

Shy child becomes big giver

Annie Hooten, Executive Assistant to the CEO • Z-Coil

When Annie Hooten moved back to the states from Australia seven years ago, it didn't take long for her to become immersed in the Albuquerque community, thanks to an advertisement she saw in the newspaper.

"I saw this ad for a walk to benefit breast cancer and decided to go sign up," says the executive assistant to the CEO of Z-Coil.

That was the beginning of an ever-widening group of contacts.

"My husband tells me, 'I've lived here all my life, and I think you know more people than I do.'"

Next came the Leukemia & Lymphoma Society (LLS) Team-in-Training.

"They take normal, average people who have never thought of completing an endurance event and train them," says Hooten. "Then you raise money and get to participate in something

that you never thought you could do. I signed up to do a 100-mile bike ride in Lake Tahoe. My husband, his favorite thing when he comes home from work is to relax and watch TV. But when I signed up for this, he said he'd ride with me a bit."

Hooten organized a Trivia Night to raise funds for the couple's ride, and it turned into an annual event.

"That year we raised over \$8000, so we both got to go."

Hooten adds that her husband now works as a coach for the charity while she volunteers as a fundraising mentor. Born and raised in Miami, Florida, Hooten says it wasn't always so easy for her to mix with strangers.

"When I was young, I was extremely shy. I would go shopping with my mother and I'd say, 'Ask the saleslady... My mom would tell me to ask [the salesla-

dy] myself, but I wouldn't.' It was during high school that she first discovered the joys of volunteering. "We did a lot of community work. I've had a very fortunate life and felt like it was my place to give back to my community."

Through Z-Coil, Hooten organizes and volunteers for a long list of charitable events. She also donates her handmade jewelry for charity auctions and volunteers as a Big Sister. Recently a recipient of the Governor's Award for Outstanding New Mexico Women, Hooten is very excited about her upcoming training to become a cuddler through UNM Hospital.

"I was on the waiting list for 14 months, and I finally got for my training in June," she says. Cuddlers volunteer to hold premature babies at the hospital.

