

## **New Mexico Listens: Santa Fe County** **Submitted by Irene Epp**

On Saturday July 30 NMListens held our 6<sup>th</sup> event under the auspices of the New Mexico Humanities Council and implemented by our local League. Co-leaders Ricann Bock and Irene Epp have come a long way in both our community outreach and our capacity to create small, grassroots community events, all tied together by our commitment to highlight and amplify voices seldom heard in our region. The title of our second NMListens SFC event, “Santa Fe Stories You’ve Never Heard” says it all. Here’s a capsule summary of our July 30 event and a glimpse at our August 28 program.

### **The Path Forward: LGBTQIA+ in a Post-Roe NM** **(Saturday July 30 10am Southside Library)**

Our June 15 event “Drumming for Change” highlighted diverse stories from the Two Spirit people in our Indigenous communities, the trans community, lesbians, gay men, bisexual people, and their outspoken allies. Our 6 person panel featured African American, Hispanic, Latino, Indigenous, and Anglo folks, all living and working in our region. Our submission to the NMHC archives from this series is a video of both panels, a short video of Pride on the Plaza, and snips from Pride interspersed with the June 15 event.

### **The Path Forward**

On July 30 NMListens featured a conversation among 4 Santa Fe area politicians and leaders, moderated by Human Rights Alliance Leader Kevin Bowen. This was a conversation on what the future looks like for LGBTQIA+ folks in the post Roe era with an activist Supreme Court and a polarized political world. Q&A followed. Our audience and panelists were older, more public figures in Santa Fe and nearby. The conversation was amazing.

We heard from Adrien Lawyer, a Founder of the Trans Gender Rights Council and its current Development Director, Patty Bushee, a former Santa Fe City Councilor (22 Years) and longtime LGBTQIA+ activist in Santa Fe, Signe Lindell, current Santa Fe City Councilor, also with a long activist history, and Marci Sylvestro, Retired Director of Esperanza Shelter, currently the Chair for Envisioning at the Santa Fe Community Foundation, lifelong activist for women’s rights, and a former Director of GLAD (Gay & Lesbian Advocates) who worked with Bella Abzug and Gloria Steinem in Boston on the first gay marriage law.

The overriding message from that distinguished group was one close to our LWV mission: VOTE VOTE VOTE. The evidence detailing the risks now faced by the LBTTQIA+ people of our nation was described in specific, alarming detail. As older activists all 4 shared their shock and disappointment with the current situation. We thought times had changed. But now we see the hatred and

violence rising again. Signe Lindell told us that 20 State Attorneys General are now suing the federal government, objecting to the fact that trans and queer youth are included in the free lunch program. Several on the panel have received death threats. Toward the end of the conversation, Marci Sylvestro noted strongly that what we face now is not only about hatred for the LGBTQIA+ community. All of us are living through an attack on human rights. In conclusion the panel agreed that this is not a time to “attack back” rather this is a time to reach out, and especially to make a space to listen. Their consensus was that sharing our stories with one another, honestly and bravely, is one of the most powerful steps we can take. The other step? VOTE!

**Sunday August 28 7pm St. John’s United Methodist Church  
A Purpose Driven Community**

This Tuesday Food Distribution is the second largest in Northern NM and is a collaboration of St. John’s Methodist, Temple Beth Shalom, the Unitarian Universalist congregation, and the Lutheran Church. Food Depot supplies grocery store gleanings, sometimes food boxes. Other organizations and also Santa Fe folks at large volunteer weekly. This is not about pity or about guilt trips, or donations. The focus is on the people involved and how they all have coalesced into a united purpose driven community. The conversation will be hybrid and includes food distribution volunteers, leaders, and customers all sharing their views and stories about this remarkable collaboration. Our end submission to NMHC archives will be a video that includes footage of distributions.