

# PARK PLAZAS

## Community Connections

**Karen Hyatt – Single Mom and Entrepreneur**

### LIVING THE GOOD LIFE IN PARK PLAZAS

In 1990, Karen Hyatt bought her townhome in Manzana Plaza from a friend who was leaving Santa Fe. Her son Max was 3. "It was the perfect place for both Max and me," Karen recalls at the start of our interview. "When Max got a little older, he could ride his bike on the paths and go to the playground. I always knew he was safe. We had neighbors who became friends — like the man who helped Max tie his tie as he was getting dressed for his first grade-school dance."



Max and Karen today.

Smiling broadly, Karen reminisces about the "night walks" they would take when the moon was full. "Little boys talk more spontaneously when they are moving," she explains, "so once a month I'd let Max stay up late — and I would learn a lot about what he was thinking as we walked the paths in Park Plazas. Again, it always seemed safe, which was important for a single mother with a young son."

Born in Shawnee, OK, Karen earned her undergraduate degree in Radio/TV at the University of Oklahoma. She won a John D. Rockefeller III fellowship to learn arts administration in schools. Her fiancé had purchased an abstract company in Santa Fe, and Karen came here in

September 1979, after her fellowship ended. "It was wonderful," she remembers. "I worked in a gallery while I got my master's degree at UNM in Organizational Communication. I quickly realized that I love small-group and one-on-one communication. It's amazing what great ideas can come out of nothing in a small group."

In later years, after her marriage ended, Karen developed Chronic Fatigue Syndrome. As she recovered, she returned to academia, earning a second master's in Psychology from Pacifica Graduate Institute. She took a job hiring and managing caregivers for the last months of an elderly woman's life. "After she died, I visited her trust officer and offered to clean out her apartment and organize her possessions," Karen recalls. "In September 2010, I had that 'Aha!' moment. On Thanksgiving morning, I printed out homemade flyers about the business idea that would become Estate Pros. I took them around to

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A rare free moment: Karen in her front hall.

### Phil Vergamini – Trad and True



Phil Vergamini and his wife, Nora Haskins, have lived in Fresa Plaza for six years. Retired from Los Alamos after a 22-year career as a research chemist, Phil's real passion is music. Since 1995, he has hosted a monthly radio show called "Acoustic Explorations" on KSFR; back in 1977, he and four colleagues formed Atomic Grass, a bluegrass band that is still performing. (At left, band members busk in Galway, Ireland.)

Today, Phil and Nora are helping plan and produce TradFest, which started in 1974 as the Santa Fe Banjo and Fiddle Contest. This year's event, August 24-26, is at Camp Stoney, 7855 Old Santa Fe Trail. To learn more, visit <https://sftradmusic.org/>.



**SPOTLIGHT**  
on your neighbor

# COOL CATS of Park Plazas



**Marty**



**Sheldon**

Marty (Ristra Plaza) and Sheldon (Chamisa Plaza) enjoy sunshine and shade as the birds serenade overhead.

## Helpful TIPS

### FEEL LIKE JAMMING? IT'S THE SEASON!

Apples, pears, apricots—the fruit trees in Park Plazas are loaded with summer's bounty. Whether you crave crabapple jelly or pickled peaches, we recommend Santa Fe County Extension Services for delicious recipes and important food safety reminders. The website, offering "expert answers for everyday questions," is at: [santafeextension.nmsu.edu](http://santafeextension.nmsu.edu). Drill down into the publications for information such as:

- E-314 "Making Jam, Jelly, and Sweet Spreads at Home"
- E-319 "Home Canning of Fruits"
- E-321 "Freezing Fruit Basics"

Cydney Martin, Master Food Preserver, New Mexico State University Family and Consumer Sciences Agent, works in the Extension offices, which are located at the Santa Fe County Fairgrounds, 3229 Rodeo Road. She welcomes questions and feedback, especially dealing with food safety, so feel free to reach out to her at [cydney@nmsu.edu](mailto:cydney@nmsu.edu) or 505-471-4711.

### TIME FOR THE FAIR!

Don't miss the Santa Fe County Fair, August 1-4, featuring canned goods, baked goods, quilts, horses, poultry and so much more. Santa Fe County Fairgrounds, 3229 Rodeo Road. For more info: [santafecountynm.gov/community\\_services/fair](http://santafecountynm.gov/community_services/fair).

### COMMUNITY GARDEN PRODUCE—COME & GET IT!

Beginning soon, the Community Garden will offer free veggies to Park Plazas residents. Giveaways take place on Saturday mornings from 9-11 AM. (Precise start date was not available at press time.) For more information, contact Wayne Darnell, 505-820-7505.

### Wanted: Your Take on Life in Park Plazas

We think Park Plazas is a special place to live—and we think you do too. If you'd enjoy sharing your thoughts, ranging from a short quote to an essay that could form the basis for a Spotlight or even a full-length feature article, let us know via email: [ParkPlazasCommunityConnections@gmail.com](mailto:ParkPlazasCommunityConnections@gmail.com)



## PARK PLAZAS STUDIO TOUR

Planned for Fall. Email us to be included:  
[ParkPlazasCommunityConnections@gmail.com](mailto:ParkPlazasCommunityConnections@gmail.com)



"Executive chef" Keith Harrison (Plaza del Papagayo) preps apricots from their tree.



# CREATING CONNECTIONS

## TAKE A HIKE!



Many of us “older folks” are hikers but, as Charles Cole (Orquidea Plaza) points out, some groups move too quickly and grow impatient with our “dawdling.” If you would like to get out on the mountain trails in a more relaxed way — and enjoy not-so-fast hiking with friends and neighbors, including Charles, email [ParkPlazasCommunityConnections@gmail.com](mailto:ParkPlazasCommunityConnections@gmail.com).

## GLOBALQUERQUE 2018

New Mexico’s 14th annual celebration of world music and culture will take place September 21-22 at the National Hispanic Cultural Center in Albuquerque. Marsha Zenderman (Tulipan Plaza) is putting together a carpool for folks who want to attend. You can contact her at [zandy1@comcast.net](mailto:zandy1@comcast.net). For more information: [www.globalquerque.org/](http://www.globalquerque.org/).

## HOW ABOUT SHOWCASING YOUR HOME FOR SFWC HOLIDAY OPEN HOUSE?

On Saturday, December 8, the Santa Fe Woman’s Club hosts its third annual Holiday Home Tour. The event will feature six homes throughout Santa Fe — and our neighbor Trudy Eiron (Chamisa Plaza) is hoping to have Park Plazas represented. The Home Tour is a fundraiser, primarily for the Club’s Scholarship Fund, which benefits local women. The SFWC holds the distinction of being a Santa Fe Living Treasure, having been in continuous service for 126 years. For more information about including your home, please contact Trudy: [trudy.eiron@gmail.com](mailto:trudy.eiron@gmail.com). As an active member of SFWC, Trudy will “hold your hand” and work closely with you from beginning to end. She promises it will be an easy and fun experience — and all for a great cause.



## JULY 4TH SOCIAL AND FIREWORKS

The stars were bright and the fireworks were stunning — a perfect night for our neighborhood social. And of course, the desserts were yummy: cookies, cakes, pies and even apple strudel! What a wonderful way to celebrate such an important day in our nation’s history — spending time with old friends and meeting new ones. Many thanks to everyone who attended!

**JULY**  
**Board Meeting**  
**Wed., July 25**  
**6:30 pm**

Residents are encouraged to attend.

## JUNE BOARD MEETING HIGHLIGHTS

- President discussed content of *Park Plazas News*.
- Bylaws Study Group presented progress report.
- Going forward, Board will track projected expenses.
- 97% of homes received full/partial compliance ratings from Architectural Control Committee.
- Association has hired two new groundskeeping staff members.
- Staff will complete playground project once border material is received.
- For fire prevention purposes, staff is clearing vegetation away from vulnerable areas.
- Water cooler has been placed at dog park.
- Board discussed policies affecting short-term rentals.

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ministers and bankers — and by January we had two contracts.”



Karen in her home office, multitasking.

Karen continues: “I started Estate Pros with the goal of serving those who are left to deal with the often overwhelming responsibility of organizing and distributing what remains after someone dies. But within five months we were being asked to work on downsizing and relocation, especially as seniors moved into smaller spaces, including assisted living. In the larger picture, all of this downsizing work feeds into estate distribution.”

Building her business hasn’t been easy. “There were a lot of scary stretches,” she says. “With a small company, you’re lucky to be vertical in three years. But I love what we do, and I’m grateful we’ve had such outstanding growth recently.”



Karen feeds a lamb named for her by a grateful client.

Today, Karen has 17 employees, eight in Santa Fe and nine in the Albuquerque area. Their territory ranges from Las Lunas to Taos. Everyone works part-time — except for Karen, of course. “As I always joke,” she says, “death is inevitable but not predictable. It’s been a challenge, but I’ve found team members who are OK with the way our business has to function.”

When I ask about family, Karen mentions she’s happy that her 87-year-old mother and her younger brother live nearby. Then, glowing with pride, she tells me that son Max recently completed his J.D./M.B.A. at the University of San Francisco and is an associate with Baker McKenzie, one of the world’s largest multi-national law firms.

A lingering sadness in her life concerns Shorty, a dog many Park Plazas residents knew. He belonged initially to Bruce Papier, the retired professor and animal activist who championed our dog park. While Bruce lay dying from cancer, neighbors Andy and Petie Sildegs cared for Shorty — and after Bruce passed away in August 2016, Karen adopted the dog. Or, as Karen notes, “Shorty adopted me.”

Shorty



“It was around Labor Day,” she remembers. “As I sat on the couch with Andy nearby, Shorty jumped up and put his head in my lap. He had soulful eyes that locked onto mine. I basically knew it was meant to be. Shorty became part of the Estate Pros family, often going to job sites with us. In fact, he was at a big Tesuque estate, where I was working with a crew of five, on the day he died.”

Sadly, Shorty began having full-out seizures after Karen returned home that October evening. “I rushed him to the emergency vet. I was sobbing, with tears running down my face,” she says. “Shorty weighed 42 pounds, and he couldn’t walk, but I managed to carry him in. It turned out to be a brain tumor — and the vet told me the damage was irreversible — so I made the decision to say goodbye. I’d had him for just over a year. It was devastating. I cried for two full days.”

Soon, however, Karen was pretty much back to her warm, positive self. It’s easy to see why clients appreciate her. (For more about Karen’s business, including some impressive testimonials, link out to her website, [estateprosnm.com](http://estateprosnm.com).) As we wrap up our conversation, she reiterates: “Life is good.”

— Jane Morris

Noteworthy



Sometimes a gate is just a means of getting into a front or back yard. But in Park Plazas, a gate can be quite a bit more.

One way to distinguish our relatively similar homes is to have an interesting or unique gate. Many homeowners have put plenty of creativity into their front gates (off the cul-de-sac) and occasionally their back gates (often facing a walking path). *Community Connections* is planning to highlight some of these special gates in an upcoming issue.

Take a look around and let us know about gates you think we should feature, including your own.

Send your ideas to: [ParkPlazasCommunityConnections@gmail.com](mailto:ParkPlazasCommunityConnections@gmail.com)

## NEWS to share?

Let us know!

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