



# Home at St. E's

Vol. 30 No. 02

Winter 2019

**S**anta Fe's ridiculously low vacancy rates and ridiculously high rental costs are making it more and more difficult for low-income people to live in the City Different. In response, St. Elizabeth case managers are placing an increasing number of our formerly homeless individuals into housing in Albuquerque and other more affordable places.

Billy Johnson is a case in point. The 61-year-old former welder and iron worker recently moved from the Men's Emergency Shelter to an apartment in Albuquerque at \$475 per month for his rent and utilities, making it affordable for the \$1,000 monthly payment he gets from Social Security Disability Insurance.

"All of our guests are very low income, and even when we help them get employment or benefits, no one can afford the \$1,000 monthly rents that are routine in Santa Fe," says Courtney Winter, case manager at the Men's Emergency Shelter. "Unless we can get them a voucher

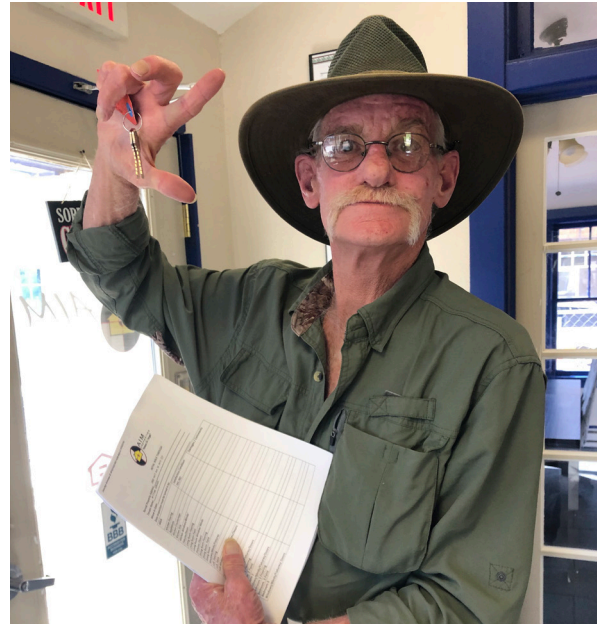
## Moving On Out

to pay market rate, it's a really long waiting list for subsidized housing or to find something affordable here in town. So now we're looking a little further afield to place people."

Johnson, born in Amarillo, lived and worked in Texas most of his life until his health failed. Non-Hodgkin's lymphoma and various skin cancers forced him to stop working while chemotherapy and treatment caused him to lose 70 pounds. Poor medical care and arguments with his relatives motivated his move to Santa Fe seven years ago.

Initially living in his car, he moved into an apartment after a few months and began getting the medical care he needed. But an argument with his landlord led to his eviction this past April and a move back into his car. But that only brought his sickness back and he was admitted to Christus St. Vincent. Discharged from the hospital to St. Elizabeth's Medical Respite Program in June, he recovered his health, built up his strength, saved his money and moved out in October.

"Courtney really helped me out," he says. "I was really sick, and she set up all my doctor's appointments. She monitored my medications and made sure I was eating properly. She also helped with finances and budgeting, showing me how to live on my limited income. But most of all, she found an apartment I could



**Billy Johnson with car keys and lease in hand leaves St. Elizabeth for his new apartment in Albuquerque.**

afford, and I'm really happy there.

"St. E's does a great job," Billy continues. "All the staff was good to me and helpful in every way they could be. I gained 20 pounds during my time there, and Courtney even brought me food to my new apartment after I left. And she still calls to check up on me and make sure I'm doing OK."

## Casa Familia Matching Grant

**The Abram & Ray Kaplan Foundation has made a \$50,000 challenge grant to Casa Familia and will match all donations made by year end to this amount. This will effectively double your gift and, if met, raise 25% of the program's annual operating budget.**

## Inside

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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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[www.steshelter.org](http://www.steshelter.org)

## Director's Corner

### "Homeless to Jefe"

#### A Personal Journey



**Edward Archuleta when board member at St. E's**

Several years ago I was sitting in the dining room at the Men's Emergency Shelter chatting with a few of the guests. One of the guys turned to me and said, "I bet you live in a big house and drive a fancy car." Before I could say anything, one of the other guests whom I had known for a few years said, "No, he lives in a tiny house and rides the bus. He's one of us." It was one of the nicest compliments I've ever received.

Little did they know I was more like them than they realized. Just a few years earlier I, too, had been homeless and it can happen to anyone. I've never shared my story before except for a few close friends and relatives, but now it's time.

Back in 2006 I had it all – my own business, a beautiful condo filled with artwork and antiques, two cars. I traveled whenever and wherever I wanted. I was living the American dream.

Then it all changed. One night as I went to sleep, I suddenly couldn't breathe and my heart began to race. I jumped out of bed and ran outside trying to catch my breath, pacing back and forth not knowing what was going on. After a few minutes, I realized I had to get to the hospital and drove myself to St. Vincent only a few blocks away. They rushed me into the ER, put me on oxygen and shot me up with Ativan to calm my racing heart. Then they ran tests – x-rays and an EKG – and everything looked okay. After spending the night, I was discharged with the diagnosis of a panic attack. It didn't make sense since I had never had one (though nowadays as director, I have them all the time.)

A few nights later, I was out with a friend at dinner and it happened again. Except this time it was worse – much worse. I couldn't breathe and I had sharp pains in my chest and arms. I thought I was having a heart attack. We drove to the hospital and again they put me on oxygen and ran tests. At one point as I lay under the bright lights the room

*continued on page 4*

# New Faces at St. E's

## Deborah Stump



Obtaining benefits for disabled individuals who cannot work is a major step on the road to their leaving homelessness, providing an income stream and the ability to pay for food, housing and other necessities of life. But it's an arduous process fraught with demanding details and numerous roadblocks along the way that can delay acceptance and payments for years, time that you'll most likely remain homeless.

Enter Deborah Stump, St. Elizabeth's new SOAR (SSI/SSDI Outreach, Access and Recovery) coordinator. Thanks to a grant from Christus St. Vincent's Community Benefit Fund, she began work part-time in October 2018 and became full-time this past July. Since starting, she's worked with 22 clients, obtaining benefits for six with the others still pending.

It's very demanding and detailed work, tracking down and assembling each client's medical record, preparing the application for submission to Social Security and then often attending follow-up hearings before a judge. If denied, she files an appeal on behalf of the client.

"It's a very long process but so worth it," she says. "I fast track the applications and instead of years my clients can start receiving their benefits in months. It gives them a new life."

## Annie Riddle



When most people think of homelessness, they usually envision men. But at St. Elizabeth, Casa Familia, our emergency shelter for women and families, houses more people annually than any other program.

This past July, Annie Riddle became its new program manager. She came to St. Elizabeth and Santa Fe in 2018 after graduating from Western Carolina University with a bachelor's degree in social work and began work as an intern at the Men's Emergency Shelter. Immediately proving her mettle, she soon became case manager at Casa Familia and now program manager.

"Moving from rural North Carolina where homelessness is not such an issue, I was incredibly surprised at seeing so many people living on the streets in Santa Fe," she says. "We've been at maximum capacity for families for the past six months. And we're seeing an increase in single women older than 55 who've become homeless for the first time."

"My work here is a lot more complex than before since we're dealing with a whole range of family dynamics. In particular, homeless children without a stable environment often have socialization problems. So one of the best things we can do is offer support and a sense of community while modeling appropriate behavior before moving them into housing."

## Courtney Winter



Courtney Winter is the new case manager at the Men's Emergency Shelter. Originally from Northern California, she moved to New Mexico in 2018, a refugee from the fires plaguing her former home.

In California, she worked as a case manager for adults with disabilities at a large non-profit and volunteered at a homeless shelter during the winters. In Santa Fe, she worked at Goodwill as a job developer and as part of her job got to know some St. Elizabeth staffers. When the case manager position became available in July, she was asked to apply.

"It's really great to work in a collaborative environment with my peers at other agencies," Courtney says, "and to see the enthusiasm of the interns here at St. E's and the kindness and generosity of all the residents of Santa Fe who support the shelter."

"I love getting to know all our guests. I'm a results-driven person so I'm really motivated to get people into housing. For me, it's such a blessing to be able to help individuals fulfill their potential and get them off the streets."

## Director's Corner: Homeless to Jefe

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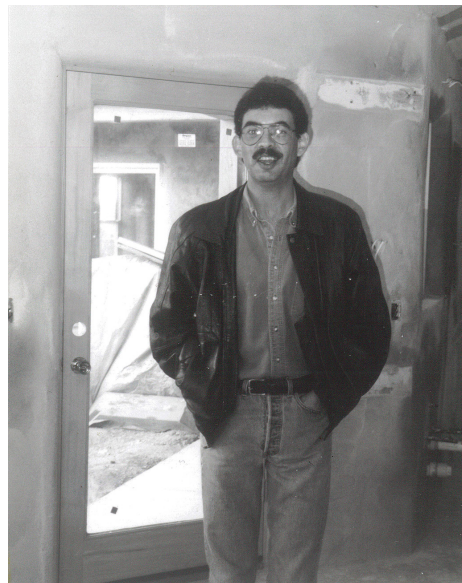
started to get dim and I could hear the nurse yelling for the doctor. My blood pressure and pulse rate were dropping fast. A nurse came to my side and said, "Mr. Archuleta, if your heart stops do you want to be resuscitated?" Then the doctors shot me up with something and my blood pressure and pulse stabilized. When I was discharged the next day, the doctors said they really didn't know what was wrong with me – maybe it was heartburn?

I started to become very weak and often disoriented. My mind was foggy – I couldn't remember conversations with people I had had a few days before and became very forgetful. Walking through a department store one evening, I had bout of vertigo and fell over on a display. Something was seriously wrong.

My third time in the ER, the doctors were even more perplexed and had no idea what was going on. So I decided to do a little detective work myself when I got home. I got on the internet, found a self-diagnosis site, entered all my symptoms and the computer spit out some possibilities – stroke, heart attack, cancer. But one other thing caught my eye – toxic mold poisoning.

That's because I was sitting in my home office and knew there was mold in the ceiling. Several years earlier my roof had started to leak and a parade of roofers and contractors began coming through my house. They would patch here and there but the leak kept coming back.

At the time I was working as a realtor and had taken a continuing-ed class about mold. This stuff could kill you. So the next day I called a mold specialist, and he came by the house to take air and core samples from the walls and ceiling saying he would put a rush on it. Two days later he called me at home. "Grab your keys and your cell phone and get out of there now. Call me back when you're outside." I hesitated. He yelled at me and said, "NOW!" So I



Edward when he first volunteered at St. Elizabeth

did what he said.

When I called back, he said, "Don't go back in there for any reason." The results had come back and they were off the chart. He explained that experts consider anything above 50 mold spores per cubic meter to be dangerous. I had 13,000! And out of the 13 or so deadly molds in the world, I had six of them. He told me I was lucky to be alive.

He suggested I call a doctor he knew who specialized in mold to get tested. I immediately called him from my front yard, and he told me to be there the next morning. Then I called my insurance agent, and he

put me in a motel for a few nights until I could find somewhere else to live.

The next day I saw the doctor, and he ran a number of mold allergy tests consisting mainly of about a dozen needle pricks in my arm with a minute dose of the various molds. My arm turned bright red indicating I was allergic to most of them. Then he did blood work and took my oxygen level. My lungs were only at about 60% capacity, so he immediately ordered medication and a nebulizer.

The next day he called with the results of the blood work and told me to get to his office immediately. As soon as I arrived the receptionist ushered me into his office. Seeing the look in his eyes, I knew things were bad. The first words out of his mouth were "Do you have a will? It doesn't look good. The mold is throughout your body, all your organs and in your bloodstream." I walked out of his office in a daze convinced I was going to die.

Even though he put me on strong steroids and other medications, my health continued to deteriorate. It took everything I had just to get out of bed. By now I was living in a rental house near downtown. I couldn't work and slowly went through my savings and retirement, maxing out my credit cards. Eventually the bank foreclosed on the condo. I went back in there one last time to hold a yard sale and gather a few things I needed. The only person I told was my younger sister who offered to let me stay with her and my nephew in Bernalillo. Many a night I kept them awake with my incessant coughing. And every time I coughed, I could feel the poison in my lungs.

After six months we got into a heated argument, and she told me

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## Director's Corner: Homeless to Jefe

...from page 4



Edward today speaking with clients at the Men's Emergency Shelter

to leave. I had nowhere to go. I guess I could have called other family members or friends but I was too embarrassed. So I got in my car and drove to Albuquerque to find a shelter. But even then I was too proud to go in. So that night I slept in my car in a vacant lot near Old Town. It was the middle of February and went below freezing. I remember waking up in the middle of the night with a sheet of ice covering the inside of the windshield.

The next day I realized I had to go to a shelter, so I drove over to one on Iron St. run by the Brothers of the Good Shepherd and stood in line with all the other guys. I wasn't sure what to expect but I was pleasantly surprised when I got in. The place was immaculate and well run. The brothers and staff were very kind and non-judgmental. Lying in bed that night staring at the ceiling I thought, "How ironic. After all the years volunteering at St. E's and working with the homeless, it's happened to me."

After my time ran out at Good

the place was clean and the people were friendly. After my time ran out there, I moved over to the Albuquerque Opportunity Center, a large warehouse on the edge of downtown. That was the first place I saw a case manager. He was surprised when I told him my story.

My days were spent, like many others experiencing homelessness, hanging out at the public library

Shepherd, I moved across the street to the Albuquerque Rescue Mission. The ARM (now called Steelbridge) was a Christian-based program with prayers before every meal and required Bible classes

at night. But

down to Tingley Beach and watch the ducks or take a walk along the bosque. By now I was finally starting to feel better and I began to apply for jobs. But nothing panned out. I was either too qualified or under qualified or nobody would call me back. After months I was beginning to wonder if I would ever work again. And I was beginning to lose hope.

After I had made my rounds of all the shelters in Albuquerque I camped out. I found a nice little grassy spot under some bushes at UNM near the duck pond. At night I could hear the waterfall nearby. It was very comforting. One night I was thinking of my predicament when a little voice in my head said, "Edward, you're supposed to be working with the homeless at St. E's. That's why you're going through this. But you won't truly know what they're going through until you've walked in their shoes."

It had been about a dozen years since I stopped volunteering and gotten off St. E's board. And while I would think occasionally of going back, I never did. It was too hard. Seeing and feeling the pain and suffering of what others were going through was too emotionally draining. But the voice wouldn't go away and was beginning to become a scream.

One day I finally gave in and drove to Santa Fe. I went to the Interfaith Shelter since there was

no way I was going to stay at St. E's because I knew too many people there. But even when I got to their door, I still couldn't go in afraid that someone might recognize me. In

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Please visit our website

[www.steshelter.org](http://www.steshelter.org)

to view the list of our

generous donors from

August 1, 2019 - October 31, 2019

and making the rounds of the soup kitchens. I was so broke I would walk around looking for cigarette butts in ashtray cans. (That's the reason today I buy cigarettes for the guys at the shelter. I know what it's like to be stressed and craving a smoke.) Sometimes I would drive

*continued on page 6*

# Thank You to Our Dedicated Chefs!

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**Are you or your group interested in joining our fabulous volunteer chefs? Please contact Jake Fulmer, (505) 982-6611, program manager at the men's emergency shelter or Annie Riddle, (505) 983-2042, program manager at Casa Familia our women & family shelter.**

## Director's Corner: Homeless to Jefe...from page 5

desperation, I called an old friend and told her what was going on. She was shocked and asked me to come by immediately. Feeling my embarrassment, she said I could stay until I got back on my feet.

After a few months, I could tell she was getting tired of me hanging around. One night she said it was about time I got off my butt and go over to St. E's the next morning. I didn't get much sleep that night. But the next day I walked into the shelter and asked for Maria Lopez, who ran the place. She gave me a big hug, took me into her office, and I'll never forget the look on her face when I told her my story. "You are the last person I ever thought would become homeless. You had everything going for you," she said. I asked if she had any job openings. There was only one position available – an internship. I laughed since I was a few weeks shy of my 50th

birthday and too old to be an intern. But the voice came back loud and clear. "Not only are you homeless, but you're going to start at the bottom too."

I gave up – the voice had won, and I told her yes. "Wonderful," she said, "can you start tomorrow?" Yikes, what had I done? I asked for some time to prepare myself and began two weeks later. It was strange and felt like I had never left. I remembered everything right off the bat. I was home.

A year ago I attended the NM Coalition to End Homelessness' annual conference at the Hotel Albuquerque in Old Town. During one of the breaks, I went searching for a little bathroom that was tucked away in the bowels of the building – a room I knew very well. When I was liv-

ing on the streets, I would sneak in there all the time to wash my hair or take a sponge bath, and no one ever bothered or questioned me. As I walked in, all those memories came flooding back. I thought to myself, "Isn't life strange? A few years ago I was living on the streets and now I'm the director of St. Elizabeth's." Yes, my friends, life is strange indeed.



Executive Director

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**Thank you to the fabulous Donors and Attendees**  
without whom we could not have raised additional income for the Hungry Mouth Festival!

Thank you to all the wonderful Staff, Case Managers, Supportive Staff and Volunteers for all their hard work and dedication to St. Elizabeth Shelters & Supportive Housing.

If you missed this year's Hungry Mouth Festival there is still time to donate! [www.steshelter.org](http://www.steshelter.org) (505) 982-6611





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## Winter Wish List

### **MEN'S EMERGENCY SHELTER**

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

**Clothing** – Hats, gloves, boots, shoes, socks, men's jackets, sweaters, hooded sweatshirts, long underwear, winter outerware.

**Personal hygiene** – Disposable razors, shampoo, deodorant, chapstick.

**Other** – Sleeping bags, sleeping pads or mats, blankets.

**Food** – Milk, juice, fresh fruits, bottled water, cheese, ground beef, chicken, pork, ham, turkey, roasts.

**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** – Handyman/woman for repairs, front-desk receptionists for 4- to 8-hour blocks of time once a week, cooks for dinners any night.

### **CASA FAMILIA**

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

**Clothing** – Women's underwear, socks, warm jackets, shoes, weather-appropriate boots; girl's/boy's clothing, school uniforms.

**Personal Hygiene** – Shampoo, conditioner, feminine hygiene products, disposable razors (female), toothbrushes, toothpaste, band aids, hair brushes, foot powder, body soap, nail clippers, nail files, deodorant (women's) alka-seltzer cold®, pepto-bismol®, over-the-counter medication (ibuprofen), baby wipes, baby powder.

**Food** – Non-perishable food, water, juice, spices.

**Other** – Blankets, bed sheets (twin), diapers (all sizes, particularly 2-5), cleaning supplies, dish soap, toilet paper, paper towels, laundry detergent, latex-free gloves, kitchen utensils, kitchen pots & pans, water bottles, shower shoes, AA/9-volt batteries, backpacks (adult & children), bus passes (Santa Fe Trails one-day, round trip or monthly), passes for community activities (eg. Chavez Center or Children's Museum), standard tools for home repair.

**Volunteers** – Front-desk receptionists from 4- to 8-hour blocks of time once a week, cooks for dinner any night.

### **CASA CERRILLOS**

Please call (471-3456) to discuss their current needs before bringing them to the facility at 381½ Cerrillos Road.

**Household Items** – Kitchen appliances, cleaning supplies, pet food.

**Larger Items** – Flatscreen tvs, computers & laptops, fencing materials.