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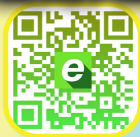


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CONNECTING SOUTHERN ARIZONA



SCAN ME



Childhood Cancer Awareness Month



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Teacher of the Year

CONGRATULATIONS!

**Teachers are stars that shine all
day.**

**They rise before the morning bell,
Bringing hope where there is
uncertainty,
Encouragement where there is
doubt,
And possibility where dreams are
just beginning.**



**Maya Donnelly
Santa Cruz County School Superintendent
&
Staff**

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



Border Eco Updates

Voting is not just a civic duty!

Voting is more than just a civic duty. It is your voice and your power, connecting you directly to your community's future.

In Santa Cruz County, from Nogales to Rio Rico, Tubac to Amado, the choices at the ballot box affect our schools, roads, water, public safety, and the unique needs of our border community. When you vote, you choose candidates and help shape policies. You tell your county, state, and nation what matters to you and your family.

In Arizona, it's easier than ever to make our voices heard.

For the 2026 General Election, Santa Cruz County has made planning simple. Early voting runs from October 7th to October 30th at 2150 N. Congress Dr. Ste. 114 in Nogales. If you serve overseas or are in the military, you will get your ballot by mail on September 19th. The last day to register to vote is October 5th. Early ballots will start mailing on October 7th. If you want to vote by mail, you can request your ballot until October 23rd.

If you can't vote on Election Day, you can vote early in person until 7 p.m. on October 30th. If you have an early ballot, you can drop it off until 7:00 p.m. on Election Day, November 3rd.

Santa Cruz County Recorder have it made it easy to stay informed. You can scan the QR codes from the Recorder's Office to check your voter information at santacruzcountyz.gov and track your early ballot through BallotTrax at my.arizona.vote.

One vote can change a local race. A few votes can change a county. Our community is counting on you to participate.

SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENT

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

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**EARLY VOTING
2026 GENERAL ELECTION
OCTOBER 7TH - OCTOBER 30TH
2150 N. CONGRESS DR. STE. 114**

Ballots mailed to Uniformed and Overseas Voters	September 19th
Last day to register to vote	October 5th
Early voting begins / Early ballots are mailed	October 7th
Last day to request a mail ballot	October 23rd
Last day to vote early in person at 7 p.m.	October 30th
Election Day (drop off your early ballot by 7:00 p.m.)	November 3rd

Scan for voter information at:
<https://www.santacruzcountyz.gov/986/Voter-Information>



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Painting Hope on a Wall: How Making Connections 4U Brings Art, Color, and Healing to Southern Arizona

Amado, Ariz. — Just off Interstate 19 in Santa Cruz County, something special happened. The Amado Community Food Bank of Southern Arizona, a vital resource for families in Amado, Tumacacori, Tubac, and Rio Rico, transformed a plain wall into a colorful mural with an important message: creativity is for everyone, and this community values it.

Kristina McDaniel, an artist from Sahuarita, is at the center of this project. She believes that art should be accessible to everyone, regardless of talent or training. "I love connecting with people's inner artist," McDaniel says, stepping back to admire her work. "Many people have been told they are not creative. I want to show them that they are."

McDaniel has been pursuing this passion for decades. A teacher since 2001, she spent six years as a resident artist at Chapman Elementary in Portland, Oregon, where she taught printmaking, sculpture, and pottery. She has painted five murals in Oregon and two in Sahuarita, along with countless pieces for friends and family.

Her traveling studio, The Vine and Pallet, is built on a simple idea: if people can't come to art, bring art to them. For eight years in Portland, she taught in community centers, living rooms, and school gyms. After moving to Seattle, she faced challenges with in-person teaching during the pandemic.

Last summer, she found a new home for her classes in Southern Arizona. A grant from **Making Connections 4U** helped provide free art classes to Rio Rico, Sahuarita, Green Valley, and eventually Amado. The goal was to remove barriers like cost, supplies, and self-doubt, inviting everyone to create.

The response was immediate. Seniors and youth sat together, discovering talents they didn't know they had. "Participants began to relax in ways they hadn't before," said the **Making Connections 4U** director. "They would arrive feeling quiet and nervous, but by the end, they would be smiling and laughing."

These classes were more than just about technique; they became a therapeutic space. McDaniel describes it as "a place to put down the weight for a while." In the creative process, people find a moment to pause and leave their worries behind.

Research shows that creative activity can lower stress and improve mood. In Santa Cruz County and Southern Pima County, where families face real economic and social challenges, these benefits are significant. "Many of our participants lack outlets," the facilitator notes. "They're just trying to get by. Giving them a chance to create something without pressure changes things."

When **Making Connections 4U** and the Community Food Bank of Southern Arizona, led by Associate Director Monica Gonzalez, looked for a way to make art a permanent part of Amado, the food bank offered its wall. For families from Rio Rico to Tubac who rely on the food bank, the mural is now a daily reminder that they are part of a creative and supportive community.

McDaniel was the ideal artist for this job. Her name kept coming up during the summer classes. "She gets it," said the director of **Making Connections 4U**. "She doesn't just paint for the community; she paints with them."

For McDaniel, the Amado mural feels like a return to her roots, back to Arizona, where she now lives with her family, and back to her passion. "I've worked in schools, community centers, and my living room," she explains. "The setting may change, but the moment is the same. That moment when someone looks at what they created and says, 'I did that,' is what drives me."

Making Connections 4U will continue to offer arts programming throughout Southern Arizona. For more information about Kristina McDaniel's work, including murals, fabric design, and therapeutic art classes, please contact us at: director@makingconnections4u.org.



2026 Teacher of the Year at the Sock Hop

The Santa Cruz County School Superintendent's Office turned back the clock on Friday, August 7th, as educators, families, community leaders, and supporters gathered at the 1920 Pierson Gymnasium for the Nineteenth Annual Santa Cruz County Teacher of the Year Awards. With a 1950s sock hop theme, the evening was filled with poodle skirts, leather jackets, diner-style food, root beer floats, apple pie, music, and plenty of dancing.

The celebration honored outstanding teachers from throughout Santa Cruz County and recognized their dedication, creativity, and lasting impact on their students and communities. The event was co-sponsored by the Santa Cruz County School Superintendent's Office, South 32, the Santa Cruz Community Foundation, and the Nogales Rotary Club. Proceeds from the evening benefit the William I. Rothstein Memorial Scholarship, helping local students pursue their post-secondary educational goals. A special thank you to Nogales Unified School District for providing the venue.

Each teacher nominated for Teacher of the Year was recognized on stage and presented with a trophy and an appreciation clipboard with local gift cards, thanks to the generosity of local businesses and community members.

Congratulations to Mr. Ravi Dutt of Nogales High School, the 2026 Santa Cruz County Teacher of the Year. In recognition of his exceptional commitment to his students and his profession, Mr. Dutt received a trophy, barbecue grill, and an assortment of prizes generously donated by community supporters.

Mr. Kim Gonzales of Pierson High School was named runner-up and received a trophy, a 65-inch television, and additional community-donated prizes.

The evening also featured two outstanding 1950s dance performances by the Rio Rico Hawx Dance Team, who brought energy and enthusiasm to the celebration, drawing the crowd to their feet. And no sock hop would be complete without a little dancing! To close out the evening, Superintendent Maya Donnelly took the stage and led guests through a hand jive lesson. What began as a lesson quickly became a full-room performance, bringing teachers, guests, and community supporters together for a memorable finale.

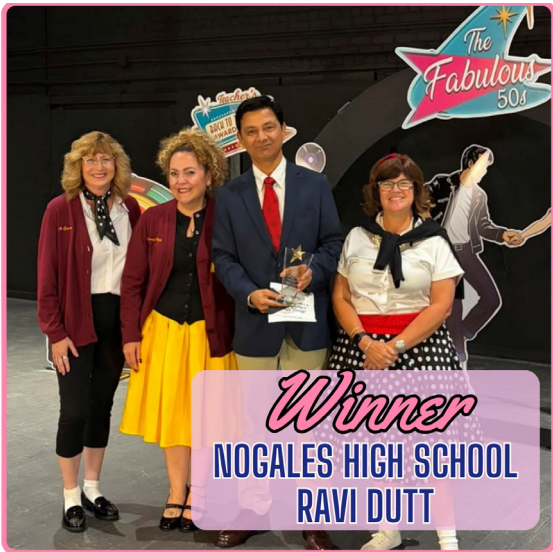
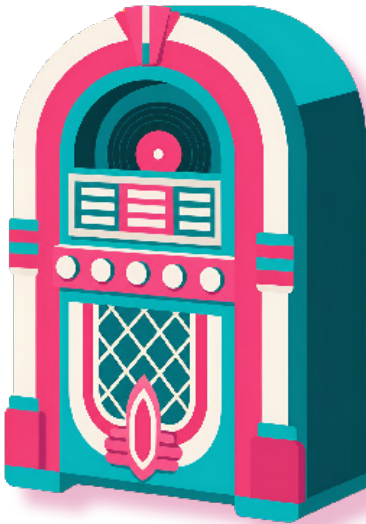
The Santa Cruz County School Superintendent's Office extends its sincere appreciation to the sponsors, donors, school districts, community partners, educators, and volunteers who helped make this year's celebration a success. Their continued support allows the community to recognize the remarkable teachers who serve our students every day while also helping provide scholarship opportunities for the next generation of Santa Cruz County students.



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2026 Teacher of the Year at the Sock Hop



September

hello
FALL

Santa Cruz Training Program



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September

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Rio Rico Insights

SCV35 Welcomes Principals for the 2026-2027 School Year

Santa Cruz Valley Unified School District No. 35 is pleased to welcome its principals for the 2026-2027 school year. These dedicated leaders bring a diverse range of experience, expertise, and leadership to their respective school communities, helping create environments where students and staff can learn, grow, and thrive.

As instructional and campus leaders, SCV35 principals play an important role in supporting student achievement, fostering strong relationships with families and staff, and building school communities centered on student success. Their leadership helps advance the district's commitment to providing meaningful learning experiences and ensuring every student has the opportunity to Dream. Learn. Lead.

Leading SCV35 schools for the 2026-2027 school year are:

Mr. Jonathan Chavez, Calabasas School

Mrs. Rebekah Cabrera, Coatimundi Middle School

Mr. Dagoberto Lopez, Rio Rico High School

Mrs. Vanessa Alegria-Rivas, San Cayetano Elementary School

Mr. Dominic Armijo, Mountain View Elementary School

Each principal brings unique strengths and perspectives to their role, while sharing a common commitment to serving students and supporting the continued growth of their school community. Together, they will work alongside teachers, staff, families, and students to build upon the successes of previous years and create new opportunities for learning and achievement.

SCV35 is grateful for the leadership and dedication of our principals and looks forward to the year ahead.

Their

commitment to students, staff, and families is an essential part of the district's continued efforts to provide exceptional educational experiences throughout our schools.

Please join us in welcoming our principals as they begin the 2026-2027 school year and continue the important work of helping every student Dream. Learn. Lead.

Rio Rico Insights



Rio Rico Insights

SCV35 Recognizes Mariposa Community Health Center for Continued Partnership

The Santa Cruz Valley Unified School District Governing Board, alongside Assistant Superintendent Dr. Melisa Lunderville, recently had the pleasure of recognizing Dr. Eladio Pereira, Dr. J. Philip Williams, and Amy Taylor from Mariposa Community Health Center and expressing our sincere appreciation for the incredible work they do to support our students and families.

Our partnership with Mariposa Community Health Center is a wonderful example of what is possible when two organizations come together with a shared commitment to helping families. Through this partnership, Mariposa has helped provide telehealth services, wraparound behavioral health support, on-site COVID-19 vaccinations during the pandemic, and affordable sports physicals for our student athletes at both our school sites and the Mariposa office.

This summer alone, more than 100 of our students received sports physicals through this partnership. By making these services more accessible and affordable, Mariposa helped remove both financial and logistical barriers for our families and ensured that our students were ready for their athletic seasons.

What makes this partnership especially meaningful is Mariposa Community Health Center's willingness to step up whenever needed. Their team consistently works alongside us to find solutions and make sure our students and families have access to the support and resources they need.

We are incredibly grateful for their compassion, flexibility, and commitment to our community. Thank you, Dr. Pereira, Dr. Williams, Amy Taylor, and the entire Mariposa Community Health Center team, for being such a dependable partner to SCV35 and for all you do for our students and families.



Rio Rico Insights



NOGALES POLICE

Beyond the Badge-It's a Commitment to Community

Policing is about more than just patrolling streets. It means being active in the community, whether at local events or in classrooms, to encourage young people to become future officers. The Nogales Police Department has recently focused on these community efforts.

If you walked down Morley Avenue lately, you might have noticed Officer S. Clarke and his K-9 partner, Odin, participating in the "Paws on the Move 5K Adoption Event."

This event brought together runners, walkers, families, and pets, with a focus on adoption and responsible pet ownership. Seeing officers outside their cars, engaging with community members, makes a difference. Children who may feel intimidated by uniforms often smile upon meeting Odin, while adults engage in conversations with the police.

This community connection continued at the Boys & Girls Club career day. Officers Clarke, Castillo, and Camerlin posed with a colorful sign made by kids that said, "THANK YOU Police Department." This simple, hand-drawn sign might be one of the best compliments the department has received.

The officers did not come to the lecture. Instead, they aimed to connect. They shared what a career in law enforcement entails, answered questions from young people, and explained different roles in the department, such as patrol, K-9, and investigations.

In another group photo, seven officers stood together after the presentation. For the students, this was a chance to see that law enforcement encompasses various roles that accommodate different skills and interests. For the officers, it was an opportunity to listen and build trust.

"This is how trust is built," one community member said after the event. "Not in a crisis, but in a classroom."

The Nogales Police Department is also investing in its future by welcoming new Officer A. Jimenez. He and his family were introduced to the department, and their pride showed how joining the police force is a family commitment.

From the 5K event to heartfelt thank-you signs at the Boys & Girls Club, and welcoming a new officer with his family, the Nogales Police Department demonstrates community policing. It's not only about responding to calls. It's about connecting with kids, fostering conversations, and appreciating those grateful notes that mean more than any award.

Our Nogales PD is actively part of the community, not just serving it.



LET'S TALK HEALTH

What is Metabolically Dysfunctional-Associated Steatotic Liver Disease (MASLD)?

Metabolically-dysfunction-associated steatotic liver disease (MASLD), formerly known as nonalcoholic fatty liver disease (NAFLD), is becoming a common health issue among teens and adults. It is a condition in which excess fat builds up in the liver due to metabolic health problems rather than alcohol use.

MASLD is commonly associated with:

- Obesity, especially excess belly fat
- Insulin resistance
- Type 2 diabetes or prediabetes
- High cholesterol or high triglycerides
- High blood pressure

When fat buildup in the liver is accompanied by inflammation and liver cell damage, the condition is called metabolic dysfunction-associated steatohepatitis (MASH), which can lead to liver scarring (cirrhosis) if left untreated.

Who is at risk?

Although MASLD can affect children and young adults, it is most common in middle-aged adults.

Risk factors include:

- Being overweight or obese, especially carrying excess weight around the waist
- High triglycerides or LDL ("bad") cholesterol
- Type 2 diabetes or prediabetes
- High blood pressure

When several of these conditions occur together, they are known as metabolic syndrome, which significantly increases the risk of developing MASLD.

What are the symptoms?

MASLD is often called a "silent" liver disease because most people have no symptoms, especially in the early stages.

Many people have fat in their liver without developing liver damage. However, some people progress to MASH, which can cause inflammation, scarring, and eventually liver failure.

A healthcare provider may suspect MASLD based on blood tests, imaging studies (such as an ultrasound), and your medical history. A blood test alone cannot definitively diagnose MASLD but may show abnormal liver enzymes that prompt further evaluation.

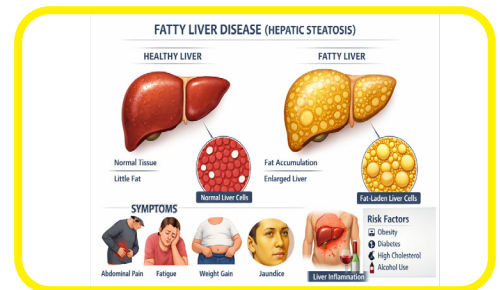
How is MASLD treated?

The main treatment for MASLD focuses on improving metabolic health and reducing liver fat through healthy lifestyle changes.

Recommendations include:

- Lose weight if you are overweight.
- Exercise regularly (aim for at least 150 minutes of moderate activity each week).
- Avoid alcohol. If you have MASH, no amount of alcohol is known to be completely safe.
- Quit smoking.
- Eat a healthy diet:
 - Fill half your plate with vegetables and fruits (aim for at least five servings daily).
 - Choose whole grains instead of refined grains.
 - Select low-fat or fat-free dairy products.
 - Choose lean proteins such as fish, poultry, and eat plant-based proteins like beans, legumes and Tofu.
 - Limit processed meats and ultra-processed foods.
 - Avoid sugary drinks and foods with added sugars.
 - Learn more about healthy eating at [MyPlate.gov](https://www.myplate.gov).
- Manage stress.
- Get enough quality sleep.
- Work with your primary care provider (PCP) to manage diabetes, high blood pressure, and high cholesterol.
- Early diagnosis and healthy lifestyle changes can help prevent liver damage and improve overall health.

Sources: American Liver Foundation, Johns Hopkins Medicine, Mayo Clinic.



Follow us on YouTube for the latest community videos.

Happy

LABOR DAY

Together, we create a safer Santa Cruz County!

A message from the Santa Cruz County Sheriff

"Even the smallest act of service, the simplest act of kindness, is a way to honor those we lost, a way to reclaim that spirit of unity that followed 9/11." — Barack Obama



2170 N Congress Dr,
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(520) 761-7869

Sheriff's Round-Up



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

4th Annual Overdose Awareness Prevention Workshop and Resource Fair to include a youth Basketball Tournament

Speed and Occupant enforcement and awareness

Deployment by deputies during back-to-school events

Communications personnel attending conference in Knoxville, Tennessee

TruNarc training for all supervisors

Flammable liquids training hosted by Emergency Management

Reid Technique training for Detectives

CPR training for all employees

Circles of Peace Movie Night

These events provided meaningful opportunities for our personnel to maintain professional skills, engage with residents, support local organizations, and strengthen relationships throughout the communities we proudly serve. We sincerely thank the event organizers, volunteers, community partners, and everyone who welcomed our team. The Santa Cruz County Sheriff's Office remains committed to community engagement, public service, and building positive partnerships across Santa Cruz County.

During the recent monsoon, the Nogales wash tragically swept downstream a couple of persons who ultimately lost their lives. The bodies were recovered with the combined efforts of the Sheriff's Office and several local community partners, including Pima County Search & Rescue, the Nogales Police Department, Bomberos De Nogales, Sonora, and Proteccion Civil De Sonora, and then taken to the Pima Office of Medical Examiner, hopefully giving the families closure. Thank you to all the agencies for their outstanding cooperation and support.

Join Our Phenomenal Team

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

Deputy Sheriff

Detention Officer

Dispatcher

Search & Rescue Volunteer

Law Enforcement Assist Team Volunteer

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

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

Thank you for your continued partnership and trust.

Sincerely,

Sheriff David Hathaway
Santa Cruz County Sheriff's Office



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