

BORDER

10 Years

eco

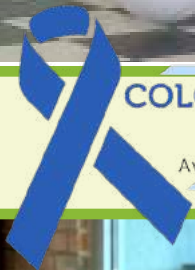


5 Echoes from the Hilltop Gallery
Abel Aguilar

Free issue! **CONNECTING SOUTHERN ARIZONA**



Spelling Bee 2024
pg.8



MARCH
**COLORECTAL
CANCER**
Awareness Month

Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month



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of Hope for the Community



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Workforce



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2024 Early Childhood Education Award of Excellence Recipients



Cristina Alanis



Susana Contreras



Maritza Lynn Higuera



Beth Hopkins



Maribel Norzagaray



Maria Scholnick



Rosalinda Perez



Dr. Gonzalo Ibarra



Leah Thalheimer-Karam



Santa Cruz County
School Superintendent
Alfredo I. Velásquez



Marina Galhouse

The month of February has been designated by the Santa Cruz County School Superintendent's Office in partnership with First Things First, Mariposa Community Health Center, University of Arizona Family Resource Centers (Nogales, Patagonia and Rio Rico), Child and Family Resources, Inc., Child Care Resource and Referral, Nogales Santa Cruz County Libraries, Santa Cruz County, City of Nogales, Division of Developmental Disabilities, Nogales Unified School District #1, Santa Cruz Valley Unified School District #35, Patagonia Public School Districts #6 and #20, Sonoita Elementary District #25, Santa Cruz Elementary District #28,

Charter Schools, Private Schools, Child Parent Centers Inc. (Nogales, Challenger, Western, and Rio Rico Head Start Centers), Preschools and Child-care. This initiative is in its 8th year of bringing attention to the importance of Early Childhood Education in Santa Cruz County. It also recognizes and celebrates the work of the medical profession, local agencies, educational leaders and institutions, preschool administrators, and teachers that provide the necessary services to nurture and enrich the lives of our young children and their families. During this time, we take the opportunity to honor and recognize those individuals whose contribu-

tions have had an extraordinary influence on our early childhood population and their families throughout the County. Therefore, the Santa Cruz County Early Childhood Education Award of Excellence was created to acknowledge and highlight the work of these individuals whose exemplary leadership, commitment, dedication, and passion has tremendously impacted and left an imprint in this early phase of a child's life. On behalf of the Santa Cruz County School Superintendent, Alfredo I. Velasquez, and partners it is an honor to announce this year's recipients of the 2024 Santa Cruz County Early Childhood Education Award of Excellence.

FEBRUARY
Early Childhood Education Awareness MONTH

Mental Health Starts at Birth

Border Eco Updates

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Tax Season is here

It's important to do your research and ask for recommendations from friends or family members before choosing a tax preparation service. Look for reviews online and check with the Better Business Bureau to ensure the business is reputable. Remember, handing over your personal financial information to an untrustworthy source can have serious consequences. Don't take any chances when it comes to something as important as your taxes. It's crucial to prioritize security and trustworthiness when it comes to handling your financial information, especially during tax season. Taking the time to research and verify the credibility of a business can save you from potential risks and scams. Remember, it's always better to be safe than sorry when it comes to protecting your sensitive data.

Don't forget April 15th Tax Day.



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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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Echoes From the Hilltop

In the art world, Abel Aguilar is making his mark. His works are praised for their intricate detail and complexity. There is a sensation surrounding the art of Aguilar. He has become an inspiration to many inspiring artists. Aguilar has become a symbol of creativity and craftsmanship in the art world. Aguilar's dedication to pushing boundaries and exploring new techniques has set him apart from his peers, solidifying his place as a trailblazer in the art world. As his influence continues to grow, Aguilar remains humble and grateful for the support of his fans and fellow artists. He is committed to using his platform to uplift and empower emerging talents, paying forward the inspiration he once received.

In a world filled with constant change and uncertainty, Abel Aguilar's art serves as a beacon of hope and beauty. His creations remind us of the power of imagination and the transformative potential of creativity.

After moving from Nogales, Sonora Mexico to Nogales, Arizona during middle school, Aguilar attended middle school and high school in Nogales, Arizona before graduating from Pima Community College with an Associate's Degree in psychology. He enjoys playing video games and board games as hobbies.

Abel Aguilar has many achievements under his sleeve. He has painted around 15 murals between Tucson and Nogales Arizona. He won awards like best of show in Tubac center of the arts, also he had participated in more than 20 group shows and 4 solo shows. Abel is an artist at the Hilltop Gallery, he had first solo show there. He is currently working on a new series of large works that combine traditional art from Mexico and Japan and will be painting a couple of small murals on Merlot Ave with other local artists.

Aguilar's perspective on art as an infinite learning experience reflects his deep passion for the creative process. He believes that there is always room for growth and improvement in the arts, and that the constant evolution of styles and techniques keeps the field exciting and dynamic. Aguilar's mention of gatekeeping in the art world suggests that he is aware of the challenges and barriers that artists face in gaining recognition and success. His background in psychology may inform his understanding of human behavior and motivation, which could influence his approach to creating art and navigating the art world.

Overall, Aguilar's diverse experiences and interests contribute to his unique perspective on art and creativity. As a result, Aguilar's work may reflect a deep understanding of the complexities of the human experience and the various factors that can impact an artist's journey.

By acknowledging the role of gatekeeping in the art world, Aguilar demonstrates a commitment to breaking down barriers and creating opportunities for artists from all backgrounds to thrive. His multidisciplinary approach and empathy towards others make his art not only visually captivating but also socially conscious and thought-provoking.

As Aguilar explains, "Art is an infinite learning experience for me, which is why I love it. You can master a certain style, but there is always something new to learn and you can always improve a lot things. I would not change anything about my work, but I would like to change how the art world works, particularly the gatekeeping aspect."

"Forever grateful to my supporters, but especially to those who have endured hard times with me, like my mom, my partner, my artist friends and even the Hilltop Gallery Elizabeth and Janice," added Aguilar.

Follow Aguilar on Instagram at @patoaguilarart to learn more about his artwork.



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March

Multiple Sclerosis Education Month

MS is a chronic illness involving the central nervous system. The immune system attacks myelin, which is the protective layer around nerve fibers. This causes inflammation and scar tissue, or lesions.

Making Connections 4U



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Community Service From the Heart

Electronic Community Resource Guide

www.makingconnections4u.org

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admin@makingconnections4u.org



2024

Spelling Bee



The 2024 Santa Cruz County Spelling Bee was held on Friday February 9th at the VFW Post 2006 in Nogales, AZ. A total of 31 contestants from elementary and middle Schools all over Santa Cruz County competed for the **1st place title**. **8th grade student Alexis Simon from Santa Cruz Elementary School District (Little Red) took the title of champion in this year's competition. In a very close competition, runner up was awarded to 8th grader Seana G. Andres of Desert Shadows Middle School. County Bee champion, Alexis Simon, will be competing in the State Bee to represent Santa Cruz County on March 16, 2024 at Madison Center for the Arts in Phoenix.** This year's official pronouncer was Mr. Larry Frederick of Montessori de Santa Cruz. The three judges were Santa Cruz County Justice of the Peace Honorable Judge Miguel A. Lopez, Santa Cruz County Treasurer Ms. Elizabeth Gutfahr and, Ms. Jovanna Lopez from State Farm Insurance. This annual event is hosted by Santa Cruz County School Superintendent Alfredo I. Velásquez and his office, as well as, partner, Rio Rico Rotary Club. The coordinators from the Santa Cruz County School Superintendent's Office were Briana Rodriguez and Julie A. Ulrich.

Congratulations

SPELLING BEE



1st place title. 8th grade student Alexis Simon from Santa Cruz Elementary School District (Little Red)

Runner up 8th grader Seana G. Andres of Desert Shadows Middle School



Clariza Gastelum: A Beacon of Hope for the Community

Clariza Gastelum has truly been a beacon of hope for the community of Santa Cruz County. Her dedication to helping others achieve their goals is evident in her work as program coordinator and now as Interim Executive Director of NCD. Following the passing of Nils Urman, she stepped up to lead the organization with grace and determination.

Under Clariza's leadership, NCD has been able to secure funds for important projects such as the Kitchen Project and economic development initiatives. Her ability to rally support from the board and volunteers has been instrumental in moving these projects forward and making a positive impact on the community.

Clariza's passion for serving others and her commitment to making a difference in Santa Cruz County is truly inspiring. She is a shining example of what can be accomplished when individuals come together to work towards a common goal. Border Eco is proud to highlight her contributions and celebrate her as a true leader in our community.

"Everything around us affects us in some way, and we always complain about what we don't like, but we don't appreciate what we have in our community," said Mrs. Gastelum. "It's important to recognize those who are doing good and to encourage others to do the same. We should strive to create positive and lasting change in our communities."

Clariza's dedication to improving the lives of those around her is evident in every project she takes on. Her selflessness and drive to create positive change serve as a beacon of hope for the community. We are grateful for her tireless efforts and unwavering commitment to making Santa Cruz County a better place for all.

Mrs. Gastelum's strong family values and close-knit upbringing have greatly influenced her life and the way she interacts with others. She cherishes the time spent with her loved ones, whether it be through family gatherings or serving together in their community. Her dedication to her church shows her commitment to helping others and making a positive impact in the lives of those around her.

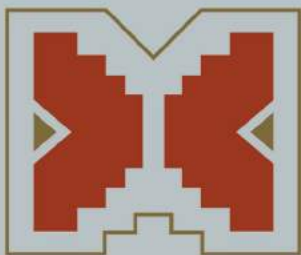
Growing up in Nogales, Arizona, Mrs. Gastelum learned the importance of hard work and perseverance from a young age. This drive led her to pursue further education, obtaining her GED and Accounting Assistance Certificate. Her determination to better herself and provide for her family is evident in all aspects of her life.

Throughout her 50 years in Santa Cruz County, Mrs. Gastelum has been an active member of the community, always willing to lend a helping hand or offer support where needed. Her passion for serving others is truly inspiring and reflects her kind-hearted nature. She continues to be an inspiration to many and is a role model for those wishing to improve their lives. Mrs. Gastelum's story is a testament to the power of hard work and dedication.



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Let's Talk Health

March is National Nutrition Month

National Nutrition Month originally established as a week-long event in 1973, National Nutrition Month expanded to a month-long observance in 1980 due to growing public interest in nutrition.

Every year a theme is selected to celebrate the National Nutrition Month. The selected theme of National Nutrition Month® 2024 is "Beyond the Table."

This theme will highlight:


1. The farm-to-fork aspect of nutrition.
2. Addresses the many ways and places we eat.
3. Emphasizes sustainability efforts.
4. Showcases the expertise of nutrition and dietetics professionals.

Let us examine each topic:

1. The farm to fork of nutrition: Do you know where your food comes from? Do you have a Farmers' market in your area? Do you buy food from the Farmers' market? Here in Nogales, we have a Farmers' market. It is called Nogales Mercado Farmer's Market. The Nogales Mercado—takes place on Fridays from 4 – 7 p.m., and from 3 – 6 p.m. in the winter—is a weekly farmer's market where local growers and vendors offer fresh and healthy food options to the community. Please check it out. Eat Locally and support local businesses.
2. The many ways we eat and places we eat affect our health. As we all know that Two-thirds of American adults are overweight, and half of these are obese. Surely part of the problem is on us, but we live in a toxic environment surround by fast foods and convenient stores that sell cheap and high in calorie foods. Choose wisely when eating out, opt for a salad before the meal.
3. This month is Colorectal awareness Month as well. Have you had your test done yet? Colorectal cancer is the second deadliest cancer in the United States. Yet it's one of the few cancers that's preventable thanks to screening. Smart food choices can reduce the risk of colorectal cancer. In general, the American Cancer Society recommends that adults and children choose diets rich in high-fiber foods, such as whole fruits, veggies, nuts, seeds and whole grains.

Badria Bedri, MS @Mariposa Community Health Center.





PRESIDENTIAL PREFERENCE ELECTION

MARCH 19, 2024

ANITA MORENO
Santa Cruz County Recorder
2150 N. Congress Dr. Ste. 101
Nogales, AZ 85621
520-375-7990
www.santacruzcountyaz.gov/287/Recorder

VOTE EARLY IN PERSON or drop off your ballot at any site below:
VOTE POR ANTICIPADO o entregue su boleta en uno de los siguientes sitios:

Nogales (Monday thru Friday)
February 21 - March 15, 2024 from 8 am to 5 pm
Santa Cruz County Complex, 2150 N. Congress Dr. Ste. 114

Nogales (Saturday) February 24, 2024 from 9 am to 12 pm
Santa Cruz County Complex, 2150 N. Congress Dr. Ste. 114

Tubac (Saturday) March 2, 2024 from 9 am to 12 pm
Tubac Community Center, 50 Bridge Rd.

Rio Rico (Saturday) March 2, 2024 from 2 pm to 5 pm
Gabilondo-Zehntner Centennial County Service Center, 275 Rio Rico Dr.

Patagonia (Saturday) March 9, 2024 from 9 am to 12 pm
Patagonia Town Hall, 310 McKeown Avenue

Sonoita (Saturday) March 9, 2024 from 2 pm to 5 pm
Sonoita Library/County Complex Building, 3147 Highway 83

Official BALLOT DROP BOX locations February 21 through March 19, 2024.
Sitios de CAJAS ELECTORALES oficiales del 21 de febrero hasta el 19 de marzo del 2024.

Nogales

- Santa Cruz County Complex, 2150 N. Congress Dr.
- Nogales Public Library, 518 N. Grand Ave.
- City Hall, 777 N. Grand Ave.

Rio Rico

- Gabilondo-Zehntner Centennial County Service Center, 275 Rio Rico Dr.
- El Ranchito Market, 7 Avenida Pastor

Tubac

- Tubac Community Center, 50 Bridge Rd.


Patagonia

- Patagonia Town Hall, 310 McKeown Ave.

Sonoita

- Sonoita Library/County Complex Building, 3147 Highway 83

On election day, ballot drop boxes close at 7 pm.
El día de la elección, las cajas electorales se cerraran a las 7 pm.



Actual photo of Early Ballot Drop Off Box Foto real de la caja de votación anticipada de boletines

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*** Program Based on Eligibility ***

An equal opportunity employer/program. Auxiliary aids and services are available upon request to individuals with disabilities. Services are made available through federal funding provided by the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act.

Jesus Garcia

Jesus Garcia was a 20-year-old Nogales resident desperately seeking employment. He was going through a difficult time; struggling financially to help his widowed mother after her husband lost his battle with COVID-19.

Jesus walked into the WIOA office on February 24, 2022. He completed the intake assessment and noted he was looking for employment and was interested in obtaining an IT certification. He was referred to Tomas Sanchez, Workforce Development Specialist for HIB Grant for Santa Cruz County (HIB Grant is federally funded specifically for Information Technology and Logistics). During his initial interview, Jesus appeared timid, shy, and a bit confused. However, he continuously demonstrated a great passion for computers and the cyber world.

Jesus provided the program with all eligibility documentation and was found to be eligible for our services. Since Jesus needed a job, and due to his age, we were able to co-enroll him in our WIOA Out-of-School program. Due to this co-enrollment, we were able to offer him the opportunity to Work Experience (WEX). Jesus was able to be placed part-time with our Santa Cruz County IT Department. We were able to provide supportive services to purchase business casual attire consisting of pants, shoes, belt and provided him with five ARIZONA@WORK polo shirts.

Through our HIB Grant Jesus was registered at New Horizons Computer Learning Center in Tucson AZ, to obtain a certificate in Information Technology Network Support Specialist. Jesus attended classes virtually Monday to Thursday from 11:30 AM to 3:30 PM commencing March 14, 2022. He would work in the morning from 8:00 AM to 11:00 AM and would then log in to class on the county IT department premises; where he had the support from knowledgeable professionals who were always available to assist him.

Jesus obtained his certification on June 23, 2022, and applied for an entry-level IT position with the County Superintendent's office. Jesus was selected for the position and is now a County employee. It has been very rewarding to see Jesus progress in life and to be part of this journey.



Revitalizing Nogales: A Look into Community Development Initiatives

Over time, Historic Nogales Main Street evolved into Nogales Community Development, expanding its focus beyond just the downtown area to encompass the entire community. Founded nearly 20 years ago, Nogales Community Development (NCD) has delivered services to individuals, families, and businesses in the area. NCD has been instrumental in creating affordable housing opportunities, providing financial literacy education, and supporting small business development in the Nogales area.

Through their partnerships with government agencies, non-profit organizations, and private businesses, NCD has been able to leverage resources and expertise to maximize impact and reach more individuals in need. The dedication and commitment of the staff at NCD have been key to the organization's success. Their passion for serving the community and their innovative approach to problem-solving have helped NCD become a trusted resource for those seeking assistance. The NCD staff consists of Clariza Gastelum, Interim Executive Director, Javier Espinoza, Program Manager, and Heidi Aguirre, Program Coordinator.

The organization recognized the need for a strategic and coordinated effort to revitalize the area, attract new businesses, and improve infrastructure to support sustainable growth. By bringing together stakeholders from the public and private sectors, NCD aimed to develop innovative solutions that would benefit the entire community. Through partnerships they worked to implement initiatives that continue to enhance the quality of life for residents and visitors alike. By preserving the rich history and cultural identity of Nogales and Santa Cruz County, NCD aimed to establish a dynamic and flourishing community that inspires other communities dealing with comparable obstacles.

Nogales Community Development has been able to implement various programs and initiatives that have had a positive impact on the lives of residents in Nogales and Santa Cruz County. These efforts have not only improved the physical appearance of the community but have also created a sense of pride and unity.

As Nogales Community Development continues to grow and adapt to the changing needs of the community, its mission remains rooted in empowering individuals and fostering a vibrant, inclusive environment for all who call Nogales home. By working together towards common goals, they have built a stronger, more resilient community for future generations to enjoy.

Through ongoing collaboration and dedication, Nogales Community Development is committed to expanding its reach and impact in the community.

By listening to the needs and concerns of the community, they are able to tailor their programs and initiatives to address the most pressing issues facing the community. With a focus on sustainability and inclusivity, they strive to create a lasting legacy of progress and prosperity for all who live and work in the area.

As we look towards the future, NCD remains committed to expanding its services, strengthening their partnerships, and continuing to make a positive impact on the lives of those they serve.

Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) is provided by NCD in partnership with the IRS, the City of Nogales, and several private and public organizations. Individuals and families with low to moderate incomes can receive free tax preparation services through the Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) program. In partnership with the Internal Revenue Service (IRS), NCD runs the program, which is staffed by volunteers who are trained to assist taxpayers in navigating the often complex process of filing their taxes. VITA volunteers assist with basic tax returns, including those for the Earned Income Tax Credit, Child Tax Credit, and other tax credits that can help low-income individuals and families maximize their tax refunds. Overall, Volunteer Income Tax Assistance is a vital program that provides essential support to low-income individuals and families, while also offering a meaningful way for people to make a positive impact in their communities.



NOGALES COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
BUILDING COMMUNITY. ENRICHING LIVES.



Sheriff's Round-Up



The Sheriff's Office celebrated the graduation of 376 fifth grade students who completed the criteria of the D.A.R.E. program. The students earned the privilege to watch a movie at the Oasis Theater and to eat pizza as they enjoyed it in the company of other students from different Santa Cruz County Schools who also completed the D.A.R.E. program. Congratulations to D.A.R.E. instructor Alejandra Estrada for a wonderful job!

The Sheriff's Office participated in the 3rd Annual Historic Salute to the Nogales Buffalo Soldiers of Camp Little in Arizona. This ceremony started in the Nogales Cemetery and concluded downtown at Karam Park.

Santa Cruz County received some much-needed rain and snow which resulted in some spectacular scenes with beautiful landscapes. Santa Cruz County Sheriff's Office participated in the 65th Annual Tubac Festival of the Arts where attendance was great and a good time was had by all. All the best to all!

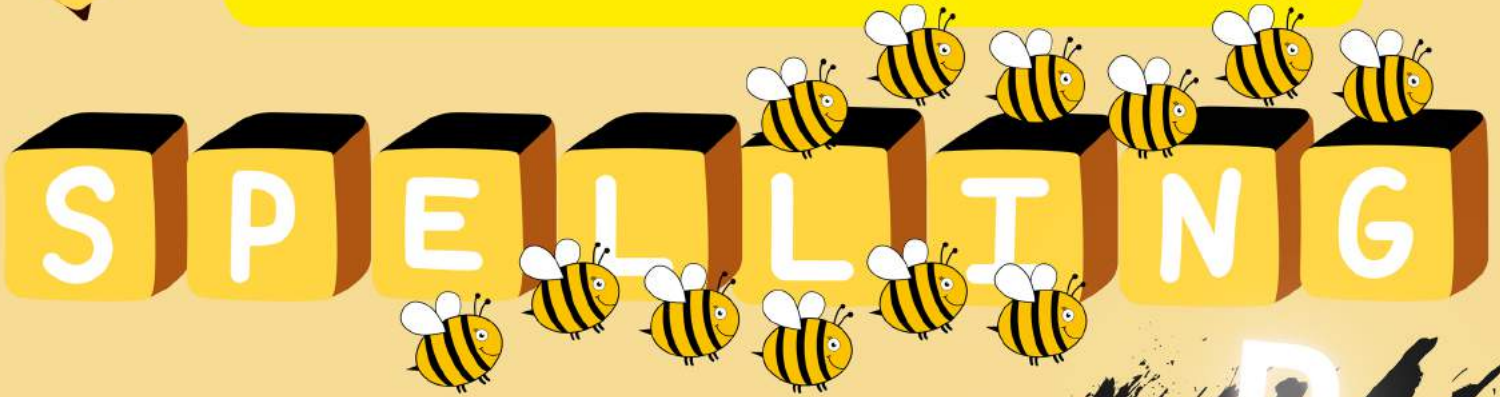
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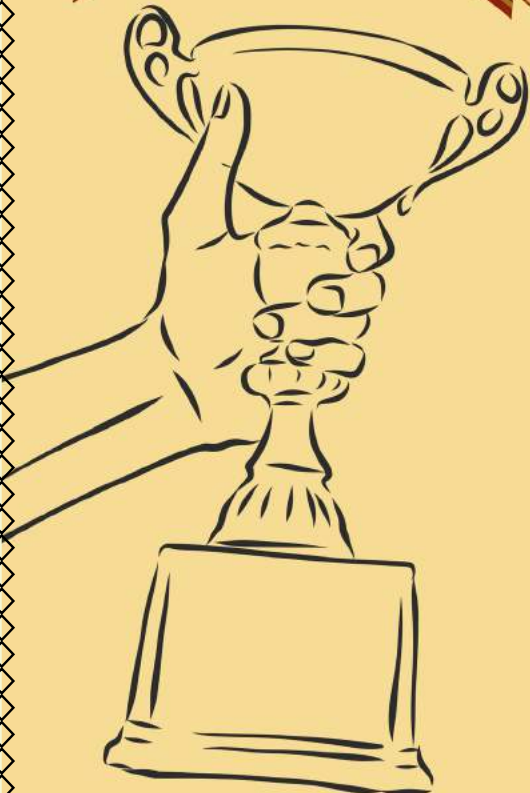


***A Message from the
Santa Cruz County Attorney***



Congratulations!

to all the contestants



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