



Community Engagement Addresses Homelessness

By Matias J. Vega, MD, Medical Director
The Albuquerque Health Care for the Homeless (AHCH) model of health care spans the intersection of primary care and public health: community oriented primary care (COPC). COPC combines the primary care-based approaches of individual and family-oriented health care, with the community and population-oriented approaches of public health. While a typical primary care practice will have the physicians deciding which services to offer to their patients based on the interests of the practice, a COPC practice will determine the health care needs of the community they are serving by research and engagement with the community (e.g., focus groups and surveys), and then design their services to best meet those needs. COPC requires community outreach, community organizing, and community responsiveness.

The reality is that the health needs of the homeless community are quite different from those of the general

Casa Los Arboles

On a brisk day in March clients, staff, and supporters gathered at Albuquerque Health Care for the Homeless' Casa Los Arboles (CLA) program to witness the start of a new project to grow organic produce. The organic garden project will not only provide nutritious food on a continual basis,



Staff and residents fill in one of two self-contained, micro-intensive planters that will yield a continual organic harvest.

population, even people that are similarly impoverished but housed. From the public health perspective, the leading causes of death in the adult general population are heart disease, cancer, strokes, lung disease and accidents, with major contributions from obesity and tobacco use. Contrast that to the leading causes of mortality in the homeless community: accidents, trauma, homicide, and addiction and the side-effects of alcohol and drug use (overdose,

...if the diagnosis is homelessness then the prescription must include housing...

cirrhosis, infection). Notice that heart disease and cancer are much less common in homeless people. Indeed, the typical causes of mortality in the general population are really diseases of aging, something that unfortunately happens much less often in the homeless community. The average age at death for a homeless street person is about 45-50, regardless of gender,

Launches Organic Garden Program

but will also help reduce water use and be therapeutic for residents.

CLA is a six-to-nine-month, 12-bed residential substance use recovery program for men. Starting with two micro-intensive containers and composting bins, the garden will soon yield fresh chard, broccoli, kale, radishes, spinach and seabees (a nutritious vegetable developed in Europe in the 15th century.)

Bob Maxwell, Program Coordinator of CLA, says he was tired of wasting water on their grass-covered yard. When Greg Gould joined the staff as a Client Care Advocate in January, plans for an alternative use of the yard really came together. Greg is a self-described "foodologist" who believes in the healing power of planting, growing and cooking your own food. Future plans include adding two more containers (four containers will

while the average lifespan for a housed American is over 77 years. Even the typical gender-differential effects of diseases such as heart disease (usually greater in men than women) are obliterated by the overwhelming stresses that homelessness imposes. In homeless health care the social determinants of health, such as lack of housing, poverty, malnutrition, and lack of access to appropriate health care are much more important than the medical factors.

A consequence of the realities of homelessness is that the public health concepts of health promotion and disease prevention need to be greatly altered in working in the homeless community. In the public health model tobacco cessation, obesity prevention, exercise, and proper control of diseases such as diabetes and hypertension are paramount in the housed community to prevent disease or decrease the side effects of disease 10 to 20 years into the future

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continually supply 12 residents with produce), fruit trees and a collection tank for shower water runoff for the garden. Bob says, "We want everything that water goes into around here to be useful."

Greg admits it's often a challenge to get folks to eat vegetables. He believes, however, that when people invest in growing and making their own food, they become more enthusiastic about eating right and taking care of themselves; important life skills for people in recovery. He says, "My motive is to encourage guys to think differently about food. If people eat fresh food that they've grown, they won't be able to go back to fast food. We're so dependent on others for our food, so growing food is a real act of independence."

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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 call (505) 766-5197 to confirm meeting dates, times and location. Dates of upcoming Board meetings are:
July 12
August 9
September 13
October 11

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:
June 21
July 19
August 16
September 20

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 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.

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

Editor, Stephanie Silver, Development Coordinator

From the ED...

Greetings and welcome to AHCH's Spring 05 newsletter. I feel fortunate to have joined the AHCH team in mid-January and have been so impressed with the dedication of the staff who represent a wide variety of different programs, each of them contributing in their special ways toward fulfilling our mission; "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."

I have also learned that this is AHCH's 20th year of existence, providing comprehensive health and social services to an increasing number of homeless persons each year. While normally a 20-year anniversary is cause for celebration, in our case it is a double-edged sword. On one hand we are proud to have provided the quality and variety of services offered at AHCH for 20 years, but on the other hand, we are sad that there is still a need for our organization to exist, more so now than ever before!

Regrettably, although AHCH has helped numerous people regain their health and move out of homelessness, we fully recognize that there are too many others ready to take their place. This obviously points to a much larger societal problem that has yet to be addressed, which includes not only universal access to health care, but also the development of workforce skills, ensuring a living wage, and the provision of safe and affordable housing, to name a few. To do this, we must confront and eliminate discrimination, institutional racism and social injustice, and build a just community that offers the same opportunities to all Americans.

If private business, federal, state, and local government, and most importantly, the people get involved and put our collective efforts together to address these enormous issues, anything is possible. Observing firsthand how people who experience homelessness survive each day is a perfect example of just how resourceful

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Administration

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

Primary Care Services

1217 1st NW
Medical Clinic
Matias J. Vega, MD, Medical Director
242-4644

Dental Clinic

Amalia Torrez, Program Manager
242-8288

Children's Outreach (Chout)

Karen Zimmerman, Clinical Team Leader
242-4644

Social and Behavioral Health Services

1217 1st NW
Sigifredo Saenz, Clinical Director
Cyndi Yahn, Social and Behavioral Health Program Manager

La Puerta

Peggy Harter, Program Coordinator
766-9520

Stepping Stones Drop-in

Milton Thomas, Social Services Coordinator
843-7611

Counseling & Therapy

Jill Zomerhuis, Clinical Program Coordinator
843-7611

Street Outreach Services (SOS)

Kara Kellogg, SOS Coordinator
767-1198

Residential Programs

Casa Los Arboles

Bob Maxwell, Program Coordinator
344-6738

Villa de Paz

Mitch Marzec, Program Coordinator
254-0320

Tierra del Sol

Maureen Rule, Program Manager
831-7815

Other Programs

Harm Reduction Program

4120 Silver SE
Dominick Zurlo, Program Coordinator
266-4188

ArtStreet

1217 1st NW
Brenda Bunker, Program Manager
248-0817

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

CLA Organic Garden Project cont.
 “We want to teach that recovery is more than just not drinking,” says Bob. Tending the organic garden is integrated into the social model program that is essential to how CLA helps residents build inner and community resources that will sustain positive life choices once they leave. Residents all participate in running the program, and the garden; weeding, composting, harvesting and cooking for each other.

The organic garden project also features community collaboration; a hallmark of AHCH’s work for 20 years. Hank Bruce, Program Director of Hunger Grow Away and a “horticultural therapist” is lending his consulting expertise and Chuck O’Herron-Alex, Organic Gardener and Educator with the Center for Action and Contemplation, is teaching the men of CLA how to set up and maintain their garden. The Center also helps families living on a former dump in Juarez set up the same kind of container gardens to help end hunger in the impoverished area.

Bob concludes, “Learning to prepare and serve meals has been a healing part of CLA for years because it’s very empowering, but as far as we know, we’re the first program of our kind to incorporate an organic garden into a recovery program.” Greg and Bob hope the garden will become a model for other places where people can benefit from “horticultural therapy” such as prisons, schools and nursing homes. As Greg says, “We can end hunger one CLA, one family, one house at a time.”

Resources:

Hunger Grow Away, 505-891-1355
 Center for Action and Contemplation, 505-242-9588

“Sock Box” for AHCH at Sole Comfort Shoes

Bring in at least two pairs of unused white athletic men’s or women’s socks to Sole Comfort Shoes and receive a coupon for \$10 off your next purchase. (One per customer.)

Sole Comfort Shoes is located at 11200 Montgomery Blvd NE, Ste 6



2004 First Day of Winter

Thank you to all of AHCH’s friends and supporters who helped make the 2004 First Day of Winter campaign a success. First Day of Winter helps raise much-needed unrestricted funds to help our organization continue to provide services that are vital to our clients, but aren’t necessarily covered by our restricted governmental and foundation funding. Our goal was to raise \$85,000. As of May 9th, we have received just over \$82,000.

We’d like to thank our hard working Development Committee members who helped with planning, letterwriting, phone follow up and personal solicitations.

An exciting development this year was the number of grassroots “house parties” supporters held to raise money for First Day of Winter. Many folks held these parties as part of their regular holiday festivities, others in honor of a special occasion. Mary and

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On March 24th AHCH hosted a tour for elected officials as part of National Health Care for the Homeless week. The tour helped inform policymakers about our work and issues related to homelessness. Here, AHCH Board President Tim Karpoff gives a tour to Mary Wilkinson, Constituent Liaison from the office of Senator Heather Wilson.

Community Engagement cont.
 for a given patient. The typical homeless person can’t count on surviving that long. So in homeless health care, screening and treatment for mental health, addictions and disabling medical conditions are much more important. The single greatest impact a health care for the homeless project can have on the health of a homeless person or family is to help them obtain housing. It seems obvious but bears repeating, if the diagnosis is homelessness then the prescription must include housing. One cannot be homeless *and* healthy. That is why AHCH has the dual mission of meeting the immediate, urgent need of homeless families and individuals, while advocating for systemic solutions to homelessness. It is not enough to simply make the lives of those enduring homelessness more palatable, but instead we must work to end homelessness. Everything about AHCH is about justice: housing justice, health care justice, economic justice, education justice, and civil rights.

You can help make possible AHCH’s work with homeless people to make choices that transform their lives.

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

Name _____

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

Visa or Master Card? _____

Name on Card: _____

Card Number: _____

Expiration Date: _____

Signature: _____

Wish List

Our clients need items to help protect them from the summer sun and heat.

Please consider donating :

hats, caps, athletic socks, bottled water, sunscreen, and lip balm.

Other needs include:

toiletries

art supplies

vitamins, ibuprofen, Benadryl

diapers

To make a donation of these priority items, or if you have any questions about making a donation, please contact Stephanie Silver at 767-1177.

In order to prioritize storage space and staff time, AHCH is limiting the amount and type of in-kind donations we accept. We are fortunate to work, instead, with these community partners to make clothing, furniture, and household goods available to our clients:

Goodwill 881-6612

St. Martin's 766-6876

Second Chances 265-9233

Sisters and Brothers Closet @ YMCA

232-1700 X. 109

Storehouse 842-6491

Hilary Hale Joins Board

AHCH's newest Board member is Hilary Hale, LPCC. Ms. Hale has been a therapist for more than 15 years and currently works for Samaritan Center for Changing Families. When asked why she joined the Board of AHCH, she responds, "I feel really strongly about homelessness and I've heard great things about AHCH." Ms. Hale feels that homelessness is an issue that the entire community should address because "we should take care of each other." Ms. Hale is also on the Board of Directors of Family Works. She is recently married and has two teenage stepsons.

Did You Know?

If your company participates with United Way for an employee giving program, you can designate Albuquerque Health Care for the Homeless to receive your contributions by simply writing our name on the donation form.

Special Thanks

A special thank you to John XXIII Catholic Community and the employees of Honeywell for their generous holiday donations of toys, clothing and gifts.

From the ED cont.

human beings can be even when they are repeatedly rejected by society at large. If only those who control the finances necessary to make these changes were as creative and resourceful as the people who experience homelessness, we could definitely find ourselves fulfilling AHCH's vision:

"To live in a world that is just and without homelessness."

Daryl T. Smith, Executive Director

First Day of Winter cont.

Ross Miesem held a holiday party for First Day of Winter, as did Carol and Mike Moye and staff members Julie Rosen and Tina Carlson. Dixie Prowell collected donations in honor of her parents' anniversary and Ann Wehr of Molina Healthcare gathered donations from her co-workers.

Thank you to all of our supporters!

Call Hire Power

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

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