



Coalition on a Mission

a monthly newsletter of the Supportive Housing Coalition of New Mexico

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Home is Where the Art Is



Julie & Tony in their new apartment in 2005.

What first strikes you about Tony and Julie is their absolute adoration for one another. Tony remembers every single date of significance in his relationship with Julie. "We met on April 6, 2004," he reports, "that is the day we celebrate as our anniversary." But he also remembers how they lost everything – their homes,

his business, all their worldly goods – because of a terrifying cycle of substance abuse and untreated mental illness.

When Tony met Julie, she was already heavily involved in substance abuse. "I had the crazy idea that I could get her out of it by getting into it with her," he says. "Don't get me wrong Julie," he says turning to her, "every choice I made was my own, it wasn't your fault." Tony let his

thriving business selling satellite systems to hotels and motels crash and burn as they maxed out credit cards and sold all their worldly goods, including Tony's extensive musical instrument collection, in an effort to survive. They were homeless by June of 2004.

It didn't take long to realize they had to do something different. "I made the decision to get out of California because I knew if we didn't leave the people we were involved with, we would never get well." And for Tony, that is another date he remembers well. "We left California on March 31 and arrived in New Mexico on April 3, 2005. "We found AHCH right away (Albuquerque Health Care for the Homeless) where we received treatment for our mental illness."

They also found Art Street and it is there that they found a way to support themselves as they lived out of their truck. Tony and Julie created artwork that they sold on the streets, in business parking lots, and even door-to-door.

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Supportive Housing Coalition of New Mexico Turns 20!

On February 8, 1996, the board of directors of the Albuquerque Mental Health Housing Coalition signed the Articles of Incorporation for the nonprofit organization whose purpose was to provide "housing opportunities for severely disabled mentally ill persons, including those who are homeless or near homeless, helping such persons to develop skills and supports necessary to live in housing of their choice." The signers included Coalition board members from Transitional Living Services, Albuquerque Health Care for the Homeless, St. Martin's Hospitality Center, and the UNM Mental Health Center.

Mark Allison joined the organization as executive director in 1998, when AMHCC had 11 housing units and a budget of \$150,000. He was the driving force behind such landmark properties as Downtown@700-2nd and Silver Gardens in Albuquerque.

First in Housing First and A Name Change

In 2005, the Coalition pioneered the Housing First approach in New Mexico, a program that began with 20 housing vouchers. In March 2006, as its reach expanded beyond Albuquerque city limits, AMHCC changed its name to **Supportive Housing Coalition of New Mexico**. Today, SHC-NM owns/manages or is in partnership with 7 affordable housing developments offering permanent supportive housing, transitional housing, crisis housing, and housing for people with



20 years, 7 properties, 331 housing vouchers, 150 landlords, 349 affordable housing units, thousands of dollars in rental assistance, 1 mission: to prevent and reduce homelessness in New Mexico.

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Home is Where the Art Is

continued



Tony's artwork donated to SHC-NM

"To this day I remember what I created and wonder how it looks in [the owner's] home," says Julie. Between the sales of their art, food from day shelters, and camping out of their truck, Tony and Julie cobbled out a living together. "We never panhandled," they say proudly, "but we were going bonkers living out of the truck."

"First of all, let me say one thing, we owe you our lives. It is so hard to be homeless." Julie

Fortunately the Pelletiers were quickly ushered into the fledgling Housing First program at Supportive Housing Coalition of New Mexico. "We were client #6 in your Housing First program," Tony relates happily, "We instantly fell in love with the first apartment John Ames (SHC-NM Community Housing Director) showed to us. We were housed on October 6, 2005. After three years, our housing specialist, Trina, got us to apply for Section 8 and we were able to make room for someone else to benefit from the voucher program." Obtaining Section 8 will allow Tony and Julie to move to Arizona to be closer to Julie's parents.

The couple married in July of 2006 with over 100 guests at their wedding in Roosevelt Park. "Many couples don't make it through homelessness," they explain, "We have been fortunate to have each other. We lost lots of material things but we always had each other." (see their wedding pictures at bit.ly/SHCPhotos)

Tony and Julie still have each other and they still have their art. Their art is mostly mixed media and "90% collaborative." And Julie and Tony care deeply about their community. Tony has served on the board of AHCH and both Julie and Tony serve as mentor emeriti for Art Street and create opportunities for artists to sell their art. This year, Tony allowed SHC-NM to use his artwork on the notecards SHC gave as its donor gifts last year. "We are honored to help, we always want to give back," explains Julie, "God bless Housing First, we would not be where we are today."

4th Annual Strike Out Homelessness Bowl-A-Thon and Raffle

September 24, 2016



SHC-NM Turns 20!

continued

disabilities. We work with 150 landlords and manage 331 housing vouchers for the City of Albuquerque, New Mexico CYFD, and the U.S. Dept. of Housing and Urban Development.

SHC-NM remains the leader in permanent, supportive housing options for people who have experienced homelessness in New Mexico. We have 30 full and part-time staff and work with a wide array of public and private funding partners.

For 20 years, SHC-NM has created **beautiful spaces** in which to live, **opportunities** for growth and personal development, and **communities** where people can finally be home.

\$20 for 20 years
spring challenge



Please help us begin the celebration with our **\$20 for 20 Years Spring Challenge** and culminating in our 20th Anniversary Celebration in October! Thank you for helping us end homelessness—permanently. Donate at www.thehousingcoalition.org.

New Life, New Look!



Alayna and Anna, SHC-NM clients, recently volunteered for Mark Pardo's Makeover Project. ABQ Newscastic is producing a video about the experience. Stay tuned to see what happened! We can't wait to see the final result!