



## East Central Ministries' 2020 Winter Newsletter

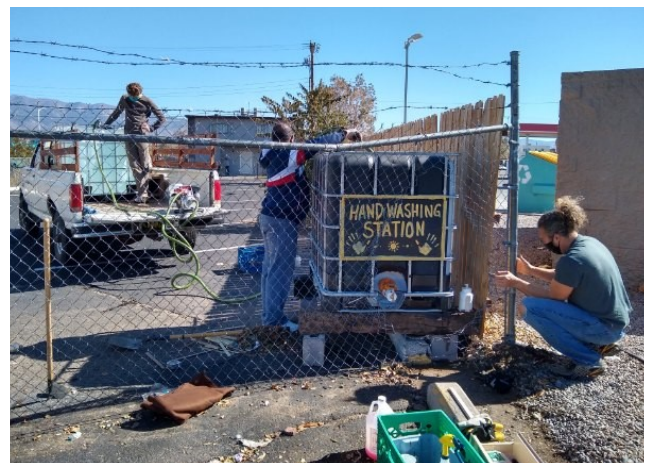
Dear ECM community and friends,

This has been a difficult year. We all experience it to different degrees, yet we all feel the strain. The season coming up to Christmas and the Holidays is usually a time of joy and preparation. This year because of Covid-19 and an unprecedented election year, it feels exhausting and dangerous. But this year's struggle has not been equally felt. The costliest burden is once again carried by our neighbors and friends on the margins, with less means and no insurance. They are the ones who have suffered the most. The health and financial crisis caused by Covid-19 has significantly affected ECM and our already vulnerable International District community. While the needs in the community and ECM's efforts to respond to these needs have increased, ECM's funding is 25% less than last year.

We need your help.

ECM is helping more people with food, rent, and utilities due to job losses and Covid-19 isolation. We have been giving free telemedicine healthcare and ask clients to pay only what they can for lab costs to ensure that our high health risk community patients receive the care they need. We have had more people sleeping on our front porch to whom we offer support and encouragement. Many of our staff and their family members, housing co-op members, and neighbors have fallen ill, sometimes ending up in the hospital, due to Covid-19. ECM's staff is predominately heads of household and women of color, and it has been a priority to keep everyone employed, providing livable wages so that they can keep focused on caring for our community.

All of these needs have increased from past years, and our finances have not kept up with the current needs let alone our future work. The Common Good thrift store shut down for 3 ½ months this year, following orders from our governor. While our store staff, volunteers, and customers have been amazing, we haven't been able to make up the resulting \$49,000 loss of income—income that we rely on to keep essential programs like our food co-op, clinic, and youth programs thriving each year. (The youth program is temporarily closed, but we plan to reopen it as soon as circumstances allow.) Earlier this year, ECM did receive the Federal PPP and other funding for Covid-19 related projects. While these helped, they are not enough to carry us into next year, with the clinic still offering free services and the thrift store continuing to face periodic closures.



Setting up another handwashing station in the International District.

ECM and our community know how to rely on each other, be creative, and do more with less. We are strong and resilient and you have helped us along the way. In partnership, you have always been generous in supporting our community work. This summer, we asked, and you responded, helping us fully pay for the new heating/cooling unit for our community space and offices. Now, we need your help again. Our goal before the end of the year is to raise \$25,000 (half of our store's missed income) to sustain programs and meet neighbors' specific needs in the coming year.

If you have not recently donated (or ever), we ask you to consider making a special end of the year donation of \$10, \$25, \$100, or whatever amount you are able to.

If you already financially support ECM, please consider adding another 25% to your donation. This extra end of the year support would ensure that ECM is on a sound footing to Love our Neighbors in all the ways needed this coming year.

**We are all in this together and will get through this together.  
Thank you in advance, Merry Christmas and Happy Holidays!**

John Bulten



Joel, Trey, & John working hard at the Garden Park.



Pandemic or no pandemic, people need to eat. ECM's **food co-op** is essential to the health and well being of our community. Thank you to Norma for keeping the co-op open and safely running this year!



On a gorgeous fall day, a few of us gathered to repaint the sidewalk by the **La Mesa Garden Park**. Outdoors, bright colors, NM sunshine: a great small group pandemic activity!



Our **Pathways program** provides case management and navigation services to those in our community most at risk, linking them to health and social services systems in Bernalillo County. Our Navigators, Gigi Osoria, Denisse Guerrero, and Eva Vasquez (who has recently taken a new job) are dedicated to their clients in the best of times and have continued to provide services throughout the pandemic. Denisse tells

us that, "Despite the very hard times that seemed to surround this year, there were many times of unity, love and hope. We were able to come together as a community and give out many emergency boxes to our friends, neighbors, and community who needed it most. We were able to focus our efforts in making sure our community had the most updated Covid safety information as well as PPE. We were able to help our community with rental and utilities assistance, applying for stimulus checks, and filling out the Census." Thank you to our Navigators for your perseverance!

## Staff Spotlight

“People understanding their own purpose; that’s the most important thing.” Gigi Osoria is right there to give people the push, pull, tug they need to get to that purpose. Gigi has worked for ECM for almost two years as a Pathways Navigator, and she is a powerhouse of advocacy, support, and encouragement, breaking through any barrier that stands in her or her many clients’ way. “Everything that I try to do, I’m successful at because I do it from my heart, and I see the best in people.”



From a young age, as the oldest sibling in a family where her mother battled mental illness and her father worked long hours as the provider, Gigi became the caretaker, guarder, protector, and lover of her siblings and parents. “It was a joy to know that no matter what, at seven years old, I could always make someone laugh, smile, feel good...no matter what I was feeling.”

All the time, she had her eyes on her father, who never gave up on her mother, no matter how ill she became. Gigi now has those same eyes for her clients as she honors the actions of her father. She never gives up. Ever. On anyone. “I am grateful that I get a chance every day when I wake up to make someone laugh, feel good, and help them.” And help them, she does. From housing homeless men and women, to fighting for proper medical care for seniors and the elderly, from pursuing disability for the least of these, to providing refuge for street worker ladies, Gigi’s whole person, her life, are devoted to those on the margins. Stepping over labels and through walls, calling truth to power, Gigi’s dedication has resulted in positive change for literally hundreds of people. “I refuse to be a victim. And that is what drives me to keep fighting and be the voice, the fight, for those who can’t do it on their own. You must be true to who you are.” And because she is true, her clients in turn learn to be true. And in truth, they can begin to heal.

Gigi’s work has taken her all over the US, and yet she feels a deep connection to the International District and ECM. “To be around someone who cares like I do—it’s a great place to be. Even though I’m not around my mom and kids, family doesn’t have to be blood. It’s the people around you, your community, your colleagues.”

It’s the people around you. And it’s what you do.

Thank you, Gigi. It’s a privilege.

Judy Wolf



ECM hosted two free flu shot clinics on the street. 61 people received flu vaccinations!

thank you  
&  
we miss you

Mari was ECM's part-time bookkeeper and accountant for four years, and she took a full-time job with New Mexico Immigrant Law Center this summer. She is a vocal advocate for equity in all things for all people and helped shape ECM in many ways beyond "the books." She also kept her co-workers laughing and had nicknames for everyone in the office. We miss both your wisdom and jokes, Mari! Thank you for your time at ECM and helping us be a more equitable organization.

Eva has been a Pathways Navigator for three years at ECM and recently moved into a job as a Covid-19 contact tracer. She connected and worked with many of our neighbors who needed the most help, treating them with dignity and respect as she worked with them to address housing, identification, addiction, and mental health issues. Thank you for your commitment to the International District, Eva. We'll miss you!



Our longtime friend and partner Gilbert Ignacio picked up ten water tanks from ECM and distributed them to families in his community on the Navajo Nation. These families are without running water and have to transport it to their homes.



Greenhouse maintenance is an ongoing ECM urban farm project. In October, high winds provided the final "blow" to the plastic on one side of our largest greenhouse. The other half will hopefully hold strong through the winter until next summer. With eight hands and some serious gymnastics in the rafters, we were able to get new plastic up and stretched tight. We doubled the greenhouse plastic and most likely it will last for six years!



**Contact Info:**

East Central Ministries  
123 Vermont St. NE  
Albuquerque, NM 87108

**Visit the Website:**

[www.EastCentralMinistries.org](http://www.EastCentralMinistries.org)

**Phone: 505.266.3590**

