



# THE TAOS NEWS

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## My Turn

### **An update on Tri-County Community Services**

#### **Tri-County Community Services board**

The Taos News, 4/2/2015

As many of you are aware, Tri-County Community Services has been going through a major financial crisis. Tri-County Community Services is a nonprofit agency which serves the some of the most vulnerable members of our community who suffer from a wide range of mental health disorders in Taos, Colfax and Union counties. Disruption of our services could potentially cause harm to many individuals and to our community as a whole. Tri-County Community Services has been a behavioral healthcare provider in Northern New Mexico for the past 41 years. We provide substance abuse and detoxification services, suicide prevention/intervention and outpatient mental health and psychiatric care for nearly 2000 patients.

Disruption in these critical services could cause major harm to those in need, and would certainly serve as a catalyst for dramatic increases in healthcare expenditures. Most of these added expenses would be shouldered by Medicaid, our local hospitals, and our law enforcement agencies in terms of indigent patients and the increase in crime. We are the only full service adult mental health provider in Taos, Ratn and Clayton counties.

Tri-County Community Services presently has about 65 employees plus a five-member, volunteer Board of Directors, of which three have joined the board within the last six months. We are methodically reviewing the finances and operations, and implementing plans to make Tri-County Community Services a more financially solvent institution. We have severed ties with the former CEO and CFO, and the former president of the board voluntarily resigned in an effort to start fresh and with a "clean slate" to keep these vital services available to the community. We have been meeting twice weekly, sometimes more, and are working tirelessly long hours to come up with viable solutions to the problems Tri-County Community Services faces. We have appealed to the state of New Mexico and to local resources for financial aid to sustain us through this difficult time. We have brought in local volunteers and consultants, who are also volunteering their time, to help get us out of this crisis.

The Board of Directors at Tri-County Community Services has been setting new priorities which begin with continuing to provide vital services to the community, meeting payroll expenses on time, keeping operating expenses current and to a minimum, and paying off essential creditors so that we can continue to provide services to our community. We are analyzing costs of operation daily, and eliminating unnecessary, and sometimes frivolous, expenses. We are also looking hard at ways to improve our services, and are constantly thinking "outside the box" to find solutions to these pressing problems. We are completely vested to ensure that the Board of Directors and management errors which occurred in the past never occur again.

The good news is, Tri-County Community Services is still here, with our doors open to the community. The Board of Directors is increasingly optimistic that this crisis will end soon. We respectfully ask for the continued patience and support of our employees, who are the foundation of this organization, our creditors, and our community as we continue to navigate through these troubled waters.

*The Tri-County Community Services Board of Directors — Fr. Mike Olsen, president; Marcia Beatty, secretary/treasurer; Margaret Suehr, Co-CEO; Nancy Passikoff and Judith Cooper — submitted this op-ed piece.*