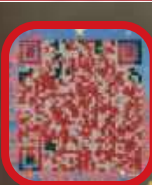




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*A Message from the
Santa Cruz County Superintendent*

"Christmas is best experienced through the eyes of a child"

Happy Holidays



Alfredo I. Velásquez
Santa Cruz County School Superintendent
&
Staff

2150 N. Congress Dr. #107
Nogales, AZ 85621
Phone: 520.375.7940





Greetings and warm holiday wishes! We extend our heartfelt gratitude for the unwavering support of our esteemed readers and valued customers. It is through your unwavering support that we are able to shed light on the remarkable individuals, captivating events, and impactful organizations that shape our beloved community.

In Border Eco, our ultimate goal is to promote connections within Santa Cruz County. As a vibrant bordertown, this region boasts a wealth of cultural diversity and cherished traditions. We strive to bring these stories to life and share them with the world. Thank you for being part of our journey towards creating a vibrant and connected community.

We kindly request your assistance in keeping us informed about any forthcoming community events, meetings, or conferences. With your valuable insights, we will be able to provide comprehensive coverage and make sure no noteworthy event goes unnoticed.

To stay abreast of the latest happenings, remarkable individuals, and influential organizations in Santa Cruz County, we invite you to follow us on Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter. By doing so, you will be well-equipped to remain in the loop and actively participate in the vibrant tapestry of our community.



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

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Get Your Career in Gear with GEAR UP

The Santa Cruz County School Superintendent's Office and the Gear Up Program are preparing for FAFSA season! As the Class of 2024 prepare for their post-secondary education, Gear Up staff offer services to support students and families with financial planning and college admissions. Federal student aid, scholarships, and work study applications can be intimidating, however, there is plenty of assistance at all five county high schools.

What is the FAFSA form and why should I fill it out?

The Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) form is used to apply for federal student aid programs such as federal grants, work-study funds, and loans. Filling out the online form is one of the most important steps students and their families can take to help pay for college. Nearly all students who apply qualify for some form of federal financial aid. The Gear Up team has been "geared up" to assist students and their families with the process!

Changes to the FAFSA has pushed back the release date. The redesigned FAFSA is expected to launch by December 31st, 2023 for the 2024 – 2025 academic year. The new changes aim to make completing the form easier and also expands eligibility for many types of student aid. Students will be eligible to receive up to \$7,395 in federal grant money – money that does not have to be repaid – for college.

Some changes include:

1. Everyone who wants to enter information into an online FAFSA account will need an FSA ID to access the form. This means each student and parent (parent which provides the greater portion of the student's financial support) will need their own FSA ID to fill out the form.
2. NO Social Security Number – new process, including parents who are undocumented, to create an FSA ID. Once an individual's identity has been verified through TransUnion, they should immediately receive an FSA ID and be able to proceed with the FAFSA application process.
3. The application is now available in 11 languages.
4. Everyone has to click a permission box to allow financial information to be transferred from the IRS, including non-tax-filers.
5. Student will be able to add up to 20 colleges on the application.
6. Only families with an Adjusted Gross Income greater than \$60,000 will be required to report asset information.

How can Gear Up and the C-CREO Hub help?

The C-CREO Hub is a college and career access center designed to be a one-stop shop for all things post-secondary. Whether your path leads to university, community college, military, or the workforce, staff will assist in the planning and supply the tools necessary to navigate through applications. The goal of Gear Up is to assist students to enroll in a post-secondary program and complete it.

The C-CREO Hub will be hosting a FAFSA-THON starting January 3rd – February 7th, 2024. Stop by the Hub every Wednesday from 8:00 am-6:30 pm or make an appointment to fill out your FAFSA application and prepare for post-secondary pathways (scholarship searches, college applications, career and college exploration and military information). Every Wednesday snacks, coffee and water will be provided, and we will be open late to better accommodate and serve our families.

Appointments are also available and recommended, however walk-ins are always welcome. Monday-Friday (8:00 am-5:00 pm.) To Make an Appointment with the HUB visit <https://calendly.com/ccreohub>

Look out for more family events coming to the Hub and all high schools.

February 28th and March 18th 2024- HUB Family Night: 5:00 pm-6:30 pm -Understanding Your Student Aid and Costs

February 22, 2024 - NHS College and Career Fair/Resource Night

March 5, 2024 - RRHS College and Career Fair/Resource Night

April 2024 TBA: HUB FAMILY NIGHT OUT- BLAST OFF

Visit us:

C-CREO HUB – Gear Up College Access Center located in the Santa Cruz Center behind Walgreens at 2021 N. Grand Avenue, Nogales, Arizona (520)394-7707, www.c-creo.org

Additional resources available to students and families:

www.studentaid.gov Website with student loan information

<https://bigfuture.collegeboard.org/pay-for-college/financial-aid-basics/fafsa/how-to-complete-the-fafsa> Preparing and Understanding FAFSA

<https://bigfuture.collegeboard.org/pay-for-college/financial-aid-basics/fafsa> FAFSA Key Information

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Echoes From the Hilltop

We are thrilled to showcase Veneranda Sanchez, a talented local singer, in this month's Echoes from the Hilltop Gallery. Veneranda, a 37-year-old married mother of two children, a 17-year-old boy and a 7-year-old girl, was born and raised in Nogales. Her journey in music began at the tender age of 7, when she would captivate her audience in her grandmother's kitchen, singing for her beloved Nana Luz and her aunt Consuelo. Armed with a makeshift microphone and a tape player as her accompaniment, Veneranda's passion for singing blossomed. Veneranda's musical journey started at Sacred Heart School, where she honed her skills and nurtured her love for music. She later graduated from Nogales High School, equipped with a solid foundation in both education and her musical abilities.

Her early influences, including the legendary Tina Turner, the soulful Janis Joplin, and the iconic Chavela Vargas, left an indelible mark on her musical style.

These remarkable women, with their powerful voices and emotive performances, never fail to send shivers down my spine. Their influence on Veneranda's artistry is evident in every note she sings. It is a privilege to witness her channel their spirit and create her own unique sound.

Throughout the years, Veneranda has dedicated herself to perfecting her craft, continuously pushing the boundaries of her talent. Her dedication and hard work have allowed her to evolve into the remarkable singer she is today. With a voice that effortlessly captivates audiences, Veneranda's performances are nothing short of mesmerizing. "I want the audience to have a good time. Life is tough. If I can offer a small escape through my performance, then I have done my job. The best way I can improve myself as a performer is to welcome criticism," said Sanchez.

In addition to experiencing Veneranda's captivating melodies, we invite you to participate in a celebration of her remarkable life. The passion she has for music, coupled with her undeniable talent, has made her a true gem in our local music scene. She is a great asset to the Hilltop Gallery.

Join us as we embark on a musical journey with Veneranda Sanchez, a shining star whose voice resonates with emotion and beauty. Let her melodies transport you to a world of enchantment and leave you longing for more. Experience the power and passion of Veneranda Sanchez's captivating performances as she effortlessly captivates audiences with her soulful voice. Experience her mesmerizing melodies that effortlessly flow from her lips, transporting you to an enchanted world of pure enchantment. Be amazed at her talent and leave the gallery with a newfound appreciation for music.

Veneranda Sanchez actively took part in the Tamale Festival held on November 17, 2023, at the Consulado de Mexico in Nogales, Arizona. The festival was a vibrant celebration of Mexican culture, filled with the tantalizing aroma of freshly made tamales and the lively sounds of traditional music. Additionally, she has been selected to perform at the upcoming Christmas parade, a testament to her exceptional talent and dedication.

Veneranda's opportunities, though not without their challenges, provide many rewarding experiences and enable her to preserve the pride and joy that come with her cultural heritage.



Veneranda Sanchez
Talented Local Singer

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Rio Rico High School Stars Shine Bright



Santa Cruz Valley Unified School District No. 35 is proud to announce that Kiana Garcilazo and Elian Olmos were recruited to play ball at the next level.

Garcilazo will play softball for the Central Arizona College Vaqueros where she will focus on general studies until she decides on a major.

"Kiana is a very special athlete. She comes from a long line of players. She loves the sport of softball and it shows through her dedication and hard work. It has been an absolute honor being on the field with Keeks. I wish her all the best in her senior year of high school and most importantly in her collegiate career." Softball Coach Rafael Corrales

Olmos will play baseball for the Arizona Western College Matadors where he will study criminal justice. In his junior year, he batted .298 in 84 at-bats with 4 doubles, 1 triple, 2 home runs and 15 RBIs.

"Western is getting a young man that has many intangibles that will make an immediate impact at the collegiate level. He has grown as a leader and understands what it takes to WIN. The trust I have built with him over the past year and a half speaks volumes for his ability to buy in to core values of any program. Elian's baseball ability speaks for itself. It has been a pleasure to be a part of his development, and I look forward to what he will accomplish at the next level." Baseball Coach Chris Laughland



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RRHS Embarking on Greatness: Students Earn Coveted Academic Honors

Students at Rio Rico High School earned academic honors from the College Board National Recognition Programs. These programs celebrate students' hard work in high school and showcase their strong academic performance. The academic honors for rural area, Black, Indigenous, and/or Latino students are an opportunity for students to share their strong academic achievements with colleges and scholarship programs that are seeking to recruit diverse talent.

At Rio Rico High School, 5 students received academic honors following categories:

Andres Flores: National Rural and Small Town Award (NRSTA)

Axel Oros: National Hispanic Recognition Award (NHRA)

Abigail Rocio Burgos: National Hispanic Recognition Award (NHRA). "I'm so grateful for this opportunity that was given to me. This tight-knit community makes receiving this recognition such an honor, and I'm glad to represent them."

Stefen Kemp: National Hispanic Recognition Award (NHRA), and the National Rural and Small Town Award (NRSTA). "I am extremely proud of my accomplishment because it represents how much dedication and work I have put into my education. It proves to me that hard work is rewarded, and you should never be afraid to try your best."

Uriel Rivas: National Hispanic Recognition Award (NHRA)

"We're thrilled to celebrate our students and recognize them for the great work they've been doing. We're proud of their strong academic performance in the classroom and on College Board assessments like the PSAT/NMSQT®, PSAT™ 10, and AP® exams," said Principal John Kneup. "There's so much that makes our students unique, and receiving this honor reinforces this as an asset for their future."

The criteria for eligible students include: GPA of 3.5 or higher.

PSAT/NMSQT or PSAT 10 assessment scores that are within the top 10% of assessment takers in each state for each award program or earned a score of 3 or higher on 2 or more AP Exams in 9th and 10th grade.

Attend school in a rural area or small town, or identify as African American/Black, Hispanic American/Latino, or Indigenous/Native.

Eligible students are invited to apply on BigFuture during their sophomore or junior year and are awarded at the start of the next school year in time to share their achievements in high school as they plan for the future. At the same time, colleges and organizations using College Board's Student Search Service™ can connect directly with awardees during the recruitment process.

"It's becoming increasingly hard for students to be 'seen' during the college recruitment process. We're exceptionally proud of the National Recognition Programs for celebrating students who are at times overlooked but have shown their outstanding academic abilities," said Tarlin Ray, senior vice president of BigFuture® at College Board. "This is a benefit not only for students but also for colleges and universities committed to recruiting diverse and talented students."



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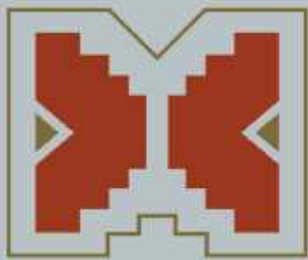
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"Christmas is going home to celebrate with family."



Anita Moreno
County Recorder

Happy Holidays

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Let's Talk Health

The American Cancer Society released updated lung cancer screening guidelines this year, 2023. Yearly screenings with low-dose CT scan for people at increased risk of lung cancer. What is increased risk?

Age: 50-80 years old and in good health. Did you know Medicare covers screening up to age 77 and most private insurance covers up to age 80.

Do you now smoke or in the past smoke? People who currently smoke or have smoked in the past should be screened. For smokers, tobacco smoking history is important. At least 20 pack-years: this means one pack a year is equal to smoking one pack per day for one year. (1 pack = 20 cigarettes). People should not be screened if they have serious health problems that will likely limit how long they will live, or if they don't want any treatment for lung cancer if it is found.

If you smoke and want to learn more about quitting, contact Alexa Lopez at Mariposa's Community Health Services Department, 520 375-6050 ext. 1353, she can help connect you with the Arizona AshLine and a quit coach to help you. Quitting smoking can greatly help you reduce the risk of lung cancer.

If you are interested in getting screened, speak with your provider now, call Mariposa Community Health Center at 520 281-1550 to schedule an appointment.

Recommendations for Lung Cancer Screening



The American Cancer Society recommends yearly screening for lung cancer for people with a smoking history.

Screening Eligibility

- Adults 50 to 80 years old
- Currently smoke or used to smoke.
- Have a 20 or more pack-year history. (A pack-year is equal to smoking 1 pack or about 20 cigarettes per day for a year.)

Before Getting Screened

- Talk to a health care professional about your risk for lung cancer and the benefits, limitations, and harms of low-dose CT (LDCT) screening.
- People who currently smoke should receive smoking cessation treatment.

Learn More About Screening

Visit cancer.org/get-screened for cancer screening resources, including information about screening recommendations; how to schedule a screening test; how to afford screening with or without insurance; and more.

If You Smoke or Want to Help Someone Quit

The American Cancer Society Empowered to Quit program is a free, email-based tool to help people quit smoking. Visit cancer.org/empoweredtoquit to learn more.

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6 Healthy Lifestyle Tips 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.

Mayor's Corner



On November 4th, the Mayor's Office actively participated in the Nogales Hall of Fame event, which aimed to honor the heroes who emerged during the pandemic. The Mayor's Office took the initiative to send personnel from the Nogales Fire Department (NFD), Nogales Police Department (NPD), and Parks and Recreation, recognizing them as a crucial group of heroes who were at the forefront of the battle.

Not only were these individuals acknowledged during the Mayor and Council meeting on November 1, but the mayor also deemed it essential to highlight their significant role in safeguarding our community during those challenging times.

The Mayor's Office expressed their gratitude towards the Nogales Fire Department, Nogales Police Department, and Parks and Recreation for their unwavering dedication and bravery in the face of adversity. Their tireless efforts and selflessness played a vital role in ensuring the safety and well-being of the community during the challenging times of the pandemic. The Mayor's recognition not only serves as a token of appreciation but also serves as a reminder of the importance of unity and resilience in overcoming any crisis.

On November 11, the Mayor's Office actively participated in the Veterans Day parade and organized a solemn Veterans Day program at City Hall, paying tribute to all the brave veterans in Nogales. Additionally, the Mayor's Office demonstrated their deep respect by conducting a wreath-laying ceremony at City Hall, honoring the sacrifices made by our esteemed veterans. Furthermore, the Nogales Police Department took the initiative to host a distinguished ceremony, dedicated to recognizing and appreciating the invaluable service rendered by our veterans. The community of Nogales came together to show their unwavering support for the veterans. Local schools organized special assemblies where students expressed their gratitude through heartfelt speeches and performances. The businesses in town also played their part by offering exclusive discounts and promotions to veterans as a token of appreciation for their service. It was truly a day filled with unity and reverence, reminding us all of the sacrifices made by our brave veterans.

On December 2nd, the Mayor's Office will be hosting their highly anticipated annual Christmas Day Parade at 6:00pm. This year, we are thrilled to announce the addition of food trucks on South Morley, marking the first time ever for this exciting feature. Furthermore, Santa Claus himself will be making a special appearance at Karam Park, adding to the festive atmosphere. Our aim is to create an unforgettable experience for the entire family to enjoy.

In addition to the parade, on December 8th, we are honored to welcome Welty and Challenger Elementary Schools for a captivating choir concert right here at City Hall. This event promises to be a delightful showcase of talent and holiday spirit. We cordially invite you to join us for these remarkable festivities, as we strive to bring joy and merriment to our community during this special time of year.



Happy
Holidays

from your friends
at the

Santa Cruz County Sheriff's Office





Sheriff's Round-Up



This past month we celebrated our Halloween Event. We loved seeing all of our children have fun but also staying safe. Our event consisted of a Drive-Thru Trunk or Treat coordinated by all of our divisions to include Patrol, Detention, Dispatch, and Admin.

Our Command Staff from the Santa Cruz County Adult Detention Center also partnered this month with the Nogales - Santa Cruz County Public Library to promote the importance of reading. Thank you to our Detention Sergeant and Commander!

Our Officers also participated with the Rio Rico Fire District for their annual pancake event. Thank you to all involved for coming out and providing resources and information to our community!

The holidays are here, and we would like to remind you to stay safe and keep others safe. Even one empty seat at the table is too many. Be safe this holiday season. Don't drink and drive. Remember buzzed driving is drunk driving!

Many people leave town for the holidays, so if you see anything or anyone suspicious we encourage you to call the Sheriff's Office. Our Communications Division is always available to assist you. Also, a reminder: If you are leaving on vacation, the Sheriff's Office offers courtesy House Checks multiple times each day. Call (520) 761-7869 for more information or dial 911 for any emergencies.

HAVE A SAFE & HAPPY HOLIDAY SEASON!

Your Sheriff,
David Hathaway



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A message from the Santa Cruz County Attorney

Christmas means reconnecting with family."

Happy Holidays

Be Safe!



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