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Mesilla Valley Community of Hope

2018

Hope Stories

Interview 2

Audrey Hardman-Hartley Transcript Index & Excerpt

New Mexico Literacy and Early Childhood Education

Interviewed by David Lee del Norte

9 March 2018

La Paz Room at Jardin de Los Niños on the Hope Campus

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Project History

The Mesilla Valley Community of Hope (MVCH) is a homeless services corridor in Las Cruces, New Mexico. In the 1970s, Saint Andrew's Episcopal Church began a small lunch service which later became El Caldito Soup Kitchen. As need for food and healthcare clinical service increased, the Las Cruces community supported the Saint Andrew's congregation with the opening of Saint Luke's Health Clinic. With a long history of compassionate services for visitors, the City of Las Cruces recognized the importance of limiting distance and travel-time between public health and human service organizations located throughout different parts of the city.

Incorporated as a non-profit in 1991, additional support continued to shape collaborative alliances with operations at 999 West Amador nearby to downtown Las Cruces. In 2011, following a particularly harsh "Deep Freeze" winter that caused health concerns and exposure deaths for the homeless, Mesilla Valley Community of Hope staff banded together with Hope Campus clients, appealed to the City of Las Cruces for sanctioned overnight camping status, and soon founded Camp Hope transitional living program.

In 2018, the Hope Stories project collected fifteen oral history interviews to learn about the legacy of organizational homeless services at Mesilla Valley Community of Hope. The term "Corridor of Care" refers to a healthcare industry perspective known as the Consolidated Services Model that helps people to access health and human service related programs quickly, reliably, and within centrally located "Hub" or "Node" areas of potentially consistent preventative care.

This public history graduate project asked participating narrators questions about how the Las Cruces community first began to advance, reinforce, and collaborate with the actions necessary to become the Hope Campus at Mesilla Valley Community of Hope. Rather than conduct interviews with those who experienced homelessness, the project features staff and volunteer narrators who shared community engagement stories about consolidated services “Campus” concepts.

The project ended without narrators to represent the community’s food pantry. Founded in 1979, Casa de Peregrinos relocated to the Hope Campus as an alliance member during the 1991 opening, and today continues to serve Doña Ana County with increased food delivery and expanded satellite locations. Two additional perspectives from outside the Hope Campus: the fourth interview with Glenn Trowbridge took place at CARE Complex in Las Vegas, Nevada, an out-of-state counter-balance to the history of homeless consolidated services in the United States; while this fifteenth interview with Kit Elliott and Meg Long occurred at Aggie Cupboard on the NMSU campus, a satellite food pantry inspired by Casa de Peregrinos.

Today’s work to help the homeless in Las Cruces is the result of a compassionate, multi-organizational approach by non-profit service providers. In 2018, these five core non-profit organizations include Mesilla Valley Community of Hope; Casa de Peregrinos food pantry; El Caldito soup kitchen; Jardin de Los Niños educational program; and Amador Health Center (formally Saint Luke’s Health Clinic). With Hope Campus the geographic center of non-profit homeless service providers in Las Cruces, it is important to note assistance and resources offered by the City of Las Cruces, the New Mexico Department of Health, and the New Mexico Department of Human Services. For an updated and comprehensive list of regional community services, insightful for anyone experiencing homelessness, inquire City of Las Cruces or MVCH with search term “Las Cruces Community Resource Guide.”

Narrator Summary

Audrey Hardman-Hartley was born in Las Cruces, New Mexico, raised in El Paso, Texas and Hilo, Hawaii, and returned to Las Cruces to attend New Mexico State University. Twenty six years after completing a master's degree, following a career in the medical field, Hardman-Hartley again returned to NMSU to study Early Childhood Education and serve as Executive Director of Jardin de Los Niños from 2014-2018.

A lifelong volunteer who has committed time to the board of directors for Las Cruces Public School and March of Dimes, Hardman-Hartley also fundraised for Camino de Vida Center for HIV Services' events. Recipient of the 2018 John Paul Taylor Social Justice Award, in this interview Hardman-Hartley advocates for children's literacy through the Dogs Who Read program, the practice of therapeutic intervention developmental screening at Jardin de Los Niños, and increased need for Early Childhood Education in New Mexico.

To outline 2018 health and human service resources available to children aged eighteen and under on Mesilla Valley Community of Hope campus, Hardman-Hartley speaks about collaboration with Amador Health Center to open a pediatric clinic located at Jardin de Los Niños. Because best practices that concern young children remain stringent and subjected to continuous oversight from the State of New Mexico, the level of security at Jardin de Los Niños allows for respite and calmness unlike other spaces on the Hope campus.

While many people may be surprised that children are present in this setting, Jardin de Los Niños provides a vital function to parents and children experiencing homeless by allowing the time, space, and appropriate resources to recover from family hardships.

Index of first hour

00:07 - Interview Introduction

01:03 - Role at Mesilla Valley Community of Hope

01:37 - Born in Las Cruces

01:48 - Education at NMSU

02:16 - Snow in Las Cruces

03:46 - Volunteerism

04:53 - John Paul Taylor Social Justice Award

06:54 - Nominee and symposium speaker

08:23 - Becoming executive director of Jardin de Los Niños

10:20 - Hardman-Hartley: family involvement

11:45 - First experiences with homeless children

13:05 - Grandmother Marion Passant Hardman NMSU Dean of Women

14:22 - Importance of childhood interpersonal communication

17:29 - Marion Passant Hardman of Hardman-Jacobs Learning Center

19:15 - Colors for Michaela children's book

22:35 - "Dogs Who Read" child literacy program

23:42 - Early Childhood Education (ECED) curriculum in New Mexico

26:21 - Therapeutic Intervention assessment

28:13 - Jardin de Los Niños children's health clinic

Index of first hour (cont.)

- 31:15 - Maintaining health for homeless families
- 32:01 - Parenting class requirement to break cycle of homelessness
- 33:44 - Parent volunteerism and self-paced courses
- 35:20 - Jardin client to Jardin employee success story
- 36:28 - Pre-K to Mayfield high school graduation
- 37:12 - Clients moving on from Jardin
- 37:52 - Las Cruces Community Resources Guide
- 38:50 - Mesilla Valley Community of Hope partnership
- 40:28 - Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)
- 42:09 - Jardin de Los Niños funding sources
- 43:10 - La Tienda de Jardin “Unique Boutique”
- 44:43 - Las Cruces community donations
- 46:27 - Cuidando Los Niños in Albuquerque
- 47:42 - New Mexico FOCUS program Quality of Care measurement
- 49:50 - McKinney-Vento descriptor of “Homelessness” and “Near-homelessness”
- 50:37 - New Mexico ranks 49th for child well-being
- 51:22 - Root-cause analysis for homeless children
- 51:56 - Engage New Mexico coalition

Index of first hour (cont.)

52:54 - Soup kitchens and child nutrition

55:49 - Monthly nutrition classes at Jardin

57:18 - 2nd annual Celebrity Chef Championship Gala for children

Index of second hour

- 01:00:48 - Mesilla Valley Community of Hope organizational fundraisers
- 01:01:27 - Tool kits to overcome substance abuse and mental illness
Consolidated services model to help the homeless
- 01:02:48 - Consolidated services model to help the homeless
- 01:03:34 - Need for centralized services in Albuquerque
- 01:05:26 - Joy Junction and Cuidando Los Niños
- 01:06:10 - Toward consolidated homeless services in Albuquerque
- 01:08:03 - Effective Las Cruces coalitions at New Mexico Legislature
- 01:09:24 - More funding for Early Childhood Education
- 01:09:58 - Personal experiences with homelessness
- 01:11:12 - New Mexico governor and NMSU Chancellor Garrey Curruthers
- 01:13:53 - Self-care and Zen room for Jardin staff
- 01:15:24 - Therapists and developmental milestones
- 01:17:10 - Jardin staff trainings for work-life balance
- 01:19:28 - Jardin teacher healthcare needs and options
- 01:20:34 - Obamacare, Medicare, potential free healthcare services for women
- 01:22:04 - “Imperfect system because the overall system is a broken system”

Index of second hour (cont.)

01:23:17 - Healthcare for the homeless and proper nutrition for children

01:24:23 - Understanding and empathy for those experiencing poverty

01:28:05 - Non-profit organization work compared to private sector

01:29:47 - Positive change of “Wants and needs” with family values

01:33:21 - Expanding the consolidated services model

01:34:27 - Future of Mesilla Valley Community of Hope

Interview 2 Excerpt — Audrey Hardman-Hartley:

So, the program that features our therapy dogs is called “Dogs Who Read,” and it was actually proposed to me by one of my employees who was our literacy coordinator several years ago, and she— Well, one of our volunteers had given me some information, and so, I passed it on to her because she was the literacy coordinator. And I said, “Okay. You think about what it is you’d like to do.” So, she came up with “Dogs Who Read,” and basically it incorporates the use of therapy dogs who come in, anywhere— depending on how busy we are, how many kids we have.

During the fall and spring semesters they come in once a week. In the summer they come in two or three times a week. And they sit. We have a special reading area, and they sit with the kids, and the kids read to the dogs. And it’s been an amazing thing in terms of keeping the after-school kids who are age six to ten up to par on their reading levels over the summer, but introducing literacy and numeracy to the two, three, and four year olds. It’s quite an amazing little journey.

del Norte: Can you discuss the differences between the classrooms that you oversee, and some of the traditional education in New Mexico?

Audrey Hardman-Hartley:

There is no such thing as traditional early childhood education as compared to primary and secondary education. As a matter of fact, there is a coalition here in southern New Mexico that have been working to get early childhood education separated out of the mainstream, and to have their own Secretary of Early Childhood Education. It makes sense because the curriculum is so varied. Curriculum in early childhood education: We talk about learning about self and others. We talk about space. We talk about fine and gross motor skill development. Those are all part of the learning curve, and part of the curriculum that have to happen there. It's not reading, writing, and arithmetic. It's a very different.

The learning is play based. In primary and secondary school, learning is not play based. It is book based. And it is: "Sit at your chair. Study. Listen to what your teacher teaches you, and — See one, do one, teach one," kind of thing. And here it's all about development. It's all developmental because we get them in the most critical stages. They start at six weeks and, again, can go up to ten years, but between six weeks and age three, that is when the most development occurs.

That is where habits are being formed. That is where the love of literacy happens. So, if the kids are being read to, and they enjoy that— If you have somebody with a nice soothing voice who's reading to them they begin to develop that love of books. So, our curriculum, you can't even compare. It's apples and oranges. They are completely different disciplines. They are completely different scopes.

Audrey Hardman-Hartley:

And I find it amazing that at the collegiate level they figured that out a long time ago because you can get a degree in education or you can get a degree in early childhood education. But, we haven't separated it out at the state-level. And that's where we have focused. We have really been focusing on—

And I know the state legislature just got more money for early childhood education to help develop those programs, and pay for what needs to happen in early learning centers. I think people— It's a misnomer to call [Jardin de Los Niños] a "Day care." It's not a babysitting service. There are curriculums developed for each child. Each child has a curriculum. Each child has a learning process. Each child has— And we change that plan based on where they're developing, and how.

del Norte: Can you describe therapeutic intervention, and achieving developmental milestones for children?

Hardman-Hartley: So, therapeutic intervention is something that is incorporated at every level in early childhood education. But, here at Jardin it's more important, I think, than in other centers because seventy- five percent of our kids suffer from some sort of a developmental delay.

Audrey Hardman-Hartley:

So, when we do— The first thing that we do when someone comes to our center is an assessment, and the teachers do it along with the family services coordinator, and the children services coordinator, and they look at all aspects of the child’s life. “Have they had their shots?” “Have they had their medical care?” “Have they had the things that they need to help them develop?” And most of them: “Uh, no.” But, then we look at: “Okay. Where are they developmentally?”

They may be two years old, but physically not that big. They may have speech problems. They may have other disorders. So, we pull in therapists to do further assessment, and work with our teachers to structure a plan whereby the therapists come into the classroom, and work with the child. And I think that’s an amazing thing, too. Back in the day when I had to have speech therapy I was taken out of class to go to the speech therapist, and it was very embarrassing. Nowadays, the teachers and the therapists work in tandem in the classroom with all of the children so that one child is not necessarily being singled out. They’re working with all of them, but they’re doing the observation and further work with the one child that needs it.

del Norte: Can you tell me if there are clinical service and health care programs available? Does that kind of tie in with what comes afterwards?

Audrey Hardman-Hartley:

The clinic. We are opening a clinic in June of this year. It will be the Jardin de los Niños Children's Clinic. And we are partnering with St. Luke's [Amador Health Center]. They will provide the medical staff, and so we will have the children get regular medical care, [and] regular clinical services.

That includes counseling services if needed, but they will get all of their shots here. They will have all of their screenings done here. They will have their well-child checks here. When they are sick they will be seen. We will start here with the kids from Jardin, and then the eventual goal is to have all of the children who are seen at St. Luke's be seen over here at Jardin.

The reason that we do that is because— And I've spoken with both of the CEOs from both of the hospitals here. They're both really thrilled with this idea because families who have no money tend to use the emergency room as their physician, and that's not good practice. It's a worst practice. Both hospitals, I know, are very interested in employing best practices, and this is sort of a best practice because it keeps the kids regularly seeing somebody that they need to see.

In addition, we will be working with the nurses from New Mexico State [University] and DACC [Doña Ana Community College], and the students from Burrell College of Osteopathic Medicine. The medical students will be doing growth studies.

Audrey Hardman-Hartley:

The nurses will come in, and assist with the well-child checks, and do— They do a teddy bear clinic which teaches kids how you take, you know: “Why we take your blood pressure,” and “How to use the stethoscope,” and all those kinds of things. So, we’re very, very excited to expand this program, and make it successful for these kids.

del Norte: Is there an age limit at Jardin that’s included in this program? I mean, does it go up to—

Hardman-Hartley: We will see siblings up to the age of eighteen. And the other kids because you’re considered a pediatric patient until the age of eighteen. So, if the needs be, then that’s our vision down the road, is all of those kids who don’t have the availability of services will come here. And it’s a friendly environment. It’s a clean environment. It’s a safe environment.

This is probably the safest building on the Community of Hope campus because of the regulations surrounding child care. So, we have extra systems in place to assure safety at all times. So, I think that’s just another reason why we need to be seeing kids here.

Recommended Citation

Hardman-Hartley, Audrey, interviewed by David Lee del Norte. March 9th, 2018. Hope Stories oral history project, New Mexico State University Library Archives and Special Collections.

Recording Information

Hope Stories 02 — 1h 37m duration. Recorded at Jardin de Los Niños La Paz Room on the Hope Campus.

Transcripts and Recordings

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