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OUR VIEW

New Anchorum Health Foundation promises transformative giving

Giving with intent is more than handing out checks — it is designed to change conditions on the ground, transformational in nature. Such strategic giving has the potential to create a new normal.

And that's exactly what the newly created Anchorum Health Foundation plans to do for Northern New Mexico.

With an initial \$200 million to be handed out over 10 years, Anchorum will be focusing on the underlying issues that cause harm in this area — improving senior care, affordable housing, educational success and access to health care. The rationale: Healthier people create a healthier society.

The \$200 million is just the beginning. Anchorum Health Foundation will receive some \$500 million over the next decade, with primary funding from Anchorum St. Vincent, the nonprofit that was a half-owner of Christus St. Vincent, which operates Christus St. Vincent Regional Medical Center and several clinics. That ownership is being relinquished to Texas-based Christus Health.

Anchorum St. Vincent's \$130 million endowment has been transferred to the foundation, and the first \$50 million payment from Christus Health to buy the rest of the ownership share took place in September. Anchorum St. Vincent is now a subsidiary of Anchorum Health Foundation, soon to be the largest foundation in the state.

Jerry Jones, president and CEO of the new foundation, says the philosophy will be “transformative, not transactional.” It’s an important distinction.

Rather than merely funding organizations seeking grants or cash infusions for projects, the foundation will collaborate on big-picture projects that both meet community needs and match foundation strategies. The giving will be strategic and intentional, often designed to attract other investments to make every dollar stretch.

Here’s an example: Anchorum St. Vincent joined with Enterprise Bank and New Mexico Bank & Trust. Each gave \$5 million — with another \$5 million donated from other groups — to start the \$20 million Catalyst Fund, which is enabling Homewise to construct 1,000 affordable housing units over seven years.

Anchorum St. Vincent also bought the former Lamplighter Inn, which is being converted to permanent housing to assist people without shelter. That effort is awaiting city permits to be operational, but when completed, the renamed Bella Luz apartments will offer 58 studio and single-bedroom apartments for Santa Feans, making 80% of the area's median income or less.

An initial effort from the new foundation includes surveying hospitals across Northern New Mexico to dig deeper into the challenges they face. It won’t take a deep dive: It’s clear hospitals are struggling in rural areas. But ensuring their survival involves making sure giving produces results that keep the hospitals alive so that patients don’t have to travel hundreds of miles for necessary care.

Anchorum Health Foundation will have deep pockets and a broad vision, with leaders dedicated to giving, but giving smart. This strategic approach has great promise to improve the lives of thousands of New Mexicans.

Over time, 10 counties of Northern New Mexico — and their residents — will be healthier and happier as a result.