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eco¹⁰ Years



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*Who Reads?
We Read!*



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Playing is learning

Early Childhood Education Awareness Month

**A
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*Preparing Children For
Success In Life*



Alfredo I. Velásquez
Santa Cruz County School Superintendent
&
Staff

21 E. Court St.
Nogales, AZ 85621
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Border Eco Updates

Celebrating the Future of Santa Cruz County: Honoring Our Children and Youth

April is a month of celebration and recognition for the remarkable young people of Santa Cruz County. We pay tribute to the dedicated individuals, organizations, and events that work tirelessly throughout the year to educate, protect, and empower our children and youth.

We are deeply grateful for their efforts, which have helped make Santa Cruz County an exceptional place for our young people to grow and thrive. As we honor our children and youth this April, we also acknowledge the importance of investing in their future.

By supporting education, providing essential resources, and fostering a safe and nurturing environment, we can equip our young people with the tools they need to succeed. Together, we can build a community that prioritizes the well-being and development of our children and youth.

It's crucial that we come together as a community to empower our young people to reach their full potential. By offering mentorship, guidance, and opportunities for growth, we can help them develop the skills, confidence, and resilience needed to thrive in life.

Let us commit to investing in the next generation, creating a brighter future for all. By working together, we can ensure that every child and youth in Santa Cruz County has the chance to grow, learn, and succeed.

Don't forget to follow us on Facebook for the latest events, people, and organizations who make a difference in Santa Cruz County.

We are always looking for new talent. If you have

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- Billy, Environmental Technician



"A New Era for Disability Rights in Nogales: How the CODI Initiative Will Reshape Access to Care"

The Commission on Disability Issues (CODI) proposal for Santa Cruz County brings together a coalition of key organizations dedicated to improving the lives of individuals with disabilities. Leading the effort is Mariposa Community Health Center, which provides integrated behavioral and medical care, including counseling, psychiatry, and school advocacy (e.g., IEP/504 plans). The Arizona Developmental Disabilities Planning Council (ADDPC) also plays a pivotal role, focusing on inclusion, self-determination, and employment opportunities through grants and policy advocacy. Additionally, the Arizona Health Care Cost Containment System (AHCCCS) and Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) programs ensure access to Medicaid-funded services and job training, helping individuals with disabilities achieve economic independence.

Binational collaboration is another cornerstone of CODI's strategy, with the Red Binacional de Discapacidades Neurodiversas (Binational Network of Neurodiverse Disabilities) facilitating cross-border resource sharing, parent support, and service coordination between Arizona and Sonora. Local educational and behavioral health partners, such as Nogales Unified School District, ACCEL & BISTA Behavioral Therapy, and Santa Cruz Training Programs, contribute expertise in special education, applied behavioral analysis (ABA), and community-based disability services. These organizations collectively address critical gaps in therapies, caregiver support, and early intervention issues exacerbated by the county's rural location and limited providers. The proposal also highlights the involvement of advocacy and legal groups, including the Arizona Center for Disability Law (ACDL), which ensures compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and safeguards rights, and the Office of Individual and Family Affairs (OIFA), which promotes mental health and substance use recovery within AHCCCS.

Grassroots organizations like the Southern Arizona Autism Association and Arizona Achieve (The ARC) further amplify community voices, offering self-advocacy training and family education.

Together, these entities create a robust network capable of driving systemic change, from policy reform to on-the-ground service delivery.

By uniting these diverse stakeholders, CODI establishes a comprehensive, multi-agency approach to disability inclusion in Santa Cruz County. The commission's structure ensures that expertise from healthcare, education, employment, and cross-border partners is leveraged to maximize impact. This collaborative model not only addresses immediate needs—such as reducing waitlists for therapies and improving accessibility—but also fosters long-term sustainability through data-driven policy recommendations and public awareness campaigns. With such a strong coalition, CODI is poised to transform the landscape of disability services in the region, ensuring equitable opportunities for all residents. The Commission on Disability Issues (CODI) proposal outlines a proactive initiative aimed at addressing systemic barriers faced by individuals with disabilities in Santa Cruz County, particularly in Nogales, Arizona. The commission seeks to advocate for policy changes, improve access to essential services, and promote inclusion across healthcare, education, employment, and public life. By leveraging partnerships with local agencies, binational networks, and state programs, CODI aims to create a centralized hub for resources, ensuring that individuals with disabilities and their families receive equitable support. The proposal highlights the urgent need for such a commission, given the county's limited access to specialists, long waitlists for therapies, and gaps in caregiver support.

One of the key benefits of CODI is its potential to bridge service gaps in Santa Cruz County, where rural isolation exacerbates challenges for individuals with disabilities.

The commission plans to address critical shortages in early intervention programs, behavioral health services (e.g., ABA therapy), and specialized education by coordinating with existing agencies like Mariposa Community Health Center and vocational rehabilitation programs.

Additionally, CODI's focus on data-driven advocacy will help prioritize funding and policy improvements, such as securing grants for accessibility infrastructure or tax incentives for inclusive businesses. This structured approach could significantly reduce disparities, particularly for cross-border families who navigate fragmented systems in Arizona and Sonora.

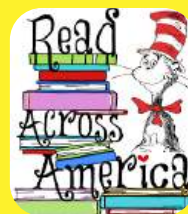
Another major advantage is CODI's emphasis on binational collaboration. Given Nogales' proximity to Mexico, the commission proposes partnerships with Sonoran organizations to pool resources, align policies, and streamline access to healthcare and education. This cross-border effort could mitigate challenges like re-evaluation costs, provider shortages, and transportation barriers. Furthermore, CODI's role in raising awareness through workshops, community events, and disability rights campaigns would combat stigma and empower individuals with disabilities to participate fully in civic and economic life. By fostering inclusivity, the commission could also attract economic opportunities, such as job training programs tailored to disabled residents.

Ultimately, CODI represents a transformative step toward equity and sustainability in Santa Cruz County. By institutionalizing disability advocacy, the commission ensures long-term accountability, from monitoring service effectiveness to advising local government. Its model mirrors successful commissions in cities like Phoenix and Tucson, demonstrating proven strategies for systemic change. Approval of CODI would not only address immediate needs but also lay the groundwork for a more resilient, inclusive community where individuals with disabilities can thrive independently. The proposal's comprehensive vision combining practical solutions with bold advocacy makes a compelling case for its adoption as a cornerstone of regional progress.





2025 Read Across America Read on Santa Cruz County Week



Celebrating Read Across America in Santa Cruz County

Literacy is the foundation of a lifetime of learning, and in Santa Cruz County, we believe in the power of books to inspire, educate, and bring communities together. In partnership with the Santa Cruz County Superintendent's Office, local schools, and community volunteers, this year's Read Across America / Read on Santa Cruz County Week was a resounding success. From March 3 to March 7, classrooms across the county welcomed guest readers who shared their love of books with students of all ages.

With the dedicated coordination of Lizette Montoya from the Santa Cruz County Superintendent's Office, more than 80 volunteers stepped forward to read to students, fostering an early appreciation for literacy. This initiative not only strengthens the connection between students and books but also unites our community in a shared mission: ensuring that every child has the opportunity to develop a lifelong love for reading.

A Community United Through Literacy

The success of Read Across America in Santa Cruz County is a testament to the dedication of our schools, educators, and local leaders. Volunteers included county and city officials, law enforcement personnel, educators, and members of the business and nonprofit sectors—all of whom took time out of their busy schedules to read with students. Their presence underscored the importance of literacy and demonstrated to young minds that reading is a skill that transcends classrooms and extends into every aspect of life.

This year's event was filled with laughter, imagination, and engaging stories that transported students to far-off lands, introduced them to fascinating characters, and encouraged them to dream big. Seeing the excitement in a child's eyes as they connect with a book is a powerful reminder of why initiatives like this matter.

Special Thanks to Our Volunteers

This annual event would not be possible without the incredible support of our volunteers. We extend our deepest gratitude to the Santa Cruz County Superintendent's Office, local government officials, law enforcement, school district representatives, and community leaders who made this event such a success. Your commitment to education and literacy helps shape the future of our students.

Looking Ahead

As we reflect on another successful Read Across America week, we are reminded of the vital role literacy plays in shaping young minds and strengthening our community. We look forward to continuing this tradition next year, with even more volunteers, more stories, and more opportunities to inspire the next generation of readers.

To all who participated—thank you for making a difference, one book at a time!

Santa Cruz County

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Alejandra Munguia	Lisa Monge
Alejandro Martinez	Luis Aguirre
Alejandro Paz	Luis Fimbres
Alfredo Velasquez	Luz Daniela Martinez
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Nogales Unified School District

Aissa Bonillas

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Anna Parada (City of Nogales)
Camelia Castaneda
Cindy Grimm
Cynthia Matus- Morriss
Daisy Soto (Crossroads Mission)
Emilio Velasquez
Francisco Padilla (First Things First)
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Let's Talk Health

Sexual Violence Awareness Month: Understanding, Preventing, and Finding Support

Sexual violence includes any unwanted or forced sexual activity. This can take many forms, including sexual assault, rape, sexual harassment, child sexual abuse, incest, human trafficking, and coercion. It also includes situations where someone is unable to give consent, such as when they are intoxicated, unconscious, or underage.

One of the hardest truths is that it often happens by someone the person knows—like a friend, family member, or someone in their community. In fact, studies show that about 8 in 10 sexual assaults are committed by someone the survivor knows (RAINN). Additionally, 1 in 3 women and 1 in 6 men experience sexual violence in their lifetime (CDC). This can make it even more difficult to talk about, but speaking up is an important step toward safety and healing.

What Can We Do?

We can all help prevent sexual violence and support survivors. Here are some ways to make a difference:

- **Believe Survivors:** If someone shares their experience with you, listen without judgment and let them know they are not alone.
- **Recognize the Signs:** Abuse isn't always physical. Signs of sexual violence can include sudden changes in behavior, avoiding certain people or places, unexplained fear or anxiety, and physical injuries.
- **Speak Up:** If you see or suspect someone is in danger, offer support or report it to a trusted adult or organization.

Remember, You Are Not Alone

If you or someone you know has experienced sexual violence, there are people who care and want to help. Mariposa Community Health Center's Domestic and Sexual Violence Advocacy Program offers support, guidance, and resources for survivors. Advocates are available to listen, provide options, and help with next steps, all in a safe and private way. Call 520-375-6050. Together, we can build a safer and more supportive community. Let's keep the conversation going and work toward a world without sexual violence.

It's Not Your Fault.

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 **Sexual Violence
Awareness**



Uniting for Child Safety: How Communities Come Together in April for Awareness

April marks Child Abuse Awareness Month, a crucial time to raise awareness about the devastating consequences of child abuse and neglect. This month-long campaign encourages individuals, organizations, and communities to come together to share information, spark conversations, and drive action to protect children.

The statistics are alarming: children worldwide suffer from child abuse, leading to severe and long-lasting impacts on their mental, emotional, and physical well-being. Research shows that children who experience abuse and neglect are more likely to face mental health problems, poor academic performance, and long-term health issues. It's imperative that we recognize and address child abuse to prevent and mitigate its effects.

Recognizing the Signs of Child Abuse

Child Abuse Awareness Month aims to educate the public about the warning signs of child abuse, empowering individuals to take action when they suspect a child is in danger. Common signs of child abuse include:

Unexplained injuries

Changes in behavior

Reluctance to leave home

Frequent absences from school

By being vigilant and speaking out, we can help protect children from abuse.

Supporting Victims and Families

Raising awareness is only the first step. It's equally important to provide resources and support to children and families affected by abuse. This includes connecting them with counseling services, legal support, and other resources to help them heal and recover from trauma. By assisting and supporting victims, we can help them build resilience and overcome the challenges they face.

Community Leaders Take Action

In Santa Cruz County, the Attorney's Office and the Sheriff's Department are committed to supporting Child Abuse Awareness Month. Throughout April, these offices will be working together to bring awareness to the issue of child abuse and neglect, and to support local organizations that provide vital services to victims and families. By partnering with community groups and advocacy organizations, the Attorney's Office and Sheriff's Department aim to make a meaningful difference in the lives of local children and families.

A Collective Responsibility

Child Abuse Awareness Month serves as a poignant reminder that we all have a responsibility to protect and ensure the well-being and safety of children. Together, we can create a world where all children are safe, loved, and able to thrive. By raising awareness, educating the public, and providing support to victims, we can work towards a society that values and protects its most vulnerable members.

Get Involved:

Learn about the signs of child abuse and neglect

Support organizations that provide resources and services to victims and families

Participate in local events and campaigns to raise awareness

Report suspected child abuse to the authorities

Together, we can make a difference and create a safer, more supportive world for all children.



SCVUSD₃₅ Hosts Their Future Chefs Event!

This year was the 15th anniversary of the Future Chefs National Challenge hosted by Sodexo. Seven SCV35 students ranging from 2nd-5th grade participated in the event that took place earlier this week. The contest consisted of students submitting their recipes beforehand, and a live event where students showcased their cooking skills.

During the live portion, the seven students were provided with ingredients and cooking utensils/equipment where they made their previously-submitted recipes in real-time. Throughout the time allotted, students were guided by Sodexo staff and used their incredible talent and skills to create delicious dishes. Judges were present throughout the event, and consisted of School Board President Ms. Lourdes Vasquez, School Board Members Mr. Brad Beach and Mrs. Susan Faubion, and District 3 Supervisor Mr. John Fanning. Some of the key components focused on by the judges were skill, creativity, taste, and presentation.

After the students were done preparing their meals, they had the opportunity to present their dish to the judges. Many students focused on key components of the meal such as ingredients used, preparation done beforehand, how they came up with the recipe, and why they chose this dish for the competition.

The judges loved the variety of food and creativity presented by the students. Each recipe had a personal touch and showcased the talent and skills of the future chefs! After some discussion, the judges named Luka Mungia as the first place winner, Francisco Padilla as the second place winner, and Mattheo Basurto as the third place winner. Great job to all of the participants! We cannot wait to see how these students will continue to showcase their passions and talents.

List of student chefs and their recipes:

Alexis Rojas (Calabasas School 2nd grade) - Calabasitas con queso

Luka Mungia (Calabasas School 4th grade) - Fried Chicken

Francisco Padilla (Calabasas School 4th grade) - Padilla Pesto Pasta

Rex Faley (Mountain View Elementary School 5th grade) - Chicken Bake with bacon

Mattheo Basurto (San Cayetano Elementary School 3rd grade) - Chicken teriyaki

Bellamy Cota (San Cayetano Elementary School 3rd grade) - Abuela's Christmas tamales

Damian Felix Arias (Mountain View Elementary School 5th grade) - Clown crepes



SCVUSD35 Celebrates Love of Reading Week!

Santa Cruz Valley Unified School District No. 35 celebrated Love of Reading Week from March 3-7, 2025. Mountain View Elementary School, Calabasas School and San Cayetano Elementary School all had guest readers visit their classrooms throughout the week to spend time with our students, talk about the importance of reading, and share stories and great memories!

Mountain View Elementary School Parent Liaison, Briana Rodriguez, said "We extend our heartfelt gratitude to our incredible community partners who took the time to read stories to our students during Love of Reading Week. Your enthusiasm and dedication made a lasting impact, bringing books to life and inspiring a love for literacy in our young learners."

Some of our guest readers included SCV35 Superintendent Mr. David Verdugo, Tubac Fire, Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisors #2 & #3, SCV35 Teaching, Learning, and Assessing Department, SCV35 Governing Board Members, Santa Cruz County Public Library, Customs and Border Protection, Author Maritza Higuera, Santa Cruz County Sheriff's Office, and local community members.

The impact of Love of Reading Week will extend far beyond the week itself, as our students continue to develop a lifelong love of reading and learning. Our appreciation goes out to the partnerships that make events such as this possible. As a school, we are committed to fostering a culture of literacy and community engagement in order to help our students and our community achieve their full potential.

Thank you to our amazing community partners for making Love of Reading Week so special!



Together, we create a safer Santa Cruz County!

The Santa Cruz County Sheriff's Office: Advocates for Child Safety



**2170 N Congress Dr,
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Sheriff's Round-Up



Santa Cruz County Sheriff's Office: Honoring Service, Community, and Commitment

April 2025 is a month of recognition, community engagement, and celebration for the Santa Cruz County Sheriff's Office. Sheriff Hathaway and his command staff will take the opportunity to honor their dedicated personnel during National Administrative Week, Volunteer Week, and Communications Week. These observances highlight the vital contributions of the administrative team, volunteers, and communications professionals who play essential roles in public safety.

The Sheriff's Office continues to make a strong impact in the community, recently participating in "Read Across America" in partnership with local schools in Santa Cruz County and the City of Nogales. Personnel joined students in celebrating literacy, reinforcing the importance of education and positive role models in youth development.

Sheriff's Office personnel participated in this year "Gear Up" and Career Fair at the Calabasas School. Looking ahead, Sheriff's Office personnel will be joining hundreds of supporters in the 2025 Special Olympics Torch Run. As part of the Law Enforcement Torch Run, officers will carry the "Flame of Hope" into the opening ceremonies of local competitions, symbolizing their commitment to raising awareness and funds for Special Olympics athletes worldwide.

Additionally, DARE graduations have commenced across the county, marking an important milestone for 343 students successfully completing the program. Congratulations to DARE Instructor Alejandra Estrada, whose dedication has helped shape the lives of many young participants. This will be Estrada's final year teaching the program, as she transitions to the patrol division. Her efforts in educating and mentoring students over the years are truly commendable.

Sheriff Hathaway and his administration thank all members of the community for their partnership with the Sheriff's Office in keeping our communities safe.

Your Sheriff
David Hathaway



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**A Message from the
Santa Cruz County Attorney**

Child abuse: a silent killer of childhood innocence



The hidden scars of child abuse: a call for action

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