

A Cause for Celebration

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After years serving the Tucson community, the Primavera Foundation is about to commemorate its numerous accomplishments helping those who need assistance in Tucson.

Amid the hustle and bustle of Downtown Tucson stand the always-open doors of the Primavera Foundation. Established in the early 1980's, the organization is getting ready to celebrate its 25th anniversary this October. And it has earned every right to celebrate this accomplishment.

Since it was founded, Primavera has been striving to improve the Tucson community and to provide assistance for its citizens in need. The foundation prides itself on advocating for social and economic justice, opportunity and community development. The nonprofit group also provides housing, employment services and financial education for the homeless and others.

The organization offers a wide range of outreach programs in the community. "[Primavera] was started as a soup kitchen to feed people who were homeless and hungry," says Deborah Dale, chief development officer of Primavera Foundation. From there, it blossomed into a full range of services and programs that help low-income and homeless people in a multitude of ways and serve about 10,000 people per year.

Primavera offers many emergency services including homeless shelters and drop-in centers, transitional and affordable rental housing, job training and placement programs, a prisoner re-entry partnership and a home-ownership program. "We help low-income families buy their first home," Dale says.

"It's grown very organically," Dale says. Originally a grass-roots organization, Primavera now administers programs based on the needs of the people served. Notably, the organization has created new programs for homeless single women in Tucson. Casa Paloma, for instance, is a program developed based on community need. "It's a daytime drop-in center for women only," Dale explains. It also serves as a transitional housing for women to live in for up to two years, which according to Dale is "the first step out of homelessness for the women who come through that program."

Possibly one of Primavera's greatest feats yet is the way it has become a cornerstone of the community, attracting thousands of volunteers every year. "We work closely with elected officials and the [Tucson Police Department]," Dale says. However, it's the individuals that get involved who serve as representatives for Primavera; they let other people know what resources they have available to them and how to support the organization.

This continual support has prompted Primavera to branch out and extend its arm to other groups. A merger with Travelers Aid of Southern Arizona last July expanded Primavera's staff, programs and budget by about 50 percent, enhancing the foundation's ability to contribute. "The continuum now is even more complete; we're serving even more people, and we're relying more on the community for support in terms of volunteer hours to maintain that," Dale says.

The foundation's future plans include a vacant lot next to the Jim and Vicki Click Training Center. "We recently received a generous bequest allowing us to purchase this lot," Dale explains. Plans for the land include a home-ownership and community-learning center that will help low-income families buy their first home. "We know that actually increases the chances of their kids going to college and stabilizes the neighborhoods," Dale says.

As its anniversary nears, the Primavera Foundation prepares for the celebration. It is set to take place Oct.2 at the Tucson Convention Center. The reception will include dinner and a storytelling performance afterward in the Leo Rich Theatre. Dale, who was a donor long before she was a fund-raiser for the foundation, says, "We want to invite people to come and celebrate 25 years of making an impact in our community."