

NEWS

from



Spring 2003

Volume 10 Number 2

As is traditional for our Spring Newsletter, this issue honors the many dedicated volunteers who give their time and their hearts to Casa Esperanza.



These hard working young men are from UNM's Omega Delta Phi. They are repairing cracks in our parking lot after power-washing the entire area. We are grateful to the many Greek organizations and other groups in Albuquerque that take on major projects for the house – from washing our acres of windows, painting our guest rooms, and landscaping, to decorating the house for holidays and hosting parties and dinners for our families.

One of the volunteers from Houma, Louisiana, works on one of the 42 individual heater/ac units found in the house. These units require constant maintenance and upkeep, and we are especially happy to find volunteers with mechanical know-how. The group from Houma is part of the United Methodist Church Volunteers in Mission (VIM) program, and we were fortunate to have five different groups visit Casa Esperanza last year, including: First UMC, Houma, Louisiana; First UMC, Sun City, Arizona; St. Timothy's UMC, Manderville, Louisiana; Good Shepherd UMC, Yukon, Oklahoma; and St. Paul's UMC, El Paso, Texas.



These happy folks are the VIM from St. Timothy's UMC in Manderville, Louisiana. Here they present a photo-op after feeding our guest families, staff and volunteers a scrumptious Cajun feast of filet gumbo and crawfish etouffe. Yum! Each group stays in the house, gets acquainted with the families in residence, works hard for a week or so, sees a few New Mexico sights and ends the week by cooking a mouth-watering dinner. They bring gifts – of themselves and their talents, as well as tangible goods such as linens, room décor, etc. – and they leave behind a remarkable afterglow of goodwill. We are expecting more groups this year. We can't wait.

With friends like you . . .

...we can do anything. Volunteers run this house, no doubt about it. The entire operation would come to a screeching halt if not for our friends who give, and do so much. Case in point: Margarita Gonzales volunteers in the office every day – that's right, EVERY day. As does Richard Tepper. He waters and polices the grounds. Chanel Desjardins comes in twice a week and produces like a pro – whatever we need. Kay Burford is the brave soul who volunteers on Mondays, one of our most hectic days in terms of resident traffic. And the two young people from South Valley Academy, Alicia Reyes and Daniel Cordoza, come one afternoon each week to help with whatever needs doing. These wonderful individuals, along with the incredible numbers of volunteer groups, help to keep the staff and this house going!

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Reach us at:

CASA ESPERANZA, PO BOX 40472

ALBUQUERQUE, NM 87196-0472

505-277-9880 Fax: 505-277-9876

EMAIL: info@casaesperanzanm.org

WEBSITE: WWW.CASAESPERANZANM.ORG

Our Mission

Casa Esperanza provides affordable housing for families facing cancer.

DIRECTOR'S PAGE

by Eileen Cook

Our World

In reviewing some past newsletter columns, I was especially struck by one written only a year ago. I wrote about emerging from a world of bewilderment and confusion after 9/11, about a feeling of normalcy returning to our lives.

But as we face the prospect of war, and as we live with daily yellow and orange alerts, praying that the dreaded red won't be called, stress, frustrations, and fear once again loom large. And while we are newly facing foes beyond our shores - foes dedicated to the destruction of our country - facing the enemy is nothing new for our cancer patients. In many ways, they have been here before.

The fear and frustration, confusion and disillusionment are not new for these families. The enemy they face lies not beyond our shores, but within. The destruction threatened is not of their country, but of their very beings. Every check-up is an alert - one only prays that it's not red, not orange, not even yellow. One prays for green - for a confirmation that the foe is at bay.

Casa Esperanza remains a refuge in this particular war, a place where families can feel safe, where they may find sup-

port from caring volunteers and staff, where they can recognize the signs - the alerts, if you will - of their fellow residents and where they can comfort and support one another.

In this time of heightened international and financial tensions, I urge each of you to remember our families this year as you make decisions for your charitable donations and estate plans. Your care of our families means everything, and we are sincerely thankful for your generosity - both of your time and your pocketbook. We simply cannot do it without you.



Chanel Desjardins, a UNM Communication major and CE volunteer, is a computer whiz, and Casa Esperanza benefits tremendously from her technical skills.

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Member of the National Association of Hospital Hospitality Houses, a professional organization that promotes and assists not-for-profit programs that provide lodging and supportive services in a caring environment for families accompanying ill loved ones away from home. To learn more about NAHHH and other special places such as Casa Esperanza, visit www.nahhh.org.

Member of the Albuquerque Cancer Coalition, an alliance of cancer support agencies, hospital treatment centers and governmental agencies to inform, to educate and to advocate on behalf of NM cancer patients and their families.

Member of Chambers of Commerce in Albuquerque, Belen, Clovis, Alamogordo, Los Lunas. Member of Albuquerque Better Business Bureau.

Ross & Marva Sykes *by Yvonne Gallegos, Guest Services Team Member*

Ross and Marva Sykes have been married 42 years and have three grown children. Retired, they spend much of their time on hobbies – Marva cooking and working on puzzles, and Ross on his '49 Mercury for which he has a room in their house devoted to “car-junk” from parts to models he has made. Life in Roswell couldn't be better.

But then, in 1999 Ross had a heart attack and was diagnosed with diabetes. Then came the shocking news that he also had prostate cancer. His urologist suggested “watchful waiting” since he was not a candidate for surgery. After talking to others in a similar situation and searching the internet, the Sykes decided to get a second opinion in Albuquerque. After much discussion and consideration Marva and Ross agreed radiation therapy would be their best option, but how would they handle being away from home for six to eight weeks? How would they pay for it?

Ross was a Mason, and a good friend reminded him of a project the Masons helped fund for cancer patients who need a place to stay, a place called Casa Esperanza. After a few phone calls, they packed their bags and

headed to Albuquerque. Nervous about leaving home, starting radiation treatments, and the financial burden of living away from home, Marva and Ross were relieved to learn that their stay would be covered from a fund en-



Casa Esperanza guest Ross Sykes.

dowed by the Masonic Charities of New Mexico – a fund established to help families just like them.

As soon as they walked into Casa Esperanza, Marva and Ross stated that they were welcomed with warm smiles and a caring staff. Marva says that Casa Esperanza was a God-send, with all the conveniences of home, in addition to its financial and family support system. Ross states that he has requested that his friends and family donate money to Casa Esperanza to continue our work in serving other families.

Marva and Ross have truly made Casa Esperanza their “home away from home.” Marva has donated puzzles which she and the other guests work together to solve. She also continues to cook and share her dishes with the other families. Ross works on the computer in our media center to keep in touch with friends and family, and he enjoys playing with the many children currently in the house. Their warm and positive attitude has proven to be a wonderful asset in their conquest to be cancer free, and we wish them the very best.

Planned Giving: “A Way to Add Value to Your Charitable Gift”

by Debbie Redford, CE Planned Giving Advisory Board

There are a number of ways to structure a planned gift to a charity and simultaneously enjoy favorable tax and financial benefits. Combined with estate planning, planned giving can provide for favorite charities and loved ones, while guaranteeing income for life to the donor and creating a gift that will live on after the donor's death. In a nutshell, planned giving provides a two way gift - the charity receives the financial assistance it needs to operate, and the donor receives the peace of mind that comes with knowing they have made a difference to a cause or organization that they feel strongly about. Recognizing the value of charitable gifts to society, the federal government has provided tax benefits that can be derived from charitable giving. When making a gift, it is only natural for donors to seek the maximum tax benefit allowable by law. Planned giving is one way to help prospective donors maximize these benefits. Of course, with all matters that may have financial and tax consequences, it is important to consult with your personal tax and legal advisors before making a planned gift.

Most people know that they can make a bequest to a charity in their will. Many people do not realize how convenient and welcome a gift of life insurance can be to a charitable organization. A gift of life insurance may provide a number of advantages to the charity, including:

- *Income to the charity that continues after your death.*
- *A large, lump-sum distribution to the charity upon your death, which can allow the funding of a special project.*
- * Proceeds which are received without the delay of probate.*

In addition, life insurance enables a donor to write the same check, but makes the funds generated by that check go much further. Life insurance allows a donor to create a significant endowment for a charity often without giving away substantial family assets.

Estate Planners in the House *by Marc Florez, CE Board of Directors*

The first of a series of continuing education programs for Estate Planners and Financial Advisors, sponsored by Casa Esperanza, was held on February 19th. All indications were that it was a tremendous success. It focused on the impact of recent changes in two key areas of a comprehensive Financial Plan: Estate Taxes and Retirement Plan Distributions.

Tom Brown, Esq, presented a program detailing the massive changes to Estate Tax Law. He indicated the need for clients to work with a professional estate planner to revise their wills and estate plans in light of all the changes and uncertainty. He reminded attendees that although repeal of the estate tax was in place, it was not made permanent. Many of the provisions are subject to political risk, which could easily change as political winds change in the coming years, especially in challenging economic times. This requires careful coordination between advisor and client during this period, to plan for uncertain eventualities. In the mean time, the tem-

porary phase out of high estate taxes provides a period of time when a lower estate tax bill might free up money for potential donors and their families to make a lasting legacy gift to worthy charitable organizations like Casa Esperanza.

Marc Florez, CFM, spoke of the growing tax problem with retirement plan distributions, and gave a six step process for defusing the retirement savings tax time bomb. Many studies have indicated that 60% to 90 % of all retirement plan assets can be lost to taxes without proper planning and execution of retirement plan distribution. Mistakenly, many people spend more time planning small consumer purchases than they spend planning and managing their largest asset, their company or individual retirement plan. In addition, proper planning and recent IRS regulatory changes allow for more tax advantaged stretching of retirement assets to benefit charities and family beneficiaries.

This program was the first of its kind sponsored by Casa Esperanza's recently or-

ganized Planned Giving Advisory Board. Future programs will focus on educating friends of Casa Esperanza on these and other financial planning issues. Please contact Casa Esperanza if you have ideas for the committee or would like to discuss a potential planned gift. You may also visit our website at www.casaesperanzanm.org.



J. Marc Florez and Thomas E. Brown III at the Planned Giving Seminar. The seminar focused on changes in tax laws and what effect such changes will have on estate planning.

Donate your car, boat or RV to benefit Casa Esperanza. Call 1-800-513-6560 or visit www.donatecar.com and let them take care of your donation.

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CASA ESPERANZA, INC.
Post Office Box 40472
Albuquerque, NM 87196-0472