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## CONNECTING SOUTHERN ARIZONA



**7.** More Than a Food Box: How Nogales' Resource Project Turns Need Into Opportunity

250 Years of American Freedom!  
*Happy 4th of July*



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**EARLY VOTING  
2026 PRIMARY ELECTION  
JUNE 24TH-JULY 17TH  
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Last day to request a mail ballot	<b>July 10</b>
Deadline to mail back your ballot	<b>July 14</b>
Last day to vote early in person at 7 p.m.	<b>July 17</b>
<b>Election Day</b> (drop off your early ballot by 7:00 p.m.)	<b>July 21</b>

Independent voters can also vote by mail. However, in elections with partisan ballots, like the primary election, you will need to contact your county recorder to specify which party ballot you want mailed to you.

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Anita Moreno  
Santa Cruz County Recorder  
2150 N Congress Drive Suite 101  
Nogales, Arizona 85621  
Phone: (520) 375-7990

# Border Eco Updates

## 250 Years of American Freedom!

This July 4th, Santa Cruz County isn't just celebrating Independence Day; we're excited to mark a special milestone of 250 years of American freedom! It's a time to recognize the everyday heroes and visionaries who believed in the power of self-governance, captured in the phrase "We the People." In our border communities like Nogales, Patagonia, Sonoita, Elgin, Tubac, Amado, Tumacacori, and Rio Rico, we're actively living out this democratic dream every day in our schools, businesses, and neighborhoods, where our diverse cultures and histories come together.

Honoring this legacy is something we do every day, especially through civic engagement. Taking part in elections is more important than ever to honor what our country stands for. Local elections directly affect key services in our community, such as our school boards, fire departments, and water resources, while national elections shape the future our kids will face.

If you're 18 and a U.S. citizen, don't forget to either register to vote or update your registration at ServiceArizona.com. If you've moved recently, take a moment to update that it's super important! And if you know someone who's a first-time voter, help them get started on this exciting journey.

Democracy works best when we all pitch in! This Fourth of July, why not join the celebration by checking out the parade in Nogales, enjoying fireworks in Patagonia, Rio Rico, or Tubac, and spending time with your neighbors? Dive into conversations about what freedom means with veterans or elders, invite a teenager to a civic event, and don't forget to make a plan to vote. **Remember, the strength of our democratic values over the past 250 years isn't just luck; it's fueled by the commitment of all of us in Santa Cruz County to uphold and cherish the values of freedom.**

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

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**Chief Editor: Adriana Romero**  
**Student Intern Reporter: Nadia Sandoval**  
**Student Intern Reporter: Chris Alcaraz**  
**Graphic Designer Consultant: Erika Ruiz**  
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Celebrating 250 Years of American History, Learning, and Civic Engagement

4th  
of  
July



*"The future belongs to those who believe in the beauty of their dreams." --*

*Eleanor Roosevelt*

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# The People's Judge: Adriana Olaiz's Commitment to Santa Cruz County



For Santa Cruz County Justice of the Peace Adriana Olaiz, public service has never been about titles or recognition. It has always been about people. As she seeks re-election, Olaiz reflects on a journey rooted in service, compassion, and a deep commitment to ensuring every person who enters her courtroom feels heard, respected, and treated fairly.

Born in Nogales, Sonora, and raised in Santa Cruz County, Olaiz's connection to the community runs deep. It is the place she proudly calls home, where she built her career, raised her family, and developed a lifelong passion for serving others. **"I genuinely love this community and feel grateful for the opportunities it has given me,"** Olaiz said. **"Being able to give back through public service and help the people of Santa Cruz County is both an honor and a responsibility that I do not take for granted."**

Before taking the bench, Olaiz spent years working within the judicial system as a certified court interpreter after completing her certification through the University of Arizona. Beginning in 2019, she worked daily in Superior Court, Justice Court, and Juvenile Court, witnessing firsthand how the legal system impacts the lives of individuals and families. **"That experience inspired me to pursue this role because I saw how important it is for every person who enters a courtroom to feel heard, respected, and treated fairly,"** she explained. **"The beauty of the Justice Court is that it reflects the human side of the law."**

Since becoming Justice of the Peace, Olaiz has focused on making the court more accessible and responsive to the community's needs. One of her proudest accomplishments has been securing funding to sustain the Recovery Court program, which helps individuals address substance abuse and mental health challenges while remaining accountable for their actions. She has also submitted a grant application that, if approved, would secure funding for the program for an additional five years.

Recognizing transportation as a major barrier for many residents, the grant proposal includes funding to help participants access counseling services, treatment programs, and court appearances. **"We want people to be successful,"** Olaiz said. **"Our goal is not only to resolve cases but to help people move forward successfully."**

Another milestone has been the launch of JP-East, an initiative designed to bring Justice Court services closer to residents in Sonoita, Patagonia, Elgin, and Canelo. **"I firmly believe trust is built through transparency, accessibility, and respect,"** Olaiz said. **"We have simplified forms and processes where possible, expanded services through JP-East, and strengthened partnerships with community organizations."**

For Olaiz, leadership extends beyond the courtroom. She regularly participates in school, leadership, and community events, believing the courts should never feel distant from the people they serve. One of the most meaningful moments of her judicial career occurred during a Career Day event at an elementary school in Rio Rico. After leading an interactive activity about the role of a judge the previous year, she returned to find a young girl dressed as a judge, inspired by the experience.

**"This has been one of the most heartfelt moments of my career as JP,"** she said. **The experience reinforced another message she feels strongly about: the importance of representation. "When young women see someone who looks like them in leadership roles, it encourages them to believe those opportunities are within their reach,"** Olaiz said. **"I believe our communities become stronger when talented women bring their perspectives, experiences, and leadership to the courts and public service."**

Her commitment to service was shaped by the values instilled by her parents. **"My parents have been among my greatest inspirations,"** she said. **"They taught me the values of hard work, humility, integrity, and service to others."** Those values continue to guide her approach on the bench today.

**"One of the most important qualities a judge can have is the ability to listen,"** Olaiz said. **"Every person who comes before the court deserves to feel heard."** As she looks toward the future, Olaiz hopes to continue expanding access to justice, strengthening community partnerships, and developing new initiatives that help residents better understand their rights and navigate the legal system.

Despite her accomplishments, she remains grounded in the same values that brought her to public service. **"What you see is pretty much what you get,"** she said with a smile. **"Whether I'm wearing a judicial robe or jeans and a T-shirt, I'm still Adriana, someone who cares deeply about people and feels grateful to serve the community that has given me so much."**

In a profession often defined by legal procedures and courtrooms, Adriana Olaiz reminds us that justice is ultimately about people. Through compassion, integrity, and a commitment to service, she continues working to ensure that every resident who walks through the courtroom doors is treated with dignity, fairness, and respect.



# Feeding Southern Arizona with Dignity: Santa Cruz County's Monica Gonzalez

Monica Gonzalez leads the Community Food Bank of Southern Arizona's Gabrielle Giffords Resource Center. She has over ten years of experience and understands the needs of Santa Cruz County.

As the Director of Resource Centers, she oversees operations in Nogales, Amado, Green Valley, and the Tucson area. Her promotion highlights that someone from our community is making a significant impact in the fight against hunger.

"My job is to support and improve operations across our locations," Gonzalez said. "I focus on optimizing food distributions, building community partnerships, and making sure our neighbors can easily access supportive services."

Gonzalez has a deep connection to Santa Cruz County. Although she grew up in California's Central Valley, her family relocated to Rio Rico in June 1996. "My parents worked hard in the fields to support us," she said. "Witnessing the challenges of food insecurity has helped me understand the struggles that families face."

This understanding motivated her. In May 2016, she decided to take a chance and joined the Community Food Bank as a Client Service Assistant. "Working on the front lines provided me with valuable experience and insights that continue to inform my work today," she said. "Ten years later, I am just as inspired by our mission as I was on my first day."

Working at the front desk allowed her to learn and grow. "It gave me a sense of purpose. Managing volunteers and coordinating sites taught me about logistics and community engagement. My experience helps me connect with both neighbors and staff."

Gonzalez's experience managing operations in Nogales, Amado, and Green Valley provided her with a strong foundation. Each center taught her how to identify community needs and adapt food distribution models accordingly. Now, as the overseer of the GGRC, she can apply these skills to the larger and more diverse Tucson area, aiming to ensure a seamless experience for everyone.

Gonzalez believes that nonprofit work is about seeing the immediate effects of help. "You can see how a family's burden is lifted," she said. "Watching someone take home fresh tomatoes from their roots is deeply moving. Seeing families smile as they receive fresh fruits and vegetables honors my family's agricultural background and emphasizes that hunger relief is about more than just food; it's about connection, comfort, and dignity."

She acknowledges the challenges that families face today. "Many struggle with finances. When jobs are unstable, or prices rise, fresh, healthy food is often the first thing to go because cheaper processed foods are more accessible. This impacts community health." The Food Bank emphasizes the values of dignity, respect, and outreach. "We want families to know that when they seek help, they are receiving more than just groceries; they're joining a supportive network of resources."

When asked about her proudest achievement, Gonzalez highlights her team. "My proudest accomplishment is the strong team we've built across our centers. Our staff works together like a family." This family excels at "food rescue and service continuity." "Witnessing our team adapt during changes while keeping our rescue operations running smoothly is inspiring. I'm proud to lead a team that creates welcoming spaces where people feel valued."

For those interested in a career in hunger relief, Gonzalez emphasizes the importance of having both passion and flexibility. "Begin by truly understanding the mission and recognizing the immediate impact of the work," she advises. She also points out the crucial role that volunteers play in this field, stating, "You quickly realize that they are essential to our efforts."

# 4TH OF JULY



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# More Than a Food Box: How Nogales' Resource Project Turns Need Into Opportunity

In Nogales, the Community Food Bank of Southern Arizona's Resource Project is opening doors for families in Santa Cruz County. Led by Monica Gonzalez, Director of Resource Centers, and Santos Yescas, Resource Center Manager, the Nogales center serves as both a lifeline and a launchpad. "The Resource Project was established based on the needs expressed by our community," said Gonzalez. "Many families required more than food assistance; they needed access to additional services and opportunities in a safe, welcoming environment."

Fighting hunger remains central to their mission. The Emergency Food Assistance Program delivers food boxes to families in crisis, and the Commodity Senior Food Program supports 1,398 low-income adults aged 60 and older with monthly packages. Now, the organization prioritizes connecting neighbors with resources that promote overall well-being and self-sufficiency, assisting about 2,900 households, or over 10,000 residents, each month.

During Cafecito Comunitario, a monthly community gathering, the center transforms into a lively space where local agencies provide information and access to services. Participants benefit from hands-on workshops in sewing, knitting, and business planning, which not only teach practical skills but also help cultivate economic self-sufficiency. Recently, participants sold their handmade items, generating over \$300 and recognizing the potential for small-business opportunities.

The Resource Project focuses on Santa Cruz County residents facing food insecurity, prioritizing low-income households, SNAP recipients, and seniors. "Community participation is essential to our work," Yescas noted, as they regularly gather feedback to ensure their programs meet emerging needs. As demand for services rises amid economic challenges, the organization has expanded food orders and strengthened partnerships to sustain supply. Collaboration, such as with Mariposa Community Health Center, enhances their services through healthy cooking demonstrations. By addressing systemic barriers to healthcare, jobs, and transportation, the Resource Project aims to connect neighbors to necessary resources and advocate for collaborative solutions.

The center offers Community Workshops in sewing, knitting, food dehydration, arts and crafts, and business planning. "These programs help participants gain skills, grow personally, and move towards financial independence," said Yescas. Recently, at the End-of-Workshops Showcase during Cafecito Comunitario, participants sold their creations and earned over \$300, realizing they could turn their skills into small businesses. The team then held a business planning workshop to help them advance.

The Resource Project focuses on the needs of local residents facing food insecurity, such as low-income households, SNAP recipients, seniors, and families in crisis. "Our resource decisions come from community assessments and participant feedback," said Gonzalez. "Community input is vital," Yescas added. "We gather feedback and have conversations about local challenges, shaping our programs to meet community needs."

Demand for food assistance is rising. "More first-time participants are signing up, and former ones are returning due to economic difficulties," said Gonzalez. In response, we order more food, strengthen partnerships, and organize community food drives.

Collaboration is key. With Mariposa Community Health Center, "they show healthy cooking demos during Cafecito Comunitario events, using the fresh produce we distribute," Yescas said. This helps neighbors prepare nutritious meals and reduces food waste.

We address barriers like limited access to healthcare and jobs. "We connect community members to resources and advocate for solutions to improve access," said Gonzalez. The organization is committed to equity and inclusion, actively seeking input from marginalized groups to ensure programs are accessible and respectful.

The goals for the next five years are ambitious. "We want to make our Resource Center larger and more effective by increasing food storage and distribution, expanding educational programs, and strengthening local partnerships," said Gonzalez. "Our aim is to wisely use resources, create more opportunities, and meet the changing needs of Santa Cruz County residents." The vision extends beyond food distribution. "We see the food bank as a leader in promoting giving and reducing food waste," she added. "By collaborating with nonprofits, businesses, and government, we can make a greater impact and address food insecurity together."

For other nonprofits, Gonzalez advises: "Understand your community and its needs. Effective programs listen and engage meaningfully. Collaborating with others can increase resources and reach."

This year, the Nogales Resource Project hosted 11 events and more than 48 workshops for 75 participants, showing that addressing hunger also involves dignity, skills, and community support.

For Santa Cruz County residents, the benefits are clear: a stronger safety net, healthier families, and new chances to improve their lives. Here, a bag of groceries is just the beginning.



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*4th  
OF  
July*



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**ELECTRONIC RESOURCE GUIDE**



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# Summer Programs 2026



Santa Cruz County School Superintendent Maya Donnelly has once again raised the bar by offering more than 30 free summer camps for students across the county.

“Summertime is a time for opportunity for young people to learn, grow, and explore. By providing high-quality summer programs, students experience meaningful learning,” said Superintendent Donnelly. “Summer programs are about more than maintaining academic skills; they provide opportunities for students to grow, explore new interests, build confidence, and create memorable connections.”

The Santa Cruz County School Superintendent’s Office, in partnership with South 32, Santa Cruz County Provisional College, AzCyber Initiative, El Rio Health, and Mariposa Community Health, has launched an expansive, entirely free summer camp program for K-12 students. The camps aim to combat “summer slide,” provide safe, enriching childcare, and give local youth opportunities to explore STEM, the arts, and to stay active without financial burden.

## Program Highlights:

Kinder Readiness (Pre-K)

Wonder Explore Create (K-3)

ROBO-Ed Programs: RoboKids (K-2nd), Coding Story (3rd – 5th), and RoboMaster (6th-8th)

SK8 Camp: (3rd – 5th) and (6th – 8th)

Fire Safety Camps: Nogales Fire, Rio Rico Fire, Sonoita Fire, and Tubac Fire (3rd – 12th)

4-H Livestock Level Up Day Camp (3rd – 12th)

Draw Anything (6th – 8th)

Drone Camp (9th – 12th)

Murals on Morley (9th – 12th)

Youth Empowerment Program (K – 12th)

Writer’s Institute (6th – 12th)

Healthcare Career Camp (9th – 12th)

AzCyber Bootcamp (Beginning) (9th – 12th)



There are a few spots left in these remaining camps.

The Art of Storytelling (4th – 5th) July 6th – July 17th

Adulting 101 (9th – 12th) July 20th – 23rd

AzCyber Bootcamp Intermediate (9th – 12th) July 13th – July 17th

Southern AZ Film Fest (10th – 1st year college) June 29th – July 15th

**To support working families, Sodexo and Southwest Foodservice Excellence provides free breakfast and lunch daily at all campsite locations. Thank you to our food service partners for delivering nourishment to all our campers!**

**To review the full catalog of camps or for contact information, please scan the QR code.**



# Rio Rico Insights

## SCV35 Aquatic Center Kicks Off a Successful Summer Season By Audra Billow

The SCV35 Aquatic Center is back in full swing for the summer, providing opportunities for children, teens, and adults to stay active, build confidence, and enjoy the water in a safe and welcoming environment.

Summer swim lessons are off to a fantastic start, with participants ages 5 to 16 making impressive progress both in and out of the water.

Swimmers are learning important water safety skills, improving their swimming techniques, and gaining confidence with each lesson.

In addition to swim lessons, the SCV35 Aquatic Center is open to the public for recreational swimming during Open Swim hours and offers early morning Adult Lap Swim sessions for community members looking to stay active and fit throughout the summer.

The success of the Aquatic Center is made possible by its dedicated team of lifeguards and instructors, many of whom are current Rio Rico High School students and SCV35 alumni. Their commitment to serving the community helps create a positive and supportive experience for every visitor.

"We are incredibly proud of the growth we've already seen from our swimmers this summer," said Audra Bilow, SCV35 Aquatic Center Supervisor. "Our lessons serve participants ages 5 to 16, and it has been exciting to watch them develop new skills and gain confidence in the water. We are also happy to provide opportunities for the entire community through Open Swim and Adult Lap Swim. It's especially rewarding to see our Rio Rico High School students and alumni giving back to the community as lifeguards and instructors. They help create a positive environment where everyone can learn, stay active, and enjoy the pool."

As the summer continues, the SCV35 Aquatic Center looks forward to providing more opportunities for learning, recreation, fitness, and community engagement. The district thanks all of the families and community members who have participated in Aquatic Center programs and supported water safety throughout the community



**Adriana**  
**Olaiz**

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# NOGALES POLICE

## Beyond the Badge- NPD Officers Strengthen Community Connections

The Nogales Police Department continues to demonstrate its commitment to public service, community engagement, and youth outreach through a series of recent events that highlight the department's dedication both on and off duty.

Among the month's highlights was the recognition of Detective A. Soto as the Nogales Police Department's Officer of the Month. Detective Soto was honored for her professionalism, leadership, and unwavering commitment to serving the community. Fellow Criminal Investigations Division (CID) detectives gathered to celebrate her achievement and acknowledge the positive impact she continues to make within the department.

Detective Soto's recognition was earned through her outstanding efforts during Police Week and her initiative in organizing and recruiting officers for a law enforcement basketball tournament. Her leadership and enthusiasm helped strengthen teamwork within the department while also fostering positive community engagement.

The department's commitment to youth outreach was also on display during Career Day at San Cayetano School. Corporal M. Duran, Parking Control Officer A. Garcia, and K-9 Officer A. Castillo spoke with students about careers in law enforcement and the many opportunities available in the profession. Students were able to ask questions, learn about the responsibilities of police officers, and gain valuable insight into the various roles that help keep the community safe.

Building positive relationships with local youth remains a priority for the Nogales Police Department. During a recent "Pizza with a Cop" event at SonShine School, Sgt. R. Lechuga met with students in a relaxed and welcoming environment. The gathering provided an opportunity for meaningful conversations between officers and students, helping to build trust, strengthen relationships, and foster open communication between law enforcement and the next generation of community leaders. Events such as these reflect the growing importance of relationship-based policing and positive community engagement.

The department also received support and appreciation from local businesses during Police Week. Walmart staff generously provided sandwiches, chips, and refreshments for officers as a token of gratitude for their service. The Nogales Police Department expressed sincere appreciation for the community partnerships that continue to strengthen the relationship between local businesses and law enforcement.

In addition to community outreach efforts, officers remained committed to public safety. Officer J. Pimienta, K-9 Officer I. Camerlin, and Detective A. Soto provided security during the Nogales High School graduation ceremony, helping ensure a safe and memorable celebration for graduates, families, and school staff. Their presence allowed the event to proceed smoothly while providing peace of mind to attendees.

From recognizing outstanding officers and engaging with local students to maintaining public safety and strengthening community partnerships, the Nogales Police Department continues to exemplify its mission of service, professionalism, and dedication to the community it proudly serves.



# LET'S TALK HEALTH

## Hydrate! How Much Water Do You Really Need?

A lot of people ask: "Do I need to drink 8 cups of water per day?"

The answer may surprise you!

### The Truth About Hydration:

- There's **no one-size-fits-all** answer. Fluid needs vary from person to person.
- Most people need about **4–6 cups of plain water daily**, but this depends on:
  - Other beverages you drink
  - Water from foods (like fruits and vegetables)
- **Water is not your only option!** Milk, tea, coffee, and other beverages also count toward hydration.

### What Affects Your Water Needs?

- Physical activity level
- Weather (hot or dry climates)
- Health conditions
- Medications

### Myth Buster:

Caffeine and alcohol do NOT "dehydrate" you completely.

While they may increase urination, they still provide a net gain in fluids over the day.

### Benefits of Staying Hydrated:

#### Water helps your body:

- Function properly
- Carry nutrients and oxygen to cells
- Flush bacteria from the bladder
- Aid digestion and prevent constipation
- Maintain healthy blood pressure
- Cushion joints
- Protect organs and tissues
- Regulate body temperature
- Maintain electrolyte balance



## Signs of Dehydration

Watch for:

- Dark yellow urine
- Weakness
- Dizziness
- Low blood pressure
- Confusion



## Simple Tips to Stay Hydrated

- Drink fluids throughout the day, not all at once
- Have a drink with each meal
- Drink water when taking medications
- Stay hydrated during social activities

Source: Harvard Health Publishing

Badria Bedri, MS, Nutritionist

Mariposa Community Health Center

June 17, 2026



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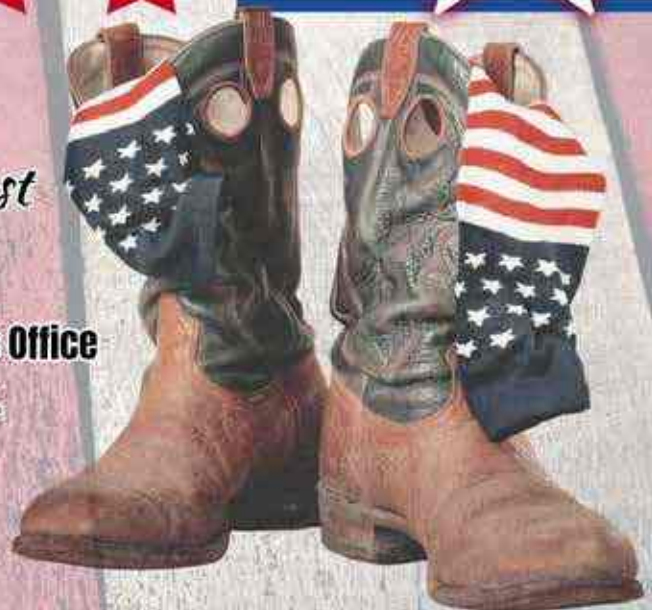


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**Santa Cruz County Sheriff's Office**  
2170 N. Congress Dr.  
Nogales, AZ 85621  
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# Sheriff's Round-Up



Members of the Santa Cruz County Sheriff's Office proudly participated in several community events and professional training opportunities, including:  
Unisource Family Safety Community Event

Local High School graduations and other school transition ceremonies

We are proud to announce the graduation of seven cadets from our Detention Officer Academy, who have now earned the title of Detention Officer. Over the course of a rigorous eight-week academy, these individuals demonstrated dedication, professionalism, and perseverance while preparing for the important responsibilities of serving the community and maintaining the safety and security of our detention facility.

With the support of our community partners and the guidance of our esteemed instructors, these newly appointed Detention Officers were challenged to excel and ultimately achieve success. Their accomplishments serve as a testament to their diligent efforts and commitment to public service.

We extend our sincere gratitude to the Sheriff's Office members, employees, and volunteers who dedicated their time, expertise, and support throughout the academy. Their commitment and professionalism were instrumental in the program's success and in preparing the next generation of detention professionals. Their service continues to make a positive impact on our organization and the community we proudly serve.

We would also like to acknowledge Detective Monreal and Deputy Castaneda for their successful completion of enhanced training in Pima County demonstrating their commitment to professional excellence and preparedness in serving our community.

## Join Our Exceptional Team

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

Deputy Sheriff

Detention Officer

Dispatcher

Search & Rescue Volunteer

Law Enforcement Asset Team Volunteer

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

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

*Celebrate Responsibly!*



*4<sup>th</sup> of July  
You Have the Power!*



2150 N Congress Dr,  
Nogales, AZ 85621  
(520) 375-7780