

E-2 THE NEW MEXICAN Sunday, February 3, 2008

COMMUNITY NEWS

Living with chemical sensitivities

After an accidental pesticide exposure in 2001, Ann McCampbell spent almost a year living in her Chevy Impala. McCampbell has been chemically sensitive since 1999, and before her illness was a practicing doctor.



GABE TAYLOR
Voice for accessibility

"When I first became ill, I was very sick. I couldn't tolerate my house and couldn't go anywhere," McCampbell said. "For the first six months, I just had to lie on a mat outside. Over the past 18 years, she has had to completely restructure her life. She even buys clothes and shoes differently now."

Chemical sensitivities changed Sharon Wirtz's life in 1988. She was teaching at the time when the chemicals from the insulation in her home and her classroom made her sick. At one point, Wirtz's sensitivity was so pronounced that she couldn't even tolerate the ink in newspapers or books. "When I would read newspapers, Mike (Wirtz's husband) would have to tape it to the outside of one of the windows so I could read it and not get sick," she said.

Some degree of chemical sensitivity affects 10 percent of New Mexico's entire population, according to a New Mexico Department of Health survey.

About twice as many women are affected as men. Recently there has been an increased scientific push to understand the physiological differences between a MCS sufferer and someone who doesn't have it.

"It's just been in the past few years, where there has been a more scientific documentation of the realities of the illness," McCampbell said. "Scientists have done studies with genes that code for detoxification enzymes with people who are chemically sensitive and those who are not, and noticed that there is a complete difference."

Living a normal life is completely out of the question for both McCampbell and Wirtz. "Trying to get anything new in your life is difficult," McCampbell said. "If you get new clothes, you've got to detox them. It's not unusual to have to air out shoes for about a year

before you can wear them." House and car repairs are also a challenge for people with MCS.

"If something breaks in your house, it's a crisis," McCampbell said. "If you need bodywork done on your car, you have to review with the mechanic to not touch the inside," Wirtz said. "Once the mechanic ended up cleaning the inside of the car with dish soap and I had to find someone to drive the car home."

Wirtz has missed several key events in her family's life. "I missed my son's wedding, both of my daughters' graduations, and I have a grandson due in January and I don't know when I'm going to get to see him," she said.

The triggers for an attack are different for each MCS sufferer, as are the range of symptoms. "Most people have an array of chemicals that they are sensitive to," McCampbell said.

The symptoms are also widespread. "My symptoms are immediate head pressure and a screaming headache," Wirtz said, adding that her symptoms have gradually decreased over the years. McCampbell's symptoms are more severe. "I have a headache and nausea," McCampbell said. "Then eventually I get stomach pain, weakness, and fatigue." Because

of the severity of her MCS, McCampbell has to carry a protective mask with her wherever she goes.

There is a growing awareness of MCS on a local level that has resulted in gradual changes in Santa Fe. "Ann and I worked with others on an IPM city task force for three years," Wirtz said. "The City Council passed an Integrated Pest Management Ordinance in 2003 that applies to all city-owned and operated facilities." Instead of using chemical pesticides, which are toxic to people, the city now uses environmentally responsible methods to control pests and weeds. "It's made a big difference in people's health as far as accessibility to public buildings," she said. As McCampbell got up to leave after her interview, she picked up a bag. In it was the mask that protects her from any possible chemical inhalation. With any disability, you take what you need with you wherever you go simply to make it through the day. Though her condition may be invisible to everyone else, MCS has not lessened the quality of Wirtz's daily life and the lives of others with this disability.

Know of any issues that need to be talked about? Contact Gabe Taylor at neighbors@sfnewmexican.com

Tribute: Project Reyes' largest yet

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Ashton, who passed away two years ago, set his money up in the foundation which is now funding the \$50,000 project.

In terms of money, this is the largest project I have ever worked on," Reyes said.

Reyes' project features a life-size family of four and a farm animal. The father portrays a surveyor of lands who homesteads with his family in the Rio Grande Valley. The wife wears the traditional wardrobe of the day. Their daughter sits on an adobe wall, which symbolizes what was used in home construction at that time. She carries a basket of vegetables representing the agriculture in the area. The son and a lamb, which represents farming, are also included. There are plans to have the family sitting on a platform in the shape of the Zia, though the exact design has not been decided.

"There are several drawings of the clay platform that I am discussing with the committee," Reyes said, who wears out of his La Cienega-area home. "It takes anywhere from three to five months to create the statues. Sometimes I'll work for 12

There are plans to have the sculpted family sitting on a platform in the shape of the Zia.

hours a day... it's so addicting." After Reyes finishes the clay sculptures, he'll mold them and then build wax models to fine-tune the works of art. When that is complete, he'll cast the statues in bronze.

While he has until this September to complete the project, Reyes plans to have the bronze statues ready for delivery this May.

"It's a lot of work, but the time goes by so fast," Reyes said. "I can sit in my studio for hours building these statues and it would seem like minutes to me. And it's so much fun to get paid to do something you love to do."

Contact Todd Bailey at 986-3088 or at tbailey@sfnewmexican.com

Turning: Kaskalla trains 'natural leaders'

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cal abuse — both received and handed out — anger, rampant alcoholism that infested every activity.

But unlike many others, including most of the men in Kaskalla's early life, he eventually arrived at a calm, spiritual place reconnected with Native spiritual traditions of safety for women and accountability for men, and now is training other men to be what he calls "natural leaders" in the eight pueblo communities of Northern New Mexico.

In addressing violence at men's and batterers' meetings conducted by Peacemakers and Teva Women United, Kaskalla and his natural leaders help American Indian men who have been violent to confront the demons in their belief systems that value might over right, view reality as a male-dominated hierarchy, justify violence and oppression and treat women and children as property of men.

"It is not spiritual-based, it doesn't work," Kaskalla said. "What does work, he said, is replacing the belief system imposed by the European occupiers with a return to traditional tribal beliefs that direct humans to understand that all things have spirits and are related; that respect is the foundation of all relationships; that women are sacred; and that all people are spirits on their own paths and part of the sacred circle of life that embraces all creatures."

"There must be confrontation (with men inclined to violence)," Kaskalla said. "But it must be done with compassion and in a way that shows that as men, they are worthy too."

As a teenager and young adult on the Zuni pueblo, he said, "make worth" meant showing that you were in control, that "you were strong, tough, mean, don't take crap and didn't cry."

"My high-school peer groups were always wrestling with the

TELL US WHO MATTERS

The New Mexican would like to recognize men in the Santa Fe area who matter. Men Who Matters is a project to identify and celebrate men who challenge other men to recognize that they can be powerful without making others powerless — men who encourage all men to work together with women, using their collective voices and resources to end violence.

To nominate an individual, please write a letter or e-mail describing the person and his accomplishments and tell us how to contact you as well as the nominee. The letters must be received by The New Mexican by 5 p.m. March 9.

Please send nominations to: Men Who Matters, The New Mexican City Desk, 202 E. Marcy St., Santa Fe, NM 87501 or submit to bernadette@sfnewmexican.com.

Profiles on those honored will be published on April 6.

concept of what is a man. It was about girls and alcohol and sports. It was the competition, especially. In the community, the young athletes were respected and respected, but always in a way that alcohol was involved." And the alcohol, which fueled the violence, was over-present and easy to acquire.

"In the recreation of Zia," Kaskalla said, "each direction you leave the reservation there is a Buz. All you have to do is stand out there in the road and somebody will pick us up and take us to one of the bars and buy us beer."

Kaskalla began drinking when he was 12. "The only people in my life who didn't drink were my grandmother and great-grandmother," Kaskalla said.

"I grew up with my grandparents and my aunts and great-grandmother, and there were a lot of traditional customs and festivals, but everything was associated with drinking afterward."

Kaskalla remembers the day everything began to change — the October day his wife, Lela, with their two young children at her side, told him that she had had enough and he would have to get treatment for the alcoholism and the abuse or she would leave him.

"When she told me that, 'Get

avoid the same traps, he reluctantly began going to AA meetings.

The meetings continued for seven years, and Kaskalla sought out other counselors to address his increasing anger and ways of handling it.

That led him to Peacemakers, where he volunteered to be a facilitator for what he thought was an AA-type group.

"But it turned out to be much more than that," Kaskalla said. "Peacemakers' services include advocacy, adult and child counseling, legal assistance and crisis intervention."

As he benefited from the Peacemakers education and anger-management programs, he also eventually rose from a volunteer trainer to executive director.

Now, with the help of Teva Women United, which also addresses issues of violence among pueblo peoples, Kaskalla hopes to expand the number of workshops and nonviolence programs for men, including the classes for offenders, who either voluntarily attend or are ordered to do so by tribal or state courts.

The main barrier to expanding anti-violence programs for men is finding funding sources, either governmental or private contributions. "There is money available for women, victims and children (programs), but not for men," who are often seen as unredeemable perpetrators.

Peacemakers does expect to begin education workshops and group support meetings in "two, with the goal of restoring the men's sense of their spiritual origins."

"We have lost contact with who we actually are," Kaskalla said.

In addition, his friends still drink and smoked pot, so to

Council launches awareness initiative

By Dennis L. Carroll

For The New Mexican

It's no coincidence that the Santa Fe Coordinated Community Response Council, a joint city-county project created to address a broad range of domestic-violence issues, has selected today, Super Bowl Sunday, to launch its men's domestic-violence awareness initiative.

Carol Horowitz, a council coordinator and the city's domestic-violence and sexual assault liaison, said the event often brings out the worst in men as they gather in packs to drink alcohol and watch other grown men do normally unspeakable things to each other.

"Super Bowl Sunday is not going to make a man beat his wife," Horowitz said, but she noted that the day is marked by actions and attitudes often associated with domestic violence, such as the alcohol, the sense of male privilege, the pack mentality and religion of women to subservient roles.

"It contributes to the idea that every man deserves a woman to wait on him, and that he is entitled to certain services," Horowitz said. She said a goal of the initiative is to get men to take violence in the home more seriously than many of them do. "We need our brothers to hold each other accountable," Horowitz said.

She said it is imperative that men realize the damage, physical and emotional, that domestic abuse inflicts on children who experience or witness it. Horowitz said violence

between parents creates a circle that results in children and teenagers becoming violent to each other and to their parents.

She said that besides lifting men's awareness of domestic violence, the CCRCC's initiative will attempt to enlist men's support in the war against violence in the home.

The effort will include creation of a series of men's workshops focused on ways that males can combat violence in the community.

Horowitz said the CCRCC also will try to build on Hispanic efforts to get bystander witnesses, such as neighbors and other members of the public, to report instances of domestic violence to police.

"You can't say it's none of my business anymore," Horowitz said. "It is your business."

The council also is embarking on a "Save Haven" program, in which business owners and their employees will be trained to accept and initially care for victims of violence who are seeking emergency shelter. For more information, call 955-5018.

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