

## Message from the ED

Jennifer L. Metzler, MPH  
Executive Director

I fully believe in the Albuquerque Health Care for the Homeless staff and board, and in our collective ability to make the tough choices for the best client care. It's exactly what AHCH has done for nearly 25 years. I have faith in our organization to continue to do the right thing, to learn continuously, to dig deep and to move through it together.

Mostly, I'm excited by the opportunities presented in this current economic climate for doing much more than reacting to crisis, giving into feeling overwhelmed, or indulging in despair. **We can hardly afford to do that – while many of us are feeling on edge, we are not nearly as on the edge as those who were already vulnerable and disenfranchised . . .** we don't have nearly as much to get us down as do those we serve.

We can't as an organization internalize all that heaviness. People without homes need for us to be strong and viable enough to carry some of the communal load of changing and challenging times. The role models and inspiration right now are those that seek care in our programs. Survival on the edge takes resourcefulness. And sometimes humor. We see it every day.

That's why we continue to look up and out. We are taking stock, fortifying ourselves, breathing deep, and thinking ahead.

- Are we seeing increased demand for care by people newly experiencing homelessness? Yes. In a 10-day stretch in December, our nursing staff made the hard calls and turned people away from our medical clinic triage 111 times.
- Are we encountering desperate people still (albeit many precariously) housed who simply do not have health insurance nor the ability to pay for care (or co-pays, or the prescriptions). Uh-huh. But we've been experiencing the pressure of increasing numbers of people who are uninsured and underinsured for years now.
- Are we willing to give in and respond to whomever in need shows at our doors? We can't responsibly do so. We can't possibly be all things to all people. What we can do is identify clear priorities for best using our capacity and expertise to serve a portion of the population without homes. And serve them well.

We can refresh our creative and strategic partnerships and be a catalyst for enhancing the community's capacity to address the needs of others. We can turn people away when demand exceeds our capacity, with respect and clarity and empathy, knowing that we nurture relationships so those we deny services will find appropriate resources among our systems collaborators.

We can also implement new models for ensuring transition of our clients to homes and quality of life that they can sustain. Each person that re-integrates in community and becomes housed, with the income and support network to maintain that housing and quality of life, opens the way for us to serve another person as yet unengaged in services. As stewards of generous community resources and support, it is our obligation to measure the impact of the work we do, and to adjust our approaches.

**Whatever we do, we change people's lives.** We have a duty to examine our work and know that the impact of our every activity is intended, and the right thing to do.

Several examples of how we are working smart and taking advantage of the current economic and policy climate to make new things happen are outlined in the features in this edition of *El Intercambio*. ■



Jennifer L. Metzler, MPH,  
AHCH Executive Director,  
in the ArtStreet studio at AHCH

## Going Green at AHCH

For Albuquerque Health Care for the Homeless (AHCH), "going green" is not just a new fad. As a mid-sized nonprofit organization (with 100+ employees and over 200 volunteers), there are both small and large examples throughout the organization's 24-year history of our commitment to environmental responsibility and energy efficiency.

For example, the AHCH ArtStreet open studio program focuses on recycled art from found objects and offers donors in the community an outlet to recycle wood, metal, fabric, magazines and other non-traditional art supplies.

Additionally, AHCH operates a residential recovery program that teaches organic gardening and cooking classes, growing produce on site at the program for the residents. Three years ago, AHCH began the shift to electronic medical records, along with many health care organizations and hospitals.

AHCH's ongoing efforts to become more environmentally-friendly are now formally incorporated into the budgeting and program planning for each year. The organization plans to replace (in phases) outdated, inefficient appliances with energy star appliances. Our eventual goal is to have 100% energy-efficient major appliances.

With funding from the PNM Fund Reduce Your Use grant program in 2008-09, AHCH upgraded its water heater to energy star-rating, and now, AHCH is able to expand some of the shower and laundry services available to clients, while simultaneously reducing the organization's impact on the environment.

In addition to the replacement of appliances with energy star, more efficient appliances, AHCH invested close to \$3,000 in the last year in start-up expenses for an organization-wide paper, plastic and cardboard recycling program.

We invite you to attend one of our monthly tours to see the services in action and see our environmentally-responsible programs. To register for a tour, please call 505-767-1178. ■



Fund A division of the PNM Resources Foundation

## Rhythm for a Reason gives philanthropy a new beat

What began in their home as a small gathering of friends has now grown to crowds of 300 to 400+ at local nightclubs. And as the attendance increased so did the impact.

Shalini Shanker and Abinash Achrekar, MD, founded Rhythm for a Reason five/six years ago in Albuquerque. When they relocated from the Detroit area, Shalini and Abinash brought their creative approach to philanthropy with them to New Mexico.

Rhythm for a Reason is an independent nonprofit organization whose mission is to "instill philanthropy in young professionals." Shalini and Abinash started the organization to assist non-profits in need. As young professionals, themselves, they noticed that their friends and colleagues have the resources and desire to contribute to community improvement efforts yet did not have the avenue in which to give.

Their creative fundraising model now includes an active calendar with two signature events a year: Blanco, a White Party in the spring and Halloween in the fall. By partnering with local businesses for the venue and by involving world-renowned djs and musicians who donate their talent for the entertainment, Shalini, Abinash and their small Board of Directors focus on "inspiring those in Albuquerque to love and respect the place they live."

Rhythm for a Reason selects a nonprofit organization as their beneficiary every couple of years. For Albuquerque Health Care for the Homeless, this relationship has not only raised more than \$10,000, the events have introduced the organization and its mission to hundreds of new supporters in our community. Their previous nonprofit beneficiary was Project Share.

For Abinash and Shalini, it's not just about the money raised. "As transplants to Albuquerque, we found that the best way to make a community your home is to give back and mobilize others to as

well."

Albuquerque Health Care for the Homeless thanks Rhythm for a Reason for their contributions and, more importantly, for their creative approach to engaging others in philanthropy. Please visit their web site for more information at [rhythmforareason.com](http://rhythmforareason.com), and we hope to see you this fall at Halloween and at future Rhythm for a Reason events! ■



### AHCH offers paperless newsletter—have you signed up?

AHCH now offers our twice yearly newsletter in an electronic, paperless version. To sign up for the new paperless newsletter, please send an email with your name and contact information to [info@abqhch.org](mailto:info@abqhch.org), with "e-newsletter" in the subject line, or call 505-767-1178. ■

### Off the Bookshelf

**"One does not lose shelter, family, finances, and survival network overnight. The phrase many use that homelessness is 'one paycheck away' illustrates the tenuous line between poverty and homelessness ... however, homelessness is not exclusively a matter of money."**

From *I Have Arrived Before My Words: Autobiographical Writings of Homeless Women* by Deborah Pugh and Jeanie Tietjen, Charles River Press (1997).

### Board of Directors ~ FY 2010

Kristin Leve, *President*  
Allyson Ross, *President-Elect*  
Yvette Ramirez Ammerman, *Secretary*  
John Salamack, *Treasurer*  
David K. Anderson  
Laura Crowe  
Anna Hayden  
Marcella Herrera  
Coby Lewis  
J.E. Jamal Martin  
George Mercer  
Mary Robinson

### Senior Management

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Anita Córdova, MA, Associate Director, Planning & Evaluation  
Trish Grand, Director of Finance  
Sandra Lee, Human Resources Director  
June Martinez, PhD, Associate Director, Systems & Programs  
Emily Stafford, LPCC, LADAC, Clinical Director  
Stefanie Whaley, Director of Operations

### Contact Information (all 505 area code)

Administration: 766-5197  
Medical Clinic: 242-4644  
Dental Clinic: 242-8288  
ArtStreet: 248-0817  
Harm Reduction Outreach: 266-4188  
STARS (Advocacy & Case Mgt.): 843-7611  
Residential Recovery Programs  
Casa Los Arboles: 344-6738  
Villa de Paz: 254-0320  
Tierra del Sol: 831-7815

**Our Mission** is to provide caring and comprehensive health and supportive services, linking people experiencing homelessness to individual and collective solutions, and to be a leader in creating service delivery models and solutions to homelessness.

AHCH, a 501(c) 3 non-profit organization governed by a community-based Board of Directors, receives funding from federal, state, county, city and private funding sources.

AHCH does not discriminate on the basis of sex, race, color, religion, sexual orientation or national origin.

## Don't miss these upcoming ArtStreet shows!

What? You say you have never been to an ArtStreet exhibit? Don't worry. We won't tell.

If you have been meaning to see a show and want to find out what all the buzz is about, come check out these upcoming ArtStreet-organized shows. ArtStreet plans and organizes approximately 10 exhibits a year, and all proceeds from art

sales go directly to the artists.

**Current ArtStreet Exhibit:** Please join us for a show entitled "Free Association" at the Winnings Coffee Co., from July 3 to July 31, 2009. Hours are from 7 a.m. to 5 p.m., Mon.-Fri. and from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., Sat. and Sun..

This exhibit features recent works by ArtStreet artists, with pieces made from recycled materials and found objects, as well as pen and ink drawings.

Additionally, ArtStreet art is on display monthly at the Farmer's Market at Robinson Park. And, upcoming shows are planned for the Folk Art Festival on Sept. 13th in Robinson Park, for the South Broadway Cultural Center in October, and for Recycled Santa Fe in November.

To learn more about ArtStreet, please visit [www.abqhch.org/artstreet.htm](http://www.abqhch.org/artstreet.htm) or please call 505-248-0817 for more information. ■



Image at left  
Artist: R.S. Ware  
pen and ink, 11" x 12", 2009

### Critical Needs List

Thank you for supporting Albuquerque Health Care for the Homeless' mission. Monetary contributions to fund both clinic-based and outreach programs are welcome year-round. To make a gift, please call (505) 766-5197 or visit our website at [www.abqhch.org](http://www.abqhch.org) to contribute securely online.

In addition to cash contributions, AHCH is also in need of the following items on our In-Kind Critical Needs List. Thank you for your ongoing support.

Bottled Water	Sunscreen
Lip Balm	Toiletries (full or travel-size)
Socks (new)	Vitamins (adult and children's, unopened)

**Albuquerque Health Care for the Homeless, Inc.**

**P.O. Box 25445**

**Albuquerque, NM 87125-0445**



Albuquerque  
**HEALTHCARE**  
for the homeless

**Our Vision: To live in a world that is just and without homelessness.**

## Calendar items

**Board Meeting Dates:** The AHCH Board of Directors meets the second Tuesday of every month at 5:15 p.m.

**AHCH Project Tour Dates:** Community members are invited to a tour of the AHCH facility and programs on the third Tuesday of the month at 1 p.m.

Please call 505-766-1178 to register for the Tour or confirm a Board meeting. ■

## Board updates

AHCH sincerely thanks outgoing Board Members **Joan Bradley, Cherry Cyrus, Jerry Montoya, Jerry Ritchie, and Ruth Needham** for their volunteer service.

We thank all of these leaders for their years of volunteer service. Both Joan and Ruth served as President of the Board during their tenure.

Recently elected Board Members include:

- **Laura Crowe**, who is a long-time volunteer with the organization and is the Human Resources / Occupational Health Manager at Matrix Absence Management, Inc.
- **Yvette Ramirez Ammerman**, who is the Associate Director, Western Operations for the National Association of Community Health Centers
- **John Salamack**, who is also a long-time volunteer with the organization and is the Director of the nonprofit organization Clothes 4 Kids.

For Fiscal Year 2010, the newly elected Board Officers are:

Kristin Leve, President  
Allyson Ross, President-Elect  
Yvette Ramirez Ammerman, Secretary  
John Salamack, Treasurer

**Non-profit Organization**

**US Postage Paid**

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# El Intercambio



Albuquerque  
**HEALTHCARE**  
for the homeless

## Summer 2009

[www.abqhch.org](http://www.abqhch.org)

Serving people experiencing homelessness in Albuquerque since 1985

(505)766-5197

## AHCH now a partner of the SOAR Initiative

The action of streamlining a complicated process for those who would be unable to navigate the system is at the heart of the Albuquerque Health Care for the Homeless service delivery philosophy.

For some people who experience homelessness and have mental illness or another disability, finding a job and stable housing may be nearly impossible. Without a mailing address or steady income, access to care and recovery services is very limited. The federal government provides a program for such individuals through the U.S. Social Security Administration. The benefits include Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI), and in addition to providing a minimum monthly income of \$674, individuals may also gain eligibility for Medicaid, which provides access to health care.

There is an application process for this benefit program, of course. And, for many of the most vulnerable individuals who need this assistance, the application process, itself, poses barriers.

According to a report from SAMHSA (the U.S. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Service Administration), "The Social Security Administration approves 37 percent of initial disability applications from all people who apply. For applicants who are homeless, however, that percentage drops to 15 percent. Although appeals can increase the approval rate for all applications from 37 percent up to 53 percent, the process can take years."

Launched in 2005, a new Federal inter-

agency initiative called SOAR (SSI/SSDI Outreach, Access, and Recovery) helps states and communities develop strategies and provide training to case managers who counsel individuals in preparing accurate and complete SSI/SSDI applications.

Over 34 states are currently participating in the SOAR initiative, and Albuquerque Health Care for the Homeless (AHCH) is one of many participating partner organizations here in New Mexico.

Preliminary outcomes for several of the states participating since 2005 show improvement from 15% to 70% acceptance of benefits applications for persons experiencing homelessness when assisted via the SOAR model were approved, and reduction of approval time from 120 days or longer on average to 93 days. The target population of the SOAR initiative is individuals experiencing homelessness, who also have serious mental illness and who need

**We're not creating disabilities, we're helping people document the disability they have and access benefits that will help them stabilize their health and housing status.**

Terri Ellis, MSW, AHCH Social Services Manager

access to these crucial benefits.

For individuals who are unable to document their claims effectively, the program helps expedite benefits, as case managers, like those employed at AHCH, are trained on the documentation requirements and can assist clients with submitting complete applications.

The aim is to reduce denials that can lead to a lengthy appeals process. With SSI or SSDI benefits, individuals have the financial resources to attain permanent housing, and with eligibility for Medi-



Veronica Cordova, an AHCH Case Manager, works to streamline application processes with a client.

caid, individuals have access to needed health care.

"We're not creating disabilities," says Terri Ellis, MSW, Social Services Manager at AHCH, "we're helping people document the disability they have and access benefits that will help them stabilize their health and housing status."

The SOAR model includes a medical component. AHCH has a dedicated clinic and part-time physician on staff to do the medical determination piece. All our staff on this project received training from the National Health Care for the Homeless Council. It is estimated that AHCH will assist up to 20 clients a month through the SOAR initiative.

The SOAR initiative is also meant as a benefit to the broader community. As individuals become eligible and gain these benefits, the strain on hospital ERs and programs providing indigent care will lessen. ■

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