

From Stagecoach Stop to North Valley Holiday Stop & Shop

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Above from left to right: Danny Lopez, Cherie Montoya, Pam Montoya, David Montoya. Below: Elaborately decorated tractors will be parked in front of some of the participating Stop & Shop stores on December 6th and 7th.

It all started with an old building made of terrones, dried blocks of earth cut from the bottom of the Rio Grande. It served as a stagecoach stop along the Camino Real, an ancient trade route of goods and cultures that connected Mexico's indigenous cultures with the indigenous cultures of the Southwest U.S. In the 1600s, during Spanish Colonization, the Camino Real (Royal Road, or King's Road) was the longest road in North America.

The historic building sat on 12 acres of land that David Montoya saved from development and revived by growing alfalfa and running cattle, returning the land to its farmland origins.

The terrones building inspired Pamela Montoya to create "the store she had always dreamed of." In 2004, Pam and her daughter Cherie Montoya opened *La Parada*, which means "the stop" in honor of the store's past as a stagecoach stop. *La Parada's* eclectic offerings honor 4th Street's history of Camino Real's (and later Route 66's) transfer of goods and different cultures. Here you can find beautiful items from around the world and from local artists.

Soon after opening *La Parada* Pam and Cherie came up with idea for the first *Holiday Stop and Shop*. They reached out to local businesses on 4th Street suggesting that they pool their advertising money. Cherie's background working in non-profits helped them organize and reach out to businesses including new businesses that sometimes felt like a "lone island."

Together with the other businesses, Pam and Cherie created a sense of community which enabled them to advertise widely to draw people in from not only the surrounding areas in the North Valley but also from greater Albuquerque. Collectively and initially led by Pam and Cherie's vision, they created "the heart and soul" of what has morphed into an annual North Valley Holiday event. "Shoppers love visiting a more rural and farm-like area with unique businesses."

Years later, Cherie keeps the spirit of the 4th Street and the North Valley alive by being a good steward of the land. Cherie's partner Danny Lopez oversees their edible permaculture farm that grows food for their *Farm and Table* restaurant located at 8917 4th Street next to *La Parada*. Fittingly, the restaurant's back wall is also constructed from sun-dried terrones.

Pam and Cherie said "The Village of Los Ranchos loved the event and for a time took it over, wanting to protect it. They gave it back to us a couple of years ago. We rebranded it and with extra love and some help we reinvigorated it and expanded beyond 4th Street to include 2nd Street and Rio Grande Boulevard. We also changed the Holiday Stop and Shop logo to reflect a more rural flavor."

There isn't competition among the businesses, only collaboration and a shared vision. Both Pam and Cherie also sponsor a number of community events and festivals every year on the land that still grows alfalfa.

The 21st Annual North Holiday Stop and Shop will be held on Saturday December 6th and Sunday December 7th. Look for the signs pointing to the businesses and the tractors decorated with holiday lights parked outside of some of the businesses.

More information at www.holidaystopandshop.com and www.shoplaparada.com.

