



5

Santa Cruz County Leaders in Training  
Summer Internship Program



## CONNECTING SOUTHERN ARIZONA



Roxanna Cota



Angeles Bonillas



Gynna Rosas



Cecilia Gonzalez



Ximena Ramos



Anna Coleman



Mia Arochi



Andrea Niebla



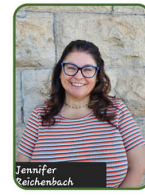
David Jordan



Gilberto Escobar



Mary Taft



Jennifer Reichenbach



Vivian Perez



Sylvia Castillo



Anabel Aguilar



Minerva Martinez



Norma Oros



Journee Hayes



Melissa Graciamonte



Giovanni Lopez



Rosa Pina

## 6 Teacher of the Year Nominees 2025 Healthy Vision Month Awareness



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Rio Rico Library: More Than Books  
A Growing Community Connection Hub



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SCV35 Summer Oasis of Safety,  
Learning, and Fun



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Sheriff's July Round-Up



# **A Message from the Santa Cruz County School Superintendent**

**“A good teacher can inspire hope, ignite the imagination, and instill a love of learning.”**

# *Congratulations* **2025** *Nominees*

A. J. Mitchell Elementary	Vivian Perez
Calabasas School	Anabel Aguilar
Challenger Elementary	Ximena Ramos
Coatimundi Middle School	Mary Taft
Desert Shadows Middle School	Gynna Rosas
Elgin Elementary	Anna Schorr Coleman
Fco Coronado Elementary	Cecilia Gonzalez
Lincoln Elementary	Minerva Martinez
Little Red Elementary	Douglas Muri
Lourdes Catholic High School	Roxanna Cota
Mary L. Welty Elementary	Angeles Bonillas
Mexicayotl Academy	Sylvia Castillo
Nogales High School	Giovanni Lopez
Patagonia Elementary	Mia Arochi
Patagonia High School	Journee Hayes
Pierson High School	Gilbert Escobar
Pinnacle Charter High School	Norma Oros
Rio Rico High School	David T. Jordan
Robert Bracker Elementary	Rosa Piña
San Cayetano Elementary	Andrea Niebla
Wade Carpenter Middle School	Melissa Bracamonte



**Alfredo I. Velásquez**  
**Santa Cruz County School Superintendent**  
**&**  
**Staff**

21 E. Court St  
Nogales, AZ 85621  
Phone: 520.375.7940



# Border Eco Updates

Thank you to our readers and supporters for your continued loyalty. Your support enables us to share stories of the people, events, and organizations making a positive impact in our community.

Our goal is to connect and support the Santa Cruz County community. As a unique border town rich in culture and traditions, we want to highlight the people, events, and organizations that make a difference.

Share your upcoming community events, meetings, and conferences with us! Stay up-to-date with the latest news and stories by following us on Facebook, YouTube, and Instagram.

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

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Date of Birth:

These ID options will only work if you provided one of them when you registered to vote. If entering a Tribal ID Number, please don't use special characters, spaces, or dashes.

Identification  
Method

Identification #

## **July 15, 2025 - Special Primary Election: Congressional District 7**

### **Important Dates for Early Voting:**

Last day to request a mail ballot: July 7, 2025

Recommended deadline to mail back your ballot: July 8, 2025

Last day to vote early in person: July 11, 2025

Election Day (Vote in person or drop off your early ballot): July 15, 2025

**Check or Track the Status of your Early Ballot <https://my.arizona.vote>**

Register to Vote at: <https://azmvdnow.gov>

Check your registration status at: <https://my.arizona.vote>

Santa Cruz County Voter Information: <https://www.santacruzcountyaz.gov/986/Voter-Information>

AZ Clean Elections Information: <https://www.azcleelections.gov/>



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**Santa Cruz County Recorder**  
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Nogales, Arizona 85621  
Phone: (520) 375-7990

**<https://www.santacruzcountyaz.gov/287/Recorder>**



# Santa Cruz County Leaders in Training Summer Internship Program

This summer, 30 high school juniors, seniors, and first-year college students are stepping into public service through the county-wide SCC Leaders in Training Summer Internship Program. Hosted by Santa Cruz County and the Santa Cruz County School Superintendent's Office (C-CREO GEAR UP Program), the program offers a unique opportunity for students to gain hands-on experience in local government while building essential career skills.

"The goal is to give our students a real-world look at how local government functions, while helping them build the soft skills they'll need no matter where their future takes them," said Maya Donnelly, the School's Chief Deputy. "They're not just observing, they're contributing, problem-solving, and getting to know the professionals who serve our community."

Interns are placed in county departments where they learn about governmental duties, internal policies, and daily operations. The program also includes weekly career and workforce readiness workshops designed to equip students with essential professional skills. Topics include professional writing, communication strategies, networking, understanding team roles, and workplace professionalism.

This year's cohort is also collaborating with the County Communications Manager, Shannon Hall, to develop a county-wide anti-litter campaign. Students are creating messages and materials to raise awareness about the impact of littering and encourage cleaner public spaces, with plans to share the campaign with local businesses.

The Leaders in Training program reflects the county's commitment to youth development, civic engagement, and workforce preparation. "This program has been a passion of mine for many years and I thank the county manager, Jesus Valdez, and the Board of Supervisors for supporting this initiative through our office that will provide many students with a foundation in workforce development skills," said Alfredo I Velásquez, Santa Cruz County School Superintendent.

"I'm learning a lot here in the office (Health Services) and in the workshops as well. The workshops are fun and the skills we are learning are things I can use outside of work in my day-to-day life." -Aylen Lopez, intern.

For more information about the Leaders in Training Internship Program, contact the Santa Cruz County School Superintendent's Office at (520)375-7960.



# Teacher of the Year 2025 Nominees

Dear County Residents,

It is the honor of the Santa Cruz County School Superintendent Alfredo I. Velasquez, South 32, Santa Cruz Community Foundation and the Nogales Rotary Club to introduce the 2025 Santa Cruz County Teacher of the Year Nominees.

Now more than ever, we are grateful for the dedicated educators we have here within our community. It is said that education is the passport to our future, for tomorrow belongs to the people who plan for it today. The tireless nominees for this year's Teacher of the Year Award in Santa Cruz County exemplify the meaning of dedication.

Teachers from each of the represented schools have selected the nineteen nominees. Subsequently, a selection committee of five volunteers, who come from different areas of Santa Cruz County, interviewed all the nominees and amongst them selected the 2025 Santa Cruz County Teacher of the Year. Certainly, this was a long and difficult undertaking for the committee and we thank them for dedicating an entire day of their time to take on this immense responsibility. The winner will be announced on August 8, 2025 during the awards dinner that is planned for them.

To the twenty-two nominees, thank you for your devotion and concern for the education of the children of Santa Cruz County and congratulations from all of us.

Sincerely,  
Santa Cruz County  
School Superintendent  
Alfredo I. Velasquez



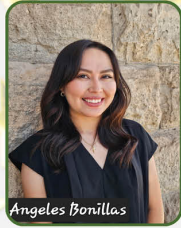
## CONGRATULATIONS!



# Teacher of the Year 2025 Nominees



Roxanna Cota



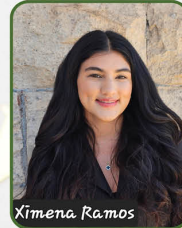
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Anabel Aguilar



Winerva Martinez



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Journee Hayes



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Mia Arochi



Melissa Tracamonte



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Rosa Pina



## CONGRATULATIONS!





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**4th of July**

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# Rio Rico Library: More Than Books

## A Growing Community Connection Hub

The Rio Rico Library is quietly transforming into a vibrant community hub, offering more than just books in the heart of Santa Cruz County. The library is reinventing what it means to serve its patrons with Tai Chi, art classes, and an active book club, inviting everyone to take part in its programs.

### A Library for the Modern Community

Libraries are no longer just quiet spaces for reading. Today's Rio Rico Library is a dynamic resource for all ages, adapting to the needs of its community.

"We're not just about books anymore," says Rio Rico Librarian, Alberto Encinas who has a background in marketing. "We're here to help with whatever the community needs, whether it's learning new skills, finding resources, or simply connecting with others."

### Current Programs to Explore:

Tai Chi: A hit among adults, these classes promote wellness and relaxation.

Art Classes: Unleash your creativity with hands-on workshops.

Storytime: A favorite for young children, fostering early literacy and fun.

Book and Movie Clubs: Meet fellow book lovers on the first Saturday of each month.

### Overcoming Challenges, Embracing Growth

As Rio Rico's population grows, so does the demand for library services. One of the biggest challenges? Keeping up with book requests and the community's desire for digital resources like Libby or Overdrive for e-books.

"We hear our patrons loud and clear," Alberto admits. "While we don't have e-books yet, we're working on it. In the meantime, we're expanding our arts programs and looking for more ways to collaborate with local schools and organizations."

### How You Can Get Involved

The library thrives on community input and participation. Here's how you can help shape its future:

Attend a Program: Try Tai Chi, join the book club, or bring your kids to Storytime.

Speak Up: Share your ideas at monthly public board meetings.

Volunteer or Donate: Support the library's mission to serve everyone.

### A Vision for the Future

Rio Rico Library promises to become an even bigger hub 10 years from now, a place where people gather not only to read, but also to learn, create, and connect.

"Libraries are reflections of their communities," says Alberto. "The more you participate, the more we can grow together."

### Don't Miss Out!

Location: Rio Rico Library

Hours: Monday–Thursday 9 AM–5 PM, Friday 9 AM–4 PM

Contact: Visit in person or check the City of Nogales website for digital resources.

Your library is waiting. Come see what's new!

Follow us on Facebook at:  
Bordere Echo





## International Taekwondo Academy: Empowering Individuals through Martial Arts

Border Eco magazine is excited to feature International Taekwondo Academy, a renowned institution in Santa Cruz County dedicated to teaching discipline, respect, and self-defense. Founded by seasoned instructor Rodrigo Valenzuela, the academy has been serving the community for over 10 years. Rodrigo's passion for martial arts began at 14, and he's been teaching since 1994. His journey took him from Nogales, Sonora, to Nogales, Arizona, where he met his wife in 2000.

The academy initially opened in Rio Rico in 2008 but relocated to Nogales in July 2021 after a brief closure due to the pandemic. With the help of former student Nico Panousopoulos, the academy found a new home next to Fitness Express. Rodrigo's dedication to teaching extends beyond physical techniques, focusing on developing students' mental and emotional well-being. He believes that Taekwondo is a way of life that can help individuals grow both physically and mentally.

Taekwondo offers numerous benefits for individuals, particularly those struggling with self-esteem issues. The belt system provides a structured framework for progression, from 10th gup (white belt) to 1st gup (brown belt), 1st dan to 3rd dan (black belt), and 4th dan and above. Through Taekwondo training, individuals can develop discipline, focus, and self-control, build confidence and self-esteem, enhance physical fitness and coordination, learn valuable life skills, and cultivate respect, self-awareness, and emotional regulation.

As individuals progress, they experience significant improvements in their overall well-being, including increased confidence and self-assurance, improved mental health and emotional stability, enhanced physical fitness and coordination, and a greater sense of purpose and direction. According to Rodrigo, "By practicing Taekwondo, individuals can develop a strong foundation for personal growth, leading to improved self-esteem, increased confidence, and a more positive outlook on life."

Rodrigo's family, including his wife Ana and their three sons, Rodrigo Jr. (20), Carlos (15), and Angel (13), is a testament to the positive impact of Taekwondo. With a strong support system, Rodrigo continues to inspire and guide his students on their own journeys.

For more information or to register, contact Rodrigo Valenzuela at [rioricotkd@yahoo.com](mailto:rioricotkd@yahoo.com), 2031 N Grand Ave, Nogales, AZ 85621, or (520) 841-2295. Join the International

Taekwondo Academy community and embark on a journey of personal growth, discipline, and self-discovery. Students will develop strength, flexibility, and confidence while mastering the art of Taekwondo. Rodrigo

provides a supportive environment for all skill levels, fostering both physical and mental growth. Join the academy today to experience the transformative power of martial arts.





## Santa Cruz Valley Aquatic Center: A Summer Oasis of Safety, Learning, and Fun

As the summer sun beats down on Santa Cruz Valley, the Unified School District No. 35 Aquatic Center has become a bustling hub of activity, laughter, and life-saving skills. With a dedicated team of 28 lifeguards working tirelessly to ensure safety and cleanliness, the center offers a welcoming space for families to cool off, learn, and relax.

"Water safety is so important, especially here in Arizona," said Audra Billow, Communication and Outreach Specialist for Santa Cruz Valley Unified School District No. 35.

The center's summer schedule, running from June 2 to July 26, caters to all ages and skill levels. Children's swimming lessons are held weekday mornings from 9:00 AM to 12:00 PM, while public open swim and lap swimming hours provide ample opportunities for recreation in the afternoons and evenings. For early risers, adult-only lap swimming is available from 6:30 AM to 8:30 AM on select days.

Behind the scenes, a team of 28 lifeguards works diligently to maintain a safe environment. Their efforts include constant vigilance, routine safety checks, and ensuring the facility remains clean and welcoming.

"As a former lead lifeguard, I know how demanding this job can be," says Audra, overseeing the Aquatic Center's operations. "But seeing kids learn to swim and families enjoying their time here makes it all worthwhile. Our lifeguards are the backbone of this community resource."

### How to Get Involved

The Aquatic Center is more than just a pool; it's a place where memories are made and skills are learned for life. Community members can sign up for an E-Pass or purchase a Day Pass. **For questions, contact Audra Billow at [bilowosc35.org](mailto:bilowosc35.org) or (520) 375-8292.**

### A Call to Action

With summer in full swing, now is the perfect time to dive in. Whether it's enrolling your child in swimming lessons, enjoying a family swim, or getting in a morning workout, the Santa Cruz Valley Aquatic Center has something for everyone.

As the lifeguards often say, "We're here to keep you safe so you can focus on having fun."

Don't miss out on this community gem. The water's fine!

*Rio Rico Insights*







# LET'S TALK HEALTH

## Eating Healthy while traveling

Summer is here and many of us plan road trips during the summer. Here are some tips to consider when on the road:

1. Planning...Planning...Planning: Research the food options available along the way and at your destination and plan your meals accordingly. This can help you make healthier choices.
2. Hydrate: Traveling by car or plane you find yourself sitting most of the time and that makes it more challenging to steadily drink water. Pack several reusable water bottles to fill with water and regularly drink from during travels. Fruits are hydrating and give energy and provide antioxidants and nutrients. Consider packing a few food storage containers with a variety of ready-to-eat fruit, like berries or mandarins, for a healthy and hydrating snack.
3. Don't skip meals: Skipping meals can lead to overeating later. Even if you are on the go, try to eat at regular intervals to keep your energy levels stable.
4. Lighten Up Fast Food: Fast food restaurants are convenient, but the healthy choices are very limited. Try to choose grilled meats instead of fried, add extra vegetables, have a salad (hold the dressing and cheese). Have mustard instead of Mayo with your sandwich.
5. Find a local Grocery store: Try to stop at a grocery store for a meal rather than fast food place. Grocery stores offer many healthy options.
6. Pack your own food: Try making your favorite sandwiches for the trip. If travelling by car take a break and find a park to have a picnic.
7. Pack your own Snacks: Pack a variety of nuts, jerky, popcorn, fruits, string cheese, apple sauce no added sugar and cut up veggies.
8. Watch portion sizes: Restaurants often serve large portions, so try sharing a dish, ordering an appetizer, or taking half of your meal to go.
9. Practice moderation: You don't have to deprive yourself of treats or indulge excessively. Enjoy your favorite foods in moderation and balance them with healthier options.
10. Add Physical Movement to Travel Plans: Whether this means planned stops along a road trip or pacing up and down the airplane aisle or while waiting for your flight, try to move the legs and stretch at least a few times each trip.
11. Bring some fun games to play with your family. Enjoy your summer trips.

@simplenutritionalsolutionsforyou, @Nationalfoundationforcancerresearch







**The Santa Cruz County Sheriff's Office wishes everyone**

**HAPPY**  
**4<sup>th</sup> of**  
**July**



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







# Sheriff's Round-Up



Throughout the past month, members of the Santa Cruz County Sheriff's Office proudly participated in various community events, including:

- Unisource Family Day
- Grants training
- Emergency Medical Technician academy
- PISA Conference (Policia Internacional Sonora Arizona)
- MURPH workout, in honor of Lieutenant Michael Murphy who was killed in Afghanistan
- Active shooter preparedness training

HGN (DUI) training hosted by the Sheriff's Office which included other agencies  
Commander John Marquez was honored at JAILCON25 Western Regional Corrections Professionals Awards as the recipient of the Distinguished Service Award. This prestigious honor is a testament to his outstanding dedication, leadership, and contributions to the corrections profession.

## Join Our Team

If you're interested in a rewarding career in law enforcement, we are currently accepting applications for the following positions:

- Deputy Sheriff
- Detention Officer
- Dispatcher

We are also seeking Lateral Officers for both Peace Officer and Detention Officer roles.

Applications are available for download on the Santa Cruz County website and can be submitted to the Human Resources Office.

On behalf of myself and the entire administration, I extend a big "thank you" to the community which supports us in our public safety mission.

Sincerely,

Sheriff David Hathaway



Happy  
4<sup>th</sup> of July





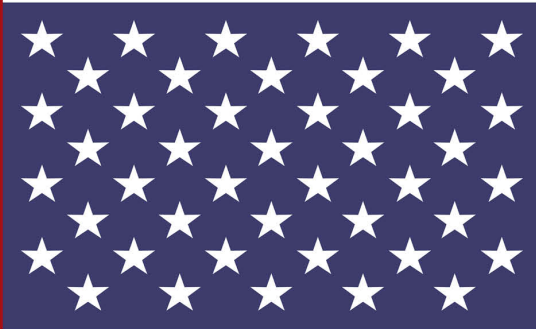
# A Message from the Santa Cruz County Attorney



*Celebrate Responsibly!*



4<sup>th</sup> of July



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