

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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Open Hands Names New Development Director

Santa Fe, NM, 2/11/11. Open Hands, a nonprofit that has served elderly, disabled and economically disadvantaged citizens since 1977, has offered the position of development director to Mary Ellen Degnan, who accepted the offer and assumes the development director position effective immediately.

Michelle Dube, executive director for Open Hands, says, "We are highly pleased to bring Ms. Degnan on board, and to deepen our collaboration with people in the community who support Open Hands' vital mission." Prior to joining Open Hands, Ms. Degnan was development director for the Alzheimer Association's New Mexico Chapter and provided development services to The Arts Center at Fuller Lodge, Santa Fe Recovery Center, Santa Fe Stages, and a number of prestigious organizations and associations in Dallas, Santa Fe, and Taos.

"It is an honor to work with the fine people at Open Hands, who are dedicated to serving the elder community that has come to know the ravages of Alzheimer's and other related dementias," says Ms. Degnan. "Ten years ago the community came together to build a building to serve the needs of those afflicted and their caregivers. In 2011, we are launching a new day at Open Hands, working with those original donors and all who have joined our family of supporters since then, to fill the building. With your help, we will expand our services to provide a hands-on approach to a daily quality of life for the current needs of our member/clients, and, at the same time, will fully engage in focused efforts seeking solutions to combat a growing epidemic."

Ms. Dube said, "Open Hands provides unique services to this community, and we know from the many heartwarming letters of thanks we receive as well as from the always-increasing demand for our services that the members of this community truly need and appreciate this organization."

Open Hands' Home Safety Program provides environmental modifications – including installation of grab bars and the construction of custom wheelchair ramps – to help people with disabilities live independently with as much comfort and safety as possible, for as long as possible. The Adult Day Services program provides a safe and nurturing environment where family members can bring their elders while they continue to work. This service offers art therapy, socialization, physical therapy, daily nutrition, and oversight by a Registered Nurse.

"These two programs save the taxpayer an overwhelming amount of tax revenue compared to the alternative of a residential nursing home, and enhances the quality of life for both client and family," says Ms. Dube. All of Open Hands' services are available

through the government-sponsored Disability and Elderly Waiver program. Services are also available to everyone in the community on a private pay basis, with rates that can be modified in consideration of each client's financial ability to pay.

In addition, Open Hands' Medical Equipment Loan Bank lends temporarily needed items such as wheelchairs, walkers, shower and tub chairs free to anyone regardless of age or income and is totally funded by private donations.

Ms. Degnan has already begun to reestablish partnerships with other nonprofits in the community, at the request of Open Hands board members and various community members. "We want to improve the community's awareness of the services and programs we offer," she said, "and another goal is to secure additional funding to ensure that we are able to meet the continuous and growing demand for what we do."

Open Hands originally was founded in 1977 as a hospice service with 26 clients and now serves over 10,000 New Mexicans each year. Programs include an Adult Day Service for senior care during the day, a medical equipment loan bank, Open Hands store located at 1836 Cerrillos Road and a Home Safety Department that was recognized by the National Council on Aging as being one of the Top Ten in the country in 2007.

Open Hands is located at 2976 Rodeo Park Drive East in Santa Fe. For more information on Open Hands, visit www.openhands.org or call (505) 428-2320.