



Where Giving Impacts



November 2019 -

Taos Community Foundation has served the northern region of New Mexico as a leader in philanthropic services for over 20 years. The work of the community foundation is twofold: to create relationships with donors to maximize their charitable giving goals, and to link those charitable efforts to strengthen the mission of local nonprofit programs. The result is to address the wide array of community needs in the most meaningful way.

The foundation has had another banner year reflecting financial outcomes and granting dollars awarded in their service area of Taos and western Colfax Counties. Over \$1.22 million was awarded in grants to nonprofit organizations and scholarships to local students for post high school educational support.

The work of Taos Community Foundation is complex. It encompasses donor goals, financial and investment services, nonprofit coaching and direct support for community projects. “There are so many aspects to our work,” stated Lisa O’Brien, foundation director. “I find a great deal of my conversations with people are spent clarifying what we do and don’t do. Folks still think we fundraise for granting dollars and take fees off gifts received. That is not our business model at all,” O’Brien remarked.

At a recent convening of community members, a donor, a teacher grant recipient, a community partner and the director of a nonprofit program that has a charitable fund with the foundation each shared the different ways in which Taos Community Foundation impacts their work in community.

Florence Miera, a social worker with Taos Municipal Schools, shared: “Our first grant from the foundation was to give homeless students an incentive to show up on Fridays, a high absentee day. TCF found donors to fill in the money we needed for food, coffee and a support group.”

This grant represents a small but powerful granting initiative that the foundation has hosted for over 10 years – teacher grants that support direct work in classrooms. This past week, the foundation awarded

over \$16,000 in grants of this nature to 40 teachers in the Taos Municipal School district. “Education is one of our strong granting pathways,” noted O’Brien. “We’ve seen incredible classroom projects stem” from this annual grant application.

Miera had also been an invited speaker to a Women Give Taos advisory meeting to talk about her work in the district providing support to homeless students. “The Women Give Taos Fund got us sleeping bags, pillows and more. When I show up with those items, you should see how their faces light up. Their jaws fall open and there are tears. Taos Community Foundation is what these students need.”

Community projects come in many forms and the renovation of Gusdorf Park this summer was one that the foundation took lead on, following the wishes of an anonymous donor who gifted startup funds. Michael Cabral, executive director of the Northern Regional Housing Authority, was a key partner in the project. “The Housing Authority had some funds for the park but it was TCF that filled in the gaps by finding other partners to leverage money, time, tools and other resources. It worked – the kids are back. And these kinds of projects tend to be like spores – they grow more and more ideas.

“The reach the foundation has is extraordinary,” he added. “The foundation is truly the greatest connector of the dots.”

Executive director of Stray Hearts Animal Shelter, Cynthis Lucas remarked, “Taos Community Foundation gives us validity. When a donor sees that we have a relationship with the foundation, it produces a certain level of confidence. Two years ago, the foundation facilitated an anonymous gift to open a charitable fund that benefits Stray Hearts exclusively.”

“One donor conversation has led to numerous others,” reported O’Brien. “The initial gift of \$10,000 has blossomed to a fund that is now over \$50,000, with very little effort. Donors appreciate having options for their charitable gifts and the foundation

is a great partner in identifying those options.”

Lucas said: “For Stray Hearts, TCF has given us their backing and much more. I see them as a sounding board. I can call and ask for a brainstorming session on how to increase our revenue stream or where to get supplies. Or our board can attend training at TCF, and they always say to stay pragmatic, to stay within the bounds of the organization, to be diligent about following the rules.”

Laurie Dunn has many relationship points with the foundation and despite her recent move to a board emeritus position after serving nine years as a board member, she remains active as a donor and in several advisory roles. “The success of Taos Community Foundation is because it has a finger on the pulse of the community, and is aware of not only the array of issues in Taos, but also the resources that can address them.” Working with TCF provides a safeguard for a donor.

“I know how powerful a community foundation can be,” Dunn added.

Dunn has been involved in Taos School Zone, one of several special projects of the foundation. Taos School Zone aims to make a greater impact on public education with a collaborative or “collective impact” approach. After several years of exploration and inquiry, she noted, “We were able to propose a ‘community school’ concept for Enos Garcia Elementary School, and raised money to hire a coordinator. TCF was able to leverage its own grant money as seed money for the project.” Thus, bringing greater strength to the project.

“To me,” said Dunn, “the foundation is very issue-focused. It sees the entire picture of the town. I like that they have been such a strong incubator for new nonprofits in Taos County – providing infrastructure and administrative support as needed.”

Dunn summed it up for the entire group. “Taos Community Foundation offers a template and support for nonprofits to get going. It is such a nurturing organization. I call it the ‘Good Housekeeping Seal of Approval.’”



FEATURED SUCCESS STORIES

Rivera Family Funerals & Cremations
818 Paseo del Pueblo Sur, Taos
575-757-758-3841
riverafuneralhome.com

Chevron Mining Inc.
Questa Mine, HWY 38 Questa
575-586-7616

Community Against Violence
945 Salazar Rd.
Taos, NM 87571
575-758-8082
taoscav.org/

Creative Framing Taos
1027 Salazar Rd. Ste. G, Taos,
NM 87571
575-751-9661
creativeframingtaos.weebly.com/

Dr. Kellie Harris
1337 Gusdorf Rd, Taos
575-751-9661
kellieharrisdds.com

Mattress Mary's Mountain Lifestyle
815 Paseo del Pueblo Sur
Taos, NM 87571
mattressmary.com

Taos Pueblo Tourism
120 Veterans Highway
575-758-1028

Phoenix Mechanical
1217 Gusdorf Rd, Taos
575-758-3027
phoenixmechanical.net

PPC Solar
245 Paseo del Canon East
575-737-5896

Taos Community Foundation
115 La Posta Rd Ste A, Taos
575-737-9300
taoscf.org

Taos County Chamber of Commerce
1139 Paseo Del Pueblo Sur, Taos
575-751-8800
taoschamber.com

Taos Municipal Schools
310 Camino De La Placita Taos
575-758-5202
taoschools.org

**Twirl
A Play and Discovery Place**
225 Camino de la Placita
Taos, NM 87571
twirltaos.org

Wolfgang's Spa Works
1210J Salazar Rd., Taos
575-758-1857
wolfgangspas.com



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