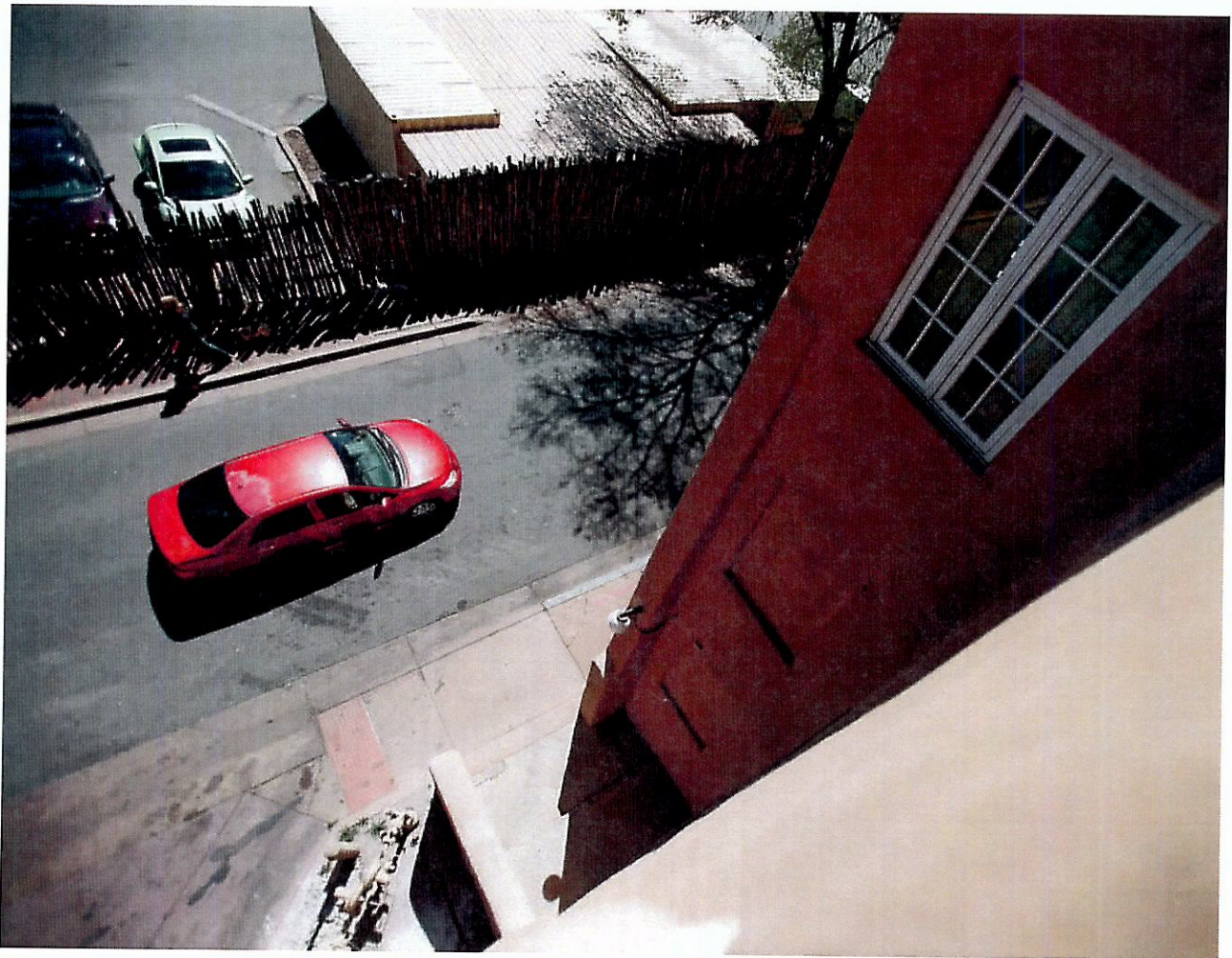


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Fundraiser offers chance to take leap off La Fonda

By Elayne Lowe | The New Mexican Apr 12, 2018 Updated 2 hrs ago



The first 92 people to raise \$1,000 for Girls Inc. can rappel off the Water Street side of La Fonda on the Plaza in . Sánchez Saturno/The New Mexican

A local nonprofit is trying an edgy new way of generating financial support.

About 100 people will have the chance to rappel off La Fonda on the Plaza's roof Aug. 4 as part of a fundraising campaign.

Girls Inc. of Santa Fe, a chapter of a national nonprofit advocating on behalf of girls and providing programs to empower them, is hosting the 62-foot rappel down the south-facing facade of the landmark hotel during the weekend of its 46th annual arts and craft show on the Plaza. The nonprofit announced its Over the Edge-curated event last week.

The first 92 people to raise \$1,000 or more for Girls Inc. will be part of Santa Fe's first urban rappelling event. Registration to be one of the 92 "edgers" or a sponsor for one opened Monday on the nonprofit's website.

"It's a great way to stand up and show support for girls," said Kim Brown, CEO of Girls Inc. of Santa Fe. "Even though it'll be a little scary."

Brown is afraid of heights but said she is excited to go over the edge to show that she, too, can take risks and serve as a role model for girls by conquering challenges, something Girls Inc. teaches in many of its programs.

The nonprofit's motto is to inspire girls to be strong, smart and bold. Brown said that by providing such an event, the group is providing an opportunity to continue the mission.

"We already believe that girls are strong, smart and bold, and we treat them as such," Brown said. "There aren't a lot of places, especially with everything going on in Santa Fe, where girls can be who they are and take risks."

The descent will be orchestrated by Over the Edge, an urban rappelling event organizer for nonprofits. Over the Edge will provide the equipment, certified rope technicians and \$10 million event insurance policy for the rappel off La Fonda.

Jayne Weiske, director of marketing for La Fonda, said the hotel is excited to be a sponsor for the 55-year-old nonprofit and provide the heights for the event.

“La Fonda is happy to support it,” Weiske said. “The longevity of Girls Inc. and the historic nature of La Fonda is a nice synergy.”

The 95-year-old hotel has had engineers examine its walls and the safety aspects of rappelling off its roof. Weiske said the hotel is in the clear for the event and will be drilling and cementing anchors on the roof.

Rhynda Stephens, business partnership and event manager for Girls Inc. of Santa Fe, said organizers want to create a lot of buzz in the community through the fundraiser.

“To me, it was a natural fit,” Stephens said. “We challenge gender norms. We help the girls realize that anything is possible. We introduce them to things that typically girls aren’t introduced to because we want them to think out of the box and realize they’re capable of anything.”

Stephens and her colleagues hope to get some prominent community members involved to increase the fun, and encourage people to sponsor those they want to see dropping from La Fonda’s roof.

For those who do not want to face the heights or do not know someone who would, Stephens said 15 girls from Girls Inc.’s enCourage program will be rappelling and hoping for sponsors. The summer program for 50 girls provides an opportunity to participate in outdoor adventures not typically offered for girls, including intensive hikes, climbing and camping.

While organizers are promising spots throughout the day on one of the two rope lines for 92 people who raise at least \$1,000, they will consider adding a third line if more people raise the funds.

Stephens said the organization is offering bonus benefits to people who raise more than the minimum, including the chance to film the drop on a GoPro camera, superhero capes and a VIP after-event at Meow Wolf, a sponsor.

Above all, Stephens said, Girls Inc. seeks to involve the community in its mission.