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Thin Line

By Gwyneth Doland



Hardy har-har . Oh, God, it's so painful. On New Year's Day, the *Albuquerque Journal* published their Cowchip Awards, an "annual rundown of the weird, wacky and only-in-New Mexico stories of the past year." What's "wacky" is that they gave a cowchip award to Dr. Sam Slishman of Endorphin Power Company—the same guy we named an "Albuquerque All Star" one week earlier.

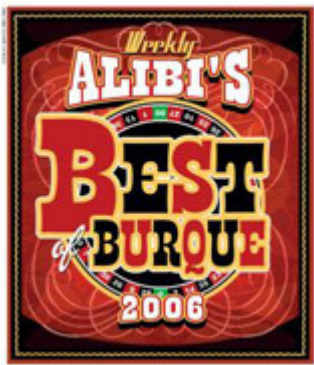
Slishman's inclusion in the cowchip story makes us wonder when they relaxed the no-crack-at-work policy in the newsroom over there. Why else would Leslie Linthicum snicker that in 2004, "A University of New Mexico doctor came up with a unique way to solve two of the world's problems: energy scarcity and homelessness. He advocated putting the nation's homeless on exercise bikes attached to a generator."

Linthicum obviously had been reading clips from her own paper and thought it would make a few "wacky" lines of copy. Too bad her cowchip added insult to the injury of the *Journal's* previous mischaracterization of what Endorphin is all about.

In January 2004, the *Journal* ran a front-page story on Slishman, the emergency room physician who created Endorphin Power Company, a nonprofit neighborhood community center that will help homeless substance abusers transition to sober living. It is set to open this spring on the same day the Metropolitan Assessment and Treatment Center opens across the street. Together, MATS and EPC are expected to make great progress toward treating homeless substance abusers, making positive changes in their lives and keeping them out of our clogged ERs and jails.

According to Slishman, when *Journal* staff writer Isabel Sanchez called to interview him for the story last January, she seemed unusually interested in one of his many proposed ideas for EPC. Although Sanchez actually touched on some of EPC's larger goals later in her story, plastered across the paper's





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front page was the headline "Hey Buddy, Can You Spare a Treadmill?"

Even worse for Slishman and the dozens of people who volunteer with EPC, the *Journal's* story was picked up by "News of the Weird," a syndicated feature similar to *Alibi's* own "Odds and Ends." Newspapers across the country reprinted the story of the Albuquerque doctor planning to open a "homeless shelter providing drug rehabilitation based on vigorous exercise at on-premises workout stations." Great, um, except that EPC was never going to be a homeless shelter and never planned to provide drug rehab services.

And now, when you Google "Sam Slishman," the "News of the Weird" story pops up every time. Nothing fills us with righteous indignation like seeing another paper award, a piece of shit (hello, Cowchip?), to a doctor who works night shifts at University Hospital so that he can devote his days to building a community center for homeless drug addicts! EPC also planned and built a roomful of computers with Internet access so that folks could get help writing résumés and searching for jobs; they're working on a juice café and community kitchen, too. By focusing on the generator idea (which, unlike the computer room, has remained merely an idea), the *Journal* made Endorphin look foolish. Twice.

The *Journal* trying to be funny is like Bob Dole trying to get laid without taking his Viagra. Why bother? It's a nightmare for everyone involved. Sorry, *Journal*. You made a lame joke and it bombed because you didn't do your homework. Meanwhile, you dumped a pile of crap on the wrong guy. Nice work!

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