



FALL/WINTER 2005-2006

IN TOUCH

Did You Know?

Over the past year, OPEN HANDS delivered services to **10,456** of the neediest elderly, disabled and low-income residents in Santa Fe, Taos and Torrance counties.

Governor Richardson proclaimed September 18-24, 2005 as "**Adult Day Services Week**", recognizing the work of OPEN HANDS and the importance of adult day services in providing affordable, community-based care to the elderly.

Seniors Reaching Out, our own performing arts troupe for active seniors, entertained more than 1,400 people in the past year through 60 performances in local schools, retirement homes and pueblos.

Celebrated folk pianist **George Winston** has chosen OPEN HANDS as a beneficiary for his January 10th concert at the James A. Little Theatre in Santa Fe. For ticket information, call 428-2347.

In the past year, OPEN HANDS has installed more than **60 wheelchair ramps** and **350 grab bars** in low-income homes throughout our community.

Responding to Those in Need



Theresa Armijo oversees a sample of medical equipment sent to help Hurricane Katrina victims. In the wake of the disaster, OPEN HANDS support reached over 100 individuals seeking refuge in New Mexico. See story on page 6.



*Beth Witrogen McLeod, Pulitzer Prize nominated author of **Caregiving: The Spiritual Journey of Love, Loss, and Renewal** addresses the crowd at OPEN HANDS' Family & Volunteer Caregivers Day.*



This issue of In Touch is respectfully dedicated to Ann DuBois, our friend and colleague who passed away on August 26th. See story on page 3.

open hands



MISSION

OPEN HANDS provides essential services to assist the frail elderly, the disabled or the economically disadvantaged to live with dignity and independence.

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From the Director

Responding to people in need is the theme of this edition of *In Touch*.

You will read about the work of OPEN HANDS in helping those in our own community and beyond. And you will learn about the people of OPEN HANDS supporting their colleagues.

Community is what we are about and why we exist. This summer we participated in events like the 2nd Street Experience, Community Days on the Plaza and the Santa Fe Fiesta Parade. These events connect us with the people we serve. Walking alongside our Fiesta float through the streets of Santa Fe, I heard many people in the crowd praise OPEN HANDS and the work we do.

It was very gratifying for us to hear that kind of response. We work hard to ensure that the care we show for others is mirrored in the care that we show within our own organization. The article in this newsletter about the employees of OPEN HANDS taking care of each other really brings home that message and speaks eloquently to the character of the people I am privileged to lead.

We are now halfway through a three-year plan aimed at enhancing the quality of



our services, the stability of our finances and the extent of our reach into the community. In the year just concluded, we retired all of the debt incurred by OPEN HANDS, which means that more funds will directly enhance program quality and quantity. With your help, we also reached our fundraising goals for the year. In an uncertain economic environment for nonprofits, I believe that we have positioned ourselves to take on the challenges before us.

Part of my role is to be constantly looking toward the horizon, for challenges as well as for opportunities. As you might imagine, there are plenty of both. I truly believe that we can and will grow as an organization that demands professionalism, accountability and quality, while demonstrating the care and compassion that defines our mission.

—TOM SPRAY

*We work hard to ensure that the care we show for others
is mirrored in the care that we show
within our own organization.*

From the President



In the coming year, through our newsletter and forthcoming annual report, you will hear a lot about community. For it was community that built OPEN HANDS and it is the community that sustains us.

Yet, like every community, ours is made up of individuals. Within OPEN HANDS, these are individuals who genuinely care for the wellbeing of those they serve. Equally so, these are individuals who care deeply for the welfare of their fellow employees.

In that light, the Board and I are

especially proud of the response of staff of OPEN HANDS to several challenges over the past few months. Effecting an appropriate organizational response to the Katrina disaster, creatively proposing and adding activities of substance to brighten our Adult Day Services clients' days, and caring for loss and illness within our own family while still maintaining the programs and services our clients and their caregivers depend on – these have truly been remarkable achievements.

It is often in trying times that the true character of an individual or organization shines through. And it is in these trying times that the people of OPEN HANDS shine brightest.

—RUBY A. MENGDEN

Taking Care of Our Own

The past few months have been especially trying for the staff of OPEN HANDS. Though normally single-minded in our dedication to and care for the elderly and low-income population we serve, the scale of the hardship that has faced our own employees has given us pause and shifted our focus inward. But the response of OPEN HANDS staff to this series of crises has closely mirrored the often selfless care they show to others; little did we expect we would need to so extensively care for our own.

Ann DuBois came to OPEN HANDS full of ideas and with a wealth of experience. She previously served for six years as a Case Manager and provider of homemaker services for the disabled. Her varied experience included training in family therapy under the

the College of Santa Fe. She held a Bachelor of Arts degree from Park College, a Master of Divinity degree in Counseling from Princeton Theological Seminary and a Master of Business Administration degree from UNM.

OPEN HANDS hired Ann as its new Community Outreach Services Director in May 2005. Her energy, enthusiasm and experience quickly added a creative and infectious spark to all of our work. By the end of August, Ann lost a dramatically brief battle with brain cancer and was gone. Prior to her passing, and even before the extent and seriousness of her illness was fully known, OPEN HANDS staff rallied in support. As Ann was a recent hire with few accrued benefits, a Sick Leave



Ann DuBois (left) with Beth Witrogen McLeod at Family & Volunteer Caregivers Day this past May.

heart. Mary Ann Garcia, also of ADS, was due for arthroscopic surgery to repair a badly torn tendon in her right knee. And another employee was diagnosed with cancer. The scale and timing of all of this seemed overwhelming.

Fortunately, the response was equally overwhelming. Through the Sick Leave Donation program, OPEN HANDS staff donated a total of 62 days of their own leave to ensure Ann, Lorraine and Mary Ann would not have to resort to unpaid leave, that bills would be paid, and that the expense of their treatment would be lessened. Our own Ken Walrack and his partner Esther organized a Frito Pie luncheon in Ann's benefit, raising much-needed funds to help offset her medical expenses. Their friend, Stuart Toman even pitched in, contributing half the food, helping to set up and making a significant donation to the effort. And ADS driver and resident musician Fred Chavez organized a benefit dance for Lorraine – selling entrance and raffle tickets and playing with his own band for the event.

While we hesitate to draw attention to our own cares – especially in light of what many of our clients face on a daily basis – these have been extraordinary times. Yet extraordinary too has been the compassion of those who work with OPEN HANDS. ■



(Left to right) Mary Ann Garcia, Ken Walrack, Fred Chavez and Lorraine Romero.

renowned therapist Sal Minuchin at the Philadelphia Child Guidance Clinic and seven years of clinical work with children, adults and family therapy. In addition, Ann had 20 years of experience in providing organizational development consulting for the national office of the Presbyterian Church, for various nonprofits nationwide and for

Donation program was quickly established to ease the financial burden of extended unpaid leave.

Through the same period, we also learned that Lorraine Romero of our Adult Day Services staff had been diagnosed with life-threatening anemia and was facing an operation that would stress an already weakened

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*OPEN HANDS always strives for accuracy. For incorrect spellings
 or omissions, please contact Elaine at 505-428-2364
 so we can correct our records.*

Katrina's Toll

In the wake of Hurricane Katrina, many of us were stunned by the enormity of the disaster and at a loss as to how we could help. OPEN HANDS was in a fortunate position to respond. While by no means equal to the scale of destruction or the extent of need, we were able to lend a welcome hand to those seeking refuge in our state.

In response to Governor Richardson's call for durable medical equipment, OPEN HANDS donated surplus canes, crutches and walkers to those temporarily relocated in Albuquerque and the Santa Fe area. We estimate that this assistance reached approximately 100 individuals. While modest, this example demonstrates the importance and flexibility of community-based nonprofits in responding to crises—even those outside of our immediate community.

"It's so rewarding to be in a position to help those displaced by this disaster and we thank Governor Richardson for his initiative," added Tom Spray, OPEN HANDS' Executive Director.

Our donation of surplus equipment came from OPEN HANDS' Medical Equipment Loan Bank. Annually, the Loan Bank provides free medical equipment loans on a temporary basis to more than 1,000 individuals suffering or recovering from a debilitating injury.

A Youthful Din and a Canine's Grin



Pet therapist Echo (center) with handler Shelley Stell (right) and an elated Esther Maez

Things are definitely not as usual in Adult Day Services these days. On a 'typical' visit over the past several weeks, there is a good chance you would have witnessed one or both of the following: a dog greeting our seniors, responding to their non-verbal commands, calmly visiting with them individually, and barking out a few words of her own; or schoolchildren, yes children, filling the great room with their laughter, reading stories and painting with elders, or unabashedly querying them for a class assignment about their view of the meaning of Peace.

These are two examples of the evolution of the ADS program. Our goal is to enhance both the variety and substance of activities available to the elderly of our community, making OPEN HANDS a welcome alternative to a senior's daily routine.

Through a special program with the Santa Fe Animal Shelter and Humane Society, Echo – a yellow Labrador Retriever – and her handler Shelley Stell visit OPEN HANDS every week, bringing joy and companionship to all of our seniors. The program was initiated by Margaret Jennings, Pet Outreach Coordinator for the Animal Shelter.

Aside from pure joy, pet therapy – or Animal Assisted Therapy, as it is more formally known – has a number of physiological, psychological and emotional benefits.

These may vary by individual, but include: range of motion exercise and sensory stimulation, decreased blood pressure, reduced loneliness or anxiety, diversion from pain or monotony, the exercise of short and long-term memory, and unconditional love and attention. People have also been shown to become more active and responsive both during and after visiting with animals. Those who withdraw from human interaction will often talk to a pet. This certainly has been our experience at OPEN HANDS.

Just as exciting for its unbounded potential is the cooperative program we have established with Santa Fe Public Schools. The core of this program is the pairing of a second grade class at Carlos Gilbert Elementary School with our seniors. Bringing young and old together creates an environment in which each generation can thrive and find meaning in their day. Running throughout the current school year, the program includes: reciprocal visits – first of 19 children to OPEN HANDS, and then a group of our seniors returning the visit to their classroom; penpaling between the class and elders in Adult Day Services throughout the year; and finally a picnic at the end of the school year.

Joy was visible on the faces of our elderly members during the initial visit and the impact of intergenerational exchange – shared wisdom, mutual interest and respect, compassion for others – will resonate for years to come. ■



Second graders from Carlos Gilbert Elementary School enjoy a morning of learning and sharing.

A Fresh Look at Volunteering

Through the years the volunteer program at OPEN HANDS has undergone many changes. This past October marked a fresh start for the program with the hiring of Volunteer Coordinator Jackie Poplawsky. With her extensive background in volunteerism, Jackie plans to boost our volunteer base through a rigorous volunteer search and expand the range of volunteer opportunities available.

The revitalization of the program began with a complete reorganization of the volunteer application and training procedure. "By creating a more precise intake process we can place our volunteers with more efficiency, thereby helping them to receive the most rewarding volunteer experience," says Jackie. Each department at OPEN HANDS answered a questionnaire that identified what volunteer positions are most valuable for their specific needs, while being equally enjoyable for the volunteer. "Volunteerism is a very reciprocal relationship," notes Jackie. "Not only is the individual being served benefiting, but volunteers can take pride in their positions, knowing how important their time is to our organization and those we serve."

The opportunities OPEN HANDS provides for its volunteers are vast and encompass many learning opportunities. Adult Day Services has partnered with Southwestern College to provide art therapy internships for

their students. Students have the ability to employ the theories and methods they learn in their classes while our clients benefit from the artistic outlet. OPEN HANDS participated in the College of Santa Fe's annual "Day of Service," enabling eight students to socialize, make crafts and garden in our greenhouse with clients.

In addition to the volunteer activities in Adult Day Services, the Home Visitors Program has doubled its partnerships with homebound clients in the past month. Through more extensive training and support for Home Visitor volunteers this program will continue to grow and create sustaining caring relationships between volunteers and homebound clients.

Seniors Reaching Out, a diverse group of elder volunteers, has begun its fall production series with the play entitled "The Fourposter." On average Seniors Reaching Out has six activities per month, including public performances and readings throughout the Santa Fe community. Charles De Muth, SRO's artistic director, has a wonderful lineup of volunteer opportunities planned for this year, such as a special SRO performance at the OPEN HANDS Holiday Party.

As these changes transform the OPEN HANDS volunteer program, listen for the gratifying volunteer opportunities that will become available in the next few months. ■

Be a Santa to a Senior



As part of our ongoing campaign to improve the quality of life of the aged in our community, OPEN HANDS will be participating in the Be a Santa to a Senior Program this holiday season. Recognizing that seniors as a population are particularly vulnerable to feelings of loneliness and isolation as well as financial hardship during this time of year, the program, spearheaded by Home Instead Senior Care, hopes to infuse the lives of seniors with an abundance of holiday cheer.

Several members of our Adult Day Services join an estimated 1,500 seniors from the Santa Fe area whose names and gift requests will decorate the Be a Santa to a Senior Christmas tree at the local Wal-Mart. Anyone wishing to serve as a Santa may then simply choose a name from the tree, purchase the items requested and return the gifts to the same location, where they will be collected, wrapped and distributed by volunteers.

Beginning November 17th, the Be a Santa to a Senior Christmas tree will be located at Wal-Mart on 3251 Cerrillos Road. Gifts will be collected until December 13, 2005.

Donor Spotlight: The Daniels Fund

OPEN HANDS is proud to announce that it has received a \$20,000 Daniels Fund grant to support its programs and services for the frail and disabled elderly of our community.

"Beyond the grant monies received, it is an honor to be recognized and supported by an organization the caliber of Daniels, which has done so much for the neediest in communities throughout our region," says Joseph DiChiaro, OPEN HANDS' Development Director.

Based in Denver, the Daniels Fund operates the Daniels College Prep and Scholarship Program and the Daniels Fund Grants Program in Colorado, New Mexico, Wyoming and Utah. The Fund was established in 1997 by Bill Daniels, a pioneer in

cable television known for his generosity.

In establishing the Fund, Bill Daniels indicated that part of its focus would be to provide support for shelter, physical and mental care and other assistance to older adults in a manner conducive to their dignity and independence. His concern for the aging can be traced to his close relationship with his mother Adele, who lived to be 94.

"It's encouraging to find a funder so in line with and sensitive to the mission and purpose of OPEN HANDS," says Tom Spray, OPEN HANDS' Executive Director. "It validates our focus on the independence of the elderly and ensures that the services we provide allow them to age with dignity." ■





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Volunteer Joy Lafferty (left), Executive Director Tom Spray and Deputy Director of Program Administration David Zerbst (right) lead the OPEN HANDS Fiesta float through the streets of Santa Fe.



Charlie Lury safely navigates this year's Fiesta Parade.