

2013 New Mexico Humanitarian Awards

Honoring leaders of today; Cultivating leaders for tomorrow

The Jewish Community Center of Greater Albuquerque is proud to present the 2013 New Mexico Humanitarian Awards. The NMHA is a distinguished recognition program born from the desire to raise awareness of the spirit of humanity and to inspire individuals, organizations, and businesses to pursue humanitarian goals. These awards honor those who have embodied an outstanding spirit of humanity in a local, national, or international capacity by:

- Promoting mutual understanding, friendship, cooperation, and lasting peace among all people;
- Accomplishing extraordinary contributions affecting environmental, legal, social, or community issues;
- Advocating programs in pursuit of freedom, civil liberties and civil rights; and/or
- Serving the Jewish community in a way that reflects the highest integrity, love for fellow man and commitment to the ideals of Jewish life.

Evening Program

5:30 Cocktail reception

6:30 Welcome - Roberta Ramo, Master of Ceremonies
Opening Prayer / Breaking of Bread - Rabbi Harry Rosenfeld

6:45 Dinner

7:45 Program / Awards presentation
Welcome by David Buchholtz, President-Elect, JCC Board of Directors

2013 New Mexico Humanitarian Award Honorees:

Robert Bowman
Leslie Elgood

Live Auction - John Garcia, Auctioneer

Jill & Michael Montoya
Don Chalmers
Beverly & the late Bob White

8:30 Closing

Jill & Michael Montoya, Los Ojos de la Familia

At the age of 27, Michael Montoya, an Albuquerque native and a graduate of the University of New Mexico, seized the opportunity to purchase a small local company, Custom Grading, involved in excavation, grading and building construction. He had no capital and so took a big leap.

Within 10 years of acquiring Custom Grading, the company grew to over 75 employees and today is one of the largest of its kind in the state of New Mexico.

Having built this successful business, Michael and his wife Jill recognized, in contrast, the continued unmet needs of so many low income families in our community and central New Mexico. So, in 2010, they created and incorporated a non-profit charitable organization: Los Ojos de la Familia. The stated purpose of Los Ojos de la Familia is: "A grassroots movement to make a difference in the New Mexico community by providing educational development and quality of life assistance." Los Ojos identifies individuals through input provided by community members, teachers and school officials, who, without such assistance, would be unable to gain an education or trade, provide for the basic needs of their families, and become self-sufficient contributors to our community.



Michael and Jill began Los Ojos by granting three high school scholarships and by assisting nine families with general aid to purchase groceries, pay utilities and/or to pay delinquent rent. Through the help of their own families and friends, to whom Michael and Jill give immense credit, the Montoyas and the volunteer Board of Los Ojos have since grown the organization into a major force for good in central New Mexico. Today their endeavors include high school scholarships to approximately 15 students per semester, plus financial aid to over 90 families. Furthermore, through Los Ojos, Jill and Michael have enlisted the help of over 100 volunteers who distribute Thanksgiving and Christmas food baskets to over 200 needy families in Albuquerque, Los Lunas, Rio Rancho and Santa Fe.

Funding comes primarily from Michael and Jill, but Los Ojos now has five main fundraising events during the year. The proceeds from these events provide funds for a carnival in October which includes free games and food for local economically disadvantaged children. Hundreds participate. Not one cent of funds raised goes for salaries or other benefits to any member of Los Ojos; 100% of all funds go to helping people in the community.

Michael and Jill say that by giving back to the community they are not only helping families in need, but they are teaching their three children, Hope, Faith and Luke, the importance of not taking their own good fortune for granted and the responsibility to help others, regardless of one's own situation. This devotion to others, community leadership and teaching of the values of what the Jewish community calls "Tzedakah" (a Hebrew word literally meaning justice or righteousness but commonly used to signify charity) makes the Montoyas and their volunteer partners in Los Ojos del la Familia highly deserving of a New Mexico Humanitarian Award.