

## Jim Harlin Community Pantry to hold ‘Garden Party’

Written by By Bernie Dotson Sun Correspondent  
Friday, 26 August 2016 02:24

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Alice Perez, executive director at the Jim Harlin Community Pantry, wants to green-up Gallup, one person at a time. The “Garden Party,” held by the Pantry, serves as a recruiting tool to get people involved with the project, Perez said.

The party is held Sept. 3, from 1 to 4 pm, and relates to the Pantry’s Hope Garden, which was founded in 2009 on several acres.

“The Community Hope Garden site is directly west to the entrance of the Community Pantry,” Perez said. “We teach people to grow organically grown items that will enhance their health. Every person who rents out their own box is allowed to grow whatever they want.”

The Hope Garden is a multi-faceted educational tool, a concept developed by the late Jim Harlin in 2006.

“It serves as a therapeutic tool for those trying to get back to nature and bring solace into their lives,” Perez said. “Some of the plants are donated by various community members and seeded indoors and then moved to the Hope Garden. People bring their own items and come from

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where we buy the seeds, too.”

Vernon Garcia is the Hope Garden gardener.

“He maintains the appearance and structure of the garden,” Perez said. “We rely heavily on our volunteers to come in on a daily basis and keep the garden watered, weeded, and harvested. This is a community garden made available for the McKinley County community.”

Perez said the garden’s greatest cost is time. But onlookers and Pantry visitors appreciate it.

“The garden is more than just a garden for the people who plant things there,” Carmelita Donald of Gallup said. “There is a lot of time and effort that goes into it. I haven’t eaten anything that has come out of the garden, but I know people who have, and they like it.”

The Sept. 3 family-oriented event costs \$10, with proceeds benefitting the programs that assist those who utilize the pantry, which was founded in 1999 by Jim Harlin and Tom Crider, and serves people in Northwestern New Mexico with healthy food and nutrition initiatives.

The Garden Party features a raffle, entertainment, a silent auction, and door prizes.

***By Bernie Dotson***

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