

https://www.santafenewmexican.com/news/local_news/decorated-trees-for-esperanza-center-auction-carry-wishes-of-hopes-wishes-and-acceptance/article_798af4fa-a133-11ef-882e-ffabf26c9631.html

Decorated trees for Esperanza Center auction carry wishes of hopes, wishes and acceptance

★ Follow Gabrielle Porter

By Gabrielle Porter gporter@sfnewmexican.com

Nov 22, 2024



Raylene Louis watches in fascination while her mother, Nytasha Martinez helps with ornaments as residents and staff of the Santa Fe Recovery Center decorate trees Friday for the Esperanza Shelter's Trees of Hope fundraiser at the Drury Hotel. The recovery center's clients decorated a pair of trees (one from the women's and the men's) to spread some joy and positivity in the face of battling addiction.

photos by Jim Weber/The New Mexican

[Privacy](#) - [Terms](#)

Stringing popcorn and cranberries together and writing aspirational quotes on little scrolls might not sound like a cutthroat activity.

But 48-year-old T.R. Alderete of Las Cruces got a little competitive Friday as he sat down to make Christmas tree ornaments with other men going through Santa Fe Recovery Center's 30-day rehabilitation program.

Alderete said he wanted the men to outshine the recovery center's women, who were decorating their own tree for the Trees of Hope auction, an annual event that raises funds for the Esperanza Center.

"It was a competition," said Alderete, laughing, as the men's group hung homemade ornaments on their tree at Drury Plaza Hotel, where it will be on display during the auction. "We were busting our butts, we think. You know, girls are going to be more creative and have a lot more patience to do stuff."

The Trees of Hope fundraiser this year will feature more than a dozen artificial Christmas trees, decorated and donated by groups ranging from the Girl Scouts organizations from both Santa Fe and Los Alamos counties to Family Medicine Partners of Santa Fe and Chase Bank. Would-be buyers can check out the trees at the Drury — which donated its space — between Tuesday and Saturday and place bids on their favorites.

All proceeds will support the Esperanza Shelter, a domestic violence shelter that reopened its central location earlier this year after housing people in hotel rooms and apartments throughout the pandemic. Patricia Varga, the shelter's vice president of donor and community relations, said the fundraiser has been put on twice before — in 2020, when it brought in somewhere between \$25,000 and \$30,000, and in 2021.



Christopher Rea, left, Jessica Callow and James Luna decorate a Christmas tree Friday with fellow residents and staff of the Santa Fe Recovery Center for the Esperanza Shelter's Trees of Hope fundraiser at the Drury Hotel. The recovery center's clients came up with a theme and decorated a pair of trees (one for the women's program and one for the men's) to spread some joy and positivity in the face of the addictions they are battling.

Jim Weber/The New Mexican

Jessica Callow, admissions administrator for the Santa Fe Recovery Center, said she brainstormed with the men's 30-day program members to come up with their decorating theme: "The Tree of Hopes and Wishes."

"That's when we came up with the ideas for the scrolls on there, the inspirational quotes and something for the family [who buys the tree] just to have and enjoy a new year," she said.

The men decided to go homemade with their ornaments, using the internet to come up with expressions to write on their scrolls.

Michael “Mikey” Armijo, a 42-year-old Albuquerque resident who is in the program to get help with alcohol addiction, said he included a famous quote from Henry Ford that he finds personally inspirational: “Whether you think you can or you think you can’t, you’re right.”

“In our addiction, that’s pretty much what it is,” Armijo said, adding that he hopes whoever takes the tree home finds “pure joy and happiness and inspiration and laughter” from the scrawled scrolls.

Yes, laughter — because the men’s group decided a little levity was in order, and included a number of scrolls with “kids’ jokes.”

“What’s a bear without any teeth?” said Alderete by way of example. “A gummy bear. Little stuff like that they can open, they can read it, and it’ll put a smile.”



Matthew Roybal, left, Corey Gonzales and Christopher Rea decorate a Christmas tree Friday with fellow residents and staff of the Santa Fe Recovery Center for the Esperanza Shelter’s Trees of Hope fundraiser at the Drury Hotel. The recovery center’s clients came up with a theme and decorated a pair of trees (one for the women’s program and one for the men’s) to spread some joy and positivity in the face of the addictions they are battling.

Jim Weber/The New Mexican

Nytasha Martinez, a 33-year-old originally from Acoma, held her 2-month-old daughter, Raylene Louis, in a front pack Friday while she helped hang ornaments on the “Faith, Love and Acceptance Tree” — the Santa Fe Recovery Center women’s contribution.

It was a particularly meaningful theme for Martinez, who has struggled with both alcohol and drug addiction, which she describes as her family’s “generational curse.” She was admitted to the program when Raylene was just 2 weeks old. Martinez, who hopes to regain custody of her older two daughters and become a substance abuse counselor after leaving the program, said she hopes the tree spreads the message of acceptance.

“Us addicts and alcoholics, we’re still people inside,” she said. “We didn’t make the best of choices ... [but] we deserve to be accepted in a world where it’s really just kind of full of hate.”

Alderete, who has been battling a meth addiction for years and is going through the center’s 30-day program for the third time, said the loss of his teenage nephew in a shooting two years ago hit him hard. He’s hoping to be accepted into the center’s 90-day program after the first-month program wraps up.

He said working on the ornaments with the other men was enjoyable and a nice break from the often painful recovery process of revisiting the past.

“To take time out of recovery and just put our energy ... into something like this to give back, that’s such a good liberating feeling,” Alderete said.

If You Go

What: *Trees of Hope auction fundraiser for Esperanza Shelter*

When: *Bidding runs from 8 a.m. Tuesday, Nov. 26, to 11:45 p.m. Saturday, Nov. 30. Bidders can see the trees in person from 10 a.m.-6 p.m. each day of the auction.*

Where: *Decorated trees will be on display at the Drury Plaza Hotel, 828 Paseo De Peralta.*

Details: *Buyers can place bids online at 32auctions.com/SantaFe*

TreesOfHope

.

Chances for charity

It's giving season in New Mexico, and a number of organized charitable efforts are getting underway.

Northern New Mexico Toy Drive

What: The toy drive solicits donated gifts that it distributes through partnerships with 40 organizations that collectively serve more than 7,000 children in Northern New Mexico.

When: Gifts may be dropped off or sent through Dec. 20

Where: Unwrapped gifts may be dropped off at city of Santa Fe fire stations, Santa Fe City Hall, Santa Fe libraries and a number of other locations in Santa Fe, Los Alamos and Albuquerque. Gifts ordered off the fundraiser's online wishlist may also be sent directly to EXIT Realty Advantage NM, 615 Central Ave, Ste 100, Los Alamos NM, 87544.

Details: Gifts should be new and unwrapped. More details, including a full list of drop-off sites and shopping lists, are available at exittoydrive.com

Santa Maria El Mirador adopt-a-home

What: Santa Maria El Mirador, which offers support services for New Mexicans with intellectual disabilities, is inviting community members to "adopt" one of its group homes by donating \$250 for the purchase of gifts for each resident. The organization has 15 homes with four or five residents each. Donations for gifts are also welcome in smaller amounts.

When: Donations are requested ahead of Dec. 15.

Where: Donations may be sent to 10 A Van Nu Po, Santa Fe NM, 87508.

Details: More information about the organization is available at santamariaelmirador.org

Santa Fe Artists' Medical Fund Celebration 6" x 6" Show and Silent Auction

What: Founded in 1996, the fund helps visual artists in Northern New Mexico who need medical care but cannot afford it. The event will auction off traditional 6-by-6-inch pieces by various artists, as well as 8-by-10-inch photography and sculptures no larger than 8-by-8-by-8 inches.

When: 1:30-3:30 p.m., Dec. 8.

Where: The Grand Ballroom of the Scottish Rite Temple, 463 Paseo De Peralta, Santa Fe.

Details: The event is free to attend. More details, including a gallery of some of the items available to bid on, are available at santafeartistsmedicalfund.org/news-events/

The Empty Stocking Fund

What: Maintained by the Santa Fe Community Foundation in partnership with *The Santa Fe New Mexican*, The Empty Stocking Fund provides support for rent/mortgage, utilities, dental and medical issues, as well as home and car repairs for people experiencing financial challenges in Santa Fe and Rio Arriba counties. The fund has currently paused the program for new applications for aid due to the "overwhelming number of requests" for aid.

When: The fund accepts donations year-round.

Where: Donations may be made online or by mailing a check to The Empty Stocking Fund, c/o The Santa Fe Community Foundation, P.O. Box 1827, Santa Fe NM, 87504-1827.

Details: More details are available at santafecf.org/funds/empty-stocking-fund

Gabrielle Porter

Reporter