our goal by the end of the year. Much of the credit goes to our New Mexico Veterans Administration (VA) office and to the nonprofit agencies that have programs specifically for veterans, which are the Veterans Integration Center and Goodwill Industries of NM. Other member agencies also helped by providing housing for those few veterans with less than honorable discharges who were not eligible for VA funded housing.

Between January 1st and October 30th of this year, some 700 homeless veterans have been helped into permanent housing suitable to their needs, and there are less than 100 left on our list who need housing. In December we will submit data to our federal partners to obtain their agreement that we have met the local and state goals for ending Veteran homelessness.