I am writing my spring newsletter article in January this year, because I am getting ready to visit my family in chilly England. We will be celebrating my mum’s 90th birthday, and she will be meeting her two great-grandchildren from Tucson for the first time. The New Year is getting off to an amazing start for my family, both in Tucson and in England. My Desert Survivors extended family is also getting a good start.

First, the United States Department of Labor has implemented a law that was signed by President Obama. The law is called the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). “WIOA is landmark legislation that is designed to strengthen and improve our nation’s public workforce system and help get Americans, including youth and those with significant barriers to employment, into high-quality jobs and careers and help employers hire and retain skilled workers.” (excerpted from https://www.dol.gov/wioa/) Obviously, this law is wonderful for people with disabilities. It helps provide for them to be treated as equal citizens, to be given opportunities in employment like other citizens. Sadly, people with disabilities—a minority group in our nation and throughout the world—have often suffered abuse and discrimination. This is certainly not the case here at Desert Survivors.

The WIOA legislation also assures that agencies like Desert Survivors are following the regulations and providing abuse and discrimination. This is certainly not the case here at Desert Survivors. The response was greater than anticipated, and the drive brought in about $50,000! The best part is that participants in this campaign should get their money back, in the amount of their donation, credited to them from the State taxes they owed. I especially enjoy that part. I pray that the good fortune bestowed upon our agency by our members and friends continues in the years to come. Thank you so much.

As you know, minimum wage in Arizona increased from $8.05 to $10.00 per hour on January 1. It will continue to increase over the next few years to $12.00 an hour. This is a challenge to Desert Survivors that we accept with the satisfaction of knowing it will be a little easier for minimum-wage workers to make ends meet financially.

The wages of our Vocational Program special workers are paid through funds from plant sales, contract funds through Natural Resources Parks and Recreation of Pima County, and member and private donations; we will be working to increase all three of those revenue sources in order to keep up with the wage increases for them. Regular staff wages for our Vocational Program are paid by a State service contract, which was brought into line with the new minimum wage law through an increase in the payment rate for Group Supported Employment Services. We thank our leaders in State Government for understanding the importance of the services we provide to especially deserving members of our community.

It is important to reiterate that the wages of our special workers are not paid by government contract funds. All wages for our special workers are paid by revenue generated by their tasks in the plant nursery and trail work in combination with contract funds and private donations. These special people are paid for the hard work they perform 250 days a year, in all types of weather and conditions. We are extremely proud of their conscientious and productive work to make the nursery the showcase of Sonoran Desert flora that it is.

As I begin my twenty-third year of service advancing the mission of Desert Survivors, I take pride in what we do and I am grateful for being part of it. I look forward to getting up every day to implement our mission with the amazing employees of our agency.

I hope to see you all at the plant sale. If you need anything from Desert Survivors, please call me at 520-609-8333. I am at your service. God bless everyone.

Richard M. Bechtold
Executive Director

Design: LMBrewer/Bailiwik, Ink; cut-out photo, top: Lycaenid species of butterfly on Asclepias insularis flower buds. Center: Hibiscus coulteri photo by LMBrewer.
Asclepias linaria
(butterflies, bees, and other pollinators).
Our sky islands, typically between 3,500
slopes, canyons, and ridgetops in mostly
species, its preferred habitat includes rocky
south to Oaxaca, Mexico. A montane
This particular
Milkweeds were once considered a full
(pineleaf milkweed)

Euchaetes
incarnata

- Lepidoptera: Noctuidae); milkweed longhorn
tiger moth
Pygotenucha terminalis

- Lepidoptera: Noctuidae); tussock
antica

- Hemiptera: Aphis

Stenocactus vaupelianus
are native to Chihuahua, Mexico, and
this species has tails from Hidalgo. Small and globular,
they are notable for their distinctive waxy multitude
of ribs, and are ideal for container gardening.
Individuals typically do not exceed five or six inches
in diameter. They are cold hardy to at least the mid
20s. Flower color is variable, ranging from pink
to yellow to pale green. Stenocactus vaupelianus
requires better drainage than some of its sister
taxa. It is uncommon in cultivation, and we will be
offering fewer than a dozen of these plants, so take
advantage of the opportunity if they interest you.
Our sale specimens are over five years old.

Table: Stenocactus vaupelianus

*Stenocactus vaupelianus*
(common name)
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All photos this issue by Jim Verrier
unless otherwise noted.

Jim Verrier
Director of Plant Nursery

Program Services: continued from back page
Train, and mentor our employees
in order for them to meet their
full developmental potential.
and, hopefully, move on to
competitive employment either
here at Desert Survivors or at
other nurseries or landscaping
jobs in the community. At Desert
Survivors, we have always strived
to make everyone who walks
through our gate feel welcomed,
supported, recognized for his or
her individual talents and abili-
ties, and is treated with equal
respect—from the CEO down to
the newest employee, as well as
every customer who shops here.
Desert Survivors is truly a fully
integrated nursery.

Karen Wilson
Director of Program Services