

# Nonprofit Group Shares Arts With Those in Need

■ *Outside In brings free performances to people who are in shelters, correctional facilities and nursing homes*

BY EMILY VAN CLEVE  
For the Journal

Middle Eastern dancer Eliane Allegre says she can walk into a room and immediately know which members of her audience will be interested in dancing with her. She can see it in their eyes and body language — a welcoming look, a gentle smile.

When performing at Res-Care Northern New Mexico, an agency that provides services for clients with a variety of disabilities, Allegre has her own way of dancing with people who are confined to wheelchairs. Colorful silk veils are draped over their shoulders in sync with rhythmic Middle Eastern sounds. For Allegre, it's all about connecting with people and sharing the deep and

lifelong love she feels for the art of dance with them.

"Our clients dance with their hands, eyes and body when Elaine performs for us," says Res-Care's daytime supervisor Darlene Durr. "The experience gives them important sensory input. We wouldn't be able to have Eliane visit us every month if it wasn't for Outside In."

Allegre is one of approximately 20 local performing artists who regularly are hired by Outside In, a Santa Fe nonprofit organization established in 1995 to bring free, professional performances to people who are in shelters, residential and correctional facilities and nursing homes. She's been working with the organization for the past eight years and loving every minute of it.

"I try to bring something out of people's minds that makes them feel that they can dance," she explains. "It takes work to make these magical moments happen, but I get more out of the experience than I give."



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Eliane Allegre, center right, performs oriental dance therapy with Chris Valerio, far left, Andrea Perea, center, and Nathaniel Swanson, far right, at the Res-Care Northern New Mexico Rehabilitation Center in Santa Fe.

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## Group Helps Spread Love of Arts

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Outside In's founder and director David Lescht understands Allegre's feelings from firsthand experience. Years ago he played music in a band that performed at prisons and hospitals up and down the West Coast. His own positive experiences inspired him to form Outside In almost a decade ago.

"I attend many of the events we present," he says. "It never gets old to watch people's eyes light up and get excited by the performances."

Outside In brings an average of 500 events to facilities throughout the Santa Fe area every year. Half of them are presented through the Youth With Promise program, which provides guitar, dance and visual arts workshops to juvenile offenders in detention and on probation, at-risk youth in shelters and residential treatment programs and other underserved youth in the community. Many of these workshops take place at the Santa Fe County Youth Development Program.

"We have an extensive enrichment program, and Outside In's weekly guitar workshop with Chris Abeyta has a huge impact on our program," says facility director Chris Sanchez. "As many as 15 kids from our training program and eight from our detention program participate in the workshop. Some of them get so inspired that they continue to take guitar lessons after they leave our facility."

Lescht usually draws on the talents of local performers, but he occasionally brings nationally known acts to town. A few weeks ago the Los Angeles-based Afro-Latin band Ozomatli performed at the Santa Fe County Youth Development Program. Lescht has presented former



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Florence Baca, left, uses a cane to dance with fellow clients at the Res-Care Northern New Mexico Rehabilitation Center in Santa Fe, under the direction of Eliane Allegre, center right.



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Chris Valerio balances a cane on top of an aluminum can while practicing in oriental dance therapy at the Res-Care center in Santa Fe.

New Mexico resident and Grammy-nominated musician Eliza Gilkyson and folk music legend Arlo Guthrie. Although some performers offer to work for free, Lescht

feels strongly about paying everyone for their time.

"They deserve payment," he explains. "My goal from the very beginning was to provide professional performances. I want quality acts, and it's important to pay for them."

Outside In manages to cover expenses for an office, two staff members and performance fees on \$110,000 a year. Funding comes from a variety of places, including many local foundations, New Mexico Arts and the National Endowment for the Arts.

"I want to get the funding level up so we can expand the program to reach more groups in northern New Mexico and Albuquerque," Lescht says. "There are a huge number of facilities I can't get to yet."