

Virus Keeps St. E's On the Move



Intern Mattie Thrasher (left) takes the temperature of a guest checking in at the Men's Emergency Shelter as Dusti Nichols, program manager, records the information.

As COVID-19 rages from winter through spring into summer, St. Elizabeth keeps updating and adjusting its programs and services to keep our guests and the community at large as safe as possible from the virus.

While residents at our three supportive living programs - Sonrisa for families, Siringo for seniors and Casa Cerrillos for adults with disabilities - all have their own apartments and can safely social distance, life has not changed much for them. But the same cannot be said for those living in group settings at the Men's and Casa Familia emergency shelters where contagion can easily spread due to shared sleeping, dining and bathroom spaces.

In response, we restricted access by the general public to both shelters in early March and limited the residents' outside activities. Shortly thereafter, Mayor Alan Webber asked us to move all our emergency shelter guests into individual rooms at local motels. To continue providing needed services, some staff moved in alongside them while others stayed at the shelters

cooking and transporting three meals a day.

Then in early April, we had the Board of Health test all guests and staff for the virus. Thankfully all tested negative and returned to the shelters except for those with jobs who, since we cannot monitor their movements and contacts, remain housed at the motels. For now guests remain inside except for one staff-supervised outing per day while prospective clients are put up at motels after being tested and awaiting results. Though street homeless still cannot enter, they can come to the door to request food, clothing, mail or hygiene items that staff will prepare and bring out to them.

"March and April were incredibly stressful," says Dusti Nichols, Men's Emergency Shelter program manager. "Our jobs were changing every day, our protocols were changing every week and all of our personal lives were uprooted by fear of infection, compounded by the abrupt disruption of our outside activities. And all the time we had to keep acting normal in front of

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Matches Made Thank You!

Thanks to you, our generous donors, we've matched two challenge grants: the Kaplan Foundation's \$50,000 Casa Familia challenge attained in December and the Anderson Foundation's \$15,000 COVID-19 challenge reached in May.

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

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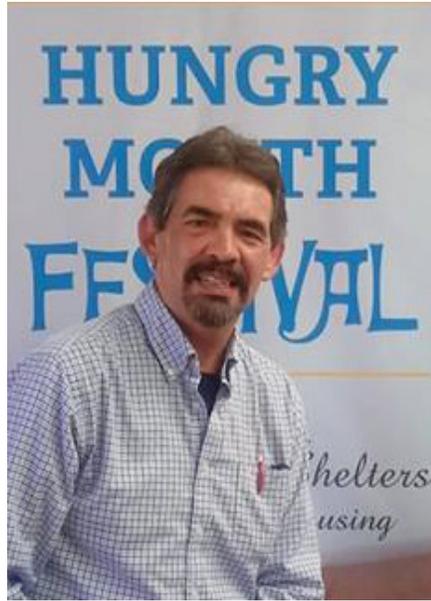
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St. Elizabeth Shelters & Supportive Housing

804 Alarid St. Santa Fe, NM 87505

www.steshelter.org

Director's Corner



When the coronavirus hit in early March, St. E's, like most every other organization, was unprepared. Though we've faced many challenges in our 34 years, nothing compared to this. Once the Centers for Disease Control began to issue protocols on how to protect from the virus – wash your hands and disinfect all surfaces frequently, wear a mask, practice

social distancing – we immediately put them into place. To protect our guests and staff, we immediately restricted public access to our two emergency shelters. To protect the community at large, we restricted guests to one staff-supervised outing per day to obtain needed supplies or medical attention. Fortunately the anticipated outbreak did not occur, and to date none of our guests or staff has gotten ill.

But the one thing that did happen was an outpouring of financial support from our donors and contributors. We've received checks from people and organizations not only from Santa Fe but throughout Northern New Mexico, indeed the country. Individuals who had never contributed to St. E's before sent money. Organizations such as the Santa Fe Community Foundation, Anchorum, Christus St. Vincent and PNM made special grants. Government agencies too – the City of Santa Fe, Santa Fe County, New Mexico Mortgage Finance Authority and FEMA – also provided emergency assistance. St. E's is greatly indebted to everyone who opened up their hearts and their wallets to help us in this difficult time with so many unanticipated expenses. On behalf of the staff, the board of directors and, most importantly, our guests – THANK YOU!

Finally, I would like to recognize the incredible staff we have at St. Elizabeth. Not once during this crisis has anyone shied away from their duties. While all were concerned about their own health and safety, everyone showed up to work each day and continued to show the love and care we have for those less fortunate. I am so proud that we have such a dedicated, professional and compassionate team. A special "thank you" goes out to all of them.

Edward Archuleta
 Executive Director

Moving A Step Foward

Fiscal prudence and financial planning usually aren't traits often associated with individuals experiencing homelessness. But that's because most people haven't met Sucely Berger.

Sucely, 24, moved into St. Elizabeth's Sonrisa transitional housing program for families in March with her partner Anthony Romero, 25, and sons Anthony Jr., 5, and Orlando, 1. Prior to that, the family had been staying at Casa Familia for six weeks.

As part of the program, Sonrisa residents pay 30 percent of their monthly income toward rent. When Sucely got her \$1,200 CARES Act stimulus check, she used it to pay her next three month's rent in advance.

"We really like it here at Sonrisa," she says, "so we put the funds toward our home. We don't know if my income will continue or if Anthony's hours at work will be cut. It's sometimes upsetting to see other people spend their checks on big-screen tvs and different things that we would like, too. But having our kids have hot water and a roof over their heads is more important to us."

Originally from El Rito, Sucely and Anthony had been living with family for several years but decided to move out early this year.

"We've been trying to get on our own for five years now but couldn't afford it," she says. "Our families are very opinionated, and it seems we could never be with either of them without someone saying something critical about what we're doing or how we're raising our kids. So we finally had to leave."

"It was a really difficult decision to move to Casa Familia, but our children mean everything to us and how we raise them will form how they go out into the world."



Anthony Romero and Sucely Berger with their children Orlando (in arms) and Anthony, Jr.

During their six weeks at Casa Familia the couple could relax at last in a supportive environment.

"The staff was wonderful," Sucely says. "They do amazing work dealing with so many different types of people and personalities. You start off thinking that living in an emergency shelter with two children is the very bottom, but their positive attitude really brought about a change in our perspective and motivated us to keep trying."

Sucely and Anthony spent much of their time there looking at apartments where they could begin creating a home together with their children, but nothing came through until an apartment opened up at Sonrisa.

"It's been perfect and has us feeling so much more optimistic about the future," she says.

The two have always worked – Sucely at Petco, Ohkay Owingeh casino and Cities of Gold before she

was laid off in January, and Anthony at Whole Foods, Smith's and now Minerva Canna Dispensary where he makes candies.

"If we stay on this same road – putting our paychecks in the bank, saving our money, building up our credit rating – we'll be able to work and stay in Santa Fe, buy a house and raise our children," Sucely says.

Now with some time off between them, the couple has even begun visiting their families again, an important first step in reestablishing the relationship. And they attribute much of this to St. Elizabeth's dedicated staff.

"We've found out that when you need help, there are people that are more than willing to do so," Sucely says. "We were at our lowest, but now we've been able to put ourselves in a better situation thanks to all the assistance we've received."

"It's truly given us a new outlook on life."

Call-Out to Former Interns

Are you a former intern? If so, we'd like to reconnect to see what you're doing now and stay in touch. We're planning an intern reunion to celebrate St. E's 35th (or later, depending on COVID) anniversary once it's safer to gather together.

We would love for you to send us a quick email with your name (previous and current if your name has changed), the year(s) you worked at St. E's at alumnintern@steshelter.org and include anything else you'd like to share to join our growing intern alumni list. And if you're in touch with other former interns, let them know too!

As you can see from the photo, the intern program is alive and thriving, thanks in no small part to your earlier service and devotion. We all had our challenges while working at St. E's, but maybe none more than dealing with today's coronavirus.

Finally, if you're interested in taking a part in planning our future reunion, let us know that as well.



Current Intern Mattie Thrasher (right) shows off the renovated intern housing to former interns Ben Myler (left), now day supervisor at the Men's Emergency Shelter, and Jerica Simmons (center), supervisor at Casa Familia

So drop us a line at:
alumnintern@steshelter.org.

Charitable Contributions Deductible Again

You are now allowed to deduct up to \$300 from your 2020 taxes for charitable contributions. The CARES Act stimulus package stipulated this was an above-the-line deduction, which means you don't have to itemize to claim the deduction, so everyone can take advantage of it.

Thank You Donors!

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www.steshelter.org

to view the list of our
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Virus continued...

our guests, who had their own fears and anxieties. Former intern Maria Fernandez even came back from her home in Ohio to help out and ended up staying at the motel to supervise our guests temporarily living there.”

Adding to the stress, our dedicated volunteers, many of them elderly, who staff the front desks at both shelters, help with maintenance and repairs, as well as prepare all evening meals understandably stayed away. So staff has been pulling double duty filling in.

“Because we don't want our guests taking public transportation, we're out driving them to appointments and shopping, along with making visits to those staying at the motels for case management,” says Annie Riddle, program manager at Casa Familia. “We've also set up some guests on Zoom so they can attend their AA, NA and other outside

meetings and counseling via computer.”

At the moment things have quieted down as we have limited numbers to one-third capacity – about 10 guests at each shelter – to distance the beds as best as possible in our group settings. To maintain these space restrictions but continue assisting larger at-risk families with children, we're hosting them in motels as well. And throughout it all, staff keeps working with guests to address the issues that led to their becoming homeless and helping them move into housing.

Though things may seem calmer now, St. Elizabeth is preparing for whatever the future brings.

“We don't know what's going to happen in the fall,” says Edward Archuleta, executive director. “Will there be a second wave, will

we even be done with the first wave? Who knows?”

“But I do know that the virus has devastated the local economy, destroying jobs and businesses, and undoubtedly increasing homelessness. So we're anticipating a big increase in numbers and demands for our services, and plan to have the resources available to accommodate them.”

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Summer Wish List

MEN'S EMERGENCY SHELTER

Please call (982-6611) or bring the smaller items to St. Elizabeth at 804 Alarid Street.

Clothing – New baseball caps, socks, and underwear.

Personal hygiene – Shaving cream, disposable razors, toothbrushes, toothpaste, hotel-size shampoo, deodorant, band aids, sun screen, combs, alka-seltzer, pepto-bismol®.

Other – Bath and kitchen towels, bus passes, vacuum cleaner, used carpentry or landscaping tools (tool belts, hammers, levels, tape measures, rakes, etc.) to assist clients in finding employment.

Food – Ground beef, chicken, pork, ham, roasts, milk, juice, eggs, fresh fruits, bottled water, cheese, coffee.

Non-food items – Non-alcoholic cough syrup, thera-flu, multivitamins, Emergen-C® packets, cough drops, Vitamin C, lip balm, band aids, alka-seltzer cold®, pepto-bismol®, hand sanitizer, hand wipes, tissues, Lysol spray, foot powder.

Volunteers – Front-desk receptionists for 4- to 8-hour blocks of time; cooks for dinner.

CASA FAMILIA

Please call (983-2042) or bring the smaller items to Casa Familia at 1604 Berry Ave.

Clothing – Women's underwear, socks, long-sleeve shirts, shoes, boy's/girl's clothing, rain gear, umbrellas, sun hats.

Personal Hygiene - Shampoo, conditioner, feminine hygiene products, disposable razors, toothpaste, toothbrushes, hair brushes, foot powder, body soap, nail clippers, nail files, deodorant, sun screen, cough drops, Emergencies Vitamin C, face wash, body wash, allergy medicine including Zrytex and Claritan.

Food - Fresh fruits & vegetables, water, juice, milk, ground beef.

Other - Bus passes, movie passes, diapers (all sizes, particularly 4-6), baby wipes, twin size sheets, towels, latex-free gloves, kitchen utensils, pots & pans, dish soap, toilet paper, paper towels, shower shoes, AA/AAA/9-volt batteries, laundry detergent, painting supplies (roller covers, brushes tape).

Tools - All our tools have disappeared. We could use a hammer, screwdrivers, tape measure, wrench, pliers, etc.

Volunteers - Cooks for dinner.

CASA CERRILLOS

Please call (471-3456) for a complete list.

Household Items - Pots & pans, bedding, furniture, cleaning supplies, light bulbs.