

# Nonprofit to offer haven, foster hope for single mothers



Elizabeth Gibson - Daily Press

Haven of Hope board members, construction crew members, and architect Jose Zelaya walk around the future office building of Haven of Hope during a tour of the construction site Thursday morning.

**By ELIZABETH GIBSON**  
Daily Press Staff Writer

When Anita Braun first stepped foot inside the Haven of Hope cottage, still under construction on Richey Avenue, she noticed the vaulted ceilings and gasped.

"It looks so aspirational," said Braun, the newly-hired executive director of the nonprofit organization. "People living here are going to come in and say, 'I deserve this.'"

Once completed and opened by this fall, the "cottage" -- as the Haven of Hope board members refer to it -- will be an 8,699-square-foot communal residence located at 2100 W. Richey Ave. that will house up to six women and their children. The cottage will also have a community lounge, kitchen, dining room, laundry room, study rooms and offices, and an apartment for an on-site staff member, who will act as a house monitor and mentor.

The mission of Haven of Hope, a 501(c)(3) organization, is to promote life skills for women to cultivate a healthy and independent future for themselves and their children.

According to the head architect on the project, Jose Zelaya of Huitt-Zollars Architect Firm in Albuquerque, one of the biggest struggles when designing the cottage was making the large building resemble a home.

"It took extra time for me to get into the mindset of a mother," Zelaya said. "I want this to be a group home where everyone feels dignified and not overwhelmed."

Also under construction right next door to the cottage is a 3,393-square-foot office building, which will encompass Braun's office, as well as a conference room, children's room, counseling office, and a large storage/pantry area. Construction on both buildings is slated to be completed by Aug.

13, and the organization is looking at opening the site to residents this fall.

Haven of Hope board members said they were thankful for the PY Foundation, a private family foundation established by Peyton Yates of Artesia, for their continued support for the project, along with the support from the overall Artesia community. Additionally, the 13.92 acres of land where Haven of Hope is being built were donated by John R. "Johnny" Gray and Doug Chandler.

"We're utilizing the energy in this town to help one another," Braun said. "We want to surround these women and their children with the love in this community."

According to a feasibility study conducted by national consulting firm Tripp Umbach in 2019, the lack of affordable housing makes it difficult for women and their families to obtain permanent housing.

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Head architect on the project, Jose Zelaya with Huitt-Zollars Architect Firm of Albuquerque, right, gives Anita Braun, executive director of Haven of Hope, left, a tour Thursday morning of the Haven of Hope construction site, located at 2100 W. Richey Ave.

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“Kids need that housing security,” said Pat Wood, treasurer of the Haven of Hope Board of Directors. “Whether they verbalize it or not, children crave safety and stability.”

The Tripp Umbach study also stated that obtaining permanent housing is unrealistic for many in Artesia, as the oil and gas industry and the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center (FLETC) have pushed the price of rental properties out of reach.

According to an informational packet, single mothers and their children will be able to reside at Haven of Hope for \$50 a month.

“Rent is expensive here in Artesia,” Braun said. “And if there are single moms living paycheck to paycheck, Haven of Hope can be a respite for them. They can live with us for a very small amount per month.”

Braun, who was hired as the executive director of Haven of Hope less than a week ago, has fostered a long career in serving and helping people.

She began her career as a flight attendant for American Airlines in the 1980s, then became the executive director of Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) in Lea County in 2005, where she remained for 12 years. Under Braun, the program grew and, eventually, she introduced the CASA Canine Companion Program, through which a Golden Retriever named Cooper was available for anti-stress therapy to children attending family court or criminal court proceedings.

“I love being able to make a positive impact on people’s lives,” Braun said. “Looking at long-term effects of helping people not only speaks to me, it screams to me. I’d like to leave my mark on Southeast New Mexico.”

Some of the services Haven of Hope will offer include low-income residential services for 18-24 months, money management, employment training and resources, life skills, education assistance, and counseling.

“We’re not giving them a handout,” said Laura Netherlin, Haven of Hope board secretary. “We’re giving them a hand up.”

A recent addition to the board of directors is Judy Stewart, retired guidance counselor for the Artesia Public Schools. Stewart hopes to encourage the future residents of Haven of Hope to obtain their GEDs, if applicable, and enroll in college courses or trade school programs.

“It will help the children to see that the cycle can change,” Stewart said. “Things can be different despite the hardships they’ve gone through. This is an opportunity for these women.”

According to the Haven of Hope website, criteria for women who wish to apply include:

- be at least 18 years of age.
- have full-time custody of at least one child under the age of 18.
- do not have any current cases with the Children, Youth and Families Department.
- no active drug or alcohol use.
- no criminal history.
- be gainfully employed and/or enrolled in school.
- possess “a desire to improve their life and the life of their child.”

“This is not rehab or a domestic violence shelter, and this takes a lot of commitment from the woman and her children. We will be picky on who we accept,” Braun said. “There will be a lot of love and hope, but there will be strict rules too.”

Mothers must also agree to Haven of Hope’s structure: no pets; no overnight guests; boyfriends or significant others will not be allowed on the property; and each resident must actively participate in life skills training and will be responsible for the upkeep of their personal room as well as community areas.

Mothers are also responsible for providing food for their families.

“We’re helping them do what they can for their kids,” Netherlin said. “I can’t wait until we have our success stories.”

If interested in volunteering or donating, visit [www.havenofhopenm.com](http://www.havenofhopenm.com) or email Braun directly at [abraun@havenofhopenm.com](mailto:abraun@havenofhopenm.com). At this time, Haven of Hope is only accepting monetary donations.