

# The alchemy of addiction

**'Music Theatre and Opiates, a Salon' hopes to bring a difficult subject into the light**

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**Dr. Gina Perez-Baron, director of Alchemy Integrated Medicine**

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**QUOTE**

**Sense of spirit**



*There is a strong sense of spirit that is in the dirt here. It has the ability to transform us. We can turn that magic towards some of these problems ... We have*

*a solid sense of community here. We need to use the strength of our culture to help us navigate through this."*

– DR. GINA PEREZ-BARON, DIRECTOR OF ALCHEMY INTEGRATED MEDICINE  
Helping people recover from addictions is personal for Dr. Gina Perez-Baron, the founder and director of Alchemy Integrated Medicine in Taos. She said her mother has been in recovery for 20 years, and she is intimately familiar with the struggles of an addict and the impact they have on the family and community.

"Music Theatre and Opiates, a Salon," hosted by Anita Otilia Rodríguez, will explore the science of addiction with an evening of music and theater Friday (Feb. 23), 6 p.m., at Quechua Restaurant, 122 Paso del Pueblo Sur in Taos.

Metta Theatre director Bruce McIntosh will be reading a piece from his observations working closely with youth in the Taos community and pieces that were written by incarcerated youths about the impact addiction had on their lives. McIntosh said he has witnessed "utter destruction of gifted, intelligent, beautiful young people and their families." In addition, musician Dino Archuleta will perform, and Liz Sump from Community Against Violence will also participate.

Perez-Baron said, "The evening is an opportunity for education, both intellectually but also in our hearts."

Perez-Baron said there is a "lack of understanding about what opiate addiction is and what we can do to support people who want to get well." She calls the work "transformative education; it is education that leads to action." The purpose of her work, she said, is "to equip people in the community ... teachers, law enforcement, and family, so they may be part of resiliency and support."

She said the bias associated with addiction needs to shift and be treated like any medical condition, "heart failure, diabetes, for example." Perez-

Baron continued, "Taos was an (addiction) epicenter 20 years before and consequently longer than anyone in the nation." She added, "There is a strong sense of spirit that is in the dirt here. It has the ability to transform us. We can turn that magic towards some of these problems ... We have a solid sense of community here. We need to use the strength of our culture to help us navigate through this."

Perez-Baron said successful addiction recovery is like a country music song played backward: "You can get back the car, the dog and the girl."

She has been providing primary care for the treatment of opiate and alcohol addiction in Northern New Mexico since 2013. In 2009, after graduating from Stanford Medical School, she relocated to her mother's home state of New Mexico. According to her website, for eight years she worked in Grants, Artesia, and Questa providing primary care. With a keen interest in addiction medicine, she began treating patients individually in Questa in 2013.

Two years later, Perez-Baron started a private practice with her rural clinic patients and began her novel group program at Questa Health Center. Perez-Baron established a program for treating addiction described as "intensive, integrated, verified and group therapy-based," and it has been acknowledged locally and nationally as a model of current "best practices" for addiction treatment.

Alchemy Integrated Medicine opened its doors in 2017 when Perez-Baron decided she wanted to return to Taos to provide medical care and expand addiction treatment services closer to her home.

Attendees to the salon are invited to join Perez-Baron for a sit-down "Ask the Doctor" Peruvian dinner after the presentation. Reservations for the dinner are required. There are 15 seats available. Call (575) 613-2570.