



Bernalillo County Commissioner

Adriann Barboa



A Note From the Commissioner:

The long-awaited and much anticipated International District Library is underway. Construction has started on the 25,000 square-foot building that will be filled with books, computers, newspapers and magazines, and it also will have a story plaza and a community room. This library will be a gathering place, a learning space and even a dance studio for this neighborhood.

District 3 Commissioner Adriann Barboa celebrates the vision of the library and appreciates all the people who have worked for years to make it possible. "The International District Library gives evidence to the champions of this special neighborhood of the County. It is a reality because of the work of so many and their commitment to this community and their understanding of what is needed and deserved for the people who live here," she shares. "I am proud to now be a part of this team and eagerly look forward to seeing the magic

(continued on Page 2)

IN THE COMMUNITY - DISTRICT 3



THE 50/50 COFFEE HOUSE & PUB

Make no mistake. There's more brewing and cooking at the **50/50 Coffee House & Pub** at 2122 Central Ave. SE than appears on its menu or at first glance of its vast venue (more than 3,000 square feet). Upon entering, you notice the restaurant: its expanse and the open kitchen. What isn't immediately visible are the places and spaces for events, meetings, and parties, and the wares and services of a half dozen other businesses. There is also a community kitchen where food-based businesses and area chefs can prepare food for distribution and catering, and yes, the 50/50 caters too.

The philosophical design of the 50/50 founders, **Carmen Prince-Morris, her husband, firefighter Chad Morris; and Amber Escovedo**, is a simple approach in a complicated world: *A gathering place where people have access to the goods and services of a collective of empowered*

"I value and appreciate my staff; they work hard and are good people. So, if they have an opportunity to advance, I want them to take it as we have no management positions available right now."

individuals and businesses all in one space. The 50/50 is about supporting local. This venue features both start-up and established businesses, many of which are owned by women and people of color.

Add to the mix is that the 50/50 is a *forward-thinking, inclusive community* as defined by **Carmen Prince-Morris**, a source of infinite energy, passion and compassion, who oversees the operation of the 50/50.

"We are a safe space," she says in a deliberate tone. According to Carmen, the 50/50 comes together collaboratively to bring good things to the people it serves, and all are welcome and accepted no matter which boxes you check or leave unchecked on any questionnaire. The 50/50 is here for all.

The Pandemic and the Lockdown: Long story short

The 50/50 is a story of vision, purpose and determination: The continued success of a new enterprise that opened in August 2019 and was immediately affected by the March 2020 COVID-19 Pandemic lockdown. When the lockdown happened in the spring of 2020, the 50/50 just kept moving forward despite obvious obstacles. "I panicked at first," Carmen shares when speaking of the lockdown. "Then I came back into my body and understood what needed to

(continued on Page 2)

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ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Click [here](#) to learn more about Bernalillo County Economic Development.

WANT MORE DISTRICT 3?

To learn more about what's happening in District 3, click [here](#).

THE 50/50 COFFEE HOUSE & PUB

2122 Central Ave. SE
(505) 639-4334

A Note From the Commissioner (Continued)

happen at the Library--from young people exploring the world through reading to local artists sharing their gifts with the community." Unlike other local libraries, this library will be open seven days a week to accommodate its programming and provide greater access to its residents.

The \$15 million library, situated on the lot that was formerly home to the Caravan East nightclub, is funded by multiple sources. Bernalillo County contributed \$500,000 general obligation bond funding for the construction of the library and \$80,000 for community room furnishings. Other funding came from State appropriations, city general obligation bond funding and a one million dollar donation from the Freedman Trust. It is expected to be open in late 2022.

IN THE COMMUNITY (CONTINUED)

(continued from Page 1)

be done. The first month gave me time to generate a plan that we put into place. And we did it—one step at a time."

Assistance came from supportive patrons, a *Go-Fund Me* page initiated by a 50/50 enthusiast, a \$10,000 Small Business Grant from Bernalillo County, and the hard work and ingenuity of the founders. Carmen also expresses appreciation for the help from Bernalillo County and District 3 Commissioner Adriann Barboa and the local utilities, and sincere gratitude to the 50/50's property owner who worked with them during the "scary" times.

Serving in the post-lockdown world

In the beginning, Carmen and one staff member managed the take-out orders and kept things going. The restaurant, initially empty of diners, was sometimes filled with Carmen's family—biological and foster children. She and Chad foster siblings and usually two to three children are with their family of four at any given time. So, while things were cooking the kitchen, parenting and learning were going on in other parts of the 50/50 when Chad was working his three-day shift. "Lots of coordination and scheduling were required," Carmen admits with a laugh.

As things changed and were redefined in the *new normal*, Carmen hired additional staff and opened the restaurant to diners. By the summer of 2020 and thereafter, always in operating in compliance with COVID 19 regulations, the 50/50 re-established its groove. Gatherings are once again possible and so life celebrations happen at the 50/50 along with other events and meetings such as the Black Diamonds Club that comes there to watch the New Mexico United soccer team's away games.

While many restaurants currently face staffing challenges, it seems that the 50/50 has less turnover. Carmen attributes this to the fact that the 50/50 strives to pay a living wage and tips are split. Equally important is that the staff believes in the 50/50



Carmen Prince-Morris

philosophy. Further, Carmen understands that working at the 50/50 isn't necessarily a forever job. "I value and appreciate my staff; they work hard and are good people. So, if they have an opportunity to advance, I want them to take it as we have no management positions available right now."

What's on the menu and available at and from the 50/50

It's best to make no assumptions when you step into the 50/50—it's not easily quantified.

The repasts and beverages offered are made with locally-sourced ingredients and products as much as possible, and the food is representative of many cuisines, cultures and dietary preferences. *Consider some of its offerings: avocado toast, huevos rancheros, kiss my grits, a short ribs and chuck blend burger, plant-based entrees and gluten-free items.* The beverage menu is as vast as its physical space from coffees and teas to tradition and more exotic sodas and waters to wines and beer, several from local producers.

The 50/50 is a new take on a general store filled with goods from participating partners. You can buy things at the 50/50 or order online. Partners of the 50/50 community include Mi Youngs Farm, Bradley's Books, Manny's Bakery, EMS Farms, and Q's Cakes, Art on the Rio and as Carmen explains, "We also brain share with a menagerie of other local businesses, artists and musicians."

Moving forward, paying it forward

(continued on Page 3)

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ANNOUNCEMENT

FUNDS STILL AVAILABLE FOR BERNALILLO COUNTY'S RENT ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

Bernalillo County Economic Development still has funds available for the BernCo Relief of Emergency Needs for Tenants (RENT) assistance program! Additionally, there are a few program updates. Bernalillo County residents who live outside of Albuquerque city limits can now apply for three months of future, upcoming rent in addition to past-due arrears. The assistance threshold has been updated. Applicants are limited to 18 months of assistance, which

are still being reviewed on a *first come, first serve* basis for residents who reside within Albuquerque city limits, outside of Bernalillo County, or within Tribal Lands.

Please click the following link for Rental, Utility, and Eviction Protection assistance programs from the State of New Mexico: www.renthelpnm.org or call 1-833-485-1334.

While it is now **business as usual** at the 50/50, static is not a condition that applies. Something is always in the works—from bringing in new partners to projects that give back to the community to ideas about expanding its reach. A new location is opening in February at Lomas Blvd. and Fourth St. In November, a percentage of a day's sales were donated to a local charity and in 2021, the 50/50 added a food truck.

There are also plans for kids' cooking classes to teach basic cooking skills and how to add healthier components to an ingredient list that is largely SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program), or WIC (Women, Infants and Children) supplied. Carmen explains from her experience as a foster parent that young people need to learn life skills such as cooking before they go out into the world on their own at 18 years old.

This is the energy and intention of 50/50. It's all good.

50/50 Coffee house and Pub
2122 Central Ave. SE
Monday thru Friday 8:30 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.
<https://www.5050coffeehousepub.com/>
(505) 639-4334