

Home at St. E's

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30 Years and Counting!

Looking Back: Still Open After All These Years

Thirty years ago St. Elizabeth Shelter opened its doors in a rented house on Don Gaspar. Most of the original 13 members of the Board of Directors are no longer with us, but Margaret Sears, who became secretary and then vice president of the board, remembers the early days well.

Margaret had worked in the mental health field as a music therapist. A friend of hers from the United Church of Santa Fe was on the board of Casa de Paz, one of Santa Fe's several previous short-lived homeless shelters, got her interested in their work, and Margaret joined the board, too.

But Casa de Paz had struggled from the beginning and was continually moving from one small rented house to another.

"We were overwhelmed and just limping along, moving from place to place and on our last legs, worried about what would happen if we closed," she says. "The obvious answer was to ask a church or congregation to take us over. But we wanted to be all-inclusive and welcoming to all and not align with just one faith."

At this time in the mid-1980s, the closing of governmental mental-health facilities was leading to a large increase in the homeless population, and Santa Fe was no exception. Realizing this, an interfaith group of community leaders began looking for solutions and decided that a new larger homeless shelter might be a temporary answer. Soon they began organizing a board for the new organization and the seeds for St. Elizabeth Shelter were sown.



Margaret Sears revisits St. E's and recollects the Early Days

"Jim Brown, who was minister at First Presbyterian, really got the place going" she says. "He, Rabbi Leonard Helman and Mike Cerletti, who later became the first Secretary of Tourism in New Mexico, all knew people of means and secured the donations to get St. Elizabeth started."

After they rented the house on Don Gaspar, Casa de Paz closed and I joined the St. E's board. "When St. Elizabeth opened, it only housed men who slept on mats in the basement and had to all share one bathroom," Margaret says. "But even that was a big step up from Casa de Paz."

The new non-profit, non-denominational organization was named after St. Elizabeth Ann Seton, the first native-born American saint in the Catholic Church, who founded the Sisters of

Charity. Sister Shirley LeBlanc was hired as the first executive director.

"She brought a professional's touch and really got the place up and running," Margaret says. "She created an operating manual with policies and procedures for staff and guests and ran a tight ship. She also was good at attracting volunteers."

Maria Lopez, program manager at the Men's Emergency Shelter, was among those first volunteers.

"I started by coming in every Saturday and cooking for 20 people," she says. "When we moved from Don Gaspar to the current facility on Alarid Street, Sister Shirley asked me if I would be interested in a permanent job. At first I said no, but the more I thought about it, the more the mission spoke to me, and now I've been here for nearly 30 years."

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TICKETS ON SALE NOW!



Saturday, October 22nd, 2016
 5:30pm-9pm | After Party 9pm-11pm
 Eldorado Hotel

Ticket Price : \$125 Dinner & Auction
 After Party : Free for Sponsors and VIPs
 \$20 General Attendees

Buy Tix : www.steshelter.org
 Questions? (505) 982-6611 x104

Giving Never Tasted This Good!





MISSION:

St. Elizabeth Shelter is dedicated to assisting homeless individuals and families by providing emergency shelter, food, case management, counseling, supportive housing and referrals to partnering human-service agencies.

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Neal Windham, Program Manager

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Director's Corner



In 1986 a farsighted group of civic leaders got together to address the growing homeless population in Santa Fe. They started small, renting a house and only accommodating men. But over the past 30 years, as numbers and needs have grown, so has St. Elizabeth. So much so that now, on any given day, we're housing 125 men, women and

children in five separate facilities.

This expansion is due to our listening and responding to those who have become homeless. We witnessed more women with children finding their families destitute, more people with mental illnesses who may have disability income but no place to stay, seniors homeless for years and now with growing health issues. It was not growth for growth's sake, but in direct response to the needs and issues of the varied people we serve.

During these 30 years, we have gotten very good at listening and responding to those who find themselves homeless. We meet our guests where they are at this moment in life and together craft a plan that's workable and attainable. That's why we're able to successfully help them through their hurdles and hardships to find stable housing. Last year, we helped move 48 percent of the single men and 78 percent of the women and families from our two emergency shelters into stable housing and new lives. And we will continue to improve these numbers until we work ourselves out of a job.

Deborah Tang,
Executive Director



Joseph
Maestas
and
Renee
Villarreal

City Councilors
speak at
Housing 4 All Event
2016 St. E's 30 Year
Celebration

Thank You Donors!

To View the List of Donors Visit our website - www.StEshelter.org

Thank You to Our Dedicated Chefs!

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US Bank/Cecilia Roybal
Marie White
Friends of Father Jim Wolff
Zia United Methodist Church

If you are interested in joining our fabulous kitchen team, call Maria Lopez, Men's Emergency Shelter program manager, at 982-6611, or Kehala Two Bulls, Casa Familia program manager, at 983-2042.

30 Years Continued...

Edward Archuleta, case manager at the Men's Emergency Shelter, is another former volunteer whose life has been intertwined with St. Elizabeth almost from the start.

"I came by the house on Don Gaspar to make a small donation, and Sister Shirley asked me to volunteer," he says. "Within a few years, I was asked to join the Board of Directors. And now, after a hiatus of several years, I'm back as case manager. This place gets in your blood."

Since its humble beginnings, St. Elizabeth has grown in concert with Santa Fe's increasing needs. It now operates five separate residential facilities, two emergency shelters – the Men's and Casa Familia for women and families with children – and three longer-term supportive housing programs: Casa Cerrillos for adults with disabilities, Sonrisa for families and Siringo for seniors. It offers a weekly

Homeless Legal Clinic, participates in the City of Santa Fe's monthly Homeless Court and provides many outreach services. All together, St. Elizabeth serves more than 2,000 people every year and today, 30 years later, remains the only year-round, full-service homeless shelter in Santa Fe and all of Northern New Mexico.

"It was tough in the beginning, and there were times I didn't know if we would survive," Margaret says. "But somehow our generous community always provided enough money to keep us open, so I think St. Elizabeth was meant to be. And now it's just awesome, as the kids would say!"