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*A Message from the  
Santa Cruz County School Superintendent*

*Wishing you all the joys of the season and  
Happiness throughout the upcoming year.*



**Happy  
Holidays!**



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

**&  
Staff**

**21 E Court St,**

**Nogales, AZ 85621**

**Phone: 520.375.7940**





## Season's Greetings and Heartfelt Appreciation

As the holiday season unfolds, we extend our warmest gratitude to our devoted readers and valued customers for their unwavering support. Your commitment enables us to showcase the exceptional individuals, captivating events and impactful organizations that shape our vibrant community.

At Border Eco, our mission is to foster connections and unity within our diverse bordertown. We celebrate the rich cultural heritage and cherished traditions that make Santa Cruz County thrive. By sharing these stories, we bridge gaps and bring our community closer together.

We kindly request your assistance in keeping us informed about upcoming community events, meetings and conferences. Our collaboration helps us create a more informed and engaged community by ensuring comprehensive coverage.

Following us on Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter will keep you up to date with the latest news, remarkable individuals and influential organizations in Santa Cruz County. Joining our online community keeps you on top of the latest developments and empowers you to actively participate. By doing so, you'll be able to stay up-to-date with local events, engage with our content, and contribute to our region's rich cultural heritage.

Thank you for being part of our journey towards creating a connected and thriving community. Your support and partnership are invaluable to us.



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

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# THANK YOU!

"I want to extend my heartfelt gratitude to Santa Cruz County, District #2, State Representative Consuelo Hernandez, my friends, my family and the NHS Girls Varsity Basketball team for their unwavering support and for re-electing me as Santa Cruz County District #2 Supervisor," said Board of Supervisor Rudy Molera.

"I'm eager to collaborate with our new board, including District 1 Supervisor Luis Carlos Davis and District 3 Supervisor John Fanning, to address the pressing needs of our community and drive progress," Molera added.

## RUDY "BUGS" MOLERA





# Making Waves: Rio Rico Swim Team Shines

The Rio Rico High School Swim Team made history on September 24, competing against Santa Rita High School in Santa Cruz Valley Unified School District No. 35's very first home swim meet at the brand-new Aquatic Center. For the Rio Rico community, this wasn't just a competition—it was a celebration of progress, dedication, and the power of sports to bring people together. The state-of-the-art facility, which opened earlier this month, was buzzing with excitement as athletes, families, and fans gathered to witness this landmark event.

The meet was more than just a test of athleticism. It was a showcase of the countless hours of preparation and commitment from the Rio Rico swimmers, who have been training rigorously since the start of the season. Meeting nearly every morning before school, the team has pushed themselves through early laps, building the endurance and strength needed to excel in the water. That hard work paid off in spectacular fashion as the Rio Rico swimmers claimed victories in multiple events, leaving their mark on the scoreboard and in the hearts of the fans.

"It's an incredible feeling to see all our effort translate into wins," said senior swimmer Fernando Campillo, who had a standout performance, winning the Men's 50 Freestyle and the Men's 100 Fly. "This new pool has meant so much to us, and to be able to compete here, in front of our families and friends, is something I'll never forget." For Campillo, the night was particularly special—it's his Senior year, and he was joined by his family and teammates in a heartfelt celebration of his dedication to the team.

The team's roster, which includes Anayareni Antunez-Pino, Mia Ramos, Mia Lopez, and Campillo, proved to be a formidable force in the water. Anayareni Antunez-Pino delivered a strong performance, securing a win in the Women's 100 Freestyle, while the team as a whole dominated the relay events, claiming victories in both the 200 Medley Relay and the 200 Freestyle Relay. The cheers from the crowd grew louder with each race, as the community rallied behind its young athletes.

For head coach Mr. Colton Law, the meet was a culmination of months of hard work and a testament to the team's resilience. "This team has shown incredible determination. Early mornings, tough practices, and the willingness to push themselves every single day—it's all paid off," the coach said. "This pool is a game-changer for us, and it's inspiring to see the community come out to support these athletes."

The new Aquatic Center has quickly become a source of pride for the Santa Cruz Valley Unified School District and the Rio Rico community. Designed to serve both athletes and the public, the pool has already become a hub for activity since its opening earlier in September. Spectators at the meet marveled at the facility, which provides a professional-grade space for student-athletes to train and compete.

"This is such a positive addition to our community," said parent and spectator Karla Garcia. "Our kids now have a place where they can really thrive and develop their skills. Tonight's meet wasn't just about swimming—it was about celebrating everything this pool represents for our schools and our town."

"The RRHS Swim Meet embodied the tight community Rio Rico portrays," said Karla Garcia. "As a mother of a second-year swimmer, I feel extremely proud of my daughter and her teammates. They truly showed skill and dedication to help each other win, but most importantly, have fun."

Anayareni swam her freshman year at Verrado High School and unfortunately missed swimming her sophomore year at Rio Rico due to lack of swimming facilities. That year was particularly challenging for her, adapting to a new school environment and struggling to make friends.

However, everything changed when she found out about the new swimming pool and the opportunity to join the team as a junior. This experience taught her perseverance and appreciation for the opportunities she has.

"I witnessed her dedication firsthand at the RRHS Swim Meet in late October," Garcia added. As the evening came to a close, the Rio Rico swimmers took a moment to reflect on what the night meant to them. For junior swimmer Mia Ramos, the meet was more than just about winning races. "It felt like we were part of something bigger. This pool is giving us opportunities we didn't have before, and we're so grateful to everyone who made it possible."

The victories in the water were impressive, but the true triumph of the night was the sense of unity and pride that radiated from every corner of the Aquatic Center. The first home swim meet was a defining moment not just for the Rio Rico High School Swim Team, but for the entire community—a reminder of the power of sports to inspire, connect, and elevate.

As the Rio Rico swimmers continue their season, they'll carry the momentum of that historic night with them, knowing they're supported by a community that believes in their potential and celebrates their success.

"This was my first time attending a swim meet and photographing athletes at one," said Audra Bilow, SCV35 Communications Specialist. "It was thrilling to watch Rio Rico High School students showcase their exceptional skill and determination. The swimmers displayed an inspiring level of teamwork and talent. Their dedication in the pool was evident in every stroke and dive. The entire event was a remarkable display of sportsmanship and achievement."

"From the cheers of parents and students in the audience to the hugs and congratulations that followed, it was clear the young athletes made their community proud," Bilow added. "All of SCVUSD35 is immensely proud of our swimmers' and coaches' accomplishments and what they will continue to achieve in the future."



# Beyond Fronteras History Exhibit

## Santa Cruz County School

Friday, October 25th marked the unveiling of the history exhibit “Beyond Fronteras” at the historic 1904 Courthouse on 21 E. Court Street in Nogales, AZ. This exhibit opening was a celebration of the rich history of Santa Cruz County and showcased the many contributions by educators, artists, musicians, chefs, historians, and most importantly, local students.

The project was written in to a grant application prepared by Alfredo I. Velásquez and the Santa Cruz County School Superintendent’s Office grants team in the spring of 2022. The funding source was ESSER III- the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund the Arizona Department of Education received through the American Rescue Plan. Monies were to be used to support educational communities most impacted by COVID-19. The County School Superintendent’s Office was awarded \$5 million dollars to carry out and expand many school and community programs, one of which was a history exhibit.

The exhibit was developed and planned by staff in the School Superintendent’s Office, and later curated by Dr. Carlos Parra, Nogales native and assistant professor of history at the University of Arizona and Juan Miguel Garcia, Assistant Coordinator of History and Humanities for the ESSER III Invest in our Youth Project. Together, they facilitated poetry workshops, organized archaeological digs, contracted U of A students to do research and write articles, and coordinated students to submit works of art and writing to “Mi Historia, Mi Comunidad.” This collection was the heart of the exhibit as it depicted how our community’s youth felt about growing up in a border community.

Beyond Fronteras offers a unique, immersive, and communal experience. It is an exploration of Santa Cruz County’s past, present, and future. Visitors are able to celebrate the diverse culture, traditions, and stories that have shaped our community over the years.

From the moment you step into the exhibit, you are transported to a world where art and culture come together. Spanning across two showrooms and a hallway, visitors are treated to a beautiful display as they explore the intricate tapestry of our region’s past and present. With interactive displays, stunning visuals, and thought-provoking installations, Beyond Fronteras offers guests the opportunity to explore and engage with artwork in a unique and captivating way.

Featured throughout the exhibit are powerful paintings depicting the battle of ambos Nogales and the Hohokam tribe painted by local artist and teacher at Rio Rico High School Miguel Grijalva. Additionally, resident artist and former bullfighter, Armando Moreno, contributed stunning paintings that are sure to captivate all who visit.

Luke Brannen, history teacher at NHS, contributed to the exhibit in the form a mural. Brannen has been creating history themed murals for the last few years with his students, but this is the first time one of them is featured in a permanent exhibition.

“This was a valuable opportunity for our IB students to present their work to the community, celebrating the shared history of Ambos Nogales,” said Brannen. “As part of their Creativity, Activity, Service (CAS) project, they aimed to give back to the community and illustrate the historical connection that unites us, highlighting how history remains deeply relevant to our cross-border identity.”

One of the most moving aspects of the exhibit was the inclusion of poems and reflections about life on the border by students of all ages. Poet Myrlyn Hepworth, artist in residence, worked with students from Pierson High School to write poetry about what growing up in Santa Cruz County meant for them and their family. The heartfelt words and powerful insights added a deeper layer of meaning to the artwork on display, creating a truly impactful and thought-provoking experience for all who visited.

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# Beyond Fronteras History Exhibit Santa Cruz County School



*“This was a beautiful event that brought people together,” said Pierson student America Salazar who recited a poem she wrote about her experience living in a border town. “I wrote this poem to highlight that even though Nogales can be problematic, it’s also a beautiful place full of culture.”*

*Beyond Fronteras also features a series of three documentaries filmed by local artist and filmmaker Kevin Martinez. Rio Rico High School Film and T.V. class with instructor, Andrew Bickerton, joined filmmakers and mentors from the Southern Arizona Film Society, Francisco Landin and Oscar Coronado, to create a short documentary about the history of the Nogal tree. These films shine a spotlight on community programs and highlight the incredible work being done in schools. This addition to the exhibit serves as a testament to the power of art in transforming lives.*

*The response to the exhibit on opening night was overwhelmingly positive, with attendees praising the creativity, talent, and passion on display. The NHS Mariachi welcomed guests as they arrived on the steps of the historic courthouse and NHS Culinary students prepared food for the celebration. The entertainment continued through the event with Lourdes Catholic School student, Luis Roberto Crespo, who played the piano, and NHS senior, Dorian Moore, who played an acoustic set with his original songs.*

*“The experience was amazing,” Miguel Grijalva said. “The way that the public was welcomed by the mariachis and the smell of the delicious food- the setting and culture was elegant and inspired talent.”*

*To book a field trip for your school or a tour for your organization, please call Maya Donnelly at 520-375-7947 or email [mdonnelly@santacruzcountyaz.gov](mailto:mdonnelly@santacruzcountyaz.gov). The exhibit is open Monday – Friday from 8:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. and Saturdays by appointment.*

*For more information and to use curriculum and videos in your classroom, visit our website @ [Beyondfronteras.org](http://Beyondfronteras.org).*



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# Santa Cruz Training Program



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# Let's Talk Health

## Protecting the Future: What Teens and Parents Need to Know About the HPV Vaccine

In today's fast-paced world, teens already have plenty on their plates—balancing schoolwork, friendships, scholarships, college applications, and even part-time jobs. Cancer shouldn't be one of the things they have to worry about. Unfortunately, with the prevalence of Human Papillomavirus (HPV) infections in the U.S., the risk of HPV-related health complications, including cancer, is all too real.

Here's the truth: HPV is the most common sexually transmitted infection (STI) in the United States. In fact, most people will contract HPV at some point in their lives. It's spread through intimate skin-to-skin contact, and one of the most concerning aspects is that most people who are infected with HPV show no symptoms at all. This means they can unknowingly pass the virus to their partners without realizing it.

While some health issues caused by HPV, like genital warts, can be treated, there's currently no cure for an HPV infection itself. What's most alarming is the long-term risk: HPV infections can lead to cancers later in life, with cervical cancer being the most commonly linked. HPV can also cause other cancers, such as those of the throat, anus, and penis.

### The Good News: Protection Is Possible

The great news is that there's a powerful way to reduce the risk of HPV-related cancers: the HPV vaccine. You may have seen it mentioned on TV or online, or perhaps your doctor has brought it up. The HPV vaccine is a safe, effective, and proven method to protect against the types of HPV most likely to cause cancer. Here's how it works: The vaccine is recommended for both boys and girls starting at ages 11-12, long before they're likely to encounter the virus. However, it can be administered as early as age 9 and is still effective for people up to age 26. If you're older than 26, it's worth a conversation with your doctor to see if the vaccine might still be a good option for you.

The vaccine works best when given early, before exposure to HPV, which is why preteens are the ideal candidates. But don't worry—if you or your teen missed the earlier window, it's not too late to get vaccinated and still benefit from protection.

### Addressing Concerns: Is the HPV Vaccine Safe?

Yes, the HPV vaccine is safe. Like other vaccines, it can have mild side effects, such as a sore arm, fatigue, headache, or a low-grade fever. These side effects are short-lived, often resolving within a day or two. The benefits, however, are long-lasting: protection against cancer.

As one local parent shared, "I was hesitant at first, but when I learned how much the vaccine could protect my daughter from cervical cancer, it felt like a no-brainer. A sore arm for a day is such a small price to pay for her health."

### Empowering Teens to Make Informed Choices

For teens reading this: You have a voice in your health decisions. Don't be afraid to ask your parents about the HPV vaccine. Maybe you've already received it but didn't realize it, or maybe it's time to encourage your parents to schedule an appointment. Taking charge of your health now can protect you in the future.

The HPV vaccine isn't just about cancer prevention—it's also part of a bigger conversation about making informed, responsible decisions. Open and honest communication about reproductive health is key to staying safe and empowered.

### Getting Informed and Taking Action

Awareness about HPV and its risks is growing in our community, thanks to the efforts of organizations like MCHC (Mariposa Community Health Center). Whether it's through Dr. Pereira's podcast in collaboration with Circles of Peace, the Youth Council's booth at health fairs, or classes like Love Notes that teach teens about healthy relationships, the goal is the same: to get informed and take proactive steps toward better health.

If you're unsure how to start the conversation or have questions about the vaccine, MCHC's providers are here to help. They offer free resources and programs designed to guide parents and teens alike.

### Take the Next Step

Parents, schedule your teen's adolescent wellness visit today to ensure they're up to date on the HPV vaccine and other critical health needs. Protecting your teen from HPV-related cancers is one of the most impactful steps you can take for their long-term health and well-being.

And teens, remember: Your health is your future. Ask questions, stay informed, and don't hesitate to take the lead in conversations about your well-being. Together, we can make sure cancer stays off the list of things to worry about.

**For more information or to schedule an appointment, reach out to MCHC today. Because when it comes to health, prevention is the best protection.**



Follow us on YouTube @ Border Eco



# Healthy Lifestyle Tips for the holidays

## 6

## for the holidays

### 1

#### EXERCISE EVERYDAY

The key is simple: keep your body active every day. By doing so, your body will actively work to burn the calories that have accumulated within it. To maintain a healthy lifestyle, it is crucial to engage in regular physical activity.

### 2

#### EAT A VARIETY OF FOOD

Consume a diverse range of foods to enhance your dietary habits. Eating a variety of foods is essential for maintaining a healthy diet. By incorporating different types of foods into your meals, you can ensure that your body receives a wide range of nutrients.

### 3

#### DRINK A LOT OF WATER

Maintaining proper hydration is crucial for optimal bodily functions and overall well-being. Water plays a vital role in various physiological processes, including digestion, circulation, temperature regulation, and waste removal. By meeting your fluid needs consistently, you support these essential functions, allowing your body to operate at its best.

### 4

#### LESS SUGAR

Reducing the intake of sugar is not the only important aspect of maintaining a healthy lifestyle. It is equally crucial to work towards decreasing the desire for smoking and limiting alcohol consumption. By gradually diminishing these habits, individuals can significantly improve their overall well-being and reduce the risk of various health issues associated with smoking and excessive alcohol intake.

### 5

#### AVOID STRESS

Prolonged exposure to stress hormones can weaken the immune system, making you more susceptible to illnesses and infections. Additionally, it can lead to mental health issues such as anxiety and depression, as well as physical symptoms like headaches, muscle tension, and sleep disturbances. Taking proactive steps to manage and reduce stress is crucial for maintaining a healthy mind and body.

### 6

#### ENOUGH SLEEP

Getting enough sleep is important. Ensuring an adequate amount of sleep is crucial for overall well-being and optimal functioning.

## DELIVERING SMILES

The holidays are a time for togetherness, generosity, and joy, but for many seniors in our community, this season can be lonely and difficult. Recognizing this, a group of compassionate organizations and volunteers has come together once again to ensure that our elders feel valued, appreciated, and loved. Delivering Smiles, a heartwarming community initiative that began during the COVID-19 pandemic, continues to grow every year, offering not only essential support but a sense of connection for Santa Cruz County's senior population.

**This year, Delivering Smiles is going even further to make the holiday season special. In addition to distributing care boxes, the initiative will also host a Christmas Party for our senior community at the Bowman Senior Center on Thursday, December 19th at 3:00 p.m. This festive gathering will bring seniors together to celebrate the season with fun and fellowship. It's an opportunity to not only deliver joy but also build connections and remind our elders that they are an integral part of our community.**

#### A Growing Effort to Meet a Growing Need

The challenges faced by seniors in our community remain significant. Many live on fixed incomes, struggling to make ends meet as the cost of basic goods continues to rise. Others may feel isolated or forgotten, particularly during the holidays. "For many of our seniors, the holidays can be a difficult time. They've given so much to their families and their community, and now it's our turn to give back," said Rebecca Mungia, CSL Plasma.

This year, the Delivering Smiles initiative is bigger than ever, thanks to the incredible support of an expanding group of partners. In addition to the original collaborators—Borderlands Food Bank, Croppers Auto Center, Nogales Housing Authority, City of Nogales, and Making Connections 4U—the initiative has welcomed new partners, including South 32, NHS Community Club, CSL Plasma, NCD, Arizona@Work, and others.

"We're really excited about the growth of this initiative," said Yolanda Soto of Borderlands Food Bank. "The more partners we have, the more seniors we can reach. The need continues to grow, and with the support of these incredible organizations and individuals, we can do even more to help our most vulnerable population."

**For more information contact us at (520)461-4880 or email us at [director@makingconnections4u.org](mailto:director@makingconnections4u.org) or [secommunitycoalition@gmail.com](mailto:secommunitycoalition@gmail.com)**



# Law Enforcement Legacy: Clint Castillo's Journey

J. "Chips" Dolores' eyes glisten with pride as she watches her son, Clint Castillo, don his newly earned Deputy Sheriff badge. It's more than just a symbol of achievement—it's a continuation of a family legacy deeply rooted in service and sacrifice. For decades, the Castillo family has dedicated themselves to protecting their community, and Clint's hard work ensures that this proud tradition carries on into its third generation.

At just 25 years old, Clint has already achieved remarkable milestones. On May 30, 2024, he graduated from the Southeastern Arizona Law Enforcement Training Academy (SEALTA) after 20 grueling weeks of rigorous physical, mental, and tactical preparation. This accomplishment marks the culmination of years of dedication to his dream, a dream that began when Clint was just an infant.

"I think I always knew this was what I wanted to do," Clint reflects. "It's not just a job or a career for us—it's a way of life. Growing up, I saw how much my parents gave to this work and how much pride they took in helping others. I wanted to be a part of that."

Clint's journey to becoming Deputy Sheriff began years ago with his service as a Detention Officer at the Santa Cruz County Sheriff's Office, a position he took on in November 2022. His work ethic and leadership quickly caught the attention of his superiors, who recognized his potential and promoted him to Deputy Sheriff following his graduation from SEALTA.

But Clint's story is about more than personal achievement—it's about family. Chips, who has spent years serving in law enforcement alongside her ex-husband Chief Gerardo Castillo, recalls how her son's passion for the field emerged early. "Clint was only eight months old when we dressed him in his first uniform for the 1999 Veteran's Day Parade. Even then, he was part of it," she says with a laugh. "As he got older, he started joining us at parades, DARE graduations, community events—he was always there, always wanting to be involved."

There is a deep connection between the Castillo family and law enforcement. Chief Castillo is Chips' ex-husband, a respected officer in the community. Together, they have dedicated their lives to protecting the people of Santa Cruz County, setting an example that would inspire their children. Clint's younger brother, 17-year-old Andres Castillo, is already considering following in their footsteps.

A proud gleam in her eye, Chips beams. "It's incredible to witness a family legacy of service. Three generations—dad, mom, and now my two sons—choosing a life dedicated to protecting and serving. It's a testament to their character and commitment."

The Castillo family's dedication stands out in Santa Cruz County, a community that has long valued the critical role of law enforcement. According to the Arizona Department of Public Safety, rural counties like Santa Cruz often face unique challenges, from smaller budgets to the need for officers to wear multiple hats in their roles. This makes the commitment of families like the Castillos even more vital.

Santa Cruz County Sheriff's Office has served the region for over 150 years, providing not only law enforcement but also a sense of trust and stability. "Law enforcement here is personal," says Chief Castillo. "We aren't just officers—we're neighbors, friends, and family. That connection makes the work we do even more important."

Clint's educational journey mirrors his determination and grit. He began his studies at A.J. Mitchell Elementary and Wade Carpenter Middle School before attending Nogales High School. Recognizing a need for flexibility, he supplemented his education at Ed Options Preparatory Academy, eventually graduating in 2017. His unconventional path is a testament to his perseverance, a quality he credits to his parents' example.

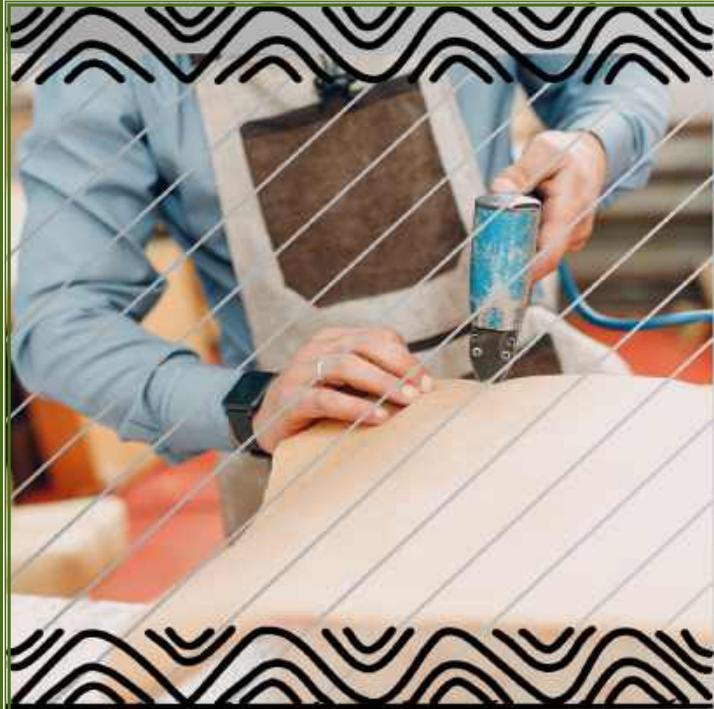
"Mom always taught us to keep going, no matter how hard things got," Clint says. "She'd remind us that the work we put in today will shape who we are tomorrow. That's something I hold close every day."

For Chips, seeing her sons embrace this legacy is both a point of pride and a source of hope. "The world is changing, and the challenges officers face are different from when I started," she says. "But seeing Clint step into this role, knowing the kind of man he is, gives me confidence. He's ready for this."

As Clint prepares to embark on the next chapter of his career, he carries with him not only the skills he's honed but also the values instilled in him by his family. "This isn't just about wearing a badge," he says. "It's about making a difference, even in the smallest ways. If I can help someone, protect someone, or even just show kindness when it's needed most, I've done my job."

The Castillo family's story is a reminder of the power of tradition, passion, and service. In a field where courage and commitment are paramount, their legacy stands as a beacon of inspiration—not just for Santa Cruz County, but for anyone striving to make their community a better place.





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"Just remember, the true spirit of Christmas lies in your heart."

The Santa Cruz County Sheriff's Office wishes everyone

# Happy Holidays

"Christmas isn't just a day, it's a frame of mind."



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# Sheriff's Round-Up



## Celebrating Dedication and Service

This month, we had the privilege of honoring retired Detective Sergeant Oscar Pena with a distinguished retirement ring, commemorating his remarkable 20 years of service. His unwavering loyalty and commitment to protecting the residents of Santa Cruz County have left an indelible mark on our community.

## Community Events and Partnerships Annual Candy Give-Away

The Santa Cruz County Sheriff's Office, in collaboration with Superior Court and Justice Court personnel, proudly participated in the annual "drive-through candy give-a-way." This year's event was a resounding success, thanks to the collective efforts of county agencies. We extend our heartfelt gratitude to county employees and community members who generously donated candy, making this event a sweet treat for local families.

## Veterans Day Parade

The Sheriff's Office was honored to participate in the annual Veterans Day parade, paying tribute to the brave men and women who have served in the U.S. Armed Forces. This poignant event serves as a reminder of the sacrifices made by our nation's heroes.

## International Recognition

Sheriff Hathaway recently garnered international attention, being interviewed by Australian television Sky News reporters and Al Jazeera News along the international border. This recognition underscores the significance of our region's law enforcement efforts.

## Holiday Wishes

As the holiday season approaches, we wish you and your loved ones a joyous and peaceful time together. May this special time of year bring warmth, happiness and cherished moments with family and friends.

**HAVE A SAFE & HAPPY HOLIDAY SEASON!**

Your Sheriff,

David Hathaway



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A message from the Santa Cruz County Attorney

# Happy Holidays

"REMEMBER, IF YOU DRINK, DON'T DRIVE"



2150 N. Congress Drive  
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Christmas is a feeling: "Christmas isn't a season. It's a feeling"