



## Taos Community Foundation: Growing to Meet Taos' Needs

By Andy Dennison

It's been a very busy year at Taos Community Foundation with significant growth in donations, funds, partners, staff, volunteers and board membership.

As one of 750 nationally accredited Community Foundations, the Taos organization primarily serves Taos County and western Colfax County. As such, the Foundation fills the roles of public charity, philanthropic advisor and grant-maker so that charitable dollars get to where they make the most impact.

Highlighting the past year has been the biggest single donation in the Foundation's history — a \$1 million contribution to Foundation's endowment fund. In addition, some 70 first-time donors have come on board during the last nine months, many of them representing a "new generation of philanthropy."

"We've seen an increase in all our money baskets," said Executive Director Lisa O'Brien during an interview in the conference room of the Foundation's downtown office. "This, in addition to a delay in hiring a full-time position, we are heading into our upcoming year in a strong financial position."

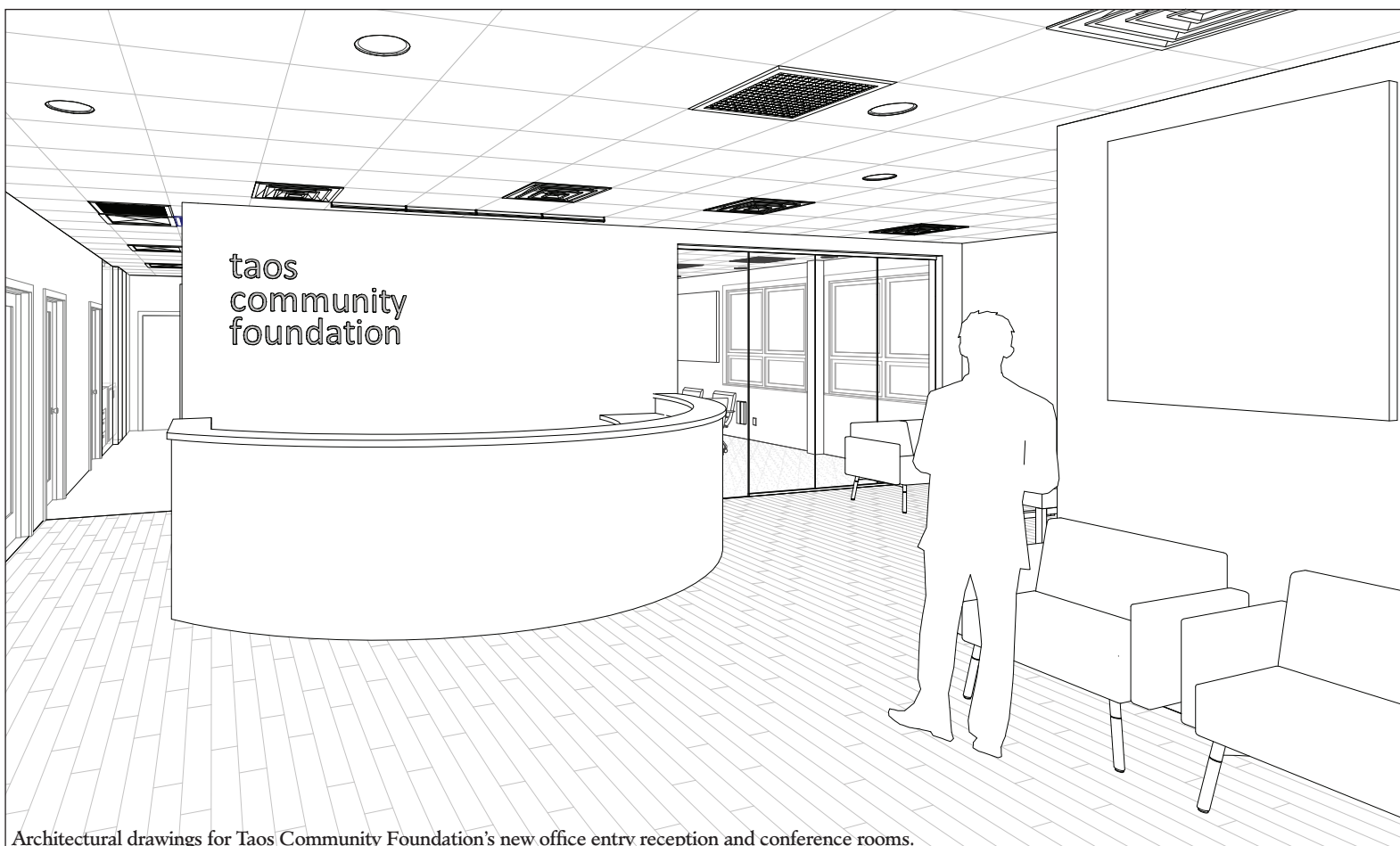
The Foundation has added six new charitable funds — including the First Generation College Student Scholarship that targets first-generation college-bound students and the Youth Heartline Agency Fund. The organization has expanded its board of directors by four, and brought on Helen Forte as the Director of Community Outreach — an updated position that filled the previous Grant Director position that O'Brien held prior to becoming the Foundation's director in September 2016.

Such a broad surge in activity means Taos' largest "platform for giving" needs more room to operate. To that end, the Foundation is moving into a new office space in the Guadalupe Credit Union building on La Posta Road, and renovations are underway.

"We are busting at the seams," said O'Brien. "We're increasing staff and our volunteer base has grown. We have to juggle people around to have space for meetings, so it's time for a larger office."

Larger means 2,600 square feet, or about twice the existing space, in an adobe home in the Des Georges Plaza.

"Last fall, we analyzed our staffing patterns and saw what a larger space would do to increase our efficiency," said O'Brien. "A new office will help push the momentum of the past year forward. Part of the community enthusiasm brought local architect Alix Henry to the table with a generous in-kind gift of design work.



Architectural drawings for Taos Community Foundation's new office entry reception and conference rooms.

"Alix has been a wonderful facilitator to this process," O'Brien continued. "She's pushed all of us to answer the deep questions of what we want our new office to 'be' for our community."

Energy for that momentum has come from many sources, including renewed conversations with charitable organizations in the area. One such connection has been with the newly formed Taos Ski Valley Foundation, which has evolved out of the new ownership of hedge fund manager Louis Bacon at the resort.

In addition to setting up a charitable fund with the Foundation, TSV, Inc. has set up an employee match program as well as a charity

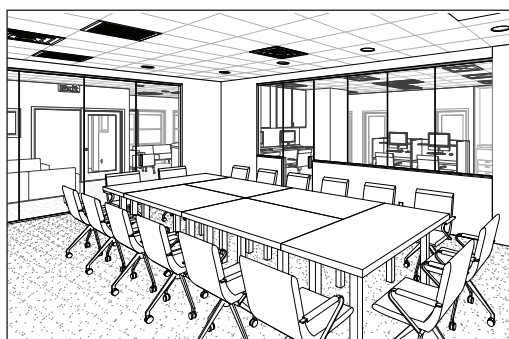


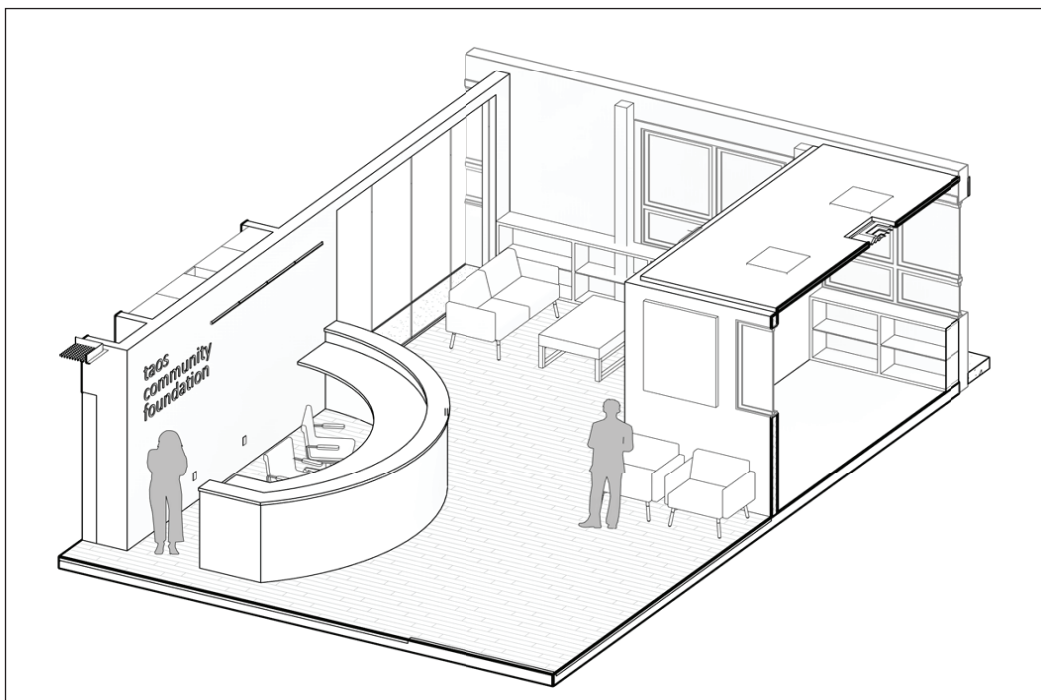
table giving initiative through the new Blake Hotel.

"This partnership has been wonderful and we continue to explore how to deepen our work together," said O'Brien. "We have many shared values when we talk about community impact and leadership — it's a very exciting time."

Other community conversations with the Foundation include the LOR Foundation, University of New Mexico-Taos and Nusenda Credit Union.

Internally, the Foundation has unveiled a new logo, a soon-to-be updated website, a burgeoning social media campaign and streamlined record-keeping.

"All of this activity is donor-driven," she said. "We've formed new



relationships and nurtured existing ones. We had to prepare to handle the increase in volume."

For the past 19 years, the Foundation has been the hub for charitable donations in Northern New Mexico. Founded in 1998, Taos Community Foundation has grown to \$10 million in assets under management, and annually granting upwards of \$1 million in community support.

Gifts come through donations of cash, financial assets, stocks and securities, bequests from estates, life insurance policies, retirement accounts, donations of property and more. These assets are pooled into "charitable funds" that are invested to produce annual income.

For the future, the staff, volunteers and board members will focus on "strengthening the donor experience" and settling into an accelerated pace of activity for the coming years.

"What we do requires trust," said O'Brien. "We take our relationships

with donors, grantees and the community seriously and we are committed to paying attention to the details. We have the financial expertise and experience, and it's what we do best. We are honored to be a strong partner in the community as we move forward in our next growth step."

As Taos Community Foundation's new ad campaign says, "The pieces are coming together ... stay tuned."



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