



Annual Report

1999-2000

**1485 North Main Ste.C Las Cruces, New Mexico
88001**

Director's Introduction

Once again, we find ourselves reflecting on the work we have completed and the work still in progress in our efforts to improve the quality of life in the colonias of Doña Ana County. Our mission plays itself out in numerous ways: community organizing, economic development, and community development. With over ten years experience in the field, we continue to find new opportunities for growth and development. This includes both for the residents and for CDC staff.

Colonia residents are often frustrated by the many challenges and barriers they face in their efforts to improve colonia living conditions. CDC has a long-term commitment to provide the means by which colonia residents become empowered and to assist them in negotiating with public and private sector entities. While the obstacles are not easily overcome, community leaders have been instrumental in making sure the process of community development continues. CDC continues to provide technical assistance and support to member organization in a variety of areas, including training and advocacy.

In the reports that follow, we provide a glimpse of the successes and challenges we face in the day to day struggles of community organizing and development. Without hesitation, CDC staff are convinced that our work would not be possible without the perseverance and diligence shown by the leaders in the colonias. The lengthy process of infrastructure, economic, and community development leave residents frustrated. However, leaders make hard choices between participating in such a difficult journey or of continuing as they are. Many have chosen the longer path and are finally beginning to see results. The following reports will give readers an idea of what small communities can achieve when they work together.



In the Spirit of Jubilee...

In 1994, the CDC purchased a building from the Catholic Church in Anthony. This building was renovated to be used as a day care center, as it was clear that such a center would serve the needs of that community. The building needed quite a lot of work in order to meet the New Mexico State guidelines for day care centers. CDC applied for several grants to help defray the cost of the renovation. CDC also received a loan from the Sisters of Loretto, Loretto

Investment Committee, to finance the costs, as the grants received were insufficient for the whole cost of the renovation. The Sister of Loretto were gracious in providing a loan at a very low interest rate and CDC had been paying this loan with the rent receive from the Gadsden Independent School District, which administered the center.

This year, in the spirit of Jubilee, a biblical call to forgive debts and to begin the new millennium in the spirit of forgiveness and reconciliation, the Loretto Community approached their Executive Committee to cancel the debt owed by the CDC. Other organizations to whom Loretto lent money were also included. The loan was canceled effective January of this year. The CDC feels very honored and humbled by the Sisters of Loretto, for showing such a strong sense of solidarity with the work CDC does in the colonias. This type of action gives the CDC strength to continue our community organizing efforts in the colonias and to leverage resources to make further improvements and/or expand the child development services. It is our hope that other organizations will follow the exemplary leadership shown by the Sisters of Loretto.

Youth Organizing Project:

1999-2000 was an eventful year for the youth leaders of the Recreational Organizing Council (ROC) in Hatch. The organization successfully opened the doors to its recreation center and equipped it with a pool table, air hockey table, stereo, a Play Station, and later, four computers. Much of the funding for their center came from the Northern Doña Ana County Youth Initiative, an initiative of the Paso del Norte Health Foundation. Hatch Valley Public Schools provided the building, utilities and equipment at no cost to the ROC.

The leaders of the ROC sponsored/hosted training sessions on teen pregnancy, tobacco and alcohol use and abuse. They hosted visits from Brigada Juvenil, a youth organization from Tucson, Arizona, focused on border rights issues. Members from the Casa de Colores from Brownsville, Texas, an organization that focuses on practicing and promoting the indigenous cultures of Mexico, also came to Las Cruces. Participating in YouthAction's Southwest Regional Program forged these partnerships. YouthAction is a national organization that provides leadership and organizing training to youth from communities of color and/or low-income communities who are passionate about social justice.

Perhaps the biggest event for the ROC was on April 15, 2000, National Youth Service Day. Members of ROC collaborated with youth artists from the Court Youth Center in Las Cruces to paint two murals for the ROC's youth center. One of the murals is portable and the other is on the outside wall of the center. The youth made a spontaneous decision to write a quote on a section of the outside wall. It read: *Es mejor morir de pie que vivir de rodillas*--Emiliano Zapata. (Translation: It is better to die on your feet than to live on your knees). ROC members present chose the quote because they identified with the values of persistence and struggles that came through to them from the quote. The following workday, the principal of Hatch Valley High School informed the group that they would have to whitewash the quote and possibly the entire mural, or risk losing the center. The group painted over the quote and sought legal counsel from Olga Pedroza of the Centro Legal Campesino. They authorized her to write a letter on their behalf to seek clarification on the school's ruling and to request permission to repaint the quote on the wall of the center. To date, the School Board did not renew the lease because of the need to use the space for other school-related functions. The ROC is currently for another building in the Hatch area that can be used as a center.

Economic Development:

In February of this year, CDC hired Megan Snedden to take on the responsibilities as the Economic Development Coordinator, a position held earlier by Ray Padilla. Megan has a Master's Degree in anthropology and has conducted research in Nicaragua and Ciudad Juárez, Chihuahua, about the ways women who own small businesses are affected by changing economic conditions. Her background has been an important part of the technical assistance offered by CDC's economic development projects.

Mujeres en Progreso (MeP) made significant progress toward the goal of opening a child care center in Columbus, NM, during the 1999-2000 fiscal year. CDC contracted with Western New Mexico University's Southwest Center for Resource Analysis in November 1999 to carry out a market survey in Columbus. This survey clearly demonstrated the need for a child care center in Columbus. Following the survey, MeP began to research the expenses and income that the child care center might expect. Analysis of the possible costs and income show that a child care center in Columbus will be feasible.

The CDC, along with JoAnn Weiss of the New Mexico Department of Health, Public Health Division (PHD), assisted MeP to write a business plan. The first draft of the plan was completed in July 2000, although it will remain a working document and changes will be made as plans for the business progress. Currently, the group is working with the CDC and PHD to locate a building and property for the site of the child care center. MeP will soon begin a search for the future director of the center, and will also begin to apply for grants and loans to finance the start-up costs of the center. Recently, MeP received news that a local landowner in Columbus is generously offering to donate an acre of land in a prime location for the child care center. MeP is also working with Suzanne D'Avalon of Youth Services, Inc., in Deming, to write a federal grant for a child care/employment initiative in Luna



county. If awarded, this grant will fund the building construction for MeP as well as provide training and assistance to MeP and other child care providers in the county.

CDC also began the process of developing a labor profile to be used as an economic development tool. A study was conducted in the community of Las Palmeras as part of a housing survey funded by Tierra del Sol Housing Corporation, Inc. (TDS). After analyzing the data, CDC and TDS plan to use the survey in other communities. The information from Las Palmeras is already being used to identify families who may be interested in working cooperatively in agricultural projects with the assistance of Heifer Project International. CDC is also in the process of finding agency partners to help in the development of a database of information about colonia communities that will be used to further the economic development of Doña Ana County.

Immigrant Rights:

Members of the Board of Directors of the CDC in conjunction with other members of the community at large, have been consistent/constant in their complaints concerning the Border Patrol and the Sheriff Department handling of immigrants in Doña Ana County. Since last year, the Board supported the CDC's staff participation in finding a systematic way of documenting alleged violations and abuses by the sheriff Department and Border Patrol. While there have been many informal complaints regarding how these two entities treat Mexican immigrants, a concerted, systematic documentation process has not been developed.

In collaboration with the Immigration Las Enforcement Monitoring Program (ILEMP) from El Paso, Texas, the CDC coordinated a series of trainings, CONOZCA SUS DERECHOS, in the fall of 1999. The trainings covered issues regarding the identification and documentation of alleged abuses and violations committed by the Border Patrol and other enforcement agencies. It also covered topics on international human rights and the rights of persons living along the U.S. Mexico border. Over 16 individuals, including youth, participated in the trainings. Last spring, CDC, along with ILEMP and over ten organizations from Texas, the state of Chihuahua and Columbus, Arizona and New Mexico, agreed to form the Consejo Regional Ciudadano (CRC), in a concerted effort to regionalize this documentation process. To date, the CRC has met on a monthly basis to develop a strategy to carry out the CONOZCA SUS DERECHOS Campaign. This campaign is intended to be the impetus for future trainings and a regional identification and documentation process of alleged abuses and violations. CDC staff is part of the education Committee of the CRC to assist in the coordination of training's necessary to provide consistency to this process.

Other Legal Issues:

In May of 1999, CDC filed an injunction relief ordering the Doña Ana County Sheriff's Department to comply with the 4th Amendment Rights protection under their Solid Waste Ordinance. The injunction relief was filed after several enforcement sweeps of the colonias to investigate alleged environmental codes violations were conducted. CDC questioned the legal authority of the Solid Waste Ordinance,

Section 26, which allowed Sheriff Department Officers to enter private property without a warrant and without individualized probable cause for particular property, to inspect for environmental crimes, regardless of whether the property is fenced or regardless of whether the resident was home. CDC rose constitutional objection to Section 26 of the Ordinance, as written. After the injunction relief was filed, CDC staff met with the County's legal staff to agree on the language of the changes in the Ordinance that would assure protection under the 4th Amendment of the U.S. Constitution. The County Board of Commissioners in September of 1999 passed the change on the Solid Waste Ordinance. Other details of the lawsuit, which included a refresher course on 4th Amendment Rights protections for Sheriff Department staff and fees to be paid to the CDC's attorney, were agreed upon in June of 2000. To date, the County has complied with the agreement. It will be the responsibility of the community at large to monitor the way in which the Solid Waste Ordinance is applied in the county. CDC will continue to take a proactive approach in dealing with environmental issues in the colonias, as well as monitoring that any law enforcement agency upholds the protection of 4th Amendment Rights against illegal search and seizures.

Donors:

The following people generously donated funds during the 1999-2000 fiscal year: Bishop Ricardo Ramírez, Carlos Corral, Charlotte Kiser, Christine Sanders, Debra Pendleton, Denise Chavez, Diana Bustamante, Dolores Halls, Douglas Hahn, Esperanza Holguin, Faye Gibson, Graciela García, J. López-Martínez, Jane Wholey, Joyce Watson, Judy Messal, Katherine Bachman, Lorraine Revling, Lura Wallace, Marieka Brown, Mary Meadows, Mason Valenzuela, Maureen O'Connell, Merlyn Risser, Nadia Barrett, Nancy Baker, Nikki MacDonald, Nina Mervine, Norma Schmidit, Patricia Chavez, Pauline Hoff, Polly Peterson, Ray Padilla Jr., Rigoberto Delgado, Rosella Almaguer, Rubén Nuñez, Sherman Williams, Stephen Helmreich, Sylvia Apodaca, Thomas Bustamante, Tracy Sterling, Virginia Halvorson, Zana Hepperly, and an anonymous local donor.

CDC continues to promote and cultivate its relationships with many organizations that provide support to the community organizing efforts. CDC has continued its collaborations with Basilian Fathers of Toronto, Ben Archer Health Clinic, Catholic Campaign for Human Development, Community Action Agency, Diocese of Las Cruces, Doña Ana County, Funding Exchange, Jewish Fund for Justice, McCune Charitable Foundation, NM Community Foundation, Parenting Resource Center, Paso Del Norte Health Foundation, Peace Lutheran Church, Raskob Foundation, REA Magnet Wire Co., Saint Mary's Catholic Church, Sisters of Mercy, Tierra Del Sol Housing Corp., Turner Foundation, Wells Fargo Bank.

Community Reports

Northern Region:

Salem:

The Salem local Board of Directors concentrated their work on two needs: the Recreational Park and the wastewater system. After several meetings with CDC and the Doña Ana County administrators, the Board agreed to use funds from state appropriations to design a multipurpose center. The County representative presented several options of what could be included on the center. The Board also sponsored two cleanup projects at the park and invited people to volunteer time and work to develop the only recreational facility in Salem. One-on-one interviews have been conducted to identify more residents interested in participating at the local board level. In addition, some families from Salem have shown interest in working with the Heifer Project International (HPI). The HPI provides livestock, training and technical support to groups interested in supplementing their income by producing food fiber and animal agriculture. Dr. Rigoberto Delgado, regional Program Manager, presented the information to two groups already. The CDC's role is to negotiate with HPI, assist groups to research sustainable agriculture issues and coordinate trainings and meetings.

El Milagro:

The Milagro Organizing Project (MOP) from the community of El Milagro continues working to complete a wastewater system with Border WaterWorks, Inc.. Through a generous grant from the Paso Del Norte Foundation, 28 families were able to qualify to offset the cost of the septic tanks already installed by Border WaterWorks. A total of eight families are using the septic tanks with a temporary community leach line. Discussions regarding the possibility of connecting El Milagro to the wastewater treatment plant in Hatch, instead of constructing a stand-alone treatment plant in El Milagro, are currently in progress. This last summer, community members agreed to participate with WaterWorks, CDC, and the New Mexico Environmental Department in negotiating a connection plan with the Village of Hatch.

The local Board is also working on improving the roads and clearing land titles. The MOP formally requested that the Doña Ana County Roads and Transportation Department provide a sign at the entrance to the community. They also requested that the Road Department agree to take on the maintenance of the road. With the land titles, the Board is seeking to get clear titles to their properties, a situation that has not been resolved with the count and the developer who sold the properties to El Milagro residents. The MOP is also interested in acquiring an adjacent 10 acres of land, owned by the original developer. They want to use this land for future housing development. The residents have identified the need for better housing and will invite Tierra Del Sol Housing Corporation to discuss the possibility of a housing initiative for El Milagro.

The CDC assisted the MOP in the application process for a mini-grant under the Healthier Communities Initiative of the Public Health Division. They were approved for the bulk of their request in June of 2000 and are awaiting the final contract to be formalized so that they can access these funds. With this grant, members of MOP and others in neighboring communities, will receive training in grant-writing, environmental health issues, and computer literacy.

Rincón:

The community of Rincón has continued to participate in quarterly community clean-ups that brings people together. E Coli bacteria was found in the community water system this last summer. Several of the members of El Orgullo de Rincón (OR) were actively involved in informing the rest of the residents on how to prevent further contamination. Residents are still concerned about the contamination and have asked the Rincón Water Association for information about the status of the wastewater system slated to be built for Rincón. It has been over three years since construction of the system was originally scheduled to begin. The resident's will continue working with the water association board to exert pressure on the county to start the construction of the plant.

MaryAnn Benavides, CDC's Community Organizer for Rincón, left in February 2000 to move with her family to Presidio, Texas. While some members of OR have not participated in community activities since her departure, there is still interest to continue the work of OR. One-on-one interviews and focus groups will be scheduled to revisit community concerns and evaluate community needs.

Southern Region:

In Las Palmeras, residents have completed the self-help wastewater collection system with the assistance of Border WaterWorks, Inc. Residents of Las Palmeras and Montana Vista are impatiently awaiting a long-delayed decision by the County Board of Commissioners regarding the connection of these communities to a wastewater treatment plant. The County must decide whether to connect to the Anthony Water and Sanitation District (AWSD) or to connect to a planned plant near Vado. The Tierra Del Sol Housing Corporation, Inc. (TDS) initiative in Las Palmeras has begun assisting eligible residents to participate in the HUD housing grant. Several meetings were organized to begin the process of screening applicants for housing renovation or new construction projects. Over eight families have applied and Brad Hall, contracted by TDS, has already completed several site evaluations and write-ups for the work orders.

The Doña Ana County Roads and Transportation Department recently paved the entrance road to Las Palmeras. The Elephant Butte Irrigation District (EBID) also made renovations to the irrigation ditch bridge crossing into Las Palmeras. While the Community still waits for the developer to fulfill his commitment to paving the roads inside the community of Las Palmeras, these two developments has made access to the community easier.

In the area of organizing, the CDC staff has turned its focus on rebuilding the local organization, El Bienestar de Las Palmeras, which was originally, involved with the planning, design, and construction of the wastewater project. As the collection system is now complete, there is renewed interest in the community to have CDC staff coordinate leadership, evaluation and strategic planning workshops to develop a work plan.



In Montana Vista, Manuela Méndez helped CDC identify a new group of leaders. This group has completed their first series of leadership development trainings. They plan to

hold community meetings to share the priorities they have identified and to elicit others not yet identified. The residents also continue working toward completion of the self-help wastewater collection system with the assistance from Border WaterWorks. To date, the project is approximately 75% completed. Residents from both Montana Vista and Las Palmeras attended a public hearing by the County to find out about the Vado treatment plant, yet to be constructed. Both communities have shown an interest in working together to build a community park near the Berino Elementary School. Montana Vista will also be included in the self-help housing project with TDS. Eligibility screenings will take place shortly after all evaluations are made in Las Palmeras.

Comunidad Tres Piedras in Mesquite: Congratulations are in order to the community residents of Tres Piedras, as they will finally have legal access into their community when the EBID completes the entrance road. The natural gas hook-up for the community is at a standstill, through some residents have shown interest in pursuing this project.

Fairacres:

The Río Grande Estates residents reached an agreement with the developer, through a mediated settlement, to divert any owned debt into a community fund dedicated toward addressing the improvements necessary to bring this community up to legal subdivision standards. The agreement was that as of December 2000, the developer would release all financial obligations from the residents and in turn, the residents themselves, would be responsible for meeting Doña And County subdivision requirements. The intent of this agreement was for residents to continue to deposit the equivalent of their monthly payments into a community fund, which would in turn be used to defray the costs of subdivision compliance. Throughout this year, CDC and Southern New Mexico Legal Services (SNMLS) have coordinated a series of meetings in an attempt to form an incorporated community organization that would be the conduct in managing an escrow account.

Research in the Colonias: Rebecca Dohlinow

In the fall of 1998, CDC was contacted by Rebecca Dohlinow, who is pursuing a doctoral degree from the Department of Geography at the University of California, Berkeley. Ms. Dohlinow is interested in examining the role of women in leadership positions in the colonias. After several interviews and a formal proposal to staff, it was found that her research project would be very beneficial to CDC. Rebecca moved to Las Cruces in February of 2000 to begin her field research in the colonias of Doña

Ana County. She built relationships with many of the women leaders in the colonias. She also organized an English class for the residents of Las Palmeras, meeting with individuals on a weekly basis. Rebecca also helped the CDC by providing an objective perspective on CDC internal operation. CDC would like to thank Rebecca for her interest in working with colonia residents. In particular, CDC is appreciative of her genuine commitment to the improvement of the quality of life in the colonias. She showed an authentic interest in understanding the struggle to overcome barriers inherent in community development. Rebecca is scheduled to return to Las Cruces upon completion of her research and agreed to keep CDC informed regarding her future research on women. We wish Rebecca success in her academic pursuits and trust she will not forget CDC or the people in the colonias who will remember her for many years.