



Outreach: Making Connections Large and Small

Many people know Albuquerque Health Care for the Homeless (AHCH) for its main clinic at 1st and Mountain. In addition to site-based services at the clinic, AHCH devotes 80 hours per week of staff time to outreach: to shelters, motels, the streets, campsites and other places where they can find people experiencing homelessness. Outreach is essential to reaching people and families in need of services. Here are two examples.

By Hallie Chertok

Ms. Chertok is a Family Case Manager with AHCH's Children's Outreach (CHOUT) team. She has been with AHCH for three and a half years. She wrote this essay as part of her graduate school application. CHOUT does outreach to motels to reach children and their families. In Albuquerque, motels are often a substitute for the inadequate number of shelters and affordable housing options for low-income families.

The squealing laughter of children comes through the motel room door as a Family Nurse Practitioner and I, a Family Case Manager, members of the AHCH Children's Outreach Team,

approach to knock. We are loaded down with bags filled with snacks, drinks, stethoscopes, art supplies, blood pressure cuffs, resource lists, prescription and over-the-counter medications, and a flyer with the newest hours for our weekly art studio exclusively for families. Despite all of this equipment, the most important tools that we bring with us are our ears, prepared to listen and share the experiences of an Albuquerque family experiencing homelessness; our hearts, prepared to share the sorrow and joy; and our spirits, prepared to do what we can to temper the effects of poverty and oppression.

The small motel room is cluttered with the belongings of a family – piles of clothes cover every surface, crayons are spilling from a box on the only bed and plates are stacked next to a tiny hot plate. The small window with thick curtains lets in little daylight. Although they seem settled in, we all know that they could be moving out that day if they cannot pay the exorbitant nightly rent. We introduce ourselves to the young mother as she braids the pigtails of her six-year-old daughter and describe why we are

carrying so much outreach gear. She could be Latino or White or Native American or any one of us. As her two children devour the snacks we brought she tells us that she is worried about many things: she has missed her period for two months; her oldest daughter was recently sexually assaulted; she doesn't know how they will pay the rent for the next day; her boyfriend who is not getting regular work and is emotionally abusive at times; her welfare was recently cut without an explanation and was the only way she paid for her daily methadone doses; her depression seems to be getting worse; her daughter was sent home from school three days ago with lice and she's not yet allowed back; and the lack of several immunizations could keep her youngest from being accepted to day care.

We make medical charts for the entire family. A pregnancy test is done in the cramped motel bathroom as is counseling on birth control options after the negative result is determined. A Depo-Provera shot is given with a card for the next appointment in three months. Both children are immunized and given stickers to calm the tears

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Without a Memory, but not without Help

Every person has a unique story. AHCH's Street Outreach Services (SOS) team recently helped someone piece together his own story when he was unable to do it himself.

In early July 2004, AHCH's SOS team received a call from Presbyterian Kase-man Hospital's in-patient psychiatric unit on a "John Doe"; a twenty-eight year old man who was found walking along Old Route 66 near San Fidel. He was dehydrated, starving and had total amnesia induced by a psychological trauma. Without a name, birth date, or memory of home, the man was brought into SOS's case management care and placed at the Albuquerque Opportunity Center men's shelter. The SOS team helped "John" acquire a bus pass and familiarize him with services for people experiencing homelessness in Albuquerque. "John" began doing what work he could without having any ID.

A social worker at Kase-man arranged for his fingerprints to be run through the National Crime Information Center to determine if he had any legal history or if he had been identified as a missing person—to no avail. Over the weeks, he discovered a few things about himself— he likes red beans and rice, he can perform mathematical square roots in his head, and he speaks five languages. More weeks passed and "John" was losing hope because his memory had not improved much. Through its collaborative relationship with UNM Psychiatric Center, SOS was able to arrange for pro bono hypnosis with a psychologist. "John" began to uncover bits and pieces about his past. Looking at a

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Chris Ponce, David Miranda and Kara Kellogg form the Albuquerque Health Care for the Homeless Street Outreach Services (SOS) team. Their outreach van carries water, blankets, snacks and information on other agencies that provide services.

AHCH Board of Directors
FY 2004-2005

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Board of Directors Meeting Dates
The Board meets the second Tuesday
of every month at 5:15 pm. If you are
interested in attending a meeting,
please (505) 767-1178 to confirm
meeting dates, times and location.
Dates of upcoming Board meetings are:
January 11
February 8
March 8
April 12

AHCH Project Tour Dates
AHCH conducts project tours for anyone
interested in visiting our programs.
Tours are the third Tuesday of each
month and begin at 1:00 pm.
Future tour dates are:
January 18
February 15
March 15
April 19
If you would like to join us, please call
Stephanie Silver at (505) 767-1177.

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

AHCH, a 501(c)(3) non-profit organiza-
tion 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.

El Intercambio ("the exchange") is a
regular publication of Albuquerque Health
Care for the Homeless, Inc.

From the ED....

What an incredible eight years this has
been for me! Because of this, I find it
very difficult to explain why
I feel it is time for me to leave an
organization for which I have the
utmost respect and admiration; an
organization whose mission, work,
board, and staff have provided me
insight to and an understanding of
what health care in its most compre-
hensive meaning really can accom-
plish. I know that whatever
I do next, I will carry with me an active
commitment to universal health care,
and safe/affordable housing, as well
as a living wage for all people.

My hope is that in reading our news-
letter and learning more about the
work that AHCH does every day to
end the unnecessary brutality of
homelessness for one person, and all
people, you will carry a growing and
active commitment to these three basic
principles of social justice also.

Finally, it is because I have had this
amazing journey, courtesy of everyone
I have gotten to work with and for the
last eight years that I am sure it is time
to move on. I am confident the new
executive director will bring fresh
ideas and energy to enhance our
ability to achieve the mission of
AHCH.

Many thanks to all of you, known and
unknown, that have supported me and
will continue to support AHCH. Best
wishes and good health to you all.
hasta

Sigrud E. Olson, Executive Director

A Valiant Woman

In 1996, Marsha McMurray-Avila
announced her resignation and the
AHCH Board faced the task of hiring a
new executive director. The organiza-
tion had weathered many changes in
its first decade, but a leadership
transition had not been among them.

The search committee already had
candidates with impressive health care
credentials when then-Board member
Diane Fisher urged the chair to meet
with Sigrud Olson. Sig was an attorney
by training. In addition to private
practice, her combined nonprofit,
policy, and government experience
was intriguing. After a series of
interviews, the selection process ended
in a candidate open house and Sig

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Administration

1217 1st NW (505) 766-5197
Sigrud E. Olson, Executive Director
Julie Rosen, Deputy Director
Jennifer Metzler, Development Director
Trish Grand, Director of Finance
Stefanie Whaley, Director of Operations

Medical Clinic, Children's Outreach and Street Outreach Services

1217 1st NW (505) 242-4644
Matias J. Vega, MD, Medical Director
Jill Ramsey, Program Manager
Primary medical care and specialty
clinics. Medical/social outreach to adults
and children and their families.

Harm Reduction Program

4120 Silver SE (505) 266-4188
Diana McCague, Program Coordinator
Drop-in center, street outreach, syringe
exchange, HIV/AIDS prevention.

Behavioral Health Services

1217 1st NW (505) 843-7611
Sigifredo Saenz, MSW, LISW,
Clinical Director
Cyndi Yahn, Program Manager
Counseling & Therapy

(505) 766-9520

Individual and group services.

La Puerta Mental Health Program

Peggy Harter, Program Coordinator
(505) 766-9520
Social work, long-term mental health
case management and street outreach.

Stepping Stones Program

(505) 843-7611
Jill Zomerhuis, Program Coordinator
Drop-in center, crisis counseling,
assessment and referrals.

Casa Los Arboles

(505) 344-6738
Bob Maxwell, Program Coordinator
Men's residential recovery program.

Villa de Paz

(505) 254-0320
Mitch Marzec, Program Coordinator
Transitional living program for men
and women in recovery.

Tierra del Sol

(505) 831-7815
Maureen Rule, Program Manager
Women's residential recovery program.

Dental Clinic

1217 1st NW (505) 242-8288
Amalia Torrez, Program Manager
Comprehensive dental services.

ArtStreet

1217 1st NW (505) 248-0817
Brenda Bunker, Program Manager
Community-based, collective art-as-
therapy and art therapy project.

Please address all correspondence to:
Albuquerque Health Care
for the Homeless
PO Box 25445
Albuquerque, NM 87125-0445

A Valiant Woman *cont.*

held court. Even with her leg elevated due to an ankle injury, her enthusiasm for AHCH was compelling and she engaged easily with long lines of board and staff. The choice was obvious.

The measure of Sig's legacy is captured by those that worked closely with her. Sr. Mary Kennan Kudlacz, a Board member since 1999, refers to the Book of Proverbs' query "Who shall find a valiant woman?" Sr. Mary K. reflects, "AHCH has found this valiant woman. Sig has brought her rich academic and experiential background, passion for the homeless people of this city, her great sense of social justice, and humor to her work, making her not just a valiant woman, but a unifier...She knows how to enjoy life, everything she does is life-giving and life-fulfilling. Sig has brought a lot of joy to staff."

Carol and Mike Moyer have volunteered in Board and other roles throughout AHCH's history. Carol describes Sig as just the right person, whose tenure matched an evolutionary stage of the organization. "When Sig came, it was the next step in our growth process. We saw her energy, we just couldn't believe it! She was able to look to the future and say 'yes, indeed you can do more.' She made a name for AHCH in the community, building on our solid foundation. We're now recognized as a worthwhile and effective program." Carol goes on to say, "I have no concerns that AHCH will continue. We'll miss Sig, but I let her go feeling really positive about the outlook for the organization." (Mike agrees and wishes Sig the best in all her future endeavors.)

Much of Sig's leadership entailed representation on local and national coalitions, including chairing the New Mexico Homeless Task Force. When asked their thoughts, members Josh Allison and Hank Hughes described Sig's recent charge to the community regarding the risks of dividing people into sub-groups, "...you open the door to saying 'let's help this group but not these others.' We have to focus on ending homelessness for everybody."

Sig's inclusiveness, passion for our mission, and her tenacity on behalf of those less fortunate leave an enduring mark on AHCH that will sustain us into the future. For this we are grateful and wish her only the best.

Outreach *cont.*

and soothe the pain. "Well-child" appointments are set up for the following week. A bottle of lice shampoo is left in the room with instructions. A new anti-depressant is prescribed with instructions to call in two days and come in for follow-up during the children's physical exams. Information is given about the cycle of violence and numbers for local domestic violence agencies. The methadone clinic agrees to provide one free dose today after a phone call is made to the counselor there. We give the syringe exchange program phone number as a back-up and reminders about safer injection techniques to avoid HIV, Hepatitis C, and other infections.

A case management appointment is scheduled to touch base, offer more support and get answers from the welfare office. We leave, our arms lighter and our hearts heavier.

John Doe *cont.*

map, he had memories of Louisiana so SOS sent his picture to a New Orleans television station that ran his story. SOS had struck gold. A relative saw the story and called SOS with his name and contact information for other relatives. The SOS team facilitated a telephone conversation and his family has since moved him into an apartment in Iowa where they live. The cause of "John's" amnesia still hasn't been established.

Kara Kellogg, Social Worker with SOS, said, "This story is a great example of how well AHCH's community-based approach works. We regularly collaborate on outreach with the UNM Psychiatric Center so we were able to pool our resources for 'John.'" She continues, "It was wonderful to witness a person returning to his life, even though there may be rough waters ahead for him as his memory continues to return." The same net of services at AHCH and UNM Psychiatric Center will be here to support him through the rest of his journey.

Call Hire Power
Hire Power Cooperative Association
is operated by AHCH's Casa Los Arboles.
If you have home and lawn maintenance,
repair, or other projects,
call 319-6315 for an estimate.

As the Family Nurse Practitioner and I prepare to knock on the next door, we know we have done very little and very much. We have not ended homelessness for the entire city or eradicated racism and classism. We have not even ended the homelessness or poverty of this one family. We have not undone the effects of systemic oppression. But we did give information about prevention, treatment and resources so that this family can make decisions and take actions that will improve their physical and psychological health and begin to make up for the social factors that put them at significant risk. By sharing our time and listening to the experiences and situation of this family, we have let one more family know that they are not alone. We will be alongside them as they take steps in the process of making the changes that they desire for themselves.

Holiday Program Wish List Each holiday season AHCH endeavors to help our clients enjoy the traditions of the season. You can help many people experiencing homelessness in Albuquerque by donating the following items.

gift sets of toiletries
travel size toiletries
wrapping paper, gift bags
children's toys
pocket calendars, wall calendars
turkeys, hams
roasting pans
dressing mix
pies
cranberry sauce
rolls, butter

Our clients need items to help protect them from the harsh winter weather.

hats, gloves, scarves
athletic socks
bottled water
blankets

Other needs include:

twin beds
art supplies & picture frames
tools & sewing supplies
first aid kits
kitchen/cooking items
bike rack
tickets for zoo, museum, movies, etc...
cleaning & laundry supplies
crayons & coloring books
diapers (all sizes)
car seats
canned/dry goods
cough syrup without alcohol

Contact Stephanie Silver at 767-1177

You're Invited!
to an Open House Farewell
in honor of
Sigrid Olson
Executive Director of AHCH
for eight years.

Please join us to bid farewell to
Sig Olson as she leaves AHCH and
moves on to new opportunities.

Date: December 7th, 2004

Time: 4:00 - 6:00 pm

For more information
call Kitty Thomas at 767-1178.



The entire staff of Albuquerque
Health Care for the Homeless wish
Sig the best of luck upon her
departure after so many years of
dedicated and inspired leadership.

Handmade Artdoll Auction

"For Friends We Haven't Met" is an art-based community project benefiting Albuquerque Health Care for the Homeless. You could be the lucky winner of a handmade Artdoll created by local artists and students and staff of Escuela del Sol Montessori. Dolls will be available for "adoption" at a silent auction Friday, December 17th from 5 to 9 p.m. at the Harwood Art Center. The event is being held in conjunction with Artscrawl.

This project is funded in part by a grant from the PNM Foundation. For more information, please call Elizabeth Marcilla at 242-3033.

Community Presentations

AHCH Board members and staff are available to visit with employee, civic, faith based and other groups. Presentations can be tailored to a particular interest or issue. If you would like someone to speak to your group about homelessness and the work of AHCH, please call Stephanie Silver at (505) 767-1177.

This holiday season shop, save and support AHCH at wellspent.org! Every item you purchase generates a donation for AHCH.



first day of winter 2004

Each year on the winter solstice, AHCH takes part in the annual memorial held nationwide to reflect on the lives and circumstances of those who have died while homeless. Through the First Day of Winter effort, we invite you to honor all the diverse members of the Albuquerque community.

- My 100% tax deductible contribution is enclosed.
 Please revise my mailing label as indicated below.
 Please remove my name from your mailing list.

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Address _____

Phone _____

Amount Enclosed \$ _____

Please make checks payable to Albuquerque Health Care for the Homeless or complete the credit card information below. Mail to: PO Box 25445, ABQ, NM 87125-0445

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Signature: _____

Albuquerque Health Care for the Homeless
PO Box 25445
Albuquerque, NM 87125-0445
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Albuquerque
HEALTHCARE
for the homeless

Our vision... To live
in a world that is just
and without
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