



SPRING/SUMMER 2006

IN TOUCH

Did You Know?

With the addition of Bernalillo and Tarrant counties, OPEN HANDS now provides Medicaid-funded home safety assessments and modifications to **10 counties** across northern and central New Mexico.

In a typical month, volunteers provide **460 hours of service** to the community in support of all aspects of OPEN HANDS' work.

May is **Older Americans Month**. This year's theme, *Choices for Independence*, reflects OPEN HANDS' continued commitment to helping older adults maintain their dignity and independence and continue to contribute to the communities they cherish.

June is for weddings! Stop by the OPEN HANDS Thrift Store to view a **stunning collection of new wedding gowns** recently donated to the Store.

The Alzheimer's Association will be holding its **11th Annual Tri-Cities Memory Walk** at Frenchy's Field in Santa Fe on September 23rd. OPEN HANDS is helping coordinate the event, which raises support to help those with Alzheimer's, their families and caregivers.

Spring Brings New Offerings, Enhancements to OPEN HANDS



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Activities Coordinator Laura McGrath assists Emma Martinez in tending to the Open Hands greenhouse. Plants grown by the new "Loving Elders Garden Club" were part of a pre-Mother's Day plant sale. Read more about our expanded activities program on page 7.



Members of the Santa Fe Women's Ensemble serenade lunchtime guests in the Adult Day Services great room.



Kumiko Atoda, a native of Fukuoka, Japan, addresses an Adult Day Services audience on various aspects of Japanese tradition and culture. See story on page 6.



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

OPEN HANDS helps our community every day. We have already served more clients in the first nine months of our current fiscal year than we did throughout the entire previous year! This is a testament to the great work of our staff and volunteers and a direct result of your generous support.

We have continued to emphasize improvements in the quality of our service. This has been marked by the addition of an Activities Coordinator to our Adult Day Services program. This position has long been planned as a critical piece in the creation of one of the best and most comprehensive programs in the state. It has allowed us, where possible, to tailor offerings to each individual client. As a result, our clients are visibly more active than they have ever been in the past.

However, this emphasis on quality is not enough. Many nonprofits are going through difficult times because they have not had the ability to plan or look ahead. In the case



of OPEN HANDS, the environment in which we work is substantially different than when we first occupied our current facility in January 2001, and it has totally changed since we began planning for

the creation of this facility back in 1996. In this light, we will continue to evaluate our program offerings to ensure they are responsive and relevant to the needs of the community.

OPEN HANDS has a great tradition of almost 30 years of assistance to the elderly and low-income families of New Mexico. While we remain committed to our mission, we will continue to adapt to the changing needs of the dynamic community we serve.

—TOM SPRAY

We have already served more clients in the first nine months of our current fiscal year than we did throughout the entire previous year!

From the President



The last two years as president of the OPEN HANDS Board of Directors has been a most rewarding and satisfying time for me. My term will soon expire and a new president

will address you in the next newsletter.

I have learned a great deal about the strong, service-oriented commitment of the organization and about the varied needs of our clients and the community we serve. We are about helping the elderly live with dignity. We are about helping families care for their loved ones and cope with the changes in their lives. We are where they go for safe and affordable care. We offer programs that enrich all their lives – and our own.

We now serve more clients through Adult Day Services and we now have a part-time nurse and an Activities Coordinator. Our Community Outreach Services help us reach still more people and we have installed new ramps and “tub cuts” for the convenience and benefit of many clients.

I am very thankful to have had the opportunity to serve and lead such a dedicated organization. Thank you to the hard-working, caring staff at OPEN HANDS. Thank you to the dynamic and active Board of Directors. They are a driving force in the fulfillment of our important mission. And thanks to all of our contributors for the support that makes it all possible.

OPEN HANDS is moving forward toward a bright and promising future!

—RUBY A. MENGDEN

Circles of Support: Addressing Poverty through Community

OPEN HANDS is currently developing a new program designed to help low-income families move out of poverty *permanently*. Through Circles of Support, OPEN HANDS will combine the tool of Individual Development Accounts (IDAs) with financial literacy training and volunteer community partners to positively impact and bring lasting change to the lives of participating families and the communities in which they reside.

When IDAs are integrated into other services, respond to participant demand, are tailored to housing markets and leverage inherent social capital of participants, an IDA becomes much more than an account, but a tool that is integral to changing people's lives.

– SOLANA RICE

MASSACHUSETTS INSTITUTE OF
TECHNOLOGY, CAMBRIDGE, MA.
2005.

IDAs themselves are not a new concept; they have been in existence for roughly a decade. In essence, IDAs are savings accounts in which qualified individuals or families (at or below 200 percent of the federal poverty line) have their savings matched by federal, state and/or private funding for the purchase of specified wealth-building assets. IDAs will help those in poverty save for job training or education, buy a home or start their own business. Financial literacy training – to be taught by our

program partner New Mexico Project for Financial Literacy – will ensure that families understand the basics of repairing credit, budgeting, saving and managing finances.

We combine the proven benefits of IDAs and financial literacy training with a supportive circle of community partners, or Circles of Support. These partners will meet with the family on a regular basis to help them problem-solve the dilemmas that arise due to poverty. The partners bring with them social capital that is not available to those in poverty, connecting them to the informational resources and network connections that the partners possess. Our hope is to foster these connections into long lasting relationships, which the family can continue to tap during the transition from poverty to financial stability.

Our baseline savings goal for each IDA recipient is \$1,000 over a two-year period. The New Mexico Assets Consortium – established by Community Action New Mexico (CANM) of which Open Hands is the designated agency for Santa Fe, Taos and Torrance counties – has already secured a \$1 million federal grant that can be used as a 2:1 match for IDA accounts and is contingent upon match dollars from the state, local businesses or organizations. The New Mexico legislature also recently approved \$1.5 million in funding for the Family Opportunity Accounts Act, a state program which mirrors the federal IDA initiative (with the addition of home repair/improvement and vehicle acquisition as qualified savings goals), and which would provide an additional 2:1 match. Further, during the course of the program, staff will work to secure additional private matching funds from local businesses of at least a 1:1 matching rate. This means that each IDA recipient will have the potential of savings matched 5:1, with a

\$1,000 savings plan resulting in \$6,000 for asset acquisition.

Prospective participants must first attend a free ten-week financial literacy training course, during which they will be screened for IDA eligibility. Following successful completion of the course, those offered IDAs will select a qualified use (homeownership, small-business start-up or post-secondary education), agree on a structured savings plan and develop a business plan for asset acquisition.

IDAs should not be thought of as merely a service to needy people, but as an opportunity to bring people together around a common goal of self-sufficiency.

– RICE, 2005.

OPEN HANDS has already put many of the pieces in place – including partnerships, volunteer support and match funding – to effectively run the Circles of Support/IDA program. We are currently in the process of seeking core program funding in order to formally launch and administer the initiative. ■

*For more information, contact
Community Outreach Services Director
Bob Kerr at 428-2342.*

OPEN HANDS is grateful to the following donors who made contributions between July 1 and December 31, 2005.

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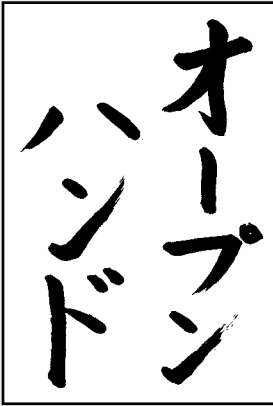
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*OPEN HANDS always strives for accuracy. For incorrect spellings
 or omissions, please contact Elaine at 505-428-2364
 so we can correct our records.*

Visitor from the East



"OPEN HANDS" in Japanese calligraphy, as drawn by Kumiko Atoda.

On April 18th and 20th, seniors in Open Hands' Adult Day Services were treated to a special visit. Kumiko Atoda, a native of Fukuoka, Japan, spent two days in our Adult Day Center demonstrating and sharing various aspects of traditional Japanese culture – including the formal tea ceremony, calligraphy, origami, Ikebana flower arranging and traditional dress. The presentations were enlightening and entertaining, keeping both our seniors and staff rapt for hours.

Kumiko's visit was sponsored by the Never Again Campaign (NAC). The NAC is a volunteer people-to-people program of Berkshire Community College in Pittsfield, Massachusetts. The program was started in 1985 to promote international understanding through sharing Japanese culture and spreading a message of peace and friendship.

Expansion of Services Marks New Phase in COS



A wheelchair-accessible ramp crafted by COS Home Safety installers for a local area home.

With the support of legislative initiatives and a growing understanding among the public and private sector of the importance of helping seniors to "age in place," OPEN HANDS is in the process of expanding the Home Safety department of our Community Outreach Services program. Home Safety provides safety inspections at no cost to residents of the counties we serve. The inspection includes an assessment of potential hazards in the home

and recommendations as to what structural modifications should be made. Information is also provided on safe medication management and safety awareness in the home.

"Personal safety is

our primary consideration in ensuring that older New Mexicans continue to live independently and in their own homes," notes Bob Kerr, Community Outreach Services Director.

As follow-up to our inspection and recommendations, OPEN HANDS' experienced home safety installers provide minor home modifications to clients on a sliding-fee scale based on household income. We do so in order to provide services equally throughout the community and regardless of economic situation. These modifications include installation of ADA-compliant wheelchair ramps, walker steps, bathroom grab bars and smoke detectors. Other modifications, such as widening doors to accommodate wheelchairs, are also available.

OPEN HANDS is an approved provider of Medicaid Disabled and Elderly (D&E) Waiver home modifications by the New Mexico Department of Aging and Long Term Services. With the recent addition of Bernalillo and Torrance counties, we now serve 10 counties throughout central and northern New Mexico (Bernalillo, Colfax, Los Alamos, Mora, Rio Arriba, San Juan, San Miguel, Santa Fe, Taos and Torrance)

Continued on page 8



Grab bars added to shower enhance safety and comfort while bathing.

New Activities Coordinator Revitalizes Adult Day Programming

The daily routine is definitely not 'routine' these days in Open Hands' Adult Day Services. In January, Laura McGrath joined the Adult Day Services staff as fulltime Activities Coordinator. The addition is part of Open Hands' overall enhancement of its programs and services.

The role of the Activities Coordinator is to create and implement a diverse and enriching program of activities tailored to the specific needs of our Adult Day Services members. The Coordinator is also tasked with training and supervising other ADS staff in providing activities for members. Finally, the Coordinator ensures that the ever-changing needs of our members are regularly met through constant, innovative activity program changes that add challenges and interest to each day.

Laura has several goals for the ADS activities offerings. These include increasing physical activity, additional sensory and cognitive stimulation activities, a wider range of outings into the community, an active gardening program and cultural enrichment events. As 2006 is The Year of the Museum, visits to the many museums in Santa Fe will also become a regular feature.

New this year is a garden club, which participants have aptly named "The Loving

Elders Garden Club." A Mother's Day sale on May 12 will be the culmination of many weeks of propagating and nurturing plants. A creative writing program will begin in May following a visit to the *Dichos* exhibit at the Museum of International Folk Art. Laura envisions that this will expand into poetry writing and biographical reflections that can be illustrated and shared to enrich our program's focus, especially benefiting those with Alzheimer's and other dementias.

Various "months," such as Older Americans Month or National Gardening Month, serve to tie activities to a theme. And longstanding favorites, including Bingo and storytelling, are blended into the calendar each month. Yet there is always time for relaxing and having those special conversations that reveal how unique and exceptional each person is who attends OPEN HANDS.

Laura has a bachelor's degree in sociology from the University of California at Berkeley and completed the "Studies in Gerontology" program through Utica College, Syracuse University. She is also a certified Horticultural Therapist, a certified Master Gardener in both California and New Mexico, and a member of the National Association of Activities Professionals. ■

Volunteer Spotlight: Joy Lafferty

One of the most important roles volunteers fulfill at OPEN HANDS is as Adult Day Services staff assistants. The time and dedication volunteers give to ADS each year is astounding. This year alone, volunteers have provided over 1,000 hours of service in ADS. Staff assistant volunteers help serve meals and snacks; organize and help clients with daily activities; and provide one-on-one service and companionship to clients throughout the day. Volunteers enrich the quality of service provided in ADS through their unique energy and spirit.

This year, one special volunteer has touched the hearts of every ADS client through her exceptional compassion and love. Her name is Joy Lafferty. Joy volunteers at least 50 hours each month in ADS. She has

been an OPEN HANDS volunteer for more than a year and during that time has made a considerable impact on each client she works with. "Joy has an extraordinary way of connecting to each individual client and staff member with such sincerity and enthusiasm. She can find the one quality that is special to a person and then is able to make that individual feel loved and appreciated," says Cindy Keiser, Director of Adult Day Services.

Without volunteers like Joy Lafferty, OPEN HANDS would not be able to provide such a warm and cheerful environment for elderly and disabled clients. As Margaret Mead proclaimed, "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed it is the only thing that ever has." ■

Celebrate Older Americans Month



Together with the U.S. Administration on Aging (AoA), OPEN HANDS is proud to celebrate May as Older Americans Month. This year's theme, *Choices for Independence*, reflects the mission and continued commitment of the AoA and OPEN HANDS to helping older adults maintain their dignity and independence while providing them with opportunities to continue to contribute to their communities.

Older Americans Month was established by President John F. Kennedy in 1963. At that time, only 17 million living Americans had reached their 65th birthdays. About a third of those lived in poverty, and there were few programs to meet their needs. This year, the first of the baby boomers – a generation numbering as many as 78 million people – began turning 60. The needs of this generation will be significant.

OPEN HANDS is proud to be one of the many organizations supporting the desire of older adults to live in their own homes and communities for as long as possible. We look forward to serving the changing needs of our growing elderly population.



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COS EXPANSION *Continued from page 6*

with D&E Waiver modifications. Under this federally-sponsored program, medically necessary modifications can be made to a home at the recommendation of a case manager, with a lifetime cap of \$7,500 per individual.

Another unique service being provided by Home Safety is an innovative bathtub conversion known as a TubcuT™. This fee-for-service installation is an economical alternative to a full shower stall conversion, eliminates the need for a shower transfer chair and can be completed in one day.

“Because of [our residents’] physical inability to easily transfer into and out of their bathtubs, bathing was a long and strenuous process,” says Deborah Entz, Executive Director of Rosemont Assisted Living Community of Santa Fe, a client of Home Safety. “It was also difficult and dangerous for our caregivers trying to assist the residents in the transfers. The TubCuts have cut bathing time in half and it is much easier and safer for both the residents as well as the caregivers.” ■

Contact COS Director Bob Kerr at 428-2342 or Home Safety Supervisor Ken Walrack at 428-2348 for additional information on any of these services.



New TubcuT™ installation increases access and safety for seniors and their caregivers.



Dedicated volunteer Joy Lafferty. See story page 7.