NMCEH Board Member Rebuilds Her Life

In 1994, I was suffering from the very serious major depressive episode that had cost me my last job. I was inarticulate, suicidal, delusional and hallucinating. The local hospital, which had treated me twice before, turned me away this time because I had no insurance. The Guidance Center turned me away because I was not homeless yet. The State hospital did not have a bed and referred me back to the Guidance Center. I remember a terrifying downward spiral but I don't know how much actual time went by. The therapist who contacted me a few days before I became homeless arranged for placement at the Life Link. Two weeks later I was accepted into the program.

The Life Link is a member agency of NMCEH and today is a multiple-site residential facility and training institute that provides treatment services, housing and life-skills training for homeless mentally ill individuals all over Santa Fe County. Whenever I get into trouble I go back to the organization, which continues to serve as an inspiration to so many of us who might not have survived life on the streets without that intervention. By Cheryl Bartlett

Shawna in the computer room at Village Sage Apartments, where she and her family live since last February. The NM Coalition to End Homelessness was a partner in developing this mixed income community.

Shawna moved to Santa Fe from Colorado in 1986. She since has been raising her two sons now 20 and 11 years old. Her younger son is autistics and requires special services and care. For a long time, Shawna worked as much as she could, despite her diabetes, but regularly struggled with paying monthly apartment rents and utilities. Often, there was no money left to buy groceries. Shawna and her family experienced repeated episodes of homelessness, having to live in her car and use facilities at rest stops for months at the time.

In 2011 the Village Sage Apartments opened in Santa Fe after years of development work by NM Coalition to End Homelessness, the Santa Fe Community Housing Trust and other partners. A case manager at Life Link helped Shawna move into Village Sage Apartments last February. Shawna's older son works part-time and goes to the Santa Fe Community College. He wants to be an engineer. Today, the family feels stable and safe, and finally have hope for the future!

Family Finds a Home at New Village Sage Apartments

by Stephanie Jacquot, Office Manager

Cheryl Bartlett, right, with Carol Luna Anderson, Life Link’s Executive Director. Cheryl was homeless in Santa Fe before getting help from the Life Link. Cheryl now serves on the Board of Directors of the NM Coalition to End Homelessness, and volunteers much of her time as an advocate for others who are homeless and have mental illnesses.
Our Sincere Gratitude Goes Out to These Individuals & Organizations

Special Thanks to:

- Nat Owings for hosting the first get together event of the Veterans Helping the Homeless Veterans at the Santa Fe Owings Art Gallery on November 12.

- Century Bank, Tiggs Planning Consultants, Zia Insurance Agency, Matthews Office Supplies, Pinon Fast Print and The Center of Contemporary Arts, for sponsoring our November 13 Movie Night, and Abigail Adler for organizing the event.

- Pinon Fast Print for discount printing services.

- Dick Wagner of Wagner Digital, LLC, for discount webmaster services.

- Patti Ferguson for organizing and hosting our December 9 appreciation party at the Governor’s Mansion. Call 982-9000 for an invitation.

- Volunteers for our Independent and Impartial Review Committees who reviewed grants to be included in the 2011 Continuum of Care applications: Jane McGuiigan, Catherine Hummel, Tara Salusso, Vera Zamora, Donovan Shouldis, Nancy McDonald, Cami Hartman, Barbara Lambert, Anita Dunmar, Lynn Love, Dennis Plummer, David Trembath, Paul Lanier, Nancy Johnson, Teresa Gomez

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Please see list at www.nmceh.org

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- The Frost Foundation
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- The US Department of Housing and Urban Development
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Veterans Helping Homeless Veterans

by Hank Hughes, Executive Director

Santa Feans Mike Peters, Mike Barr, Revell Carr, Tom Aaguson, Mark French, and Raphiel Benjamin have been meeting regularly since June 2, 2011 to raise money for homeless veterans. All five served in the armed services themselves. While life after the armed services has been kind to all of them, they have a special understanding for those who have struggled with homelessness since leaving the services. The group (New Mexico Veterans Helping Homeless Veterans) is operating as a committee of the New Mexico Coalition to End Homelessness.

“I got involved in this organization because throughout my 35 years in the Navy I witnessed the sacrifices and dedication to our country of many, many service members. I am sure that this service and its aftermath contributed to the problems suffered by most of our homeless veterans. We, as a country, sent them in harm’s way to defend us and I cannot turn my back on them now,” says Mike Barr who retired from the Navy as a Rear Admiral.

On October 12, 2011 the group organized a fundraiser event hosted by Nat Owings and the Owings Art Gallery in Santa Fe. The event was attended by 60 guests, many veterans themselves, who warmly expressed their support and donated funds towards the New Mexico Veterans Helping Homeless Veterans’ goals. The overall goals of the group are: 1) Provide supportive housing for New Mexico homeless veterans; 2) Help New Mexico homeless veterans obtain supportive services; 3) Advocate on behalf of New Mexico homeless veterans; 4) Reduce the percentage of homeless people who are veterans in New Mexico to below the percentage of veterans in the general population by 2014, and support the federal goal of eliminating veteran homelessness entirely in five years.

Care 66 Renovates the Lexington Hotel to House Homeless Individuals

by Sanjay Choudhrie

CARE 66 acquired the downtown Gallup Lexington Hotel in 2009 to develop it into a Transitional Housing and Permanent Housing facility. This will enable people to move quickly from transitional housing to permanent housing.

The reconfigured the Lexington Hotel will provide permanent housing in 21 SRO (Single Resident Occupancy) units on the 2nd floor and approximately 15 beds of transitional housing on the ground floor to homeless individuals. The facility also provides recreation spaces, a commercial kitchen, dining area, a tenant kitchen, laundry facilities, elevator, common bathrooms, and offices for case managers and staff. One room on each floor is designed for a disabled person and most rooms are universal design allowing for occupancy by disabled people. This facility will enable CARE 66 to serve both men and women.

CARE 66 obtained funding from HUD, the City of Gallup, McKinley County, New Mexico Capital Outlay, ARRA through NMED (for asbestos abatement), the Daniels Fund and the Navajo Housing Authority to complete the project. Operations will be supported by Continuum of Care grants.

Rhonda Berg, the Housing Development Director for CARE 66, managed the project and was assisted by Peter Tarutis, our construction manager. Pavilion Construction served as General Contractor and Loren Miller served as architect for this project.

The historic lobby was refreshed and preserved to serve as a welcoming place for visitors, clients and tenants. The Grand Opening is tentatively scheduled for January 13th 2012.
Albuquerque Heading Home: New Initiative Helps Many Get Housing

by Lisa Huval, Policy and Advocacy Director

In 2010, the NMCEH brought together its member agencies and representatives from the City of Albuquerque to implement Albuquerque’s plan to end homelessness. This culminated in a new public-private initiative called Albuquerque Heading Home, whose purpose is to identify and house the most vulnerable people experiencing homelessness in Albuquerque. To date, 43 people have been housed through this initiative including long-time friends Shirley Olguin and Sonja Lujan.

Shirley moved into her new apartment earlier this year, after 13 years of homelessness. Although Shirley has been clean and sober for six years, she struggled to exit homelessness. She is unable to work because of a physical disability which leaves her in constant pain and because of her mental health disabilities. She says that the best thing about having her own place is that her grandkids, ages 2 through 10, can come over to her apartment where she can bake them cookies and make them dinner. With stable housing, she is able to get to her appointments, manage her medications and start thinking about her education. Her goal is a degree in criminal justice.

Sonja Lujan recently moved into her own apartment after living in her car and emergency shelters for the last six years. Her goal is to obtain a culinary arts degree.

Sonja moved into her new apartment just after Shirley, after six years of living in her car and at a local emergency shelter. She is enjoying being able to do small things that many of us take for granted, such as cooking, using and washing her own dishes and eating a meal when she wants to. Her dream is to get her degree in culinary arts and to become a chef, because she loves to cook. This is a dream she pursued even while homeless by taking a couple classes at a time over the last several years.

Both Shirley and Sonja spoke of how difficult it was to be homeless and how over time they started to lose hope that things could get better. By focusing on long-term solutions to homelessness – permanent housing and supportive services that help people stay housed - Albuquerque Heading Home has helped end that cycle for Shirley and Sonja and for many others in our community.