

Newsletter of
LAS ESPERANZAS, INC.

for and about
the Mesquite street-original townsite historic district

Vol. #06 - Winter - 2008

President's Corner

As we welcome in 2008, we are looking forward to an exciting year in the Mesquite Historic District. The new street lights and signs will be installed, another gateway will be built and we hope our partnerships with Las Cruces Downtown and the City and State will continue to grow. We have much to be thankful for with the support we have had over these past 9 years since Las Esperanzas, Inc. was founded. Each Board member and each officer has made a difference in our neighborhood and we hope this tradition will continue well into the future. Speaking of traditions, this was the first year we joined with the Alameda Depot Historic District and Downtown to light a path of luminarias. We enjoyed it so much, we are already starting to plan for next year's luminarias event.

We are also working on numerous other projects in 2008 including more public art for gateways and bus stops, adopting Klein Park, oral histories from our neighbors and plans for an annual meeting where everyone can get a taste of our ongoing projects and add some of their ideas to the mix.

I will be continuing my membership with Las Esperanzas, Inc. but will be handing my gavel to a newly elected President in another month. It has been an honor to serve this organization and I thank the Board and the members for all their help and support.

Bob Cummins, President

THANK YOU TO OUR BENEFACTORS

Sams Club Store #4784
Doña Ana Historical Society
Las Cruces Downtown
Angelina Rosales
Joyce Macrorie
Wilma and Bobbie Hutson
David Chavez
Lorrie Meeks
Mesilla Valley Land & Development
Jeanne Abkes
Estella Sanchez
Judi Boa
Greg Smith
Hector Diaz, Landmark Real Estate

The Greening of the Mesquite Historic District

by L.M. Meeks

In January we stood on the roof in the hot January sun and discovered that Las Cruces is one of the best places on earth for solar power. We watched a team from Positive Energy, Inc. along with homeowner Bobbie Hutson, install 20 solar modules on the house at 742 E. Hadley Ave.... a house built in the early 1950s.

Bobbie and Wilma Hutson are joining an ever-growing group of people whose values are aligned with sustainability in their lives, their homes and our planet. The installers say it is rare to install solar panels on an older home. The Hutsons, both in their 60s, asked themselves -if not us?...then who?... if not now?...then when?



On the roof...Positive Energy, Inc. installers discuss the installation while Bobbie Hutson talks to reporter Bethany Conway of the Las Cruces Bulletin

The Hutsons have installed a "grid-tied, net-metered photovoltaic (solar electric) system". "Grid-tied" means the solar panels are connected with wire through an inverter and meters directly to El Paso Electric power system. "Net-metered" is a term related to the meter that is read every month by the power company to determine the bill. When the solar panels produce more electricity than the Hutsons are using, excess electricity will go into the El Paso Electric system; the Hutson's electric meter will actually spin backwards. If it is cloudy or dark, the Hutsons will get their electricity from El Paso Electric and their meter will spin forward. How that give and take balances out, determines their monthly electric bill.

Although the installation and panels cost \$10,000 to \$35,000 depending on the energy needs of a home, there are state and federal tax credits up to \$11,000 available. Other incentives have been implemented in other parts of the state. Additionally, the Hutsons are effectively locking in today's energy prices; without solar power their energy costs would continue to rise. Further solar information is at www.NMSEA.org.

The Jan/Feb 2008 "Green Issue" of "Preservation, the Magazine of the National Trust for Historic Preservation," states "the greenest house is the house already built." Keeping older homes viable saves energy and conserves resources. The National Trust began a sustainability initiative in 2006 to promote the environmental benefits of historic preservation. Here in Las Cruces, with the foresight of the Hutsons, we are part of that initiative within this old neighborhood and have begun its renewal and march into the future while holding on to its historic past.

What's Happening

"Las Cruces: Crossroads of History" Permanent Exhibit at the Branigan Cultural Center is a comprehensive look at the history of the Mesilla Valley and Las Cruces spanning the past 400 years.

Dona Ana Historical Society had a Gala Ribbon Cutting at the Amador Hotel on November 29th, 2007 to mark the beginning of the Amador Foundation Restoration Project. The Foundation plans to restore the Amador Hotel for use as a world class History Museum.

On January 9, 2008 Las Cruces Downtown presented a draft of the guiding principles for downtown commercial facade improvements to their Board, the City officials and the public.

Mark Westbrook, an engineer from Positive Energy, Inc., will discuss Home Energy Efficiency and Grid-tied Solar Electricity on Friday, February 1, at 6 p.m. at the Southwest Environmental Center. 635-9582.

The governor's office has included \$500,000 in his budget for Centennial activities. The State of New Mexico Centennial Committee here in Las Cruces is headed by Jon Hunner. A meeting is set for the end of February (tentatively February 27th). A Board Member from Las Esperanzas, Inc. will attend.

The new street lights ARE coming. We know we said the new street lights would be out in September, then it was December. We are an optimistic bunch. Look for the first street lights to go up in February. Also look for posts with the Mesquite Historic District medallions on Campo, Mesquite and elsewhere upon entering the neighborhood.

On Sunday April 13, 2008 The Las Cruces Symphony Guild will once again be sponsoring a tour of the Mesquite Historic Neighborhood as a fund raiser.

The State Historic Preservation Office still says keep and fix the wood windows on your historic home. If you still want more energy efficiency, the tax credit from the state is available for storm windows if your house is "contributing" and in the state or federal historic district. Information at (505) 827-6320. Ask for Robyn Powell, Harvey Kaplan or John Murphey.

Vision 2040, a long range planning effort between Dona Ana County, the City of Las Cruces, the Village of Hatch, the Town of Mesilla and the City of Sunland Park is holding a series of information and public input meetings in February and March. More information can be found at <http://vision2040.nmsu.edu> or call the planning department at the City of Las Cruces.

MESQUITE MEMORIES

Board Members Take Part in Oral History Project

by O. McDonald

Board members Ronald and Olivia McDonald recently made a Story Corps CD recording chronicling the life of Olivia's mother, Consuelo Lerma, who spearheaded the formation of Las Esperanzas, Inc. The recording scenario was an opportunity to preserve history and elaborate on the culture of the neighborhood by describing a prominent and active native of the community. Fittingly, the Library of Congress certainly couldn't be a more excellent place to house a permanent record of Mrs. Lerma.

National Public Radio's StoryCorps mobile unit was in Las Cruces several weeks and invited the public to share their history. Since 2003, thousands have taken part in the StoryCorps oral history project, describing their lives and history. StoryCorps is an independent nonprofit project whose mission is to honor and celebrate one another's lives through listening.

Plans are currently being discussed by Las Esperanzas, Inc. to begin recording oral histories of individuals throughout the Mesquite Historic District.

Phillips Chapel Celebrates 100 Years

Built in 1911, Phillips Chapel at 638 N. Tornillo has a congregation that dates back 100 years.

In 1907, the Colored Methodist Episcopal (C.M.E.), now renamed the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church, was organized. They first worshiped in a small rented building at the corner of Campo and East Court. In 1910 the land on Tornillo was purchased for \$45 by Daniel Hibler and the Chapel was built. The building, typical of other C.M.E. churches built in the Southwest, has been continually occupied since 1911. Buttresses that extend on each side of the facade are the building's most distinctive architectural feature. The Chapel has 18" adobe walls, and the original pine wainscoting and floors.



NEWS OF THE NEIGHBORHOOD

The Learning Center

by Joyce Macrorie

In the year 2000 the idea of a Learning Center had gotten underway using spaces in Branigan Library, Weed and Seed and the Police Station on Spruce Street. There were immediate needs for child care to enable moms to study. Although this remains a concern, Dona Ana County and the Jardin de los Ninos have given assistance. In addition, neighbors, relatives, friends and other students cooperate and share care so that everyone can have a chance at getting an education.

The Dona Ana Community College Learning Center's Mesquite Neighborhood branch opened its doors in June of 2002 in a new building located at 890 N. Tornillo Street, Las Cruces. It was built with a grant from HUD.

When they moved into their new building in 2002, coordinator Luly Valencia-Glenn along with assistant, Guillermina Alvidrez and computer teacher, Estella Flores expected about 150 people. Six hundred showed up. Classes and workshops in fixing up houses were instituted with the help of NMSU Facilities and Maintenance and college students who earned class credits for Community Service. Then came a Community Block Grant allowing the acquisition of many computers where people now learn skills that allow them to improve their lives and compete for jobs. GED and English as a Second Language classes are offered to aid students who want to go on in their schooling. There are work skills classes and Parenting Classes, a Small Business Class working on interviewing skills and a room full of outfits for women to choose from for their interviews.

Students earn points for grades, attendance and homework that are redeemable for clothing, furniture, paint and books. There are math workshops and sewing classes. Students have sold their work at The Downtown Farmers Market and Dona Ana Arts Council events. On Fridays there is counseling provided by Southwest Counseling Service and a grant is in the works for more health services. Information is available on financial aid and career choices. Every semester Ms. Valencia-Glenn is able to help students transfer to the Community College to enroll for degrees. Last semester twelve students graduated from the learning center and enrolled in classes in Teaching, Criminal Justice and other degree programs.

Everyone is welcome to visit, sign up, attend and have a wonderful time learning and preparing to move forward in life.

Dona Ana Community College Learning Center is FREE and OPEN TO EVERYONE
Call 528-4054 or stop by 890 N. Tornillo Street for a visit.

Mesquite Heroine

We are proud to have one of our Board Members and longtime residents of the neighbor honored by the City for quick thinking, staying cool in a harrowing situation and getting two criminals off the streets.

Estella Sanchez, 77, awoke to find a light on in her house and when she went to turn it off, saw a man in the hall. Instead of confronting the intruder, she found a safe place and



called the police. Within minutes, police officers Feliciano Garcia and Gil Mora arrived and found the intruders in Mrs. Sanchez's bedroom, only a few feet from where she lay hidden under the bed.

On December 17th, Mrs. Sanchez was honored at City Hall by the Mayor, City Council and the Police Department with a certificate for her bravery and calm thinking.

Adopting Klein Park

By an unanimous vote, the Board of Las Esperanzas, Inc. has elected to adopt Klein Park.

We are joining in the new program sponsored by *Keep Las Cruces Beautiful* called "Adopt-A-Spot." The program encourages any individual, organized group or business to adopt a public area and help clean it up and make it beautiful. We plan to add flowers and plants, keep the park clean and come up with ways to make it more and more a neighborhood gathering place.

Las Cruces Beautiful is affiliated with Keep America Beautiful and has a mission to educate and encourage individuals to take greater responsibility for improving their community environments. Once a spot is adopted, Las Cruces Beautiful will recognize the group with an attractive sign in the adopted spot. Look for our a sign and then look for us, and come out and give us a hand.



Dichos del Vecindario

by Stella Melendrez

Con paciencia se gana lo imposible.

English translation: With patience you can gain the impossible.

JOIN LAS ESPERANZAS, INC. TODAY!

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State ____ Zip _____

Telephone _____

Email _____

Suggested donation:

Individual: \$15
 Families: \$20
 Benefactors: \$50 or in-kind donations

Please send this form with your tax-deductible dues to:

Las Esperanzas, Inc.
 P.O. Box 16261
 Las Cruces, NM 88004
 505-541-2206

...or bring this form with your dues to the next meeting!

REMEMBERING THE PAST WITH HOPE FOR THE FUTURE

PHOTO TOUR



Board Members work together to fill over 2500 luminaria bags with sand.



Santa's helpers, Dan Rosales, Faith Padilla-Hutson, Joyce Macrorie w/ Mr. & Mrs. Santa.



Santa with Police Officer Dan Rosales and part of his crew.



Luminarias line the walk at Klein Park.



Angelina Rosales provides winter festival entertainment at the bandshell in Klein Park.

The Sights and Sounds of the Winter Festival

by Lorrie Meeks

On December 7, to celebrate the beginning of winter festivities, Las Esperanzas, Inc. joined with City of Las Cruces and the Alameda Depot Historic District to light a path of luminarias that led from Klein Park to Downtown to the Alameda Depot. There was a great camaraderie of people, old and young, coming together to fill thousands of bags with sand. Sometimes you worked to help another then fill, then fold..... sometimes you worked alone..... but you always worked with the light percussion symphony in the background - the endless crinkling of brown paper bags.

By dusk, the sidewalks were lined with bags filled with sand and a candle. The wind started to blow, but we were not daunted. Our neighborhood police officer, Dan Rosales, showed up with a group of volunteers, and we began to light the candles. Sometimes, you'd try over and over to light the same candle, thinking "this will never work." Then you stop to stretch your back and you look behind you...across the park.... where someone else had fought with their candle and won, and another and another until the park is filled with the soft glow.....at first it is like fireflies, you can't quite believe what you see, then more and more are lit; then you are sure there is a team of people, just like you, working to light the path. You can't hear them, and you can't see them, but because of the candles, you know they are there. Again, a fine sense of community spreads through us as we work apart yet together to welcome all to our neighborhood.

And there's nothing quite like the horse drawn carriages that took us from downtown, up around Klein Park and Pioneer Park, to create a sense of decorum, a special night, a celebration. As I stood in line for the carriage, a woman told me luminarias used to signal the way home - or, out in the country, to show a guest the way to come - they could see the small bonfire and be welcomed and guided by it.

We hope to continue this tradition into the future and hope many of you will be welcomed here in the years to come.



Pork Posole

From the home of Rafaela Chavez:
"This is a great dish for those cold New Mexican winter evenings. Enjoy!"

- 2 tablespoons of vegetable oil
- 1 large yellow onion, chopped
- 5 Anaheim or jalapeno peppers, seeded and chopped
- 7 garlic cloves, chopped
- 1 teaspoon of oregano
- 1 teaspoon of ground cumin
- 10 cups of chicken broth [lower-sodium chicken broth]
- 3 cups of shredded pork [pre cooked]
- 2 cans of hominy
- ½ cup of chopped fresh cilantro

Garnishes:

- Chopped avocado, red onion
- Baked corn tortillas, crumbled
- Queso Blanco, Mexican cheese or Monterey Jack

1. Heat oil in Dutch oven over medium heat until hot. Add onion, peppers and garlic, sauté 10 minutes. Add oregano and cumin, sauté 5 minutes.
2. Add chicken broth, pork, hominy and cilantro and cook until thoroughly heated. Ladle into soup bowls and server with avocado, red onion, and your baked corn tortillas and cheese.

WANTED!

PICTURES
 STORIES & RECIPES
 Please submit your ideas to
 Lorrie Meeks, Editor
 P.O. Box 16261
 Las Cruces, NM 88004

Editor's note: All submissions are subject to editing and become the property of Las Esperanzas, Inc. unless specific arrangements are made otherwise.

Our Mission is to facilitate the preservation, renovation, revitalization and protection of the Mesquite Street-Original Townsite Historic District of Las Cruces, New Mexico



BOARD MEETINGS
Eastside Community Center
310 N. Tornillo St.
3rd Wednesday of
every month
6:30 PM

OFFICERS
President: Bob Cummins
Vice President: David Chavez
Secretary: Jeanne Abkes
Treasurer: Lorrie Meeks

BOARD MEMBERS
Freda Flores
Lauris Gallegos
Renee LeCuyer
Joyce Macrorie
Olivia Lerma McDonald
Ronald McDonald
Stella Meléndrez
Dan Rosales
Estella Sánchez

Las Esperanzas, Inc.
is a 501(c)3, nonprofit,
grassroots neighborhood and
preservation association for the
Las Cruces Mesquite Street-Original
Townsite Historic District



Board Member Olivia Lerma McDonald
and State Representative, Andy Nunez



Board Member Renee LeCuyer, Councillor
Dolores Archuleta, and Board Vice President
David Chavez.



City Manager Terrence Moore, Danielle
Miyagishima, Mayor Ken Miyagishima., Board
Treasurer Lorrie Meeks, Las Esperanzas Member
Wilma Hutson



Asst. City Manager Robert Garza,
State Representative Andy Nunez,
Councillor Miguel Silva



Board Member Joyce Macrorie, Member
Wilma Hutson, Board Vice President
David Chavez, County Commissioner Bill
McCamley, Board President Bob
Cummins, Board Members Stella
Meléndrez & Renee LeCuyer



Board Member Ron McDonald, County
Commissioner Bill McCamley, Asst. City
Manager Robert Garza, State Representative
Antonio Lujan

Las Esperanzas, Inc. is a community-based organization and we know we would not be as successful without the continuing support of our city, county and state. We would like to take this portion of the newsletter to recognize and extend our thanks to those partners. We know there are many people working behind the scenes and to them, we also want to express our gratitude. Shown here are some of those partners, along with our Board Members at a Brunch in January of 2008, sponsored by Las Esperanzas, Inc., at the home of the founder of Las Esperanzas, Inc., Consuela Lerma.

Also, we want to offer our many thanks to our former mayor, William Mattiace and our former council member, Jose Fietze, for their efforts and interest in the Mesquite Historic District. We would not be where we are today without their consideration.