

The Conscious Aging Network of New Mexico—A Growing Circle

By Gary Carlson, PhD

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Have you felt excitement about your Spiritual Eldering® work, yet not known how to make it come alive in your community? I was feeling that way about two years ago—just having completed my Spiritual Eldering® training along with my wife Charlotte, I was full of energy but had limited outlets for my enthusiasm. A close friend who was writing a book on resiliency in the aging population suggested that we try to identify and meet with others who shared our enthusiasm for this exciting time of life. An exploratory meeting with about six interested people was most fruitful.

Continued meetings since then have led to a dynamic and active organization of professionals who work with elders—the Conscious Aging Network of New Mexico (CAN-NM). From our Statement of Purpose: "We share a belief that our later years can be a time of growth, discovery and joy—a time in which we seek wisdom, participate fully in the human family, and create a legacy for future generations." Currently about 15 of us meet monthly to network and to explore ways to "get the message out." It is exciting—and fun!—to be a part of this group!

CAN-NM's first big activity was in August, 2003, at the 25th Annual New Mexico Conference on Aging, which regularly draws over 1000 participants from all over New Mexico. Our group proposed that the conference include a conscious aging track. The conference organizers made conscious aging a focal point of the conference! Supporting this activity, we wrote three newspaper articles that were published locally, and presented 10 highly successful conscious aging workshops at the conference. We are organizing a similar program for this year's conference, and have invited Harry Moody, a leader of the conscious aging community, to be a keynote speaker.

In February, 2004, we promoted a "Tao of Aging" workshop in Albuquerque, featuring David Chernikoff and Drew Leder. We had over 100 persons attend the workshop, a remarkable achievement for our young group, and a dramatic confirmation of the need for this kind of activity for the elder community.

The CAN-NM organization has had many benefits for me as I pursue my aging work. It has been very satisfying to interact regularly with this supportive group of colleagues and it has encouraged Charlotte and me to pursue our own Sage-ing work more intensively while at the same time giving me new opportunities for making a difference.

I would encourage all of you in other communities to consider creating a similar networking group!

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