SUCCESS STORIES

Taos Community Foundation Focuses on Impact

BY ANDY DENNISON

For Taos Community Foundation, the key shock was how to find ways to increase the impact of its community work beyond its current granting dollars amount. For the past 11 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 the Foundation currently holds $12 million in assets under management comprised of community volunteers.

We believe one of our strengths is our community work beyond their own funders into the mix. The phrase “strength through connection” became a touchstone for the Foundation’s next moves.


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.

“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,” stated O’Brien. “Then we had an example of how small, well-placed funding can inspire other gifts. Nowadays, we are looking for projects that ‘have legs’ and can inspire other funders to the project goals,” stated O’Brien.

“Making strategic decisions to deepen our community partners to widen the ripple effect of grant-making,” 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 “ego” 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.”

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