



SUCCESS STORIES



Taos Community Foundation Always Finding a Way

By Dena Miller

There is more to a successful community foundation than grantmaking. A community foundation makes an impact through the grants it gives, but it truly soars when the bedrock upon which it is built is one of sustainable and collaborative community relationships.

With almost three decades of community involvement under its belt, Taos Community Foundation has demonstrated impressive fiscal acumen — allowing it to grant millions towards the most pressing needs of the region — but, according to Interim Director Catherine Horsey, the foundation's greatest success stems from its sweeping overview of the community and the ability to “gather and support the people who are the ones who make things happen.”

Helen Forte, Director of Community Impact, agreed. “We have strong community ties and continue to deepen relationships with our grantees. We are facilitating sustainable partnerships with them and with other foundations, and we promote a broader perspective based upon our community and systemic knowledge, with the goal of providing guidance and counsel,” she said.

“We are not here to tell grantees what to do or how to do it,” Horsey noted. This approach is based upon the tenets of trust-based philanthropy, which never dictates, but rather,



creates an environment of fluidity in recognizing that needs change, as does the manner in which they may be addressed.

“We listen. We are in the unique position where we can assess issues and place them in a broader and often more helpful context based upon our reach across the community and ability to bring movers and shakers together to achieve positive outcomes,” Forte noted.

The community at large has benefited enormously from collaborations facilitated by TCF, though they may not be aware of the role the foundation has played.

One of the most consequential alliances in recent years was the establishment of the Enchanted Circle Community Organizations Active in Disaster (EC-COAD), which

reacted to the COVID-19 pandemic with resources for preparedness, response and recovery, and which will continue to protect the rural population in the event of another public health emergency.

David Elliot, who was named the Taos News 2021 Citizen of the Year for his years of volunteerism, civic service and his role in establishing EC-COAD, praised the group, saying, “Taos Community Foundation will always find a way” to host action-oriented conversations and move forward efforts benefitting all residents, especially those in acute need.

Through its relationship with Taos County, TCF was thrilled to be able to facilitate the distribution and provide oversight for over \$600,000 in federal American Rescue Plan Act funding to nine local organizations working in the fields of emergency housing, basic needs, sustainable agriculture, legal services, youth programming and community development.

“Our position in the community ensured a rapid and flexible response,” Horsey said.

“We’re also proud of our role in supporting and seeding Navigating Emergency Support Together (NEST), she continued. Taos NEST is a DreamTree Project-led initiative with the goal to assist community members in accessing emergency shelter and support services. Taos NEST is a collaboration with CAV, HEART of Taos, Taos Men’s Shelter,

Youth Heartline, St. James Episcopal Church and other service providers to support adults and families experiencing housing insecurity and/or homelessness.

Catherine Hummel, Executive Director of DreamTree Project, shared “The funds from TCF are invaluable, because TCF is able to quickly fund projects like NEST that could otherwise stall while awaiting support.”

Taos Education Collaborative, a fiscally sponsored project fund held at Taos Community Foundation, catalyzes resources and opportunities for local children through creative partnerships with over 10 local organizations. The significant impact these organizations make in our community is amplified through these partnerships.

Each of these profoundly impactful partnerships demonstrate the role that a strong community foundation can play, not just in providing grant funding, but in gathering and supporting those with their own visions for the future of Taos and its people, culture and history. The Taos Community Foundation will always continue its work to build solidarity and sustain generosity in the Taos community.



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