

## **New Mexico Community Foundation: The HELP Years and Rebranding into the New Mexico Foundation**

### **A Personal Account**

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At the invitation of David Henkel, former Chair of the New Mexico Foundation (NMF), I served as a member of NMF's Program and Grants Committee (P&G) soon after I retired from UNM in 2016. Professor Henkel and I had been faculty colleagues in prior years. In addition to participating in the monthly conference calls of the P&G, I occasionally observed business meetings of the Board of Directors at the foundation's headquarters in Santa Fe. By attending these sessions, I was impressed with the consistency of mission, program areas, and core values of the foundation, an enduring legacy of philanthropy focused on the people and needs of rural New Mexico. Since I had played a role in the formative years of the New Mexico Community Foundation, now NMF, I was inspired to look more closely at the resilience of the foundation and how it managed to retain much of its original scope and purposes. My interest was dual. From 1976 to 1980, I served as Executive Director of Home Education Livelihood Program (HELP, Inc.) when the first iteration of a statewide community foundation for New Mexico was attempted, and from 1982 to 2016, I taught rural development courses at the Community and Regional Planning Program, School of Architecture and Planning, University of New Mexico.

A short time after I was appointed to the P&G Committee, I began to consult literature about the history of the foundation: background papers available at the NMF office, the Articles of Incorporation, annual reports, newsletters, magazine articles, and other useful sources. In my perusal of these documents, I noticed that most of the written record started with the incorporation of the New Mexico Community Foundation on May 3, 1983. Omitted were the early HELP years, 1979-1982, when the foundation was a corporate division within HELP, a few years prior to the filing of Articles with the New Mexico State Corporation Commission. One internal paper at the NMF office, "A Brief History of the New Mexico Community Foundation," described the stages of evolution just after 1983 and concluded with 2011, the year when the paper was written. There was no mention of the pre-1983 history, but the paper acknowledged that the first NMCF office was housed at HELP's headquarters in Albuquerque. Also noted was the close connection to HELP's contacts, "particularly in rural communities where HELP primarily focused its efforts." Moreover, early activities and grants were conducted through "partnership with the Home Education

Livelihood Program,” an entry in another office document titled “NMCF History Timeline, 1983-2011.” The Brief History paper and the History Timeline, however, did not detail how or when NMCF originated prior to the filing of Articles of Incorporation in 1983. To supplement these documents of record, I reached out to and compared notes with a few individuals who had been part of the early years, both at HELP and as founding Board members of NMCF. They each provided valuable information that filled in certain gaps in the timeline.

In this report, I outline precursor events when the Home Education Livelihood Program took steps to organize the first statewide community foundation in New Mexico during the late 1970s. The highlights, analysis and views expressed here are entirely mine and not an official report of the New Mexico Foundation. Any errors and omissions are my own. I welcome corrections and apologize for any omissions of important historical events. Much more can be said by others who have years and decades of knowledge about and direct experience in the work of the foundation, especially since incorporation in 1983. My own personal knowledge came from the early HELP years when I was HELP’s Executive Director, 1976-1980. I cover this period in detail and offer that information as my testimony regarding the circumstances that led to the founding of the New Mexico Community Foundation, now rebranded as the New Mexico Foundation.

For research purposes, I formulated key questions to guide my review of sources: when and how did the rural focus of the NMCF commence; who were the founders at the time of the 1983 incorporation; did the affiliation with HELP, Inc. from 1979-1982, continue to influence the work of the foundation after the incorporation? In the narrative that follows, I address these questions based on a fresh look at documents and a review of personal communications I undertook with some of the key participants. I include highlights of grant-making from 1983-2023 as a transition to the present. The 1983-2023 section of the narrative, however, is not intended as a complete report. For a sampling of the foundation’s remarkable history and record of accomplishments, I recommend the NMCF Annual Report for 2007 as well as the 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Report featured in the December 2013 issue of the *Green Fire Times*. More recently, the NMF celebrated its 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary and issued a booklet that details grants awarded during the Covid-19 pandemic, 2020-2023. The booklet also includes a summary of the early HELP years that led to the incorporation of the New Mexico Community Foundation in 1983. These and other sources are cited at the end of this report and some are available online.

My own perspective emphasizes the rural and statewide focus of the foundation from inception to 2023. I also include the many ways that the HELP non-profit organization influenced the New Mexico Community Foundation before and during the incorporation stage in 1983. Importantly, the transition from a corporate division of HELP to an independent foundation involved key individuals affiliated with the HELP era. Bruce Rolstad, a former HELP employee, volunteered to serve as the first Executive Director of NMCF/HELP in 1979 when he and the HELP Director, José Rivera, began to invite key individuals to serve on an interim Board of Trustees. Margaret (Peggy) Driscoll was an early Trustee and prior to that she had been a member of the HELP Board of Directors representing Church Women

United. José Rivera was HELP's Executive Director from 1976-1980 and later served as one of the founding NMCF Board members at the time of incorporation in 1983. Ernest (Gene) Ortega was HELP's next Executive Director, and he was also a founding Board member of NMCF, Inc. Although not previously affiliated with HELP, Susan Herter was recruited by Margaret Driscoll and Bruce Rolstad to join the NMCF/HELP Board of Trustees and became the first President of the Board.

As a concluding statement, I am grateful for the opportunity to have served the New Mexico Foundation in my capacity as a member of the Program & Grants Committee. Long-enduring organizations are said to be those that hold true to their founding principles and can respond and adapt to changing environments better than organizations that stray from their initial purposes. This characteristic fits the evolution and development history of the New Mexico Foundation. From the precursor HELP "doing business as" the New Mexico Community Foundation, to NMCF Incorporated, and later the NMF, the legacy of the foundation is a story of resilience: early struggles, persistence, adaptation, and continuity.

## The HELP Years, 1976-1982



**1976, Early Steps and Influence:** In 1976 Sandy Kravitz, consultant hired by the Ford Foundation, conducted a site evaluation of the Home Education Livelihood Program, a rural development organization headquartered in Albuquerque, known today as HELP New Mexico, Inc. He met with HELP's Executive Director, José Rivera, and as part of the itinerary, they traveled to HELP projects in north-central New Mexico. HELP had been founded in 1965 as an agency sponsored by the New Mexico Council of Churches and was among the first sixteen Community Development Corporations funded by the Ford Foundation and the U.S. Office of Economic Opportunity during the federal War on Poverty. Its broad purpose was to serve the underemployed seasonal agricultural workers in New Mexico. The HELP strategy was to organize local Steering Committees and Area Councils on a statewide basis, and together develop programs aimed at improving the quality of life in rural New Mexico. The *Home* was seen as the focal point of opportunity where all members of the family could participate in their advancement. *Education* was seen as the bridge between economic and cultural needs of the home resulting in a better economic *Livelihood*. The final step was to group the elements of home-education-livelihood into a *Program* where all members of the family benefit from their participation whether in adult education classes, home economics and manual skills instruction, day care services, or remedial instruction in the rural schools attended by the older children (HELP Report in *ERIC*, December 1965).

Initial HELP participants in 1965 included (a) ex-migrant farmworkers who had settled out of the migrant stream but whose income was limited to local and seasonal employment at poverty wages; (b) in-migrants who moved from crop harvests in Texas to other farmwork available in Doña Ana County of New Mexico during the second onion crop in August; (c) within state migration of Navajo and Apache families from northwestern New Mexico in search of employment in the broomcorn fields of Portales, San Jon, Logan and Clayton at harvest time; as well as (d) subsistence farmers of northcentral New Mexico who cultivated their own lands during the growing season but who eked out an existence on small plots of land supplemented by low wages working part-time in larger farms of the region (HELP Report, 1965 *op. cit.*).

By 1967 there were fifty HELP Steering Committees giving agricultural workers a strong voice in the design and administration of the programs aimed at their benefit. The Steering Committees were elected at community meetings, and once organized they identified the needs of migrant, seasonal, and other agricultural workers in the area. The HELP office provided stipends to individuals enrolled in pre-vocational education and skills training such as welding, plastering, woodworking, furniture making, auto mechanics and other trades. Vista volunteers taught math and English literacy classes as well as training in citizenship, homemaking, sewing, and dress making. [See HELP Booklet, c. 1967, featuring activities in communities statewide: Portales, East Grand Plains, Hagerman, Hatch, Hondo, Ft. Sumner, Truchas, Gallina-Coyote, Antón Chico, Peñasco, Santo Domingo, Torreón, Córdova, Mora, and Cleveland.]

The HELP Board of Trustees hired the State Program Director, established statewide policies and procedures, reviewed the progress of the programs underway and authorized new initiatives recommended by the Director. Board members in 1967 included a wide range of New Mexicans such as a clergyman, banker, homemaker, university administrator, church lay leaders, six farmworkers, and a representative from Sandia Corporation in Albuquerque. In addition to a State Office in Albuquerque, the administrative structure included Area Offices in each quadrant of New Mexico: Northwest (Española), Northeast (Las Vegas), Southwest (Las Cruces), Southeast (Roswell) and a project office in the Navajo Checkerboard Area (Torreón Chapter House). The specific goal was to upgrade social and economic conditions among migrant and seasonal farm workers employed in commercial agriculture mostly in southern New Mexico, subsistence landowner farmers of northern New Mexico, and other low-income rural populations such as the elderly and families with children.

By the time of the Kravitz visit in the middle 1970s, HELP initiatives included a wide range of programs: adult education classes, child development and day care centers, senior opportunities and services, rural health clinics, credit unions, agricultural co-ops, job and work experience training, small business economic development, self-help housing, and emergency assistance to agricultural workers traveling to jobs in the migrant stream. After a tour of HELP's communities, and before leaving Albuquerque, Kravitz stated he was impressed with the innovative way HELP deployed seed funds to initiate projects, train

residents to serve on governing boards, and gradually turn the projects over to local communities as “spin-offs.” In other cases, HELP used small grants and revolving loans to fund pilot projects in economic development, and if the projects succeeded, they became community-based enterprises.

Conceived by Alex Mercure, HELP’s Executive Director from 1965-1970, this approach to rural development resulted in the start-up of Siete del Norte Community Development Corporation in northcentral New Mexico and Tierra del Sol Housing Corporation in Doña Ana County<sup>1</sup>, and later under Ray López, HELP’s Executive Director from 1971 to May 1976, Centro Campesino de Salud, a system of eleven rural health clinics in northcentral New Mexico.<sup>2</sup> José Rivera continued with Mercure’s developer approach during his subsequent term as the HELP Executive Director (1976-1980). While serving as Executive Director, Rivera and the staff developed a series of community-based institutions: Clínica de Familia in Doña Ana County with health clinics in San Miguel, Anthony and Hatch; Rural Housing Inc., a holding company of HELP for senior citizen and handicapped housing in the towns of Española, Socorro, Truth or Consequences, and Carlsbad; and the New Mexico Community Foundation as a corporate division of HELP Inc.<sup>3</sup> In all of these and other cases, HELP often was referred to as “the parent organization” and the entities as “affiliates of HELP.”

*[Note: Alex Mercure later served at USDA headquarters in Washington as Undersecretary for Rural Development, and later as President of the Northern New Mexico Community College, El Rito, New Mexico.]*

By coincidence, Sandy Kravitz had been on the faculty of Brandeis University in the late 1960s when José Rivera was a doctoral student at the Florence Heller Graduate School for Advanced Studies in Social Welfare (now the Heller School for Social Policy and Management). At the end of his site visit, Kravitz advised Rivera that HELP should expand its “developer approach” and increase funding resources aimed at community building. In his view, “HELP needs its own foundation,” a mechanism to pool resources and create a permanent source of seed capital.

Soon after the Kravitz visit, José Rivera came across a report that a new community foundation had just been established in North Dakota (filed 07-01-1976). He also learned that New Mexico was one of the few states that did not yet have a statewide community foundation. To gather more information, he ordered a handbook from the Council on Foundations in New York, a national source of information about the charitable work of community foundations and how they are structured. With templates from the Council on Foundations, Rivera wrote a concept paper proposing that HELP organize a foundation for New Mexico, initially calling it “The New Mexico Rural Community Foundation.” Comparable to other community foundations around the country, the HELP foundation would pool charitable contributions from donors into flexible accounts from which to issue grants: designated funds, donor advised funds, field of interest funds, and others.

**1977, The HELP Plan:** In January of 1977, the HELP Board of Directors adopted a Long-Range Policy Plan to guide HELP's rural development activities during the five-year period of 1977-1982. The Plan was submitted by José Rivera and included goals within three broad categories: Physical Development, Human Development, and Economic Development. The Board of Directors also adopted a Long-Range Financial Plan to create an asset base from which to implement the goals. One of the policy goals was to establish an administrative division within the HELP structure to be called the New Mexico Rural Community Foundation. To raise funds, HELP planned to conduct a yearly fund drive focusing attention on rural communities of New Mexico that did not have local fund-raising capabilities. Donations would be solicited from foundations, corporations, labor unions, private individuals, and banking institutions that operated in New Mexico. According to the Plan, these charitable donations would create an independent, flexible, and growing pool of financial resources to support "projects that need to raise matching funds for leverage purposes, projects that need financial advances awaiting reimbursement or funding, projects that need working capital to offset front-end development costs, and projects that need staff and other resources for planning, design or policy research."

### **1978-1982, NMCF/HELP**



Left to Right: José Rivera, former NM Governor Jerry Apocada, and Bruce Rolstad



Governor Jerry Apodaca announces the NMCF at a press conference in 1980



Bruce Rolstad explains the mission of the New Mexico Community Foundation

Before launching a campaign to raise funds, José Rivera met with Bruce Rolstad, a former HELP grant writer, to determine a governance structure and staffing requirements of the foundation. They held a series of planning meetings at the HELP office in Albuquerque. Rolstad volunteered to serve as the Executive Director on a part-time basis. Rivera agreed that the HELP office would provide in-kind administrative services. As an initial step, they revised the name of the foundation, now calling it the **New Mexico Community Foundation (NMCF)**. The name was changed to focus not only on the rural and outlying communities but also the small towns in all quadrants of New Mexico, most of which were not large enough to establish their own community foundations. At the time, only Carlsbad had a community foundation, established in 1969. [The Albuquerque and Santa Fe foundations were not incorporated until 1981, March and October, respectively.] The NMCF mission, on the other hand, was to address community development needs on a statewide basis, a geography in parallel with the HELP mission. To formalize the plan, José Rivera travelled to the IRS office in Washington D.C. sometime in 1978, and inquired if HELP's 501(c)(3) status could qualify it as a public charity and be able house the foundation as a division of HELP, Inc. He requested and subsequently received an IRS letter of determination that HELP could establish a community foundation and that tax-deductible contributions received could be utilized in furtherance of HELP's charitable purposes.

*[Note: The approval from IRS is recorded in Publication 78, Cumulative List of Organizations Described in Section 170(c) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1954, Revised to October 31, 1984, p. 514. The entry reads: "Home Education Livelihood Program, Inc. D/B/A New Mexico Community Foundation, Albuquerque, N.M." The first listing occurred in the Cumulative List Revised to October 31, 1979, p. 492.]*

For an interim Board of Trustees, Rolstad recruited Margaret (Peggy) Driscoll, a HELP Board member who was also the head of the Driscoll Foundation in Santa Fe and an heir in the Weyerhaeuser Company family business. As the incumbent HELP Executive Director, José Rivera would also serve as a Trustee, along with Ernest (Gene) Ortega, a member of the HELP Board of Directors. To add an outside person, Driscoll and Rolstad approached Susan Herter of Jacona, New Mexico, to join the Board of Trustees. Among other former distinctions, Susan had served as Chief of Staff to Vice President Nelson Rockefeller during the middle 1970s and later was appointed to the President's Commission on White House Fellows by Presidents Carter and Reagan. In early 1980 Bruce Rolstad arranged that former **New Mexico Governor Jerry Apodaca** (1975-1979 term) formerly announce the establishment of the HELP/New Mexico Community Foundation. Governor Apodaca held a press conference for this purpose in Santa Fe at the Inn at Loretto where he, Bruce Rolstad and José Rivera made presentations to the news staff in attendance. Both television and print media were present. A poster behind the head table served as a reference point to communicate the "Ways of Giving," namely, donations of land, real estate, securities, life insurance, annual cash gifts, or bequests. Donors could deposit their gifts into optional funds: discretionary, field of interest, advised or designated. An additional way involved individual

memberships available to individuals and corporations willing to pledge cash gifts annually as General, Sustaining or Sponsor Members.



José Rivera explains the “Ways of Giving”

After the formal announcement in Santa Fe, two other Trustees joined the New Mexico Community Foundation Board: Fred O’Chesky, an executive with the Public Service Company of New Mexico, and Fred Schwendimann, a lawyer based in Santa Fe. In July of

1980 Gene Ortega replaced José Rivera as HELP's Executive Director, and Ortega soon acquired a permanent office owned by HELP at 3423 Central Avenue NE in Albuquerque. The NMCF Trustees met at the HELP location until Bruce Rolstad was able to secure donated space in Santa Fe.

*[Note: Gene Ortega remained as HELP's Executive Director until 2003, the longest term of all former directors. He also served, and still does, as President of Rural Housing, Inc., the HELP holding company with senior and handicapped housing projects in Española, Socorro, Truth or Consequences and Carlsbad. Under his leadership, this "spin off" entity expanded its services to develop affordable housing for low-income families including rental and first-time homebuyer units as well as facilities for non-profits, head start and charter schools in Albuquerque. By 2010 Gene Ortega was widely recognized as the developer of affordable housing in New Mexico and his bio at a grants management workshop that year credited him for having developed over 700 affordable rental units and more than 100 units for first-time homebuyers.]*

As a preliminary step, Bruce Rolstad conducted outreach activities throughout New Mexico. His purpose was to gather information about local needs in the rural counties of the state while also searching for resources that would fill the gaps in the education, economic, health and human services sectors. Meanwhile, Herter, Rolstad and Rivera began to contact potential donors, banks, and other business institutions in Santa Fe and Albuquerque. Working without an endowment, the NMCF/HELP awarded small grants occasionally as donations permitted. Early funding support came from the Driscoll Foundation in Santa Fe and the Weyerhaeuser Family Foundation located in St. Paul, Minnesota. Peggy Driscoll had planned to fund an endowment to get NMCF started, but a tragic accident occurred before this could be accomplished. She died in an automobile accident on June 11, 1981, returning from the Albuquerque Sunport to Santa Fe. Her passing was reported by St. John's College in Santa Fe where she had served as a former Chair of the Board of Visitors and Governors.

Without an endowment, Bruce Rolstad and Susan Herter decided to cultivate a broader base of donors for the foundation. Bruce Rolstad later recalled the difficulty of fundraising for philanthropic purposes in rural New Mexico, given its large surface area and a dominant ranching economy at the time. In his words: "Back in those days, the concept of private philanthropy was not even conceived yet in NM; so, we had a really hard time finding money. But the needs in rural NM were so great. All these little places—Hillsboro, Tierra Amarilla, Thoreau—no one was looking out for them. We wanted to provide resources from the private sector because government and business would not do it" (*Green Fire Times*, December 2013, p. 31). Most of the wealth was in the large cities along the Rio Grande corridor such as Santa Fe, Albuquerque, and Las Cruces; the needs of small towns and outlying rural places were not on the radar of most philanthropists.

Without a permanent endowment, however, it became clear that the foundation division at HELP should reorganize as a separate entity and begin the process of building up a portfolio of fund accounts. HELP had successfully launched NMCF as the first statewide

community foundation in New Mexico, but it was time to chart a new direction outside of the HELP administrative structure.

### **NMCF Incorporated 1983**

In early 1983, Susan Herter, Bruce Rolstad, and José Rivera determined it was best to incorporate the foundation as a separate legal entity. This action was in keeping with the HELP approach of sponsoring projects until they were ready for independent governance. Also, with its own nonprofit status, NMCF would be better positioned to solicit grants, gifts, and other donations from private sources as well as to purchase, lease or sell property. For statewide representation, additional Board members were recruited from Las Cruces, Los Alamos, and Santa Fe. Through a law office in Santa Fe, the initial group filed Articles of Incorporation with the State Corporation Commission of New Mexico on March 22, 1983. The founding Board of Directors included Susan Herter, José Rivera, Ernest (Gene) Ortega, Fred O'Chesky, Santa Fe lawyers Fred Schwendimann and Ron Van Amberg, Janet Susco of Los Alamos, and Marilyn Sandford of Las Cruces. The incorporation papers designated Bruce Rolstad as the Registered Agent of the foundation, and the HELP headquarters on 3423 Central Avenue NE, Albuquerque, was listed as the NMCF registered office. The State Corporation Commission approved the Articles of Incorporation and issued a certificate of incorporation on May 3, 1983. José Rivera served as the Interim President of the Board for a few months until Susan Herter was elected as the permanent President.

*[Note: José Rivera left the Home Education Livelihood Program in June of 1980 but continued to serve on the NMCF Board until March 30, 1985, when fellow Board members presented him with a Nambe Ware plaque in appreciation for his service to NMCF. Ernest (Gene) Ortega served until 1995, representing HELP, Inc., and was presented with a textile from Tierra Wools, Los Ojos, an early NMCF supported project affiliated with Ganados del Valle.]*

**The Churches Project and Early Grants:** To launch a major fund raising campaign, in 1984 Bruce Rolstad and Susan Herter put together an overhead transparency for presentation to potential donors and organizations. The overheads articulated the goals, objectives, and funding priorities of the New Mexico Community Foundation. The stated goal of the newly incorporated foundation was to enable all cities, towns, and rural areas of New Mexico to achieve and maintain self-reliance and quality of life to reflect their values and traditions. The objectives were to: make grants to numerous community service organizations; act as a clearinghouse and convenor for programs crucial to the survival of communities; and build endowments to assure future giving. The priorities that the foundation intended to support included: aging, child and family care, community centers, community economic development, corrections, domestic abuse, education and environment, health, housing, legal, peace education, and youth.

During 1984 Susan Herter and Bruce Rolstad also began to conceptualize a church restoration project for rural New Mexico called “Churches: Symbols of Community.” The idea was to restore old adobe churches that had been neglected and bring them back into service by partnering with church *mayordomos* (caretakers), parishioners and other residents. Rural depopulation and the centralization of masses at the more distant parish towns had resulted in obsolescence and physical deterioration of many historic adobe churches. At this point, NMCF was basically penniless, but Susan Herter persisted and sought the help of a grant writer to submit a proposal to the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA). In her view, the building of an adequate endowment portfolio was years away, but meanwhile the foundation could raise money around tangible projects that would galvanize community participation and attract outside financial support at the same time. The application to NEA succeeded, and NMCF received its first grant in the amount of \$40,000 that was supplemented by a \$20,000 donation from Faith Meem, a NMCF Board member at the time.

*Why the Churches?* This question and others were raised and answered in the overhead presentation mentioned earlier: “A response to the imminent loss of an unparalleled architectural style in America, the historic adobe churches that have served as the centers of New Mexico communities.” *What is the Foundation trying to do with the Church Project?* “Launch a statewide, community-based preservation effort with individual communities, to co-develop successful plans to save the churches.” *What are the objectives?* “To halt further deterioration of churches; to direct statewide and national attention toward New Mexico’s historic churches; to restore or enlarge a sense of community pride.” *What role will the Foundation play in the Church Project?* “Serve as a clearinghouse for information about the project. Seek funds to complete the first phase of work: identify communities in New Mexico where important, historic churches are threatened by lack of funds and by neglect; contact key people in church systems to form working relationships; contact key people in communities for form networks; promote the establishment of one or two successful preservation efforts to serve as models; disseminate information.”

The Churches Project soon became the foundation’s major activity, and with resources in place, Susan Herter hired Nancy Arnon in 1986 as the administrative director, Sam Baca as director of the community program, and Ed Crocker as the technical director. The staff provided design and technical assistance in dozens of rural New Mexico communities, and local people contributed the materials and labor. Importantly, requests for assistance came from local communities prior to the sending out the design teams, a prerequisite for the partnership concept. Once an agreement was reached, the *mayordomos* in each church took charge of the daily work performed by community volunteers. The NMCF administered and operated the Churches Project internally for almost a decade, a fitting tribute to the vision of its founder and champion, Susan Herter. Years later, Susan reflected that the project was a godsend to NMCF. With its first major grant, the fledgling statewide foundation was able to keep on going, “by the Grace of God.” The foundation also provided matching funds that leveraged a second grant from the NEA for a project sponsored by the Historic Preservation Division of the State of New Mexico to conduct a survey of historic

churches of New Mexico that began in 1986 and was completed eight years later by Boyd C. Pratt (see Pratt 1993).

*[Note: After the NMCF Board of Directors conceived the annual Luminaria Awards in 1996, Susan Herter was one of the first individuals to be recognized (1997) for her visionary leadership and contributions to the mission and values of the foundation. Throughout her term as President of the Board, Susan's persistence in assuring the survival of NMCF was widely acknowledged. Her strong will, optimism and persistence during the early years were critical to the foundation's resilience and its future. During her term as a Board member for Think New Mexico, 2010-2011, Susan was credited as a founding board member of Common Cause, the North American Institute, and the New Mexico Community Foundation. Susan was born in 1924 and passed away on November 28, 2021.]*

Despite limited access to donor funds, Rolstad recalls an early grant when NMCF managed to put together a small amount of seed money to assist a fledgling sheep growers' cooperative in the Chama Valley that became Ganados del Valle and its affiliated weaving shop in Los Ojos, NM, Tierra Wools. In 1988, María Varela (then a NMCF Board member and a co-founder of Ganados del Valle) proposed that the foundation establish the Milagro Fund with proceeds from *The Milagro Beanfield War* when the film premiered in Santa Fe. The Fund's purpose was to support rural economic development initiatives such as the Tierra Wools coop at Los Ojos. The proceeds were granted to Ganados del Valle with administration of the Milagro Fund by the New Mexico Community Foundation, an arrangement that continued when Ganados received grants from other sources. When the sheep ranchers and weavers joined as an interlocking cooperative, the foundation stepped in to become the umbrella during the formative years. The connection to the foundation provided local participants time to strengthen a core group and later spin off the Ganados del Valle model to other communities. Aided by interest earned from the initial endowment of \$170,000 in the Milagro Fund, the foundation provided technical assistance along with small grants as seed money.

Earlier, Rolstad had been a supporter of La Clínica del Pueblo at Tierra Amarilla and its sister organization, La Cooperativa, dating to 1982 when Carol Miller was the clinic's Executive Director. In 1991 La Clínica received a donor-advised grant from the NMCF for indigent health care made possible by contributions to the foundation's initiative, S.H.A.R.E.S (Self Help and Regional Economic Sustainability). Other beneficiaries from this account included the Cuchillo Negro Community Association, the Water Information Network, Tewa Women United and the New Mexico Acequia Association. Later, Rolstad and foundation colleague Susan Rundstrom, helped Carol Miller raise funds for a fire station in the community of Ojo Sarco some ninety miles from Tierra Amarilla. This occurred after *vecinos* (neighbors) had purchased an original one-room schoolhouse from the Peñasco Independent School District for one dollar but needed a substantial infusion of money to develop the schoolhouse into a fire station to be staffed by volunteers. As a first step, the neighbors incorporated as the Ojo Sarco Community Center (OSCC). "Thanks to Bruce, the

New Mexico Community Foundation, and other donors, OSCC was able to develop its first fire station with a meeting room and lending library. Since then, the fire department grew and now operates from a large fire station providing both fire and EMS services to Ojo Sarco and surrounding communities. The lending library is now a Developing Rural Library within the NM State Library System” (Carol Miller email to José Rivera, April 29, 2023).

In addition to funding the Ojo Sarco project, the foundation continued making other grants that ranged from \$500 to \$2,000 and in some cases \$5,000 to people in rural communities based on a two-page letter of inquiry by the residents explaining what they needed and what they were trying to do. After staff review, if the intended project met the guidelines of the foundation, the community was invited to submit a grant application (Brewer, *Albuquerque Journal*, 09/27/1992). In those days the awards were small, but the foundation staff often provided seed grants and technical assistance to gather information for the submission of grant proposals to other sources. As an early example, the NMCF provided a \$1,000 grant to the Cooperative Ownership Development Corporation in Silver City to transport equipment from Wisconsin for making pellets suitable for wood burning stoves. The seed grant in turn leveraged an additional \$10,000 grant from the McCune Foundation that made transportation of the equipment possible with plans to create 30 new jobs in a pellet-making factory. (See *NMCF Newsletter*, Autumn 1995, p. 6).

According to a file kept at the foundation office, small grants during the 1980s and early 1990s covered a variety of needs in diverse locations throughout New Mexico. The file includes descriptions of self-organized community groups that requested and received assistance: Costilla Arts and Crafts Cooperative; Rio Chama Acequia Association; Tewa Women United; Ocaté Community Center and the Ocaté/Ojo Feliz Volunteer Fire Department; Alamo Navajo Sky Blue Corn Project of the Alamo Navajo School Board Inc.; Vecinos del Norte; Winston, Chloride, Chiz and Dusty Community Association; Sabinoso Community Ditch; Ganados del Valle; Ramah Navajo Weavers Association; El Rito Betterment Association; the Navajo Co-op, The Gathering Place, Thoreau, NM; First Methodist Church, Gallup, NM, Chichiltah Housing Project, Outhouse Project; Doña Ana Arts Council, Career Art Path; Child-Rite Adoption Services, Taos NM; Cuchillo Negro Community Association; Casa de Peregrinos, Emergency Food Program, Las Cruces NM; Ojo Sarco Community Center; Cañones Early Childhood Education Program; and Recuerdos y Cosechas, Santa Fe NM. Other organizations funded during 1980-1994 but not included in the file, were the Taos Valley Acequia Association, the New Mexico Acequia Association and Rincón Marquez, a Navajo community without potable water where the foundation made a grant to purchase a 5,000-gallon water tank (*NMCF Newsletter*, Autumn 1995, p. 7).

*[Note: At the time of these grants, the NMCF operated out of 227 Otero Street in Santa Fe as noted in letterhead stationery on file in a ring binder that details each of the projects listed above. Locations are noted in some of the project titles, while other entries describe locations within their respective narratives. Photographs are included for most of the projects with Bruce Rolstad present in some. To his credit, the majority of communities Bruce visited to evaluate needs and then follow-up to document project results were located in remote parts of New Mexico such as Winston-Chloride, Cuchillo Negro, Ramah, Los Ojos, Costilla-Amalia, Cañones, Ojo Sarco, Ocaté-Ojo Feliz, Thoreau,*

*the Alamo Navajo Band, and others. In addition to grants, the NMCF often provided technical assistance, equipment, fiscal sponsorships, and in some cases established field-of-interest accounts to attract donor contributions.]*

By 1994, the foundation had made grants and provided technical assistance to more than 100 communities across New Mexico while awaiting the establishment of a permanent endowment that would increase financial capacity and ability to support communities at a larger scale. In his message of 1994, outgoing President Harlan Flint stated:

*“Our community is the whole state of New Mexico. The health of rural communities directly affects the health of our urban centers and vice versa. We all must share with our neighbors a common concern and responsibility for the aspirations and needs of every ‘village’ in the state, both large and small.... The problems are as diverse and challenging as the exploding colonias developments along the Mexican border and the need for small-scale, community-based economic development in rural communities. The solutions require us to build a permanent endowment to generate a reliable and growing flow of resources to fund projects and organizations that sustain the communities of New Mexico.... We hope many New Mexicans will join with us in building a permanent, charitable source of funds for the communities of New Mexico” (NMCF Newsletter, Autumn 1995, p. 3).*

In January 1995, the Churches Project split off from the foundation and became an independent non-profit called Cornerstones Community Partnerships (CCP). The name was changed in part to reflect a decision to restore other historic adobe buildings in addition to churches. Susan Herter later explained how the change came about: “Our first field person, Ed Crocker, came up with the term Cornerstones...it refers both to that key part of a physical building and also metaphorically to those community leaders who make things happen. And it’s plural because we’re talking about both buildings and many generous souls” (Caleb Bach article in *Americas*, 2001). As a social activist and director of the community program, Sam Baca played a critical role in growing the original Churches Project into the new entity and expanding its mission to include educating at-risk youth about their heritage. In his view, the purpose of the project was not limited to the restoration of church buildings, but to bring communities together and preserve the rich cultural values and traditions that these churches embodied. His peers at Cornerstones credited Sam as the person who shaped the core philosophy of the organization. He stayed at the helm for many years insuring CPP as a viable enterprise widely recognized for its community service throughout New Mexico. Another key person who joined the staff during the transition period was Francisco Uviña. Francisco was hired in the summer of 1994 by the first CCP Director, Barbara Zook, and after a brief leave of absence he returned in 1995 and later was promoted to serve as the Technical Manager, a position he held until 2009. Francisco recalls that other personnel in the formative years included Pat Taylor, Antonio Martínez, Ed Crocker, Barbara Zook, and Beth Johnson, with Sam Baca holding the organization together. Soon, the work of Cornerstones became widely recognized not only in New Mexico but nationally and internationally.

CCP continues restoring buildings in New Mexico and the greater Southwest. In addition to providing consultation services and technical support to community partners, the staff today offers hands-on teaching of traditional skills in restoration and construction techniques to youth and adults. The Cornerstones mission statement posted on the internet website acknowledges the role of New Mexico Community Foundation as the parent organization. In addition, the website describes one of the model projects at the San Rafael Church, La Cueva, near the town of Mora, when the Churches Project was still being operated by NMCF. In this example, the church mayordomo contacted NMCF in 1990 asking for assistance in restoring the local church that was deteriorating due to lack of maintenance and weathering. The Cornerstones website credits NMCF for having initiated the project and securing financial support to commence the restoration:

*“With the assistance and guidance of the NMCF and funding received from various sources, including the National Park Service through the New Mexico State Historic Preservation Office and the World Monuments Fund, volunteers began work in earnest in the fall of 1990 and continued every summer until it was complete. San Rafael was rededicated on June 30, 1996.”*

**Building of an Endowment and Growth:** In 1993-1994, the New Mexico Community Foundation was invited by the Ford Foundation to be part of its Rural Development and Community Initiatives. NMCF was one of four community foundations designated to receive a three-year \$500,000 grant to advance grant-making and endowment building for rural community and economic development. By raising the matching funds required in the Ford award, NMCF created an endowed Rural Economic Development Fund. By 1996, the NMCF had established a second office in Roswell as the headquarters for a Rural Initiatives program during the term of Janet Voorhees as NMCF Executive Director. The program was funded by the Ford Foundation to strengthen rural communities across New Mexico and was directed by Frank Sanchez, a longtime community organizer from southeastern New Mexico. In a foundation publication called *The Rural Initiative Bulletin* (January 1996), Sanchez reported that the program had made inroads at improving the economic security of rural families by providing technical assistance, capacity building workshops, grantmaking and partnerships with other community groups and leaders.

As one example of partnering with other groups, the *Bulletin* highlighted outreach initiatives when Frank Sanchez and other foundation staff travelled to Las Cruces and met with leaders of the Doña Ana Colonias Development Council. At the time, local colonias included Salem, Del Cerro, Milagro, and Anthony. By agreement, the role of the Rural Initiatives program was to serve as a convenor, broker, grant maker, fundraiser and also as an educator by way of capacity building workshops. Workshops, seminars, and training sessions were also held in many other New Mexico towns: Portales, Santa Fe, Las Cruces, Roswell, Taos, and Albuquerque as well as Las Cruces. Some events featured speakers who had authored books about mobilizing community assets and fundraising for social change. Another speaker convened a seminar on “Cooperative Businesses and the Laws of New Mexico.”

The 1996 winter issue of the *NMCF Newsletter* was dedicated to recognizing and thanking donors from the previous year and included an extensive list of donor categories: more than 190 individuals, 16 corporations, and 22 foundations and organizations small and large. The *Newsletter* also featured the “Philanthropic Values” of the foundation and laid out the “5-Yeast FOCUS” during the term of Janet Voohees as the NMCF Executive Director. By way of a graphic, the vision of values and grantmaking depicted a CIRCLE OF FOCUS FUNDS around endowment building and philanthropic activities statewide: the Living Desert Environmental Fund, the Youth Fund, the Native American Community Re-investment Fund, *Los Sueños de Comunidad* Fund (the Dreams of Community), the Arts-in-Action Fund, and the Peace and Compassion Fund. “Our emphasis is on investing in PEOPLE, especially PEOPLE in communities who are ORGANIZED-New Mexico’s Greatest Asset.”

With a steady infusion of funds during the middle 1990s and into the turn of the century, the foundation was able to increase its grants-making from \$108,158 in 1995 to \$2.5 million in 2003 (NMCF Annual Report 2004). By 2004, the NMCF had lived up to its statewide mission with grants awarded in all quadrants of New Mexico. In keeping with its core mission, the foundation targeted philanthropic resources aiming to strengthen New Mexico families, support rural livelihoods initiatives, and distribute donor advised, designated and scholarship grants. In addition, more than forty fiscal sponsorship agreements were in effect during 2003-2004 to support grass-roots projects and start-up organizations with over \$1million received on their behalf (NMCF Annual Report 2004). During the period 1994 to 2011, NMCF successfully procured grants from multiple sources such as the McCune and Thaw foundations, the Kellogg Foundation, additional awards from the Ford Foundation, and new grants from the Atlantic Philanthropies, Tides, and the Department of Energy. The support from the McCune and Thaw foundations at the front end was especially critical to the survival of the foundation, buying time to pursue the other major awards noted above. By 2007 NMCF was able to increase its grant-making in New Mexico to more than \$7.1 million during the period of January 2006 to June 2007. The annual report for that year describes scores of accomplishments, taking up fifty-six pages of awards, funds, grant-making statewide and by region, and other data (NMCF Annual Report 2007).

Between 2003 and 2007, Executive Director Robert Stark commissioned filmmaker Paul Espinosa of San Diego, a native New Mexican, to produce short documentaries of supported projects illustrating the statewide reach and influence of the foundation. The films included a diverse set of community-based projects:

*Picuris Bison Project*: reintroduce bison for cultural, nutritional, and economic benefits at Picuris Pueblo in northcentral New Mexico; *Tierra Monte Housing Project*: assist families build affordable energy efficient homes in Sunland Park to include training and technical assistance; *Laguna Pueblo*: help children prepare for life’s journey through education in an elderly care center where they learn about respect and other cultural values; *Court Youth Center*: after school program in Las Cruces where youth are exposed to art and business skills taught by artists; *Border Book Festival*: an event in Las Cruces with a street parade and talks by writers and poets to

inspire children and youth to become authors; *Elev8 New Mexico*: an integrated services approach at the Gadsden School District to elevate children through an after-school program, comprehensive school-based health services, and family support activities; and *The Legacy of Family*: an overview of projects supported by the foundation emphasizing the importance of families in the life of the state.

By 2010, the foundation's portfolio of initiatives and focus areas had diversified and was evident in statewide funded grants at a total of \$4,463,642 (NMCF Annual Report 2010). Success stories included SPARK (Supporting Partnerships to Assure Ready Kids) an early childhood initiative addressing the achievement gap for young children statewide: Good Food for New Mexico Families to revitalize local food production for community health and prosperity in partnership with the New Mexico Acequia Association, the American Friends Service Committee and Farm to Table; Elev8 New Mexico, a full-service community middle schools initiative in Albuquerque, Anthony and the Pueblo of Laguna; as well as a continued rural development and food security initiative. In keeping with its commitment to social equity, self-reliance, and community-driven solutions, the NMCF sponsored a project aimed at cultivating leadership and empowering women and girls through a program titled "Women Building Community." In a new area, the NMCF established an Equine Protection Fund to save the lives and improve the health of horses, mules, and donkeys and eventually gave relief to 981 equines through feed assistance, gelding assistance, veterinary care, and humane euthanasia when appropriate at a modest total cost of about \$178,000 (see NMCF Annual Report for 2017).

In 2011 total awards increased slightly to \$4,557,361. Philanthropic resources were deployed across all thirty-three counties of New Mexico focusing on first response to emergencies and traumatic situations, cultivating a stronger state for women through the newly established Women Building Community program, strengthening the ongoing work to engage Tribal Communities in the promise of philanthropy and entrepreneurship, and transforming lives of children through the Santa Fe Schools for the Arts & Sciences with the NMCF managing its endowment building fund (NMCF Annual Report 2011). An additional \$2,023,558 were awarded through 425 grants in the following year, 2012, to meet the challenges and provide opportunities statewide in a diverse set of focus areas: equity, food access, art and culture, health, women and girls, education, basic human needs, scholarships, environment and animal protection, and emergency funds. The 2012 Annual Report also noted that the foundation held and managed \$3,298,901 of Native American funds in support of education and leadership investments such as the Native American Preparatory Scholars fund and the Community Learning Exchange, a national network established to share wisdom and collective leadership approaches to better address critical social issues. As a new initiative, the NMCF announced its first annual Chispa Awards program to honor nonprofits across the state that "accomplish a lot with very little." Twelve organizations that work to improve their communities each received a \$7,000 unrestricted grant to use for their general operations. The name of the awards program, "*Chispa*," was chosen since it means "a

spark” that shines a light in the communities served by each organization. (See 2012 Annual Report)

In 2013 the New Mexico Community Foundation celebrated its 30<sup>th</sup> year anniversary and by then was managing nearly \$30 million in various funds and assets and more importantly had distributed \$7.5 million in grants during the previous two years and \$60 million overall. A special issue of the *Green Fire Times* (December 2013) commemorated the 30th anniversary of the foundation, 1983-2013. A lead article by Jenny Parks (President and CEO) and Sandy Kiser (Board Chair), restated the early program areas and focus of the NMCF back to the 1983 incorporation: "Reflecting on our rich history, we are especially proud that we have remained steadfast and true to our mission serving the most rural and most forgotten in our state. We are proud to serve Chaparral, Thoreau, Silver City, Jemez Pueblo, Magdalena and many more places and individuals." A sidebar in the article raised the question: "What Does NM Community Foundation Do?" The reply in the sidebar noted that thirty years after incorporation, NMCF was still conducting philanthropic activities by connecting donor resources with the needs of people and rural places statewide.

*"New Mexico Community Foundation (NMCF) established in 1983, supports community projects and underserved communities by pooling resources to support New Mexico's people, strengthen the state's nonprofits, and grow philanthropy and endowments, especially in the rural parts of the state. The foundation serves both donors and beneficiaries--connecting philanthropists (large and small) to the needs and aspirations of cities and towns, pueblos, and villages across all of New Mexico. NMCF pulls together people, ideas, and resources, and serves as a champion of rural communities. NMCF has served all 33 counties in the state by identifying community needs, [and then] designing and leading broad-based initiatives to meet those needs and supporting local and regional nonprofits whose missions complement the Community Foundation's mission."* (Green Fire Times, December 2013, p. 7)

To document the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary, the foundation published a booklet titled "1983-2013, 30 Years, New Mexico Community Foundation, Together We Thrive." The booklet announced the event as the "30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary and 2013 *Luminaria* Gala Celebration." The program included a cocktail reception with a musical group followed by presentation of the 2013 *luminaria* awards noting that these awards had been conceived in 1996 by Jaune Evans, Executive Director and the NMCF Board of Directors. The awards have been a tradition at the foundation since that time to pay tribute to individuals who make a profound difference in their communities: "*Luminarias* motivate, inspire, protect and support the dreams of others, promote diversity and equity, and build community strength through their leadership and vision while embodying the values of NMCF." Ten outstanding 2013 *Luminarias* were recognized that evening: Estevan Arellano (from Embudo, NM), Mary Carter (Anthony), Carnell Chosa (Jemez Pueblo), Jill Cooper Udall (Santa Fe), Matt & Jeanette deKay (Farmington), Lisa Jennings (Albuquerque), Frances Levine (Santa Fe), Hayes Lewis (Zuni), Lynda Taylor and Robert Haspel (Santa Fe), and Don Usner (Chimayó). Next was a dinner and remarks by President and CEO Jenny Parks, followed by a 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary

Tribute by the Youth Media Project. Before the closing and acknowledgements, an auction was held to support three focus areas of the foundation: NewMexicoWomen.Org, Rural Community and Economic Development, and Emergency Funds.

A year after the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary, the NMCF issued a pamphlet titled “2014 Highlights.” Several examples of events, programs, and funds were featured, namely, the NMCF honored seven Luminarias at a gala in Santa Fe; granted over \$2.8 million to protect natural resources, build capacity for others and to improve the lives of all New Mexicans; launched the NewMexicoWomen.Org’s *Take a Stand* campaign and awarded over \$100,000 to programs that advance opportunities for women and girls statewide. In addition, the foundation had served as fiscal sponsor to nearly fifty charitable organizations; and established new funds including the Laurel Fund and two funds for Animal Protection New Mexico. The foundation also co-organized a Funder’s Roundtable on behalf of Santa Clara Pueblo to protect the Santa Clara community, canyon, and ancient culture after the catastrophic Las Conchas wildfire and subsequent flooding. NEW MEXICO WOMEN.ORG itself reported the publication and dissemination of its *Indicator’s Report* focused on the health and well-being of women and girls, along with NMW.O having organized philanthropy dialogues about issues that impact women and girls in New Mexico and hosting the 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Legislative Reception focused on women’s financial empowerment.

**Recap, NMCF Story of Resilience:** The history of the New Mexico Community foundation is a story of resilience: early struggles, persistence, adaptation, and continuity. The foundation started as an incubator project at the Home Education Livelihood Program, itself a statewide not-for-profit community service organization. The HELP mission and core values carried forward into the work of the NMCF: collaborative work aimed at improving quality of life statewide in New Mexico by working together in partnership with local leaders in small towns, indigenous communities, and rural areas.<sup>4</sup> As noted in this report, the early years of the NMCF were devoted to assessing community needs in the most rural and vulnerable places of New Mexico and how to match needs with potential donors at a time when private philanthropy was not widely practiced in New Mexico. The needs assessment approach on a statewide basis and the matching of those needs with private sector donors continued as standard methodology and practice under the independent NMCF. The incorporation in 1983 provided NMCF with a governance structure from which to develop fund accounts aimed at attracting donors and grants from outside sources with the goal of establishing a permanent endowment. This phase too was fraught with obstacles and struggles in the raising of money, a period later described as the lean years. “By the Grace of God,” however, Susan Herter and Bruce Rolstad managed to cobble enough resources to initiate the Churches Project in 1985. The idea of restoring historic adobe churches resonated with local communities and successfully attracted donors and grant sources that sustained NMCF for a decade, giving the foundation time to continue building up its profile and track record of project development and implementation.

Around the middle 1990s, the foundation’s campaign to start an endowment met with success. The McCune and Thaw Foundations were especially critical in supporting NMCF during the transition period, thanks in large part to Susan Herter, who worked closely with the Directors at McCune and Thaw Foundations and getting them on board. The Ford

Foundation and other grant sources added to the endowment and provided funding that enabled the foundation to substantially increase its own grant-making in rural places throughout New Mexico.

In the year 1998, NMCF reached a milestone when the foundation granted out more than \$1 million and more than double that amount in 2003, signaling a period of rapid growth during the first decade of the new millennium. Assets grew exponentially and reached \$17,670,786 in 2004 and twice that amount in 2007. Grant-making statewide also increased in parallel with the growth in assets, reaching \$7.1 million from January 2006 through June 2007. The 30<sup>th</sup> year anniversary report featured in the *Green Fire Times* covers the work of the foundation into December of 2013 and describes scores of projects and new initiatives reflecting the commitment of NMCF to serve people in small towns, Pueblos, villages, and other rural places throughout New Mexico.

## **2019, New Mexico Foundation Rebranding**

In 2019 the NMCF rebranded as the **New Mexico Foundation** with a focus on “Strengthening Our Communities.” The new brand underscores the initial purpose of serving communities of New Mexico statewide, a feature that distinguishes NMF from other foundations that primarily focus on individual cities and counties of New Mexico, such as Santa Fe, Albuquerque, Taos, Carlsbad, Los Alamos, Chaves County Community Foundation, Grant County Community Foundation, and the Angel Fire Community Foundation serving the Moreno Valley of Colfax County. There is also a community foundation in Las Cruces serving Doña Ana and six other counties in southern New Mexico, the Community Foundation of Southern New Mexico. The stated mission of the New Mexico Foundation is “*to steward resources, build partnerships, and create opportunities that transform lives and communities throughout New Mexico.*” The name was rebranded to New Mexico Foundation in part to emphasize its original mission of serving all regions of New Mexico on a statewide basis. The NMF continues the legacy of serving the most vulnerable people and forgotten places where the needs are greatest.

By 2021, the New Mexico Foundation had expanded its statewide philanthropy. New funds that year included The Native American Recovery Fund Zone Grant which seeks to build capacity of Native American organizations in New Mexico with a focus on five areas: family economic security, local health and food systems, youth opportunities, and water resilience. In another initiative, the foundation established a HEAL (Health Entry for Asylee Lives) Fund to support New Mexico non-profits that provide shelter, medical, socio-emotional services, transportation, interpretation, and legal representation to vulnerable children, families and adults seeking asylum and refuge in the United States. A third new project, the Broadband Equity Fund, began to work with Tribal, state, and philanthropic partners to ensure broadband access throughout New Mexico in partnership with a Broadband Collective that met monthly to plan and fundraise (NMF Annual Report 2021).

As a special feature, the 2021 Annual Report included “Community Stories of Resilience” as exemplary projects. Spread over three pages, the report describes five grants

in support of community resilience. The *Chama Valley Arts Coalition* collaborated with the Eleanor Daggett Memorial Library to initiate a story hour program aimed at literacy enrichment and school-readiness of pre-school aged children in northern New Mexico. The *Dream Diné Charter School* in the Navajo Nation providing emergency supplies and welfare checks related to the pandemic with financial assistance coming from the Native American Relief Fund. Through the NMF Northeastern Regional Health Fund, *Mental Health Resources* were granted to five organizations doing health-related work in northeastern New Mexico including a Behavioral Health Services program in Quay County. In Taos, the story about *Not Forgotten Outreach* described funding through the NMF Permaculture Fund that helped veterans connect with local farming mentors in a training program for habitat restoration and the planting of a food forest in the heart of town. With a grant from the HEAL (Healthy Entry for Asylee Lives) Fund, the *Border Servant Corps* in Las Cruces was able to purchase a van for the safe transport of clients who are seeking asylum in southern New Mexico communities. In summary, the 2021 Annual Report posted grants totaling \$2,850,000. Of this amount, \$1,035,000 was awarded to non-profits and tribes as a response to the COVID-19 pandemic starting in April 2020. As in prior years, the foundation continued the community-advised funds, individual donor funds, scholarships, agency funds, emergency funds, and other investment accounts. Grants were distributed to all quadrants of New Mexico as well as the Rio Grande Corridor.

The integral values of the NMF continue unchanged: building local economies, establishing relationships with community leaders, and capacity building of the non-profit sector to assist New Mexico's most underserved communities. The foundation continues to believe in the power of philanthropy as a tool for inspiring creative, community-based change and prosperity. In the Strategic Plan for 2022-2024, the grassroots approach to improving the quality of life in rural New Mexico and statewide remains as a key component of the foundation's core mission:

*"We pool resources to support New Mexico's most underserved communities, strengthen Mexico's nonprofits and grow philanthropy, especially in rural New Mexico. We connect donors to valuable projects and vulnerable communities and work to be responsive to current, often urgent, needs. We turn small actions into big impacts.... At NMF, we value rural New Mexico communities, equity and fairness, local leadership and experience, partnerships, sustainability, transparency, and respect for traditions and culture."*

The Strategic Plan 2022-2024 also recognizes the need to leverage resources for local communities as the people of New Mexico emerge from the COVID-19 pandemic and respond to the impact of climate change. Priority fields of interest in the three year period include:

*Rural Infrastructure-water for domestic and irrigation uses, access to broadband, housing, energy (electric, solar, wind, gas), transportation*

*Community Resilience*-agriculture systems, access to natural and cultural resources, traditional social connections, acequia associations, mutual domestic water associations

*Healthy Communities*-nutrition, primary health care, mental health, recreation, first responders, credit availability, domestic animal welfare

*Educational Opportunities*-traditional languages, teaching English as a second language, occupational training, outdoor education

*Environmental Adaptation*-maintaining and protecting soil and water health, protect wildlife, sustaining vegetation

To implement program support across the fields of interest, the New Mexico Foundation will draw from active funds already in place and will mobilize additional sources of support. Strategic Goals for 2022-2024 include:

*Goal One:* Increase the level and impact of grant-making and local capacity building through strengthened partnerships with community leaders, donors, and funders statewide to support community engagement in realizing desired local outcomes

*Goal Two:* Raise NMF Profile

*Goal Three:* Enhance the financial base for long-term operations and program activities/grants

*Goal Four:* Strengthen the effectiveness and impact of NMF by ensuring it has a diverse and knowledgeable board, and a professional and dedicated staff.

## **40<sup>th</sup> Year Anniversary, 1983-2023**

The COVID-19 relief funds continued into the 40<sup>th</sup> year anniversary of the foundation in 2023. By May 2023, the anniversary month dating to incorporation in 1983, the New Mexico Foundation led by CEO JoAnn Melchor, had raised over \$2 million for the Native American Relief Fund (NARF). The purpose was to distribute PPE, food, water, and emergency assistance resources to 23 Pueblos and the Navajo and Apache Nations in New Mexico (see booklet “New Mexico Foundation, 1983-2023: Celebrating 40 years of Statewide Community Philanthropy”). In the words of JoAnn Melchor:

*“Trust-based philanthropy is critical to our Native American tribes. In the past, non-native funders were coming in and saying, ‘this is what you need, this is what we are giving you.’ We can do better by asking communities, ‘How can we be in partnership with you?’ That simple shift, of asking local communities what they need, is the best way for philanthropic organizations to start working with tribal communities.”*

This approach, per JoAnn Melchor, derives from the core value of the New Mexico Foundation throughout its forty years of statewide community philanthropy.

In addition to the published booklet, the NMF staff also distributed a fact sheet documenting the foundation's impact by the year 2023. Total grants since 2018 were reported as \$14,874,404 via 2,305 grants. Highlights included: \$2,023,304 granted through the Native American Relief Fund-COVID-19 since 2020; \$1,500,000 in awards from the Native American Recovery Fund Zone Grant since 2021; \$1,095,648 granted from the HEAL Fund since 2021; \$455,750 granted since 2022 from the New Mexico Broadband Equity Fund; \$349,781 from the NMF Permaculture Fund since 2019; and \$335,000 from the New Mexico Workers Equity Initiative Fund granted in 2023. During 2022, some 350 organizations received awards and sixty-two small community organizations were provided fiscal sponsorship services. In addition, the foundation managed \$22 million in investments for fifty individuals and organizations through donor-advised funds and agency endowments (see "New Mexico Foundation At-A-Glance").

To celebrate the 40<sup>th</sup> year anniversary, special events were held in Santa Fe (Museum of Indian Arts and Culture, Meem Auditorium) and Albuquerque (Indian Pueblo Cultural Center, Outdoor Patio), April 19<sup>th</sup>, and June 7<sup>th</sup> respectively. Constituents, friends, and foundation partners were invited. A handout prepared for the anniversary events stated:

*"For 40 years, the New Mexico Foundation (formerly New Mexico Community Foundation) has distinguished itself as a statewide leader in philanthropy. Our progressive, grassroots approach builds stronger communities through collaboration on critical issues and by tapping into local resources, helping residents of New Mexico discover the strength in themselves. We envision a state where every New Mexico community has access to resources that support their ability to enjoy a better quality of life. Through partnerships with leaders in the community, we support effective strategies to address statewide issues together."*

Rosemary Romero, Board Chairwoman, opened the events by welcoming all the friends and supporters in attendance and provided additional remarks. She introduced JoAnn Melchor, NMF President and CEO, who described the mission of the foundation since its beginning in 1983 and highlighted how the mission has been accomplished by way of program strategies, new funds, fiscal sponsorships, and grant-making. At the end, JoAnn Melchor thanked the friends and donors for their contributions of time, talent, and funding support over the forty years. Other invited speakers gave brief talks as well. For Santa Fe, they included Bobbie Ferrell representing U.S. Congresswoman, Teresa Leger Fernández, José Rivera, co-founder of the foundation in 1983, and Diane Trujeque of the Children's Cancer Fund. In Albuquerque, the guest speakers were DeChellie Gray representing U.S. Congresswoman Melanie Stansbury, Roberta Rael, Executive Director of Generation Justice, and Benny Shendo (Jemez Pueblo), Chairman of the Board, First Nations Development Institute. Food and refreshments were served with attendees encouraged to continue conversations after the events were adjourned.

## Update: Commitment to Community 2025-2026

In May of 2025, the NMF Board of Directors hired a new President and CEO, Justin Kíí Huenemann, “a visionary changemaker and champion for collective prosperity.” Previously, He had served as President and CEO of First People’s Fund, where he elevated Indigenous artists in celebration of traditional knowledge, artistry and leadership. He also held executive positions at Jemez Pueblo Enterprises, the Notah Begay III Foundation, the Native American Community Development Institute in Minneapolis, MN, as well as Senior Program Officer at the Northwest Area Foundation supporting community-driven economic development across rural, urban, and tribal communities in eight states.

During the next six months, the CEO position was still under the rebranded New Mexico Foundation. At a holiday open house on December 2, 2025, the invited guests, grantees and supporters of the foundation gathered to welcome Justin and hear about his vision and plans for the future. The event was held at the permanent headquarters of the foundation, 8 Calle Medico, Santa Fe, NM. Near the end of the evening, Justin addressed the group and announced that he and the Board of Directors planned to restore the foundation’s name back to its founding years as the “New Mexico Community Foundation.” He emphasized the statewide mission of the foundation in support of all New Mexico places, especially the rural and tribal communities. True to his words, he next sent a Happy New Year greeting to friends and supporters in the January E-Newsletter 2026 formally announcing the change in name. Below is the text of his message that he titled “Commitment to Community.”<sup>5</sup>

We are excited to welcome 2026 and begin the year by reembracing our original name- **New Mexico Community Foundation**.

Our Board’s decision to restore “Community” to our full name reflects our commitment to a core element of our work and mission: centering and supporting all communities and people across New Mexico. This return reaffirms who we are and why we exist.

*Community* is a word that holds many meanings and evokes many feelings. For us at the Foundation, it is about recognizing and affirming our collective and shared humanity as neighbors and fellow New Mexicans. It is through shared fellowship and desire for collective good that inspires and roots thriving communities- in all its forms.

Moving forward, the New Mexico Community Foundation will further root itself in the belief that all places and people hold value and are the heart of community. Our goal is to support communities in thriving on their own terms while ensuring everyone has the opportunity to enjoy a high quality of life.

This sense of “community” calls on all of us to be good relatives to one another—to care for, support, and uplift each other. We look forward to partnering with you and helping you find meaningful ways to give back to your community.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup>**Alex Mercure** also initiated an apple growers' cooperative and processing plant in the Española Valley, a livestock corporation and cattle feedlot for northern New Mexico ranchers, a wood products enterprise at El Vado, and a weaving shop at Truchas. Later, he was instrumental in the founding of Associated Southwest Investors, Inc., a venture capital company assisting minority owned businesses with start-up loans and equity partnerships.

<sup>2</sup>**Ray López** was a major leader in the establishment of technical support for mutual domestic water associations in rural northern and southern New Mexico to upgrade the aging water supply systems and improve operations and maintenance functions. He served as a member of the Board of Directors for the National Demonstration Water Project.

<sup>3</sup>**José Rivera** and the HELP staff in Albuquerque developed a Federation of Acequias in six rural counties providing comprehensive assistance to local ditch associations: physical improvements, economic development, education, and research. At the regional level, the Northwest Area Office in Española organized *Acequias del Norte*, an advocacy and support organization composed of northern New Mexico ditch commissioners and mayordomos.

<sup>4</sup>**HELP New Mexico, Inc.**, continues to serve people and places of New Mexico on a statewide basis. Currently, HELP maintains a diversified approach to program development that addresses community needs in existing service areas through twenty-five offices across the state with more than two hundred employees. The HELP programs focus on “six pillars of service” that include Employment, Education and Cognitive Development, Income and Asset Building, Housing, Health and Social/Behavioral Development, Civic Engagement, and Community Involvement. (HELP New Mexico Inc. website, July 2020)

<sup>5</sup>**NMCF E-Newsletter** January 2026, “From the CEO, Commitment to Community” by Justin Kíí Huenemann, President and CEO, New Mexico Community Foundation.

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## **PERSONAL COMMUNICATIONS**

Bruce Rolstad, first NMCF Executive Director, regarding early history of NMCF/HELP, Santa Fe NM

Susan Herter, first NMCF/HELP President of the Board of Trustees, regarding the early NMCF years and founding of "The Churches Project," Jacona NM

Ernest (Gene) Ortega, former HELP Executive Director and member of the initial NMCF/HELP Board of Trustees, regarding the early history of NMCF/HELP, Albuquerque NM

María Varela, former member of NMCF Board of Directors representing Ganados del Valle enterprises and instrumental in establishing the Milagro Fund with proceeds from the premiere of *The Milagro Beanfield War*, an award-winning film directed by Robert Redford.

Francisco Uviña-Contreras, Director of the Historic Preservation and Regionalism Program, UNM School of Architecture and Planning, regarding history of the Churches Project and its transition to Cornerstones Community Partnerships, Bernalillo NM

Carol Miller, former Executive Director of La Clínica del Pueblo, Tierra Amarilla NM, email April 29, 2023, regarding assistance by Bruce Rolstad and Susan Rumstrum for development of a fire station in Ojo Sarco NM.

**Cumulative List of Organizations described in Section 170 c of the Internal Revenue Code of 1954. Revised to October 31, 1979. Publication 78 (Rev. 1-80).**

**See entry in next full page:**

**Home Education Livelihood Program Inc. D/B/A. New Mexico Community Foundation. Albuquerque, N.M.**

## Cumulative List of Organizations Section 170 c of the IRS Code 1954 to 10/31/1979

- Home Aides of Central New York Inc., Syracuse, N. Y.
- Home Aids of Rockland Inc., New City, N. Y.
- Home and School Association Livingston High School, Livingston, N. J.
- Home and School Association of Asheville Country Day School Inc., Until 8008, Asheville, N. C.
- Home and School Association of the Woodrow Wilson High School of Washington Dc, Washington, D. C.
- Home Assistance Foundation, Bensenville, Il.
- Home Association Inc., Tampa, Fl.
- Home Association of Patriotic Order of Americans, Birdsboro, Pa.
- Home Association of Washington Iowa, Washington, Ia.
- Home Base Child Care Association, Grand Forks, N. D.
- Home Bible Class Ministry, Portland, Or.
- Home Bible Fellowship, S. Farmingdale, N. Y.
- Home Bible Studies and Literature Outreach Inc., Napa, Ca.
- Home Bible Study Fellowship Inc., Corona, Ca.
- Home Bible Study Group, Mt Pleasant, Ia.
- Home Bound Medical Care Inc., Until 7906, Memphis, Tn.
- Home Builders, Birmingham, Al.
- Home Care & Health Services Inc., Tyler, Tx.
- Home Care Association of New York State Inc. C. O. Gary L. Granik, Until 8006, Syracuse, N. Y.
- Home Care Corporation of Springfield Inc., Springfield, Ma.
- Home Care of Dallas Inc., Dallas, Tx.
- Home Care Research Inc., Until 8009, Frederick, Md.
- Home Care Service Center for Neurological and Handicapped of San Franc, San Francisco, Ca.
- Home Care Service South & West Inc., Alsip, Il.
- Home Care Services Inc., University City, Mo.
- Home Cemetery Association, Sleepy Eye, Mn. (6)
- Home Church School Foundation Inc., Littleton, Ar.
- Home Delivered Meal Service Incorporated, Breckenridge, Mn.
- Home Delivered Meals, Grand Forks, N. D.
- Home Delivered Meals Inc. 600 Sager St, Until 7812, Danville, Il.
- Home Economics Assn Miss, Quitman, Ms.
- Home Economics Education Association, Washington, D. C.
- Home Economics Foundation Inc., Greensboro, N. C.
- Home Education Livelihood Program Inc. D/B/A. New Mexico Community Foundation, Albuquerque, N. M.
- Home Emergency Life Preparedness Inc., Until 8212, Pulaski, Va.
- Home for Abandoned Animals, Middleton, Ma.
- Home for Aged Baptists Inc., Ironton, Mo.
- Home for Aged British Southern District, Jacksonville, Fl.
- Home for Aged Church of the Brethren Incorporated, Roanoke, Va.
- Home for Aged Lutherans, Wauwatosa, Wi.
- Home for Aged Masons of Texas, Until 8006, Arlington, Tx.
- Home for Aged Men, Portland, Me.
- Home for Aged Men in the City of Brockton, Brockton, Ma. (4)
- Home for Aged Men in Worcester, Worcester, Ma. (3)
- Home for Aged People in Fall River, Fall River, Ma. (3)
- Home for Aged People in Stoneham, Stoneham, Ma. (3)
- Home for Aged People in Winchester, Winchester, Ma. (4)
- Home for Aged Protestant Women, Pittsburgh, Pa.
- Home for Aged Women, Boston, Ma.
- Home for Aged Women, Rockland, Me.
- Home for Aged Women, Portsmouth, N. H. (3)
- Home for Aged Women, Jersey City, N. J. (3)
- Home for Aged Women, Cedar Rapids, Ia.
- Home for Aged Women, Portsmouth, Oh. (4)
- Home for Aged Women, Youngstown, Oh.
- Home for Aged Women at Easton Md Inc., Easton, Md.
- Home for Aged Women in Greene County, Catskill, N. Y.
- Home for Aged Women in Salem, Salem, Ma. (3)
- Home for Aged Women in the City of Elizabeth, Elizabeth, N. J.
- Home for Aged Women Inc., Wilmington, De.
- Home for Aged Women of Cleveland Ohio, Cleveland, Oh.
- Home for Aged Women of Salem Ohio, Salem, Oh.
- Home for Aged Women of St Johnsbury, St Johnsbury, Vt. (3)
- Home for Aged Women, Trustees of the, Worcester, Ma. (3)
- Home for Christian Scientists Inc., Baltimore, Md.
- Home for Crippled Children, Pittsburgh, Pa.
- Home for Destitute Crippled Children, Chicago, Il.
- Home for Elderly Women of Montgomery County, Amsterdam, N. Y.
- Home for Friendless Animals Inc., Noblesville, In.
- Home for Helpless Animals Inc., Until 8012, Atlanta, Ga.
- Home for Homeless Women, Wilkes Barre, Pa.
- Home for Homeless Women Trust by Settlers Elma C. Bishop and Bessi, Wilkes Barre, Pa.
- Home for Incurables, Cincinnati, Oh.
- Home for Incurables Founded by the Kings Daughters and Sons of Tennessee Inc., Memphis, Tn.
- Home for Incurables of Baltimore City, Baltimore, Md.
- Home for Incurables of Baltimore City Endowment Fund Inc., Baltimore, Md.
- Home for Jewish Aged of Cincinnati, Cincinnati, Oh.
- Home for Non Ambulatory Retarded Inc., Parma, Oh.
- Home for Old Men & Aged Couples, New York, N. Y.
- Home for the Aged, Elmira, N. Y. (4)
- Home for the Aged, Dallas, Tx.
- Home for the Aged, Charlottesville, Va.
- Home for the Aged, Saginaw, Mi.
- Home for the Aged Altenheim, Wheeling, W. V. (4)
- Home for the Aged in Providence, Providence, R. I.
- Home for the Aged in Ulster County, Kingston, N. Y. (3)
- Home for the Aged of Frederick City, Frederick, Md. (3)
- Home for the Aged of Grafton County, Woodsville, N. H. (4)
- Home for the Aged of New Rochelle Inc., New Rochelle, N. Y.
- Home for the Aged of the City of Freeport Inc., Freeport, Il.
- Home for the Aged of the Little Sisters of the Poor, San Francisco, Ca.
- Home for the Aged of the Ohio Eldership of the Churches of God in North America, Findlay, Oh.
- Home for the Aged of the Protestant Episcopal Church of the Diocese of Los Angeles, Alhambra, Ca.
- Home for the Aged People of Franklin County, Greenfield, Ma. (3)
- Home for the Armenian Aged Inc., Emerson, N. J.
- Home for the Friendless in the City of Harrisburg, Harrisburg, Pa.
- Home for the Jewish Aged, Philadelphia, Pa.
- Home for Widows & Single Women of Lebanon and Lebanon Co, Lebanon, Pa.
- Home Furnishings Industry Chapter for the City of Hope, Los Angeles, Ca.
- Home Garden Neighborhood Center, Hanford, Ca.
- Home Health & Home Care Inc., Paris, Pa.
- Home Health Agency, Eugene, Or.
- Home Health Agency of Alamogordo Inc., Until 8006, Alamogordo, N. M.
- Home Health Agency of Chapel Hill Inc., Chapel Hill, N. C.
- Home Health Agency of Greater Miami Inc., Miami, Fl.
- Home Health Agency of Homeplace Inc., Ary, Ky.
- Home Health Agency of Memorial Hospital Inc., North Conway, N. H.
- Home Health Agency of North Broward Inc., Tamaral, Fl.
- Home Health Agency of Olympia Fields Inc., Olympia Fields, Il.
- Home Health Agency of Orland-Tinley, Chicago, Il.
- Home Health Agency of Sarasota County Inc., Sarasota, Fl.
- Home Health Agency of South Broward Inc., Hallandale, Fl.
- Home Health Agency of Southwest Florida Inc., Naples, Fl.
- Home Health Agency of Will County, Frankfort, Il.
- Home Health Agency Vna of Southwest Louisiana, Lake Charles, La.
- Home Health Agency-Multi-County Inc., Hattiesburg, Ms.
- Home Health Aide Service Inc. Southeastern Iowa Homeaker, Burlington, Ia.
- Home Health and Counseling Services Inc., Walnut Creek, Ca.
- Home Health Care Agency of North Alabama Inc., Birmingham, Al.
- Home Health Care Inc., Southfield, Mi.
- Home Health Care Inc., North Miami Beach, Fl.
- Home Health Care of Cleveland, Until 8006, Cleveland, Oh.
- Home Health Care of Connecticut Inc., Until 8106, New Haven, Ct.
- Home Health Care of Eastern Pa Inc., Bethlehem, Pa.
- Home Health Care of Henry County Inc., New Castle, In. (4)
- Home Health Care of Mecklenburg Inc., Until 7903, Charlotte, N. C.
- Home Health Care of Mississippi Inc., Hattiesburg, Ms.
- Home Health Care of Pinellas County Inc., St Petersburg, Fl.
- Home Health Care Services Inc., Wichita, Ks.
- Home Health Care Services Incorporated, Tallahassee, Fl. (4)
- Home Health Care Services of Kosciusko County Inc., Warsaw, In.
- Home Health Home Care Inc., Orange, Tx.
- Home Health Research Foundation, Long Beach, Ca. (4)
- Home Health Service Henderson County Health Department, Hendersonville, N. C. (6)(7)
- Home Health Service of Chicago South Inc., Chicago, Il.
- Home Health Service of Greater Philadelphia, Elkins Park, Pa.
- Home Health Service of King County, New Orleans, La. (6)(7)
- Home Health Service of Lake County Health Dept, Waukegan, Il.
- Home Health Service of Northern Essex Inc., Haverhill, Ma.
- Home Health Services Inc., Until 7805, Charleston, S. C.
- Home Health Services Inc., Lake Charles, La.
- Home Health Services Inc. of Highland, Highland, Il.
- Home Health Services of Arkansas Inc., Fayetteville, Ar.
- Home Health Services of Ashtabula County, Ashtabula, Oh.
- Home Health Services of Chicago North Inc., Chicago, Il.