

# LA MERCED

VOLUME FIVE | ISSUE ONE | DECEMBER 2020

## THE PANDEMICS HARSH IMPACT ON RGEC

When the COVID-19 pandemic set in, it did so hard and suddenly. Like every other organization, Rio Grande Educational Collaborative struggled at first to navigate the new uncertainty and a dramatic reduction in its business. Overnight, RGEC which is Atrisco's largest Non-Profit business, lost nearly 100% of its revenue when schools shutdown. Needless to say from that moment forward, it has been a challenge. RGEC has been able to survive in these confusing and unsettling times.

RGEC was experiencing one of its best periods of success before March 2020, serving (60) K-5 and K-8 schools in the Albuquerque, East Mountain, Los Lunas, Belen and Socorro areas. Our strategy of offering educational before and after school programs for students in public and charter schools around New Mexico had resulted in RGEC's phenomenal growth. A significant growth from when the Atrisco Companies first acquired RGEC ten years ago with only (6) six schools. We had just added our first pre-kindergarten program at Collet Park Elementary in Albuquerque for the 2019-2020 school year and were excited about how that and other new business lines were developing. When the pandemic health concerns caused shutdowns in the Spring of 2020, RGEC saw most schools close early in their Spring semester. Since then, many of our partners have chosen to remain teaching virtually through the Fall



semester as well. Demand for before and after school programming plummeted as parents are fearful for the safety and health of their children.

RGEC has been forced to pivot in the face of this adversity and has remained agile. We designed and implemented a rigorous COVID prevention protocol in our remaining sites. The protocol included a "social contract" of sorts with our clients (parents and students) where all sides could know what protocols to operate with under a pandemic and what to expect from each other and how they would respond in the case of a virus interaction. Thanks to the commitment of our dedicated and highly trained staff and the diligence of our client families, we operated summer programs at a handful of sites. In the fall, we took that

*continued on page three*

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Greetings everyone.

One of the most common things I have heard over the past nine months, often expressed with a tinge of sympathy, is some version of "WOW, what a challenging time to be a leader!" Truer words have never been spoken. In all my time working in a professional capacity which now numbers in the decades, leadership roles have always had a familiar pattern. I never could have imagined the new challenges that would arise however from leading through a global pandemic. Everything is harder. Even the simplest of things now seem to take more time and require greater effort.



I remain however an optimistic person. Don't get me wrong, I have had some down days or weeks over the past eight/nine months as have the majority of our leadership team. I feel however, much positive growth will come out of this for all of us. As a leader here at Atrisco, a number of traits we possessed and approaches we practiced have had to be deepened or further refined to deal with the complications employees are experiencing. We have all become better listeners, more empathetic bosses and increased our patience with one another. Employees are all going through difficult periods in this pandemic, they are tired and they tend to all have some low level depression lingering. So, while we have had to become ad hoc therapists for our employees, we as leaders are also trying to figure out how to keep the company alive. How to survive this disruption. It's a lot.

We will become smarter and stronger from this, no doubt. As the saying goes, "One's character is best understood in the challenging times." At Atrisco, our leaders have passed the character test with high marks. Without a doubt, one of the reasons our company is still surviving this pandemic. Our ability to lead in tough times, has always been a strong suit since we launched in 2007. Now, through this pandemic, we have logged another chapter in our 400 year story, further evidencing our tenacity and resilience.

inside

<b>The Pandemic's Impact</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>Welcome New COO/CFO</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Fathers Building Futures</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>FBF Sale</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>New Websites</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>Updating Conveyance Processes</b>	<b>5</b>





# FATHERS BUILDING FUTURES

## Becomes Entity Number Seven

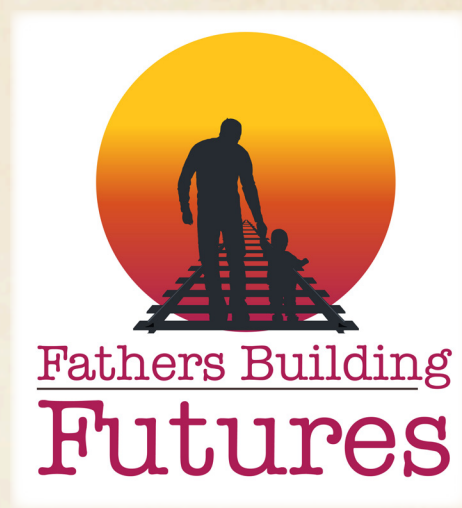
On April 4, 2020, The Atrisco Companies celebrated the completed acquisition of its seventh and newest company, Fathers Building Futures (FBF). Similar to the historical acquisitions of RGE and Mariachi Spectacular, The Atrisco Companies recognized Fathers Building Futures as a high-impact educational program with amazing potential to advance its mission of community improvement through social enterprise. Both parties saw the opportunity to strengthen FBF's community impact through the kind of strategic adjustments and back office innovations The Atrisco Companies offer.

Fathers Building Futures' mission is to ensure parents and families experiencing barriers from incarceration have the best opportunities for stability -- emotionally, socially and financially. Simply put, the company helps re-integrate formerly incarcerated men, referred to as "Second Chancers", back into society by providing job skills development and job placement. Fathers Building Futures started as a program of PB&J Family Services, before becoming its own 501(c) 3 non-profit organization in 2017.

Fathers Building Futures' model focuses on overcoming barriers, especially around employment. One of the most common reason that people return to prison is the inability to support themselves. This program aims to reduce the recidivism caused by employment insecurity, while also strengthening the clients as family members, community members, and financial

stewards. The participating fathers (or clients) complete a recently redesigned (8) month training program involving (12) domains that are critical to their development and reintegration into the community. These domains include parenting skills, job training, financial literacy training as well as "soft skills" training such as emotional intelligence and conflict resolution. About half of the employment training are addressed through a three month training period in FBF's well-known custom wood shop. The remainder of the job training is more specialized training geared towards higher level certifications. Both of these paid on-the-job trainings become a critical stepping stone to help clients find and hold steady employment, which is a top indicator of success after incarceration. The program has held an 88% recidivism rate compared to our state's own 46% success rate. At a larger scale, FBF will have huge beneficial impacts on our community.

"We have a program focused on preparing Second Chancers to become very good citizens and employees by giving them a different way to sustain themselves. Through lots of on the job training, employee development and support," said Peter Sanchez, Atrisco Companies CEO. Moreover, as Atrisco Companies helps FBF scale their company and program, we can also positively impact a social problem here in New Mexico that sadly exists around our country. The number of incarcerated individuals in our country is staggering. While the United States comprises 5% of the world's total population, our country places into



jails and prisons a highly disproportionate number of people; 25% of the world's total incarcerated individuals are incarcerated here in the United States. Many of these people did not require a prison sentence but now find themselves marked as felons. FBF has a noble mission to help provide some of these fathers, through their programmatic work, with a second chance of living a normal yet better life.

Joseph Shaw is the Director of Fathers Building Futures. Shaw himself was incarcerated before becoming an FBF client, and later accepting a position at Fathers Building Futures. He worked a part time position at first, and eventually made his way to leadership.

Fathers Building Futures make items such as wooden burial caskets and urns, as well as kitchen products such as cutting boards. This enterprise allows for clients to be trained, but also provides for additional enterprise revenue to the non-profit. Fathers Building Futures has served over 400 clients in its history. There are seven clients currently enrolled in the program, with a goal to have fifteen clients by May 2021. Fathers Building Futures brings with it a successful track record of securing grant funding from national, state and local sources. Currently the biggest program supporter is the Kellogg Foundation, but the program received funding from more than 20 unique partners over the past two years. The Atrisco Companies is very excited to add Fathers Building Futures into its organization.







## THE PANDEMIC'S HARSH IMPACT continued from page one

experience and installed it in our 21st Century Grant locations in Albuquerque and Belen and continue providing high quality educational programming for those communities.

It is no exaggeration to say that these quick responses (along with the support of many of our government funding partners) averted a crisis for The Atrisco Companies. A fully operating RGECE drives 70 to 75 percent of Atrisco's annual profit, supporting most of our (24) full time employees and all of our more than (220) part time contract staff. Unfortunately, only a few of those contractors have been able to continue with us, but we look forward to bringing many of them back as the market for RGECE's services returns to normal. We are proud and relieved to say that we have been able to retain all of our full time staff. No small feat in these difficult times. We are grateful for this.

"The strength of our organization has always been our employees. That is our braintrust. We tried really hard during this pandemic to keep people in our ranks and employed," said Peter Sanchez, CEO.

RGECE has always been a support for families when New Mexico's education system has suffered. We know that parents are seeking supplemental ways to educate their children.

RGECE is an invaluable resource to hundreds of families by helping students extend their learning during out of school time. RGECE offers a great value for the price, and works diligently to help families that qualify bring their program cost to at or near zero through the Early Childhood Education and Care Department Child Care Assistance program.

Looking forward, RGECE is in constant communication with families and institutional partners (schools, districts, state departments) about how serving students in alignment with our mission will happen in the near future. If schools remain virtual throughout spring of 2021, RGECE and The Atrisco Companies will continue to pivot and innovate. Moreover, a silver lining too has occurred from this setback. One bright side of the change in our everyday work demands has been the ability to redirect time and energy into a number of important projects that will make RGECE better. New web-based applications, new training curricula, and customer service and communications innovations have all emerged from this time of relative dormancy at the school sites. This spirit of innovation permeates our work at RGECE, and management and staff remain committed to seeking solutions, maximizing resources, and being ready to respond to whatever challenges (or opportunities) present in the future.

## ATRISCO COMPANIES' NEW WEBSITES

When the COVID-19 pandemic set in last spring, the everyday work around the Atrisco Companies changed significantly. With fewer sites to operate in RGECE, fewer funeral events in El Campo Santo, and the cancellation of Mariachi Spectacular, we had the opportunity to focus our team's constructive energy on a number of special projects. One of the special projects we are proudest of completing is the total redesign and rebranding of the Atrisco Companies' websites and landing page. Overall, seven (7) websites were re-done and one (1) landing page.

With the help of Loop Marketing (a Chicago-based web design company), each of our websites were completely updated to be more cohesive with one another and to tell our stories in more vibrant, more consumer-friendly ways. While getting more appealing visually, the sites have also become more customizable. The sites use WordPress, a content management system that a number of our tech-savvy staff members have mastered. This gives us in-house, up-to-the-day control over changes, which makes the sites much more flexible and responsive for their readers. We encourage you to visit all of the new sites starting with the beautiful landing page at [www.atriscocompanies.com](http://www.atriscocompanies.com). We are proud of the new look!



The ATRISCO COMPANIES

History | Values & Philosophy | Board Members | Management

 [Learn More](#)
 [Learn More](#)
 [Learn More](#)
 [Learn More](#)
 [Learn More](#)
 [Learn More](#)





# ATRISCO COMPANIES WELCOME NEW COO/CFO

## Welcome Brian O'Connell!

In May 2020, the Atrisco Companies welcomed Brian O'Connell as our new Chief Operating Officer and Chief Financial Officer. The Atrisco Companies excitedly welcomed Brian and believe his experience in both business and programmatic development will be invaluable as Atrisco Companies navigate through a pandemic and then return to the growth curve being experienced prior to COVID.

Brian is a life-long New Mexican with extensive experience in the nonprofit and legislative education sectors in New Mexico. He has 23 years of non-profit and government work experience. Brian started his career in non-profits at the age of 22, managing the swimming pool for the Arthritis Foundation in Albuquerque.

"I remember thinking the Executive Director there had a fun job, but I had very little idea that I was getting a glimpse of my own professional future."

Brian holds a Bachelors in History and a Masters of Public Administration from the University of New Mexico. After completing his Masters, Brian became a fiscal analyst for the Legislative Finance Committee where he worked for three (3) years. He is proud that he eventually became one of the youngest Senior Fiscal Analysts in their history at that point in time. He learned a great deal about state government, politics and leadership.

After leaving that position, Brian accepted his first non-profit leadership job, becoming the Executive Director for the New Mexico CASA (Court Appointed Special Advocates) Network. Now known as NMCAN, the organization grew

into the most recognizable volunteer-driven child advocacy organization in New Mexico, under Brian's direction.

Twelve (12) years later in 2012, Brian moved on to become the Executive Director of Golden Apple Foundation of New Mexico, a non-profit that recognizes New Mexico's greatest educators. Now, eight (8) years later, Brian has found himself here with us at the Atrisco Companies. Atrisco Companies CEO, Peter Sanchez, was Chairman of the Board at Golden Apple Foundation of New Mexico. That was the beginning of a partnership between Peter and Brian.

"... We worked together well and had some good successes in that partnership. We remained in touch after [Peter's] board service there ended," Brian said, "When an opportunity to work with him again arose, I was excited to take it."

At a time where the Atrisco Companies is striving to maintain its growth and thrive more than ever, Brian joins us at an exciting time. Brian said he is thrilled to share the Atrisco story to a wider national audience. He loves the uniqueness of Atrisco's example of social enterprise—one committed to community improvement, family, and history. Particularly, he is focused on maximizing the potential of one of our newest Atrisco companies, Ascend Business Services.

Brian's extensive leadership experience has provided him with knowledge of financial and operational matters which are readily transferable to charter school operations and finance which are the mission of Ascend Business Services.



*Brian O'Connell,  
New Chief Operating Officer & Chief Financial Officer*

Brian said that his prior work experience has made him, "a better and more complete New Mexican." He enjoys the aspect of his work that helps to serve communities and honor diversity. Brian's goal is to help strengthen and help further grow the Atrisco Companies. He would like to learn as much as he can about our wide variety of programs and offer his insight as a newcomer. So far, Brian has had a positive experience since joining our company in May. He said that the work is challenging and rewarding. Beginning this new journey with Atrisco in the midst of a pandemic was a real leap of faith for Brian. The world has been turned upside down but to Brian's credit the world's uncertainty did not dissuade him from this new endeavor.

"Where else can you start the day helping inventory cemetery plots, then help strategize on a project for fathers reintegrating after incarceration, and then finish the day on a conference call with the Secretary of the Public Education Department?," Brian said, "I have enjoyed being here tremendously so far, and am looking forward to a bright future."



## YEAR END INVENTORY SALE AT FATHERS BUILDING FUTURES

Our big blow out sale is here! For a limited time, we are offering our beautifully handcrafted products at 30% off. These products are of great quality and would be a perfect holiday gift. You can see some examples of our work here. Please keep in mind availability and wood types may vary.

Please stop by our shop at 2705 Pan American Fwy NE, Ste. B. or email us at [info@fathersbuildingfutures.org](mailto:info@fathersbuildingfutures.org) for more info! You can also visit our new website: <https://fathersbuildingfutures.org/>







# UPDATING CONVEYANCE PROCESSES

## with Atrisco Oil and Gas Unit Holders

In December of 2006, Westland Development Company completed the historic sale of the Atrisco Land Grant to SunCal Companies and Barclays Bank. As part of the merger, Westland transferred and contributed all of their interest in rents and royalties and half of their mineral rights interests to Atrisco Oil and Gas LLC. As a result, each shareholder was issued an Atrisco Oil & Gas Stock Certificate dated July 19, 2007.

These certificates, or "Units" as they are now known, have only nominal value at the moment. The market for oil and natural gas has been impacted in the last decade by new technologies and global pricing changes. These changes have made it cost-prohibitive to explore and develop holdings like ours at Atrisco Oil and Gas which is a high risk project because it is not considered a known reserve. This is in contrast to so many other energy production efforts around our country which are today viable using fracking

technologies with high percentages of success in those outcomes.

In spite of a present lack of value with our units, this position can change in the future and become of great value. Moreover, these units also represent an important relationship between Atrisco heirs and their ownership and heritage with the Atrisco Land Grant. For that reason, it is critically important Atrisco Oil and Gas manage the holding and conveyance of units very carefully. In the coming months, we will be reviewing all of our documentation around the Atrisco Oil and Gas units, modernizing the recordkeeping into a state-of-the-art database, and refining the conveyance process of units between Atrisco heirs. Today, our rules allow for transfers upon death of a family member. It is important that we be prepared to help families distribute an heir's units according to their wishes among children and other family members when a death event occurs. Our rules

do not allow for Atrisco Oil and Gas units to be sold or transferred to be made outside of families.

In the past, heirs were informed that the transfer of units could not be completed because the value of Atrisco Oil and Gas' holdings could not support the cost of a formal transfer agent. For the moment, that is still the case. However, the industry has changed, and we are exploring whether we can now make these transfers without an agent. That would allow Atrisco Oil and Gas to execute and record these transfers in real time. We encourage heirs who are interested in making transfers to keep all unit documents, wills, death certificates and any other relevant documentation they have until we can move forward with the transfer process. We will continue to communicate developments in this area and we encourage heirs/unitholders to read our website from time to time to update themselves on changes.

