



# Success Stories 2017

## Expansion Has Come In Many Forms To Taos Community Foundation

By Andy Dennison

Most visible is a new office on La Posta Road — with twice as much room as the previous space. And, the TCF's agency endowment list has grown with the addition of four new funds to its portfolio.

But equally as important has been the expansion of the mission of TCF, as it moves into its third decade of grant-giving and fund management.

“Our new building seems to have launched us off into community work,” said Executive Director Lisa O’Brien. “It’s quickly become a community philanthropic hub where we are now talking with nonprofits about what we can do for them and what they want from Taos Community Foundation.

It’s true that we readily recognize the importance of what we do at our work, and who we do it with. But less often do we see how the place where we work affects our productivity, well-being and growth.”

“We now have walk-in traffic,” added O’Brien, “something we haven’t had before. This place is now working at a faster pace, with higher activity levels and a higher volume of traffic.”

Staff has kept a list of reactions from people who come in the new office; words like “communal,” “welcoming,” “modern” and “upbeat” typify their responses to the brightly colored, spacious layout in the former Fidelity National Title office.

“We want people to feel like they can come right in and find out what we are all about,” O’Brien said. “We’ve actually had people walk in and ask about how they can make contributions directly to nonprofit organizations or set up legacy gifts.”

O’Brien readily acknowledges that, since 1998, the Foundation has done a great job of making grants for organizations in the community and of managing the endowments and legacy donations that make that possible. Some \$800,000 in grants and donations goes out into Taos annually.

Now, as its 20th anniversary celebration approaches, it’s time to reach further out into the community to make a greater impact.

“We want to create educational opportunities for legacy donors, offer new services and support with budgeting and fundraising for the nonprofits in town, and become a more visible partner in the community,” she said.

“Our moving into this space was with strong support from building owners, Fred Winter and Marcia Winter,” she said. “They both saw the significance of having the Foundation office in a visible location, both for the organization as well as the community. We are



honored to have them as champions for our growth plans.”

Already, the large and open conference space at the new office has hosted group conversations with community groups and individuals. One centered on how organizations could establish endowment funds to build financial stability well into the future. Another convened nonprofit directors to share goals and challenges as an informal discussion.

“These types of meetings have opened up some new points of conversation between organizations,” said O’Brien, who emphasized that this type of impact is one the Foundation has not highlighted strongly in the past.

“We know that this type of



activity directly strengthens the inner workings of an organization and we are now ready to start rolling more services out.”

And, in the near future, the Foundation hopes to make its conference space available to nonprofits when they need a larger space for a meeting, workshop or brainstorming session.

“The Foundation wants to be a resource for anyone in the community,” O’Brien said. “We have a strong team that is skilled in the management and investment of funds — it’s what we do well. Now we want to bring that expertise right into the community where it is most needed.”

Across the country, O’Brien sees changes in the philanthropic business. The “tight edges” between a Foundation and its grantees are loosening, she said, and the former rigidity of the enterprise has softened.

“At conferences, there’s more talk about being nimble, taking more risks,” she said. “In our office meetings now, we talk about what it means to be ‘bold,’ how we can expand our impact into a wider community.”

This widening of focus at the Foundation has expanded staff as well. Helen Forte has joined the staff as the Foundation’s first director of community outreach. She will bring her expertise to help steer the Foundation deeper and further into the community

of Taos and Northern New Mexico.

Doubling the space they have to work in not only gives staff and volunteers more physical elbow room, it also has allows them to stretch their intellectual wings — and expand what Taos Community Foundation can do.

“It’s amazing how the new building has changed us,” said O’Brien. “It has helped us find our stride, and now that we are settled in, it is time to get on with our work and really take the Foundation forward into the future.”



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