



Taos Community Foundation Focuses on Impact



Some members of the Gusdorf Park “clean-up” team – Taos Community Foundation, Women Give Advisory Circle, Sunrise Builders, Los Jardineros Garden Club, and Northern Regional Housing Authority.

BY ANDY DENNISON

For Taos Community Foundation, the work these days is to find ways to increase the impact of its community work beyond their granting dollar amounts. For the past 21 years, the Foundation has been the hub for charitable donations in Northern New Mexico. Founded in 1998, Taos Community Foundation has grown to \$12 million in assets under management and now, two years in a row has awarded over \$1 million in grants and scholarships.

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 gifts then establish charitable funds, that when invested, creates income for grant-making in the community. This investment return is directed by individual donors, or as recommended from Foundation committees, comprised of community volunteers.

The Foundation currently holds more than 140 separate funds, which accounts for the complexity of grant-making.

“Many people think we fund-raise, take fees off the gifts and then turn around and push out grants. This couldn’t be further from the truth,” said Foundation director Lisa O’Brien during a recent interview. “Granting dollars are the result of investment revenue, not ‘fundraising’ dollars. We’ve come to a point where we are making strategic decisions to deepen our impact in community beyond just grant-making. We started asking

ourselves how we could make the most of our credibility and capitalize on the strong relationships we’ve built. We believe one of our strengths is being able to say, ‘the time is right,’ on particular community projects, and inviting folks to the table to get something off the ground is one of our roles.”

Two decades of responsible grant-making, financial management and credibility in the community gave the Foundation opportunities to bring other funders into the mix. The phrase “strength through connection” became a touchstone for the Foundation’s next move.

“Some community projects come directly from community members,” shared O’Brien. One such phone call from a Foundation donor a couple of years ago, sparked a conversation about the lack of playground equipment in the park at the S-curve on Gusdorf Road. “I was asked how much playground equipment would cost,” stated O’Brien. “I had no idea at the time but knew it was a research task worth the effort.”

Going back to the “time is right” notion, the donor who elected to remain anonymous fronted the initial \$20,000 for the park.

“As a funder it is important to have the right partners at the table, and even then, a project might take a long time,” reported O’Brien, who is proud of the collaborative partnership between nonprofits, the Northern Regional Housing Authority and business leaders. “Gusdorf Park is one of those projects – but this spring, the time was right,” she said.

“Our core team has been meeting biweekly since February and the project has grown exponentially as a result,” continued O’Brien. “The original gift of \$20,000 has leveraged an additional \$50,000, with very little effort.” As a result, both park gazebos have been refurbished, landscaping has been updated and sidewalks have been replaced. The Foundation and partners will host a formal ribbon-cutting ceremony at the site on July 12 to celebrate the new play space.

“This project has sparked discussion about refurbishing other parks,” said O’Brien, which the Foundation is prepared to facilitate. “The core group has already started the conversation of what phase two looks like. People know the benefits of having safe places for kids to play in their neighborhood and want to be part of the effort.”

Taos Community Foundation has also supported Taos School Zone as a special project since 2015. A collective impact project established to coordinate the efforts of nonprofits, parents and teachers to produce measurable outcomes for students, Taos School Zone has made impressive strides. In recent months, the project has received more than \$100,000 from various sources to jump-start the first year of a Community School model at Enos Garcia Elementary school.

“We extended a small impact grant as a means of introducing other potential funders to the project goals,” stated O’Brien. “Again, we had an example of how small, well-placed funding can inspire other gifts. Nowadays, we are looking for projects that ‘have legs’ – projects that are ripe for moving

forward,” said O’Brien, adding that Taos Community Foundation seeks out community partners to widen the ripple effect of grant-making.

As an anchor organization, the Foundation continues to support existing programs, while looking for new, innovative or “ripe” projects to support.

“It’s an exciting time for us at the Foundation,” O’Brien said. “We are making intentional decisions moving forward as we explore ways to deepen our community impact. It is an exciting moment in time as we step into a new leadership role. We look forward to our next adventure.”



TAOS COMMUNITY FOUNDATION
115 LaPosta Road, Suite A
(575) 737-9300 | www.taoscf.org

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
575-758-3317
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
taosschools.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

taos community foundation

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