

OUTSIDE IN

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David Lescht, director

For four years, every time the famous folk singer swung through Santa Fe on tour, David Lescht tried to ask Arlo Guthrie for a performance at Delancey Street. "Not only are performers of his stature besieged by such requests all the time, but just getting to them, through the people around them, can be a real challenge," Lescht said. When Guthrie finally found the time to perform at the drug rehab ranch, residents reported that the concert confirmed for them that they "could enjoy themselves sober." Guthrie said the experience

moved him at least as much as his music moved the residents.

That's often the case for the artists who are the backbone of Outside In, a nonprofit group umbrella'd under Bread for the Journey. Some events, like the Guthrie appearance at Delancey, are one-time-only. But Outside In also goes to nursing homes and residential centers on a monthly basis, to the prisons several times a year, and plays for annual dances at the senior centers. One volunteer, Chris Abeyta, teaches guitar at the Santa Fe Juvenile Detention Center



every week. Last year, Outside In sponsored 200 events, up from 120 in 1997 and 85 in 1996. The 1999 goal is 250.

"Anywhere there is a confined population, we'll try to be there," says Lescht. "At-risk youth are becoming a major focus because the need is so great and it's been so successful."

The operation, which has an annual budget of \$50,000, met expenses this year, thanks to some small foundation grants. Lescht, the founding father and administrator, is the only paid employee. Most of the artists volunteer their time, but Outside In has a policy of offering some compensation, way below scale. It helps the artists, Lescht says, and it improves the quality of the performance. Others volunteer grant-writing, administrative and photographic skills (see cover). Outside In also works as a clearinghouse; it facilitated a donation of guitars by singer-songwriter Bonnie Raitt to the Boys and Girls Club, and helped the city book entertainment for Community Day.

Some local artists perform every month, like magician Paul Glickman tickling Alzheimer's patients with his illusions, or Middle Eastern dancer Eliane Allegre dancing for a group of severely mentally retarded persons. The staff is amazed when they get up and move. "It's magical; she's the only one who can reach them," says one.

And sometimes "big names" appear as if Glickman had summoned them out of his top hat. At a conference of the Folk Alliance in Albuquerque in February '98, Lescht asked for volunteers to play at a homeless shelter. To his surprise, one of the performers who came by was John McEuen, a famous folk singer. "He had everybody singing along," Lescht said. "The big names don't get there by accident; they have that charisma with any audience."

Afterward, McEuen said: "By doing this, these people are given more hope, smiles and relief... a little space from which they may better judge what a better path might be."