



East Central Ministries 2022 Fall Newsletter

Thoughts from John...

Yesterday, I stood in the street in front of ECM and watched as Albuquerque Police ordered over 20 people to move their makeshift homes of tents, tarps, boards, and cardboard that covered the sidewalks down the whole block. This encampment had quickly grown over the past week, when many of them were displaced the same way just five blocks away. This constant cycle of people trying to find a place to shelter and then being forced to pack up and move is painful to witness on an individual and community level.

So many vulnerable people with so many issues. Some have significant untreated mental/behavioral health struggles. Many self-medicate with street drugs which are cheaper and easier to find than a doctor's prescription. All have suffered traumatic life experiences probably since being small children. Survival instinct bands small groups together within makeshift communities, yet a lack of adequate coping skills often leads to shouting, fearful mistrust, and at times violence. All the complex issues and vulnerabilities get carried around within people who never get a restful and safe night's sleep. It is hard to imagine how painful and fearful it is to live this experience of every night's shelter being only what you can find outside on the sidewalk.

I sat on the sidewalk with two women who had just moved across the street with the shopping carts that contain their only earthly possessions. As we talked, I heard two messages. "We just want someone to give us a chance." The universal plea of, Do I belong? Does anyone care? Does my human existence matter at all? And then, "We just want to be left alone." This is the plea of the truly marginalized; those that the system was set up against from before they were born. The essentials of life, safety and belonging in childhood, education that empowers, skills and job opportunities that provide economic security, physical and mental health support that is accessible...this system that may be promised and available to some definitely has not been afforded to these women. They have determined that they must survive on their own. "We just want to be left alone." It is their answer to the life of disappointments and promises unmet.



The issues of homelessness are complex. They are systemic, generational, fraught with bad policies of cutting and not funding everything from childhood and family support, education and job training, to affordable housing options. The truth of "we get what we pay for" applies. When we have neglected our social wellbeing investments because we have valued maximum profits and growth, then we continue to get the results of a large growing community of people who are completely alienated and marginalized.

While ECM has not specifically focused our ministry on issues of homelessness, our neighborhood continues to change. We now have two wonderful staff working with families who are precariously housed. We continue to wrestle with others on larger solutions because while homelessness is complex, there are solutions with the right societal and political will. On that particular morning, I gave what I had capacity for..... a cold bottle of water and a little bit of time to listen with no judgements to a couple of neighbors.

- John Bulten, Founder and Executive Director

One Hope Centro de Vida Health Center

ECM directors, staff, clients, and patients would like to extend a **hearty THANK YOU to Blanca Pedigo** for her six years of service as the Director of One Hope Centro de Vida Health Center! We appreciate all the hard work Blanca has done and are thankful for her contributions to community health. Blanca is a gifted intercultural communicator, skilled social and healthcare advocate, and has helped to bring One Hope to a whole new level. Blanca has spent the last few months training our new Director and is now ready to transition to a senior administrative role within ECM. Thank you, Blanca! We could not have gotten here without you!



Blanca & Audrey

Please join us in welcoming Audrey Cooper, our new Director of the One Hope Centro de Vida Health Center! Audrey joined us earlier this year and has had an exciting foray into all that is One Hope and its role as a healthcare provider to our International District community.

Audrey comes to us with an extensive background in the healthcare field. Her desire for larger systems change surrounding healthcare led to her becoming an RN, where she would be provided with a ground level view of the system, allowing her to understand its form and function. Her early work with AmeriCorps brought her to the Texas/Mexican border with a free-standing birth center, where she learned Spanish, and Las Cruces, working with homeless and near homeless children and their families. Moving to Albuquerque, she continued working in the South Valley with those generally marginalized from the healthcare system, and then moved on to clinical quality with the New Mexico Primary Care Association, with a focus on patient quality care. Audrey was also a Fellow through the UNM Evaluation Lab, which led to an evaluator position working with non-profits on individualized evaluation planning and implementation. Before coming to One Hope, Audrey worked for the State of New Mexico doing large scale strategic planning in the areas of primary care and hunger relief.

Audrey recently completed her Master of Public Health at UNM with a focus on systems, services, and policy. She also earned graduate certificates in Maternal Child Health and Race and Social Justice.



East Central Ministries Staff 2022

We are excited to have Audrey and welcome her and her husband and young son (and baby on the way!) to ECM and One Hope! Audrey's passions include fostering joy in the workplace, centering staff care, and evaluation implementation. Audrey believes that working for a non-profit such as ECM will provide opportunities to test creative policy and implement changes that may one day happen at the broader, policy level.

Welcome Audrey! We are glad you are here!

New Family Stability Program

This year brought the start of an exciting new Family Stability Program, a collaboration between ECM, the Siemer Foundation, and United Way of Central New Mexico. Case managers Lornel Baker and Kierstyn Francois work closely with Albuquerque Public Schools/ABC Community Schools to identify and provide services for precariously housed students and their families. Utilizing a multigenerational approach, they ensure the needs of the whole family are met. As families stabilize, evictions and homelessness become rare events, allowing children to remain in their preferred school all year long. The result is better-educated, happier, and more secure children. **Thank you Lornel and Kierstyn!**



United Way
of Central New Mexico



SIEMER
INSTITUTE



At ECM, we like to do things on the cheap. That doesn't mean we like cheap work, we just want to save our money for programs. So, when an Aussie like Craig comes along, looking for temporary work before heading back across the sea, we say, "Well sure, Mate – *please*, help!" Craig worked with us this spring for a few months, fixing, building, and installing a bit of everything. Craig and his wife Jana might well be known to a few of our supporters, as they have spent many years crisscrossing the US in their bus with their kids as The Hollands! Family band, stopping in Albuquerque every year or two. Craig is a talented musician AND craftsman. **Thanks Craig, for your generous spirit and helping ECM look great!**

Pathways Program

With thanks and appreciation, we say good-bye to Guillermina Osoria who served the ID with distinction, professionalism, and generosity as a Pathways Navigator for ECM/IDHCC. She is now moving on to bigger and brighter things, but will keep a foot in the ID, as she has multiple, continued roles in the community. Thank you, Gigi! We will miss you!

At the same time, we extend a **welcome** to our new Pathways Navigator, **Claudia Mata!** Claudia previously worked for ECM and we are excited to welcome her back. We see many good things ahead!



Claudia Mata

Keep on Truckin'

Our other programs continue apace! The food cooperative continues to serve approximately 300 members a month, Growing Awareness realized record sales this spring, our youth program had a wild and crazy summer and is now settling into homework club mode, and the Common Good continues to have strong sales and much volunteer support. Thank you, everyone!

Perspectives from 2 ½ feet



Did I call it or what? If you refer to the last newsletter from Fall 2021, I believe I ended with ‘So, see you next year. Maybe.’ Of course, at that time, I figured that I was just going to blow this popsicle stand. I never actually meant that it would take simply forever to get the next newsletter out. And, yeah, blah blah blah, excuses excuses excuses. So, you started new programs. So, what? So, you brought on a new Health Center Director. So, what? So, your operating budget is the largest it has ever been and you are excited and busy working with your new accountants and finalizing audits and and and... So, what? What about what I’ve been through? Did you hear that three kittens, KITTENS, do you hear me? KITTENS took up residence across the street in the warehouse! Not only were they not kicked out, but they were given a warm bed, food, water, and were slobbered over every day by the so-called staff that work here. Maybe that’s why a newsletter never got out. Hmpf. Let me tell you, I was just glad when they left. I heard they went to the home of one of the board members and I even saw a photo of them snuggling on beds and playing on stupid cat castles. Well, good riddance is all I can say. Don’t let the door hit ya’...well you know what I mean. I feel like this is deja-vu all over again.... All I can say is that they are gone and I am too tired to write an article this month. I’ll try this again: “So, see you this winter. Maybe.”



Visit the Website:

www.EastCentralMinistries.org

Phone: 505.266.3590

EAST CENTRAL MINISTRIES FALL 2022 NEWSLETTER

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED
Albuquerque, NM 87108
123 Vermont St NE

