Memories of 2017

We have made it to December, and another year is drawing to a close. 2017 has brought both new faces and farewells. It has been filled with challenges — roofing problems, short staffing, social uncertainty for our immigrant neighbors — and joys — strengthened community bonds, new programs, new friends and relationships. We have felt need, and we have found help in unlikely places.

We'd like to share with all of you some of the stories from this last year, both happy and sad, that have touched our hearts and stand out in our memories. We hope that you enjoy this look back on 2017.

From all of us at ECM, we wish you a joyous holiday season, and pray that God will bless you and yours in the coming year.

Letter from Blanca Pedigo, Interim Director

Dear friends and supporters of ECM,

These last six months, when I have been filling in as Interim Director during John’s sabbatical, have been a surprising time for me. As I considered what takeaways I wanted to share with all of you, what stood out to me was the surprising yet faithful ways in which God continues to show up, for me individually and for us as a community.

Directing an agency is a hard job. It’s easy to play backseat driver when you’re not in that role, and think to yourself, “I could have done this better.” It’s another thing to be in that role. You are tasked with making decisions every day, and your choice has a real effect on a lot of people — staff, volunteers, friends, and, above all, our community. As Director, you have to take responsibility for that impact—both the good and the not-so-good.

This responsibility is a challenge, and there were plenty of times I felt overwhelmed or underqualified or ready to quit. But I was struck how, at each of those times, God showed up through the people he placed in the life of this ministry — our patients and clients, friends of the ministry, our board members, and my coworkers — to remind me why I’m here, and why it’s important that we take on exactly those decisions that we are most tempted to relegate to the back burner. Phone calls, homemade cookies, donations when we needed them most, and surprise visits from friends — all of these were signs of God’s care for me and for us as a community.

These six months have been a period of learning for all of us. From the finer details of managing an ever-growing nonprofit, to the need to carve out time for reflection and planning even in the midst of the daily grind, to God’s unfailing grace and providence, we have all gained insight into what it means to, in the words of our mission statement, “live out Jesus’ values of justice and compassion.” I trust and believe that, whatever changes 2018 may bring, these lessons will equip us to face them and be better for them.
One Hope Centro de Vida: Patient Emergency Fund

Back in September, we threw a Kermesse, or a community-run carnival, to build up a patient emergency fund to help patients experiencing financial need cover their visit fee or pay for prescribed medications. The Kermesse was a fun night full of laughs and community bonding, and all together we raised $1,068.

One patient we’ve been able to help out with these funds is Chuchita.* Chuchita lives alone, is disabled, and is dealing with multiple medical needs, some of which have forced her to stop working. These struggles have naturally affected her mood, causing her to feel depressed. With the funds we raised from the Kermesse, we were able to help her pay for her medications, so she can heal both physically and emotionally.

We’ve been so pleased to see that, while she still is unable to work, she has a much happier, optimistic attitude. She is dedicating herself to learning how to manage her illness, and she is seeking new ways to feel productive and active. Right now, she is making scarves to sell, both as a creative outlet and to help pay her bills.

A big thanks to everyone who helped out with Kermesse and enabled us to help patients like Chuchita!

*Name changed to preserve privacy.

Casa Shalom

While various staff members have lived at Casa Shalom since the program’s inception, this year was the first time we had a live-in coordinator specifically tasked with cultivating and organizing community life and activities. Carey’s work to streamline communication and be a central point of contact for community activities has born fruit in increased participation in committees and community cleaning days. The goal for Casa Shalom has always been that it is owned and directed by the resident members, but having a central point of contact to provide some structure and intentionality has proven to be very valuable.

We are also seeing a growing diversity within the community of languages, cultures, and socio-economic backgrounds. This diversity has strengthened the community, as one person’s perspective and experience can complement those of the others. Community life is messy, and personality conflicts, differing expectations, and the trials of day-to-day life will always bring up tensions. We are excited for the possibilities and richness that these varied perspectives bring to the table as we navigate these challenges and opportunities — and for the increased depth of communication that results from more bilingual members.
Pain and Healing

While the holiday season brings much joy and reflection, we also recognize that for some, this time of year brings a great deal of grief. Many of our clinic’s patients are separated from their families and living alone. Others are grieving personal tragedies like the death of family members, and the holidays often bring a resurgence of pain. We also recognize that, while we do what we can for our community, there are many needs, such as homelessness and substance abuse, that we don’t work with or which have no easy solutions.

We pray for all those, in our community and elsewhere, for whom the holidays are a time of pain, isolation, or mourning.

Technical Assistance Grant from Con Alma Health Foundation

We are excited to announce that we have been awarded a Technical Assistance grant of $7,500 from the Con Alma Health Foundation! These grants are awarded to organizations to help them build internal capacity to improve or expand their work.

Since ECM has experienced so much growth over the last few years, we have seen the need to catch our internal systems up to our programs and activities. We will be using these funds to contract a CPA to provide consultation throughout 2018 on accounting, administrative, HR improvements, and board development. The changes we make as a result will allow us to focus more of our time and energy on our community.

We are so grateful to Con Alma for their partnership!

Youth programs: Community Ownership in Action

As you may know from our last newsletter, a hurdle we’ve been dealing with this year has been the need to repair the roof over our youth room. As we wrestle with bids, fundraising, and finding new spaces, we’ve been touched by all the myriad ways our kids and their families have been rallying together to support us in these efforts.

In October, the parents ran a used book sale, with proceeds benefiting the roof. One parent donated some items for us to raffle, and another gave proceeds from selling an old vehicle.

Moreover, all of the moms from our preschool cooperative are collectively planning to purchase a wall-mounted heater for the preschool area of our youth room, where heat from the room’s main heater doesn’t reach. They found a secondhand heater in good working condition, and are pooling their money to buy it.

It has been very touching for us as a staff to see the community taking ownership of the space and taking initiative to raise money for it.
New Partnerships

The work of community development is by necessity a highly collaborative endeavor, and 2017 was no different. Here are just a few of the new partnerships and collaborative projects we embarked on this year:

- **International District Resource Circle**: This year, our contract with Pathways to a Healthy Bernalillo County is provided through a collaboration we have launched with PB&J Family Services, First Nations HealthSource, International District Healthy Communities Coalition, and Immigrant and Refugee Resource Village of Albuquerque. We hope this collaboration will help us leverage resources and respond more cohesively to challenges in our neighborhood.

- **Pima Medical Institute**: We have been working with Pima’s dental hygiene program to develop a partnership, starting in January 2018, in which 3rd-year dental hygiene students will volunteer to provide cleanings at our clinic.

- **UNM Behavioral Health**: We signed a new contract with the Behavioral Health Department at UNM, for a psychiatry resident to offer weekly consultations at our clinic. So far, he is seeing about 12 patients. We have been able to offer each patient’s first 3 consultations for free, to help behavioral health care be more accessible and to give patients an incentive to overcome the stigma of seeking help.

Also, we are always grateful to our ongoing partners, who have collaborated with us through the years.

---

**Partner with ECM!**

We are so grateful to you for all the ways you support us here at ECM. Whether you give financially, volunteer your time, spread the word, or remember us in your prayers, you all keep us going strong as we continue our work in the International District.

As you think about your end-of-year giving, we humbly ask that you consider making a tax-deductible donation to ECM. Our largest source of income continues to be donations from compassionate individuals like you. As we continue to grow and strengthen our programs, we rely on your financial partnership to support our work.

---

**Visit the Website:**
www.EastCentralMinistries.org
**Phone:** 505.266.3590

**Contact Info:**
East Central Ministries
123 Vermont St. NE
Albuquerque, NM 87108

ECM welcomes your financial partnership as we demonstrate God’s intended reality in our community.