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Endorphin Power Company: What's It Up To?

by [Johnny_Mango](#)

[City Life](#)

Posted on: 07/03/07



ZUNI & CARDENAS SE--Last Earth Day I had signed up to receive the email newsletter from the [Endorphin Power Company](#). Well, the emails kept talking about this "[Endorphin Challenge](#)." It sounded like a room decorating contest where 20 teams of people got to spend \$1000 of OPM in rehabbing

and decorating rooms with a chance to win a Caribbean cruise and \$400 each. You can read all the rules for yourself. While you're at it, browse their website. It just might change the way you spend your free time.

I went down to where all the action is: 509 Cardenas SE. That's on the southwest corner of Zuni and Cardenas. I had actually noticed this building every time I passed by on my way to [El Norteno](#). It looked kind of like stacked up containers that had been moved there from somewhere else with the intention of stuccoing the outside to make it look like it was all one big building. And that is exactly what it was.

Yesterday Sam Slishman was giving me a tour of the property. Sam, an ER doctor at the Heart Hospital, is the CEO of the Endorphin Power Co. His original idea was to start a fitness center for the general public using exercycles hooked up to generators with lightbulbs attached to them. Sort of a neat gimmick, but then his mind went off in another direction: "I realized it could be a useful treatment modality for substance-dependent people. Perhaps by replacing their exogenous opiates (heroin, methadone, oxycodone, etc) with endogenous opiates (endorphins), they could be helped to escape their addictions." So states the EPC website.

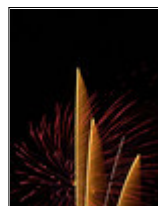
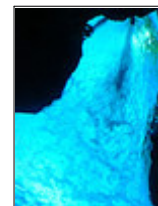


By the way, this idea of using the generators to give 'feedback' during exercise, got interpreted by some in the media and elsewhere as using poor people to generate electricity by hooking them up to exercise bicycles. This earned Slishman one of the Journal's Cowchip awards a couple of years back.

Kindergarten Blocks

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Anyway, we were standing in a room on the second floor. He



pointed out the window to a silver-colored box that looked like some kind of storage pod. "Ted Waterman gave us 20 prefab units just like that one across the street," he said. (God I love Albuquerque...try getting the zoning to do this in Santa Fe). They had arranged all 20 of them like a

giant set of kindergarten blocks two stories high and shaped in a big 'el.'

The building contains two offices and 18 dormitory style rooms, each with a closet and bathroom. They will be home for people recovering from alcohol and drug problems...a place where they can stay and receive the kind of support that will help them be successful and



healthy. The property also contains a kitchen, meeting rooms, offices, a bike repair shop, library, computer room, work-out center, and a beautifully xeriscaped garden. A cafe/dining hall is also contemplated...one that both serves its residents with a meal plan, and the general public as well.



The Challenge

The Endorphin Challenge is the way this project is using to get the rooms in shape for future tenants. All the work on the site is by volunteers. "You don't have to be an addict to help out," said Sam. A woman was sitting in the shade

with her little dog named 'Killer.' A neighbor to the project, Lynne Fullerton is an example of why there currently are 20 to 40 people who volunteer on a regular basis. "Being here just makes me feel good," she said quietly. Lynne is in charge of all the landscaping. She tends her plants in an open "greenhouse" under a tree. It is open on the top and made of bales of straw.

Two city employees came by while I was there. Joseph Chavez and Jeri Barrol were connected with a meth outreach program and wanted to check out how things were progressing. The Endorphin project is across the street from the MATS building (Metropolitan Assessment & Treatment Services). In fact it seems to be convenient to everything: transportation, stores, clients, and services.



The tour continued. "Coin-operated showers..." said Sam. "A quarter for 4 minutes. "We want to get people clean, not use the showers to warm up." I nodded. We continued wandering



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Wednesday, Jul 4

Albuquerque Isotopes Vs Memphis Redbirds @ Isotopes Park

Thursday, Jul 5

the Hounds - blues music and more @ Whisque Mesquite Grill and Bar

SW Shootout Regional Poetry Slam @ Kimo Theater

Friday, Jul 6

Cafe Mocha @ Albuquerque Museum of Art and History

Saturday, Jul 7

Downtown Growers' Market @ Robinson Park

Sunday, Jul 8

Strange Noize Tour @ Sunshine Theatre

Friday, Jul 13

9th Annual New Mexico Tap Dance Jam @ Keller Hall

Wednesday, Jul 18

Eco-Hood Education @ The Source for Creating Sacredness

Thursday, Jul 19

James McMurtry and the Heartless Bastard... @ Puccini's Golden West Saloon

Saturday, Jul 21



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around. There are several buildings on the site. There was a large meeting room equipped with couches along the walls and a 10 foot long coffee table in the middle. It was used by various 'anonymous' groups for their alcohol and drug-related meetings.



The Sisters

A couple of governmental agencies rent out office space upstairs. But the biggest agency with offices there was a surprise: [St. Joseph Community Health](#). I had wondered what happened to St. Joseph after they sold the hospital to Ardent. They morphed. The Sisters of Charity took the money they got from sale of their hospital and put all their efforts into community health. This includes access to healthcare, but also addresses concerns with socio-economic, behavioral, and environmental factors. "80% of health issues do not involve going to a hospital," said SJCH board member Carol Moye. They have so many programs underway, including a Breast Cancer Resource Center, you really need to visit their website. But over at 509 Cardenas SE, they can be found somewhere up on the second floor.

A Second Family

Sam says they have one more opening for an Endorphin Challenge team. There are other opportunities for involvement if you are interested. As for Dr. Sam Slishman, "The EPC has become a wonderful mechanism for gathering the most caring, creative, non-money-grubbing, good people I've ever met. It seems I've instead invented for myself a quest, and a second family."



Comments

[Benny the Icepick](#) wrote:

The EPC is a terrific community resource. I'm behind Sam 100% on his dream of exercise-powered rehab. And some of the tenants do some amazing work - tiling in the bathrooms, constructing walls.

Thanks, Johnny, for highlighting this little-known but completely noble cause.

07/03/07 15:56:52

[Janice - Endorphin Challenge Room #17](#) wrote:

"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has." EPC is another living example of Margaret Mead's famous quote.

The mission is noble, real and achievable, and the work is honest, sweaty and FUN!

I live in Southern California where you have to look long and hard to find "real." That is why I keep going back to EPC and Albuquerque to do construction work. Can't think of a better way to spend my summer vacation!

I predict that the Endorphin Power Company will

Downtown Artist Market & Festival: T... @ Gold & 8th Behind Flying Star Downto

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become a shining example to other cities and communities on how to role up your sleeves, have some fun and do good and meaningful work.

Bravo, Sam, for your vision and leadership – and your humility. Indeed you make everyone feel welcome and valued.

And thank you, Johnny, for getting the word out.
07/03/07 19:37:19

[Bayle C.](#) wrote:

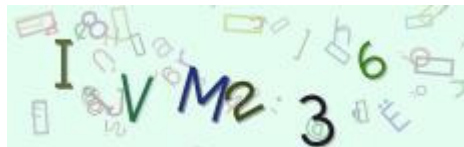
I can't say enough about what EPC has done for the community. It is truly an extraordinary place with some of the most dedicated, talented and intelligent volunteers around. The world needs more places like it. Hats off to Sam, Gigi and all others who continue to pour sweat in order to make NM better.
07/04/07 13:16:37

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