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

Congratulations
Spelling Bee Contestants



Alfredo I. Velásquez
Santa Cruz County
School Superintendent
&
Staff

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Nogales, AZ 85621
Phone: 520.375.7940



"Education must not simply teach work-it must teach life." W.E.B. Du Bois

Border Eco Updates

Tax Season is here

It's essential to thoroughly research and seek recommendations from trusted friends or family members before selecting a tax preparation service. Check online reviews and consult the Better Business Bureau to confirm the company's reputation. Keep in mind that sharing your personal financial information with an unreliable source can lead to serious consequences.

When it comes to something as critical as your taxes, it's not worth taking unnecessary risks. Prioritize security and trustworthiness, especially during tax season, to safeguard your financial information. Investing time to verify a business's credibility can help you avoid potential risks, scams, and costly mistakes. Ultimately, it's always better to err on the side of caution when protecting your sensitive data.

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- Billy, Environmental Technician



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The Legacy of Adolphus “Dolph” Samuel Noon: A True Renaissance Man

In the rich history of Nogales, Arizona, few individuals have left as indelible a mark as Adolphus “Dolph” Samuel Noon. Born in 1867 in Provo, Utah, Dolph's life was a testament to his incredible versatility, dedication, and civic pride. From mining to engineering, firefighting to community service, Dolph's story is one of a man who shaped the physical and spiritual landscape of his adopted hometown.

Dolph's journey began in the rugged Oro Blanco mining district of Southern Arizona, where he arrived as an 11-year-old boy with his parents. His father, Dr. Adolphus H. Noon, a British physician, owned the famed Austerlitz Mine, and young Dolph absorbed the intricacies of mining like a sponge. However, Dolph's ambitions extended far beyond the mines. As a young man, he shifted his focus to Nogales, where he established himself as a machinist, blacksmith, and eventually, a renowned building contractor and mechanical engineer.

Dolph's impact on Nogales' early 20th-century infrastructure is still visible today. He played a pivotal role in the construction of the 1914 Fire Department Building, also known as Old City Hall, and erected the iconic Noon Building on the corner of Elm Street and Grand Avenue. The International Gas Company Building on Grand Avenue, though now demolished, was another testament to his craftsmanship. Dolph's work extended beyond buildings; he installed the thousand-pound Seth Thomas bell in the clock tower of the new Fire Department Building in 1915, a symbol of his attention to detail and love for his community.

Dolph's contributions didn't stop at Nogales' borders. He built a 25-mile county road from Calabasas through Hell's Gate Pass to Ruby in 1917, a feat of engineering that connected remote areas to the bustling town. He also lent his skills to the restoration of the historic Tumacacori Mission in 1919 and served as the local building inspector during the construction of the Nogales High School Gymnasium in 1922. Even in his later years, Dolph's passion for building led him to work on the monumental Boulder Dam project on the Colorado River.

But Dolph was more than a builder; he was a firefighter at heart. A loyal member of the Nogales Volunteer Fire Department since 1907, he rose to become the Foreman of Papago Engine Company No. 1. His dedication to the department was unwavering, as evidenced by his meticulous annual reports. Dolph's commitment to firefighting was matched only by his love for his family. He married Anna Menzel of Kernville, California, in 1896, and together they raised three sons.

Dolph's life was not without its setbacks. In 1930, he ran for Santa Cruz County Sheriff as a Republican but lost to the popular Democrat Victor “Vic” J. Wager. Yet, Dolph remained a beloved figure in Nogales, often seen driving around town with his loyal white fox terrier by his side.

Today, Dolph rests in the Noon family plot in the Nogales Masonic Cemetery, surrounded by a hedge and shaded by trees. His legacy lives on in the buildings he constructed, the roads he paved, and the fires he fought. Adolphus “Dolph” Samuel Noon was a true Renaissance man—a master builder, engineer, firefighter, and pillar of his community. His story serves as a reminder of the power of dedication, hard work, and an unwavering love for one's hometown.





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2025

Spelling Bee



The 2025 Santa Cruz County Spelling Bee took center stage on the morning of February 7, 2025, at the Veterans of Foreign Wars. It brought together the county's brightest young spellers for a thrilling battle of words. The event, proudly sponsored by the Santa Cruz County School Superintendent Alfredo I. Velásquez, was a showcase of dedication, perseverance, and language proficiency.

The morning began with a warm welcome from Superintendent Velásquez, who emphasized the importance of literacy and academic excellence in the community. The attendees then rose for the Pledge of Allegiance, setting a solemn and patriotic tone for the competition. Following this, the Pronouncer, Mr. Larry Frederick from Montessori de Santa Cruz, took the stage to introduce the event and its participants.

The esteemed panel of judges for the 2025 Spelling Bee featured distinguished figures from the Santa Cruz community: Mr. John Fanning, Santa Cruz County District #3 Supervisor; Ms. Jovanna Lopez, State Farm Agent; and Ms. Sandra Moraga, South32 Hermosa Community Specialist. Their role was pivotal in ensuring a fair and rigorous competition.

After a reading of the official rules, participants engaged in a practice round to acclimate to the competition format. This warm-up proved invaluable, setting the stage for the intense and exhilarating rounds that followed.

As the Official Spelling Bee commenced, the young contestants showcased their spelling prowess, tackling increasingly complex words with confidence. Spectators held their breath as each student approached the microphone, with their families, teachers, and friends cheering them on from the audience.

After several rounds of fierce competition, the title of 2025 Santa Cruz County Spelling Bee Champion was awarded to Oskar Darius Miranda, a talented fifth grader from Fco. Vasquez de Coronado Elementary School. Oskar's exceptional poise and command of language secured his victory, earning him a well-deserved place in the upcoming Arizona State Spelling Bee.

The runner-up, Anna V. Valenzuela from A.J. Mitchell Elementary School, also demonstrated remarkable skill and determination, making it a closely contested finale. Both students received enthusiastic applause as they were honored for their achievements during the Awards Ceremony.

Looking ahead, Oskar Miranda will represent Santa Cruz County at the 2025 Arizona State Spelling Bee on March 15, where he will compete against top spellers from across the state. His victory marks not only a personal triumph but also a moment of pride for his school and community.

The event concluded with a reception, allowing contestants, families, and supporters to celebrate the success of all participants. Santa Cruz County's 2025 Spelling Bee was testament to education, perseverance, and a community committed to nourishing its young scholars.

Congratulations to all participants, and best of luck to Oskar as he prepares to take on the state-level competition!



Find us on YouTube!



Congratulations



2025 Winner Oskar Darius Miranda
Fco. Vasquez de Coronado Elementary School
5th grade



SPELLING BEE

2025 Runner Up
Anna V. Valenzuela
A.J. Mitchell Elementary School 5th Grade



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Anita Moreno

Santa Cruz County Recorder

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Phone: (520) 375-7990

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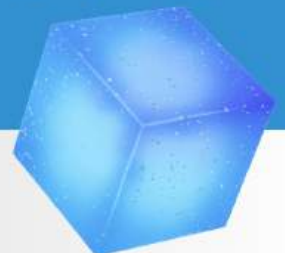
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Rio Rico Insights

The atmosphere at the UFW in Nogales was vibrant and colorful, with beautifully arranged decorations that celebrated the spirit of competition at the 2025 Santa Cruz County Spelling Bee. A dazzling black and gold backdrop, adorned with shimmering tinsel and cheerful bee-themed balloons, set the stage for the young competitors as they prepared to showcase their spelling prowess. Students from Santa Cruz Valley Unified School District 35 (SCUUSD35) took the stage with confidence, representing their schools with pride and determination. The district was well-represented by Josue Luquez from San Cayetano, Kevin Duran from Mountain View, Danielle Inda Romo from Calabasas Elementary, Christian A. Estrella from Calabasas Middle School, and Shulamithy Battu from Coatimundi Middle School. Each participant demonstrated poise and dedication as they tackled challenging words, striving for a chance to advance to the next level of competition.

Although SCUUSD35's spellers did not place in the top two, their hard work and perseverance were evident to all in attendance. Audra Billow, the district's communications specialist, captured the event through photography, documenting and celebrating students' efforts. "We are incredibly proud of our students for their dedication and bravery in stepping onto that stage," Billow shared. "They represented our district with excellence, and their participation alone is a testament to their commitment to learning." The event served as a reminder that success is not only measured in trophies but also in the courage to compete, the resilience to keep improving, and the joy of learning.



Understanding the Impact of Brain Injury on Daily Function

Living with a brain injury can significantly impact your daily function in various ways. From cognitive challenges to emotional and physical changes, it's essential to understand how these factors can affect your everyday life.

For Rio Rico resident Juan Hernandez, living with a brain injury has been a life-altering experience. "After my car accident several years ago, I've struggled to do the things I loved before," Juan said. "Simple tasks like grocery shopping or cooking meals have become daunting challenges. The emotional toll has been just as difficult, with mood swings and anxiety affecting my relationships with family and friends. It's been a hard road, but I'm learning to adapt and find new ways to navigate my daily life."

Brain injuries, ranging from concussions to more severe traumatic brain injuries (TBIs), can have profound effects on cognitive, emotional, and physical functions. Understanding the specific type of injury is essential for determining the most effective treatment and management strategies. Common symptoms include memory problems, attention deficits, emotional changes, and physical impairments, all of which can make daily tasks more challenging. However, with the right support and coping strategies, individuals can manage these difficulties and improve their quality of life. Cognitive challenges, such as memory impairment and attention deficits, are particularly common. Techniques like mnemonic devices, breaking tasks into smaller steps, and minimizing distractions can help enhance memory recall and focus. Emotional and behavioral changes, including mood swings, irritability, anxiety, and depression, also require careful management. Relaxation techniques, therapy, and self-care practices can play a vital role in maintaining mental well-being.

Physical impairments, such as motor function deficits and speech-language challenges, often accompany brain injuries. Rehabilitation approaches like physical therapy and speech-language therapy can significantly improve mobility, strength, and communication skills. Additionally, assistive technologies and environmental adaptations, such as mobility aids or home modifications, can enhance accessibility and safety. Family and friends play a crucial role in the recovery process, offering emotional support and encouragement. Establishing a structured routine can also provide stability and predictability, helping individuals navigate daily life with greater ease. By combining these strategies, individuals with brain injuries can work toward improved functioning and a better quality of life, supported by a network of care and innovative tools.

Brain injuries can range from concussions to more severe traumatic brain injuries (TBIs), each with its own set of effects on cognitive and physical functions. Understanding the type of brain injury you have is crucial in determining the appropriate treatment and management strategies.



Striking a Balance Between Security and Civil Rights

The streets and highways of Santa Cruz County have become a battleground of opinions, where the line between safety and harassment blurs. The constant presence of law enforcement patrolling the area has ignited a fiery debate among residents. While some applaud the vigilance as a necessary measure to protect lives, others argue it feels more like overreach a system prioritizing quotas and revenue over community trust.

The Numbers Behind the Debate

According to the Arizona Department of Transportation’s 2023 Motor Vehicle Crash Facts, Santa Cruz County reported 450 crashes last year, resulting in 5 fatalities and 115 injuries. Compared to Pima County, which saw 10,263 crashes, 168 fatalities, and 3,826 injuries, Santa Cruz’s numbers are significantly lower. Proponents of a heavy law enforcement presence point to these statistics as evidence that their efforts are working.

“You can’t argue with the data,” says Maria, a local business owner. “Fewer crashes mean fewer lives lost. If having more officers on the road keeps our community safe, I’m all for it.”

But not everyone is convinced. Critics argue that the low crash numbers don’t necessarily justify the intensity of law enforcement activity in the county. “We’re a small community,” says Jesus, a lifelong Nogales resident. “We don’t have the same traffic problems as Tucson or Phoenix. It feels like overkill.”

A Question of Motives

For many residents, the issue isn’t just about safety—it’s about fairness. Santa Cruz County is one of the poorest regions in Arizona, with a median income of just \$53,614 per year, according to the Census Bureau. For families already struggling to make ends meet, the aggressive enforcement of traffic laws can feel like a financial burden rather than a protective measure.

“Every time I see a patrol car, I wonder if they’re really looking out for us or just trying to fill their ticket quotas,” says Jessica, a mother of two from Rio Rico. “It doesn’t feel like they’re here to help. It feels like they’re here to take.”

The data adds another layer to the debate. In 2023, Santa Cruz County reported 23 alcohol-related crashes, resulting in 13 injuries. While these numbers are concerning, they pale in comparison to the scale of enforcement. Residents like Jessica question whether the focus is proportionate to the problem. “Past the checkpoint near Amado, you hardly see any law enforcement on the highway,” she notes. “It’s like they’re targeting specific areas, and it doesn’t feel fair.”

A Tale of Two Counties

The contrast between Santa Cruz and neighboring Pima County is stark. In Pima County, which includes Tucson, the sheer volume of traffic and crashes dwarfs Santa Cruz’s numbers. Yet, residents there report far fewer encounters with law enforcement.

“You don’t see this level of harassment in Pima County,” says Carlos, a truck driver who frequently travels between the two regions. “In Santa Cruz, it’s like they’re waiting for you to make a mistake. It’s exhausting.”

This disparity has led some to speculate about the motivations behind Santa Cruz County’s enforcement strategies. Are they truly focused on safety, or are they using traffic stops as a revenue-generating tool?

Striking a Balance

The debate over law enforcement in Santa Cruz County is far from settled. On one hand, the data suggests that their presence may be contributing to fewer crashes and fatalities. On the other, residents feel targeted and over-policed, particularly in low-income areas like Nogales, Patagonia, and Rio Rico.

“Safety should always come first,” says Miguel, a local resident who has been vocal about the issue. “But it’s also about how you treat people. If the community feels harassed, then something isn’t working.”

As the conversation continues, one thing is clear: finding a balance between safety and respect is crucial. Law enforcement plays a vital role in protecting lives, but their efforts must be fair, transparent, and rooted in the needs of the community they serve. For Santa Cruz County, the path forward lies in open dialogue, data-driven policies, and a commitment to building trust one traffic stop at a time.



Together, we create a safer Santa Cruz County!



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(520) 761-7869**

Sheriff's Round-Up



Sheriff Hathaway spoke this month to a church group from the Midwest that came to Nogales to learn about border issues. They were given a firsthand look at the U.S.A. / Mexico border and were given a presentation of the realities in the area.

In addition, personnel from the Sheriff's Office participated in the fourth annual salute to the Nogales Buffalo Soldiers at Camp Stephen D. Little, honoring the legacy of these historic figures. They also took part in the Copper Mountain Air open house held at the Nogales International Airport in order to maintain our commitment to community outreach.

The Sheriff's Office was proud to join the festivities at the 66th Annual Tubac of the Arts Festival, an event that drew thousands of visitors from diverse backgrounds over five days. Sheriff's Office community involvement will continue throughout March as Sheriff personnel engage with local schools across Santa Cruz County by reading to students and promoting literacy.

Congratulations are also in order for Detention Officers Sebastian De La Riva and Raul Rodriguez who have recently graduated from the Arizona Correctional Officer Training Academy after completing a rigorous 7-week program.

Sheriff Hathaway and his administration extend their heartfelt thanks to the community for their efforts to preserve our safe communities. We also want to thank every division of the Sheriff's Office for their dedication and support of our public safety mission.

Your Sheriff
David Hathaway



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

*Congratulations!
to all the contestants*

***Spelling
Bee***



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