

BORDER

eco



4

A Community United for Student Success
Jump Back to School 2026

CONNECTING SOUTHERN ARIZONA



7 Celebrating Santa Cruz County's Outstanding Educators

SCAN ME



National Immunization Awareness Month



10

Five Fighters, Two Medals, One Heart



12

Beyond the Badge: NPD Officers
Community Commitment



15

Sheriff's August Round-Up



WELCOME

Back to school

*A Message from the
Santa Cruz County School Superintendent*

*"Let's make today the first day of a great
adventure!"*

**Santa Cruz County School Superintendent
& Staff**

**21 E. Court Street
Nogales, AZ 85621
Phone: (520)375-7940**



Border Eco Updates

A New School Year, A New Beginning

As students return to school, they begin a new chapter full of possibilities. Each lesson, assignment, and challenge is a chance to grow. Some days will be great, while others may be tough. What matters is to keep moving forward, believe in yourself, and remember that asking for help is a strength.

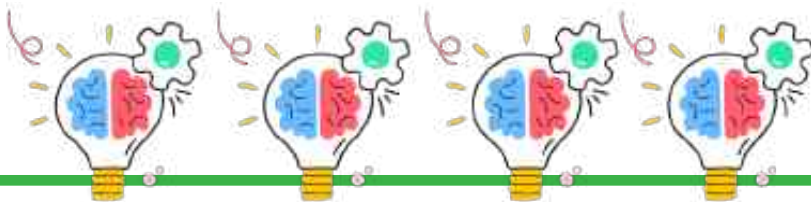
Chase your dreams. The effort you put in today can open doors for tomorrow. Attend class, ask questions, stay curious, and learn from mistakes. Your background doesn't limit your future; your determination and choices can lead you to success.

Teachers are vital to your learning. They do more than teach; they help you recognize your potential and build confidence. Their influence can last a lifetime.

Supporting students means supporting their teachers. Educators need supplies, resources, encouragement, and respect. When teachers feel valued, they create positive classrooms where students thrive.

Everyone, parents, businesses, and community members can help. We can donate supplies, volunteer, and show appreciation for teachers. A simple thank-you can go a long way.

To all students: believe in yourself, be kind, and stay focused on your goals. Your teachers, families, and community are here for you. Together, let's make this a year of growth and achievement.



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Please send us information on any upcoming events, meetings, or programs to share with our readers.

CONTENT

4 A Community United For Student Success

Jump Back to School 2026

5 Patagonia Celebrates Freedom, Service, and

Community on the Fourth of July

6 Celebrating Santa Cruz County's Outstanding Educators

7 Celebrating Santa Cruz County's Outstanding Educators

10 Five Fighters, Two Medals, One Heart

11 Rio Rico Insights- 17 Years of Supporting SCV35 Students- By Audra Billow

12 NPD Monthly Roll-Community Commitment

13 Let's Talk Health- Inspiring Tomorrow's Health Leaders

14 Back-to-School-Sheriff's Office

15 Sheriff's August Round-Up



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A Community United for Student Success

Jump Back to School 2026

The new school year began with hope, excitement, and a powerful reminder of what can be accomplished when a community comes together for its children.

This year's Jump Back 2 School event at the Ray Molera Nogales High School Gymnasium brought together nonprofit organizations, businesses, government agencies, volunteers, and community partners with one shared purpose: helping local students begin the school year prepared to learn and succeed.

More than 800 backpacks and school supplies were distributed to elementary school students from the Nogales Unified School District. This year, organizers provided more supplies than in previous years, reflecting both the generosity of community partners and the growing challenges confronting local families.

For parents managing the rising costs of housing, food, transportation, and other necessities, purchasing a backpack and classroom supplies can place additional pressure on an already limited household budget. Jump Back 2 School helped ease that burden while reminding families that they are not alone.

Every donated item represented more than a school supply. It offered students confidence on the first day of class, gave parents one less expense to worry about, and showed teachers that the community stands behind their classrooms.

The event's success belonged to everyone who contributed time, funding, supplies, services, and encouragement. Community partners worked side by side to organize activities, distribute materials, assist families, and create a welcoming experience for students. Their collaboration demonstrated that meaningful change occurs when people move beyond organizational boundaries and unite around a common goal.

As students return to school, it is equally important to recognize the teachers who will guide them throughout the year. Teachers do far more than deliver lessons. They encourage students during difficult moments, identify their strengths, nurture their curiosity, and help shape the people they will become. Many educators use their own time and resources to ensure their students have what they need.

Supporting students must therefore include supporting teachers. Families, businesses, nonprofits, and public agencies can help by donating classroom supplies, volunteering, recognizing educators, and remaining engaged throughout the school year.

Next year, Jump Back 2 School will celebrate its 15th anniversary. Organizers are already looking forward to making the milestone a memorable community celebration that builds upon years of service and partnership.

The backpacks may have been distributed in a single day, but their impact will be carried into classrooms throughout the year. Together, the community gave students more than supplies; it gave them encouragement, dignity, and a stronger beginning.



Patagonia Celebrates Freedom, Service, & Community on the Fourth of July

Patagonia's Fourth of July celebration brought together residents and visitors for a day of patriotism and community pride. The event combined the joy of Independence Day with a tribute to those who have served in the U.S. Armed Forces.

The festivities began with a parade led by this year's grand marshals, Ron and Cindy Morriss. Decorated vehicles, American flags, and excited participants filled the streets while families cheered along the parade route, celebrating the spirit of Patagonia.

At 1 p.m., everyone paused for the Blue Star Memorial dedication ceremony at Doc Mock Park near Beaty Lane and McKeown Avenue. The plaque honored the service and sacrifice of America's military members, reminding us of the courage of generations.

Congresswoman Adelita Grijalva attended the ceremony, along with Santa Cruz County Supervisor John Fanning and other community members, to honor those who defended the nation. Her presence showed the importance of recognizing veterans and active-duty military personnel, highlighting community support for remembrance.

The ceremony served as a meaningful break in the day's celebrations. With flags waving and patriotic colors displayed, attendees reflected on the freedoms we celebrate each Independence Day and the sacrifices that made those freedoms possible. The memorial will be a place for Patagonia residents and visitors to honor military service year-round.

After the dedication, the Patagonia Community Garden hosted a reception with refreshments, allowing attendees to connect and share memories. The day concluded with children, veterans, local families, and civic leaders standing together in appreciation, reflecting on the strong bonds that connect generations in this proud community.

Patagonia's Fourth of July celebration was more than just a holiday gathering. It showed the heart of the community: grateful, welcoming, and united. Through the parade, memorial dedication, and community activities, the town celebrated America's independence and honored the service of those who strengthen the nation in this proud community.

More than just a holiday gathering, Patagonia's Fourth of July celebration showcased the heart of the community: grateful, welcoming, and united. Through the parade, memorial dedication, and various activities, the town celebrated not only America's independence but also the individuals whose service and spirit continue to strengthen the nation.



Celebrating Santa Cruz County's Outstanding Educators

The Santa Cruz County School Superintendent's Office takes great pride in recognizing the exceptional educators chosen as the 2026 Teachers of the Year from their respective schools. These remarkable teachers stand out not only for their outstanding teaching abilities but also for their unwavering dedication, genuine passion, and commitment to fostering the success of every student they encounter.

To celebrate their achievements, the Santa Cruz County School Superintendent's Office will host the annual Teacher of the Year Celebration on August 7, 2026. This year's theme, "Meet the Stars of the Sock Hop," promises to be a festive and inspirational evening, culminating in the exciting announcement of one exceptional educator as the 2026 Santa Cruz County Teacher of the Year. The selection of the recipient was made possible through a comprehensive review process conducted by a panel of five esteemed community judges. These judges dedicated their time and effort to thoroughly evaluate the applications, ensuring that the most deserving candidate is honored for their contributions to education.

We extend our heartfelt congratulations to each of this year's selected Teachers of the Year. Their hard work, creativity, and passion for teaching leave a lasting impact not only in the lives of their students but also within their schools and the broader community. We are profoundly grateful for the tireless efforts they put forth every day to empower the next generation and enrich our educational landscape.



"Wishing all the amazing students of Santa Cruz County a happy, successful, and inspiring school year! May it be filled with discovery, growth, and unforgettable moments!"

$$ax^2 + bx + c = 0$$

back to school

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Celebrating Santa Cruz County's Outstanding Educators





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Five Fighters, Two Medals, One Heart

CHARLOTTE, North Carolina — The lights were bright, the mats were large, and the top competitors from across the country were present. When five young athletes from Santa Cruz County entered the 2026 U.S. National Taekwondo Championships from July 1-5, they were not just competing; they were representing.

They represented their schools, families, and the International Taekwondo Academy, where they train with Master Rodrigo Valenzuela. The National Championships are the biggest event for USA Taekwondo, where state champions compete to become national contenders, and national champions join America's elite. This year, thousands of athletes gathered in Charlotte to compete for a spot on the podium. Five came from Santa Cruz County.

Alex Cardenas, 11, from Wade Carpenter Middle School, was the youngest competitor. He was focused and fearless in his first national competition. Diego Romero, 9, from Mexicayotl Academy, the team's youngest member, showed impressive composure for his age on the big stage. Mario Parra, 11, from Continental Middle School, fought with calm and power to win the GOLD and become the 2026 National Champion. Gabriel Zamorano, 12, from Desert Shadows, had a determined performance, earning a BRONZE medal. Alejandro Tello, 11, from Sacred Heart Catholic School Middle School, displayed precision and heart, also winning BRONZE.

Two national medals and five athletes who never gave up. For Master Rodrigo Valenzuela, these results mean more than just medals. His academy teaches discipline, respect, humility, and the mental toughness needed to compete far from home for your community.

"To take five kids from our county to Nationals and return with a national champion and two bronze medalists, that is huge," said Master Rodrigo Valenzuela. "These kids train after school and on weekends. They sacrifice. They did it."

For Mario Parra, the champion, the gold reflects years of early mornings and late practices. For Gabriel Zamorano and Alejandro Tello, their bronze medals show they belong among the best in the U.S. For Alex Cardenas and Diego Romero, competing at just 9 and 11 years old is just the start of their journey.

They returned from Charlotte with medals but left behind something even bigger: an impression. They showed that small towns in southern Arizona can produce champions. From Patagonia, Rio Rico, and Nogales, Santa Cruz County fights with dignity. Last week in Charlotte, these five kids demonstrated that to the rest of the country.

Congratulations to our 2026 National Team: Mario Parra - National Champion and Gold Medalist; Gabriel Zamorano - Bronze Medalist; Alejandro Tello - Bronze Medalist; Alex Cardenas and Diego Romero - National Competitors. The International Taekwondo Academy is home. The podium in Charlotte was just a stop along the way.



Rio Rico Insights

17 Years of Supporting SCV35 Students

For the 17th consecutive year, Santa Cruz Valley Unified School District welcomed families from across the community to its annual Back to School Blitz, continuing a tradition of helping students begin the school year with confidence, excitement, and the support they need to succeed.

This year's event served 615 registered students, a significant increase from last year, as families gathered to access school supplies, connect with community resources, and prepare for the first day of school.

The event also brought together 37 community vendors, including representatives from all five SCV35 schools and local organizations dedicated to supporting children and families.

Their presence provided valuable information and services, reinforcing the strong partnerships that make the Back to School Blitz possible year after year.

Student wellness remained an important part of the event, with 150 vision screenings conducted and 30 students receiving referrals for additional eye care, helping ensure they have the tools they need to succeed in the classroom.

The Back to School Blitz is coordinated by Angie Lopez, whose leadership and dedication have helped the event become a cherished community tradition over the past 17 years.

"This event is about so much more than school supplies," Lopez said. "It's about bringing our community together to support our students and making sure every child feels prepared, welcomed, and excited for a new school year."

The continued success of the Back to School Blitz reflects the generosity of community partners, volunteers, district employees, and local organizations who donate their time and resources each year. Their commitment ensures that hundreds of SCV35 students begin the school year knowing they are supported by a community that believes in their success.

As Santa Cruz Valley Unified School District prepares to welcome students back to campus, the Back to School Blitz remains a shining example of what can be accomplished when a community comes together with a shared purpose: giving every child the best possible start to the school year.



NOGALES POLICE

Beyond the Badge-Community Commitment

The Nogales Police Department is working hard to connect with the community it serves. Recent activities show the department's focus on both keeping the streets safe and supporting the well-being of the people.

The 4th of July parade emerged as more than just a festive celebration; It was the result of careful planning and teamwork. In the hours leading up to the parade, command staff and officers gathered to strategize and receive their assignments for the day. They are prepared to keep traffic moving safely through the busy streets, manage traffic well, and build good relationships with the community.

The success of the parade showed how dedicated and hardworking the department is. Lt. Bermudez, along with Evidence Technicians Yhadira and Fernanda, planned every detail and spent many hours to ensure everything went smoothly. Detective Moreno managed traffic to keep participants and spectators safe, while the Criminal Investigations Division (CID) watched over the activities to maintain a secure environment all day.

A memorable moment during the parade was when Officer Vasquez and his son, Recruit Vasquez, worked together in traffic control. This touching scene highlighted the department's commitment to public safety and the family tradition of serving the community.

Beyond the parade, the Nogales Police Department aims to create lasting positive change by building strong partnerships. Recently, Lt. Bermudez and Officer Ramirez met with representatives from Crossroads Mission. This partnership seeks to connect the community with important resources to tackle issues like homelessness and addiction, showing the department's comprehensive approach to public safety.

Additionally, Officer Ramirez celebrated a major milestone by graduating from the police academy, marking the start of his career in law enforcement. Chief Jimenez and other leaders, including Lt. Angulo and Assistant Chief Gallego, joined the celebration, welcoming him to a key role in serving the people of Nogales.

The Nogales Police Department proves that its mission is not just about enforcing the law; it is about serving and supporting the community they are proud to protect.



★ LET'S TALK HEALTH ★

Inspiring Tomorrow's Health Leaders

Since 2002, more than 600 students from Santa Cruz County have had the opportunity to participate in the Summer Youth Institute at Mariposa Community Health Center (MCHC). This program equips young people with the knowledge and skills they need to advocate for healthier communities.

This year, MCHC proudly welcomed 30 students from Nogales, Rio Rico, Lourdes Catholic, and EdOptions high schools for its 24th annual Summer Youth Institute. During their time there, these participants became certified Teen Health Facilitators, empowering them to share vital health information and resources with their friends and peers.

What started over twenty years ago has blossomed into a comprehensive public health and leadership program aimed at inspiring the next generation of healthcare professionals. Collaborating with groups such as the University of Arizona, Circles of Peace, SEAHEC, HOPE Inc., the Arizona Attorney General's Office, and the Arizona Department of Liquor Licenses and Control, students gain firsthand insights from experts into issues that matter to young people today.

The sessions cover important topics such as substance misuse, alcohol use, and teen pregnancy, equipping students with practical tools to make informed decisions and support others facing similar challenges. Additionally, participants earn certifications in CPR and Teen Mental Health First Aid, preparing them to respond to emergencies and recognize when someone may need support.

Another exciting aspect of the institute is career exploration. Students have the opportunity to shadow MCHC providers and staff, giving them a peek into various clinical, administrative, and supportive roles within the healthcare system. MCHC staff share their personal career journeys and provide valuable insights on education, job responsibilities, and potential career paths.

As part of their experience, students also take a field trip to the University of Arizona, organized by the College of Public Health. This visit helps them understand academic requirements, explore college programs, and consider their own career pathways after high school.

The Summer Youth Institute plays a crucial role in helping students build their résumés while also nurturing them to become community leaders. It inspires them to share accurate health information with their peers and to envision themselves as future healthcare professionals.

Every year, participants leave the program feeling more confident, with new skills and meaningful connections that will support their success in high school, college, and beyond. In the process, they not only grow personally but also contribute to building a healthier and more informed Santa Cruz County.



Follow us on YouTube for the latest community videos.



The Santa Cruz County Sheriff's Office wishes every student a great school year!



BACK
TO
SCHOOL



"The beautiful thing about learning is that no one can take it away from you."



Santa Cruz County Sheriff's Office
2170 N. Congress Dr.
Nogales, AZ 85621
520-761-7869



Sheriff's Round-Up



During the month of July, members of the Santa Cruz County Sheriff's Office proudly participated in several community events, including:

Rio Rico Freedom Fest

Nogales Fourth of July Parade

Patagonia Fourth of July Parade

Back to School Blitz

Nogales Unified School District Jump Back to School Event

Iglesia Del Nazareno Bible Camp

These events provided meaningful opportunities for our personnel to engage with residents, support local organizations, and strengthen relationships throughout the communities we proudly serve.

We sincerely thank the event organizers, volunteers, community partners, and everyone who welcomed our team. The Santa Cruz County Sheriff's Office remains committed to community engagement, public service, and building positive partnerships across Santa Cruz County.

Join Our Phenomenal Team

Those interested in a rewarding career in public service and law enforcement are encouraged to apply. We are currently accepting applications for the following positions:

Deputy Sheriff

Detention Officer

Dispatcher

Search & Rescue Volunteer

Law Enforcement Assist Team Volunteer



Your service can make a lasting impact on the safety and well-being of Santa Cruz County.

On behalf of the entire Sheriff's Office administration and myself, I extend my heartfelt appreciation to the members of our communities who support our mission and assist us in maintaining public safety each day.

Thank you for your continued partnership and trust.

Sincerely,

Sheriff David Hathaway

Santa Cruz County Sheriff's Office



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A Message from the
Santa Cruz County Attorney

"Education is the passport to the future."

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