

SSVEC

Currents

LOCAL STORIES ABOUT LOCAL COMMUNITIES

NOVEMBER | DECEMBER 2025

A great romp of a grape stomp

Stomping grapes
at the 13th annual
Great Crush Festival
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in to Sierra Vista
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ON THE COVER

Merry participants dressed in white gowns jump up and down in wooden vats of grenache grapes during the 13th annual Great Crush Festival at AZ Hops and Vines in Sonoita. See the story on page 18.

COVER PHOTO BY ALAN HOM



Jason Bowling, CEO
Sulphur Springs Valley
Electric Cooperative

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Springs Valley Electric
Cooperative (SSVEC).
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Member equity: **Your share in SSVEC**

Most utility customers pay a bill and that is the end of it. SSVEC members own the cooperative. That ownership comes with real value: **MEMBER EQUITY.**

We are updating the name “capital credits” to “member equity” so the meaning is clearer at a glance. Member equity is your share of the cooperative’s margins. Each year, when revenues exceed expenses, your portion is allocated to your account. We use that equity to build and maintain lines, substations, and technology that keep power reliable and affordable. When financial conditions allow, our board retires a portion of prior years and returns it to members.

Why this change now? Our recent surveys tell us that only one in three members say they understand they are member-owners. The rest think of themselves as customers or are unsure. Ownership should not feel abstract. Member equity makes the relationship plain. It links your bill, our system investments, and the checks or bill credits you receive over time.

What does not change: The program itself. Allocations and retirements continue under our established financial policies. You will still see year-end communications that explain retirements and how to ensure delivery, especially if you have moved. If you have unclaimed funds from prior years, our team can help you reconnect those dollars with the right member.

What does change: How simply and consistently we talk about it. You will begin seeing “member equity (formerly capital credits)” in print, on our website, and on your bill inserts. Over time we will shorten to “member equity” once everyone is comfortable with the updated term.

Timing is also important. As of this writing, the board has not yet met in October to evaluate options for handling member equity. Once that meeting concludes, you will see communications from SSVEC through our usual channels explaining the board’s decisions and what they mean for you.

What member equity says about us: SSVEC operates at cost, focused on service. We do not send profits to distant shareholders. We invest in this system and in this community, then return value to the people who use the power. That is the cooperative difference.

How you can engage: Come to our annual meeting, vote in board elections, and consider serving when a seat opens. Follow our updates, keep your contact information current, and encourage neighbors to activate their SmartHub account so they never miss a retirement notice.

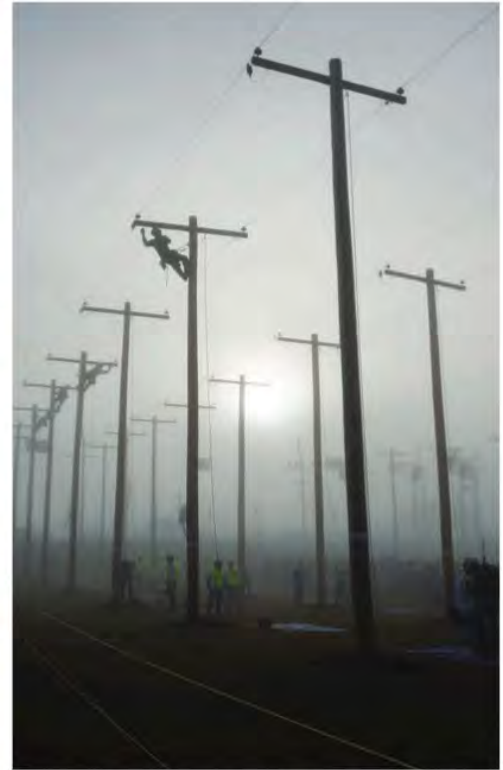
Member equity tells the story of ownership in two words. It is your share in SSVEC, and it grows stronger when members are informed and involved.

Sincerely,
Jason Bowling, CEO, SSVEC



www.ssvec.org

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ABOVE: A hazy morning greeted linemen competing in the annual International Lineman's Rodeo in Bonner Springs, Kansas, October 17. LEFT: SSVEC Journeyman Lineman Efen Gallego readies for his turn climbing a utility pole at the annual International Lineman's Rodeo competition.

SSVEC posts top 10 REA finish at International Lineman's Rodeo

For the first time in the 87-year history of the Sulphur Springs Valley Electric Cooperative (SSVEC), a team of journeymen linemen joined apprentices in competing at the 41st Annual International Lineman's Rodeo in Bonner Springs, Kansas on October 15 to 18.

The competition tests linemen on core skills necessary for their jobs, including hurt-man rescue, pole climbing, and mystery events.

Journeymen representing SSVEC, including Efen Gallego, Jacob Shull, and Jesus Hernandez, placed seventh among Rural Electric Association (REA) teams, recording clean scores across every event with no point deductions.

"This is our first year competing in the journeyman division, and the results and performance of our journeymen and apprentices make us proud and speak to their level of professionalism,"

said Jason Bowling, Chief Executive Officer at SSVEC.

Apprentices Sawyer McDonald, Marcus Olivares, Coby Hall, and Austin Barney also stepped up big in the competition, delivering disciplined, safety-first performances across the events and representing SSVEC with pride.

"That's really where it starts," said Nathan Hodges, Senior Vice President of Operations at SSVEC. "Thanks to the experience and skills of our journeymen, SSVEC has developed a strong culture of safety and proficiency that gets passed on to our apprentices."

The Lineman's Rodeo attracts the best linemen and apprentices from around the world to compete in events based on traditional lineman tasks. After more than 40 years, the International Lineman's Rodeo & Expo still proves to be the industry's most valued premier event of its kind for the electric utility industry.

Riggs Field Day



ABOVE: Students attending the annual Riggs Field Day competition, held September 17th, represented seven schools in a competition matching skills in range, wildlife, soils and forestry. Some 76 students, all members of Future Farmers of America at their respective schools, continued a tradition that began with the first Riggs Field Day in November 1971. LEFT: SSVEC Key Accounts Manager Jenny Downing (left) and Patina Thompson of the Willcox-San Simon Natural Resources Conservation District (NRCD), enjoyed a moment at the annual Riggs Field Day. Ms. Thompson is a main organizer of the event.

SSVEC donates to two county fairs



ABOVE: SSVEC donated to 4-H and FFA auctions at two county fairs recently. At the Santa Cruz County Fair (photo above) SSVEC donated \$1,500 and AZG&T donated \$1,000. RIGHT: At the Cochise County Fair, SSVEC donated \$3,500 to the organizations. Pictured are (front row from the left) Cora Madson, and Zoe Sarten. In the back row (from the left), SSVEC Key Accounts Manager Jenny Downing, Gabriella Brandt, Addison Burright, Lindsay Hampton, Koral Sainz, Rhett Wade, and SSVEC Energy Management Specialist Samantha Gonsowski. PHOTO PROVIDED BY SYDNEY N. FITE OF FITE DESIGNS



New substation brings reliability, new technology to St. David

Construction of a first-of-its-kind substation just outside St. David was completed in late September, providing members of the Sulphur Springs Valley Electric Cooperative (SSVEC) with significant improvements in service reliability, automation, and expansion, Vice President of Engineering Jesus Moreno reported.

"We've replaced a wood-frame facility that was at least 50 years old, with a state-of-the-art substation that incorporates the latest technology and provides an opportunity for future expansion," Moreno said.

The project involved working closely with Apache Nitrogen, a leading manufacturer of ammonium nitrate-based products located next to both the old and new substations.

"The new substation plays a crucial role in ensuring the safe and reliable delivery of power, which is vital for Apache Nitrogen's continuous manufacturing processes," said Jason Morgan, Apache's General Manager. "Additionally, the substation enhances our load management capabilities and offers future scalability, aligning with our evolving power requirements."

Moreno said the new infrastructure is the first "ring bus" substation design on the SSVEC grid.

"This will increase the reliability of the substation and allows for the installation of an additional transformer, if needed," Moreno said.

It is also the first substation that is compatible with SSVEC's new Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition (SCADA) system, which is vital to the distribution of electricity on the grid.

"The additional automation built into the new St. David substation will provide essential feedback and information to our

technicians, which increases our overall reliability and allows a faster response when there is an outage," Moreno said.

Two years ago, the wood-frame substation caught fire and the damage from that event prompted SSVEC to proceed with plans to construct the new facility, Moreno said.

SSVEC line crews completed the final task of the project at the end of September when they retired an existing transmission line from the old substation, and installed a new line connected to the now-operational St. David facility.

Apache Nitrogen cooperated on the line retirement, graciously agreeing to shut down its plant operations on the day the project was undertaken.

Plant Operations Manager, Dennis Hayes, highlighted the new capacity of new substation to regulate voltage, which is essential for protecting Apache's sensitive manufacturing equipment from potential damage caused by power fluctuations.

"We expect the incorporation of modern, remotely managed equipment will significantly reduce downtime and mitigate weather-related outages," Hayes said.



ABOVE: The new state-of-the-art St. David Substation. **LEFT:** The old wood-frame St. David Substation. **FAR LEFT:** Apache Nitrogen cooperated on the line retirement by agreeing to shut down the plant on the day the new substation went online.



ABOVE: the SSVEC mobile safety trailer just before linemen set up the display. LEFT: Eric Jones, SSVEC Journeyman, dishes out candy at the annual National Night Out on October 7 in Sierra Vista. PHOTOS BY JASON BOWLING

National Night Out

SSVEC was on hand Tuesday, October 7, for the annual National Night Out event at Veterans' Memorial Park in Sierra Vista.

The Cooperative proudly displayed its Safety Demonstration Trailer, with live presentations of how to stay safe in situations that involve electricity.

The night is sponsored by the Sierra Vista Police Department.

Featuring free fun, National Night Out featured an impressive array of public safety organizations, with on-scene equipment demonstrations, games, and free take home items, promoting each agency and the vital services they provide.

Training for the unexpected:

SSVEC's Emergency Response Drill

For linemen in the electric service industry, danger is a constant companion. Whether repairing energized lines 30 feet in the air or restoring power after storms and wildfires, these professionals face risks most people never encounter.

That reality was at the center of three Sulphur Springs Valley Electric Cooperative (SSVEC) "Mayday Drills," conducted in Willcox, Benson, and Sierra Vista. Each involved SSVEC personnel, who coordinated with local first responder agencies.

"Training like this ensures everyone knows who to call, when to call, and what to expect," said Matt Riesgo, SSVEC Safety Manager.

Lineman training emphasized CPR and first aid, while responders practiced rapid coordination with the SEACOM emergency dispatch center, a first-responder helicopter service, and local fire, police and rescue organizations.

"Working together with first responders builds confidence and ensures the best possible outcome when real emergencies happen," said Steve Garate, SSVEC Training and Development Manager.

Through realistic drills, SSVEC continues to strengthen safety awareness, teamwork, and readiness—ensuring crews are prepared for the unexpected.



Medical technicians roll a SSVEC lineman to the Lifeline emergency helicopter for transportation to the hospital in Benson as part of the Mayday Drill.



LEFT: SSVEC linemen work with the Sierra Vista Fire Department at the scene of a mock emergency during a Mayday Drill. RIGHT: SSVEC linemen, together with Benson first responders, practice CPR as part of the utility's Mayday Safety drill in Benson. PHOTOS BY MICHELLE HUNTER



Willcox Fire Department Captain Weaver and Willcox Police Administrative Assistant Melissa Teeters are ready to ring in the holidays for the local Salvation Army. Look for the annual bell ringers stationed outside the Willcox Safeway store, sometimes manned by volunteers from SSVEC as well as other community organizations!
PHOTO BY MICHELLE HUNTER

Ring in the Holiday Spirit of Giving

Holiday cheer, a smiling volunteer in a red Salvation Army apron, and a ringing bell for donations is a common holiday season sight. However, what you may not know is just how helpful your spare change can be.

Donations are always kept local, and a large majority are generated through holiday bell ringing; emphasizing how impactful this annual event is.

In addition to monetary donations, canned food, bathroom supplies, and clothing are consistent needs.

If you or your business would like to volunteer for one or more days as a bell ringer, or donate in other ways, call your local office for more information.

- Sierra Vista: (520) 459-8411
- Benson: (520) 459-4612
- Willcox: (520) 766-4231

Energy Day at SSVEC

Members of the 2025 Leadership Class, sponsored by the Sky Island Regional Partnership (SIRP), gathered Thursday, Oct. 9, to tour the Sulphur Springs Valley Electric Cooperative (SSVEC) construction and maintenance yard in Benson. Class members listened to a presentation by CEO Jason Bowling before attending a hands-on presentation by SSVEC line crews demonstrating electrical safety and explaining what's involved in maintaining reliable electrical service for the Cooperative's more than 60,000 meters.



Chock-full of ch

By R.J. Cohn

If you're a chocoholic, this is the place of your dreams.

Even if you're not, Ruby's Divine Chocolates is about as divine as Willy Wonka's Chocolate Factory, except this dream of a candy store on State Route 92 next to Nirvana's Cup of Joe is mouthwateringly real.

Loaded with handmade artisan chocolates shining like jewels in a display case carrying passion fruit caramel, black currant marzipan and key lime chocolate, this may be what paradise looks like.

Try tasting just one of Robert and Jessica Ishoy's candies – if you can stop at one – and you'll realize that this heavenly little store really is a piece of paradise, a chocolate mecca in the middle of the high desert packed with more chocolate delights than you could ever imagine.

Make no mistake: When you step into Ruby's Divine Chocolates, it's divinely difficult to leave.

Nobody locks up their sweet tooth when they go to Ruby's.

With wondrous-looking candies staring at you from a refrigerated case the moment you walk in, you're practically on cruise-control sauntering past the likes of roasted raspberry, espresso and amaretto chocolates. When they introduced the new rage of candy, Dubai chocolate, it sold out immediately. They've re-ordered 300 pieces, most of which are pre-sold.

"When a customer walks in and I give them a sample, I tell them they have to eat it in front of me," said Ishoy, an Army veteran who helps support Sierra Vista's Warrior Healing Center. "I watch their eyes go wide, look at me and say 'wow, I'll never eat another piece of candy but this.' Happens all the time."

Started in 2017 a few miles from their current location, the Ishoys took a leap of faith in a jump-starting a niche chocolate business in a community they weren't sure would embrace their love of gourmet chocolate.

"You couldn't find any really good chocolate in Sierra Vista 10 years ago, and we got tired of driving to Tucson for it,"



ABOVE: An overwhelming sight assorted range of artisan chocolates.**TOP:** Owners Jessica (on the right) and Robert Ishoy are welcoming faces when walking into Ruby's Divine Chocolates. **PHOTOS BY** MONIQUE VARGAS





Chocolate choices



said Jessica Ishoy. “Robert’s dad had a chocolate shop, and he’s been a chocolate fanatic ever since. We had a feeling we weren’t the only ones.”

Their hunch panned out.

Customers who loved quality chocolate discovered Ruby’s Divine Chocolates, named after their daughter, plus it had an old-time candy store ring to it. Word that the Ruby’s was the go-to place for the best chocolate this side of Tucson quickly spread. They added a line of gourmet coffees, popcorn, jerky, tea and products like maple bourbon balsamic olive oils. Suddenly, they had a gourmet food store on their hands.

“We did a lot of research before we opened,” said Robert, who also works as a contractor at Fort Huachuca. “We found three of the finest chocolatiers in Arizona because we wanted to sell the highest-quality chocolates at the most affordable price. That’s something that’ll never change, even though I drive round-trip nine hours east of Phoenix for our products.”

Don’t think even for a minute that operations like Ruby’s are only busy on Valentine’s Day and Halloween. The chocolate industry is positioned

for sweet success all year. Last year, revenue in the global chocolate confectionery market reached more than \$254 billion and is slated to grow annually by 5.63% through 2028, according to Statista, an online data-gathering platform.

“We’ve done well since we opened,” said Jessica. “Christmas, Valentines and Mother’s Day are big ones for us. Our regular customers have supported us from day one and have stayed true to us all these years. We’ve gained new ones who’ve become just as loyal.”

It’s more than their quality chocolate that makes the store connect with customers. Jessica Ishoy has redefined customer service to another level in an era where it’s become almost extinct.

“She’ll get a call from someone who can’t make it in for a box of candy, and she’ll do a home delivery, or meet a cus-

tommer at the shop after hours,” said her husband. “She goes that extra mile without hesitation.”

But Jessica Ishoy sees it differently.

“Our customers are like family,” she said. “Who doesn’t go out of their way for their family?” ■

Robert pours a sample of gourmet olive oil, which comes in a variety of flavors.



Yoga Community Center class attendees utilize their hanging yoga silks to stretch and maneuver into various poses. PHOTO BY MONIQUE VARGAS

Like a butterfly in a cocoon

Aerial yoga swings in to Sierra Vista

By R.J. Cohn

If you always want to dangle in the air like a trapeze artist, you don't have to run away to join a circus.

Instead of swinging from trapeze riggings 50 feet off the ground, you can do it safely and more therapeutically in Sierra Vista through aerial yoga at My Yoga Community Center on State Route 92 next to Nirvana's My Cup of Joe.

In a novel twist that takes traditional yoga to a new level, aerial yoga allows you to suspend in mid-air cocooned in a silk hammock mounted from the ceiling while performing yoga poses and movements, many which aren't achievable on the floor.

"It offers another option in stretching your body, giving you a wider range of motion while being supported by a swaying hammock," says My Yoga studio owner Justin Westbrook, who has a M.A. in yoga therapy. "You feel calm and invigorated, both during and after the workout."

Yoga instructors like Westbrook – who opened his studio in 2022 offering seven different forms of yoga -- say aerial yoga builds strength and flexibility

along with helping to reduce stress and anxiety.

"The resistance you get from the apparatus when you pull and climb on the hammock provides you with a kind of exercise you can't do on floors," says Westbrook, one of the studio's two aerial instructors. "Plus, it promotes a sense of relaxation by being cradled in a hammock that's also supporting your body, even when doing some inverted positions."

Also known as anti-gravity yoga, the practice combines yogic postures with elements of Pilates, dance and a touch of acrobatics.

But you don't have to be a super-limber acrobat or a top-level athlete to get the swing of aerial yoga.

All you do is let the hammock do the work.

The swaying and almost-floating sensation from the suspended hammock gives a sense of weightlessness, which – according to a study in a Research and Dance Education journal – reduces anxiety and promotes contemplative states. Proponents say the hammock's support also provides deeper relaxation, releases tension in tight muscles, can

improve blood circulation and relax one's nervous system.

"I see a lot of exhilaration and smiles when people try it, even for the first time," says Westbrook, "especially after they step into the hammock and become inverted. There are a lot of different varieties of yoga like restorative and chair yoga. Aerial yoga is another form, and everyone has been asking about it."

It's been so popular since Westbrook introduced it in February that he currently has a waiting list for people wanting to try it. Offering one weekly session with nine hammocks, Westbrook is planning to expand classes by the end of summer. He also offers private classes for those seeking more of a one-on-one approach or have conflicting time schedules.

"Aerial yoga is simply another form of exercise that creates movement in the body," says Westbrook. "We have community members from 7 to over 60 doing it. Everyone, regardless of body size, has been successful at it and are enjoying themselves participating in this. It's been wonderful seeing community members taking to aerial yoga like this." ■

ADOBE STOCK IMAGE BY DAVID KREUZBERG

Yaqui hideout

By Larry Scott

It's a sort of walled compound. Patrick said, "When you arrive at the blue bench, text me, and I'll come out and unlock the gate."

I found the blue bench, parked nearby, and sent Patrick a text. Sure enough, he came out and let me in. Not your typical B&B, I'm thinking.

Inside Yaqui Hideout, the walls are high, covered with murals by local artists, which may be viewed at <https://www.exploredouglas.org/pearce-murals/>.

"The walls are not there to protect against wild buffalo or foreign invasion," Patrick jests. "They do provide welcome protection against the wind." To me, it suggests a sort of near-east ambiance.

Certainly, it creates the perfect environment for astronomy buffs. The location, in the desert just off Kansas Settlement road, is remote — quiet, and peaceful. Where the night sky is black and the stars clear and bright — as at Chiricahua Astronomy Complex in the Turkey Creek area nearby. The courtyard walls block any man-made light from the surrounding region.

Exactly right for setting up your telescope to look deep into space. And, when you finish taking in the wonders of heaven, in the early hours of a new day, your guestroom is right there — a few yards away.

Birders particularly love the location, in the flight path of the Sandhill Cranes

and other birds between the Willcox Playa and Whitewater Draw. It's a world-class birder's paradise. Looking to the South, more than 300 species of birds have been identified over recent years.

From out front near the Blue Bench, one can look back up the road, directly into the awesome cliffs and rock formations of Cochise Stronghold — a dream destination for hikers, photographers, birders, and (crazy) mountain climbers.

Yaqui Hideout also provides the perfect refuge for folks who just need an escape from the rat-race. With only three guest rooms available it's never overcrowded; generally, there are no more than six guests on the property at once.

While partners Patrick and Bob have no aspirations to run a theme park, there are certainly attractions.

Kids of all ages love the Great Pyrenees dogs, Marshal and Miss Kitty. And those crazy donkeys, Ravioli and Cannoli. There are also sheep, but they aren't particularly interested in socializing — a bit skittish, actually. And the owls in the barn — look but please don't disturb.

There's a Basket Weaving Studio, where Bob does his thing! His baskets incorporate hand dyed reed and various weave techniques, which make for colorful creations. He sells baskets and teaches basket weaving and loom skills at local arts and crafts festivals as well as to guests and friends of Yaqui Hideout.

Bob teaches locally and at guilds — Basket Artisans of Arizona, Bisbee Fiber Arts Guild, and at Missouri Basket Convention. Twice, he's competed at the World Wicker and Weaving Festival in Poland.

Yaqui Hideout is also known as a Lavender farm. Lavender is an aromatic evergreen plant that is native to the Mediterranean region, including the countries France, Spain and Italy. While the fragrance of dried lavender is wonderful, it's more than just a pretty fragrance - some claim health benefits — that the oil and calming scent can help reduce stress and improve sleep.

At Yaqui Hideout, guests enjoy a continental breakfast which includes Lavender Scones or muffins, fresh-baked with the just enough culinary lavender to wow - but not overwhelm - one's tastebuds. Amazing! ■

Yaqui Hideout Lavender Farm

Bed & Breakfast • Basket Weaving • Lavender Products

3661 E Antelope Rd Pearce, AZ 85625

Ph: 520-222-6122 • Cell: 480-455-2388

Info@YaquiHideout.com

www.YaquiHideout.com

FROM LEFT: Break time! The Owl, mural by local artist Sandy Lee. Lavender at sunset. BACKGROUND: Front gate and wall, under a full moon. PHOTO COURTESY OF YAQUI HIDEOUT



An INNOVA approach

Sky Island School of Nature and the Arts seeks to enrich kids' education

By R.J. Cohn



Sky Island School of Nature and the Arts owner/director Heather Heredia.

TIVE



For parents looking for a more innovative approach to their childrens' early education, the Sky Island School of Nature and the Arts may offer the curriculum they've been seeking, one that stimulates curiosity while nurturing the joy of education.

Combining nature-based classes with core subjects, the K-5 private school in Hereford provides an educational experience that's different from traditional education; it encourages hand-on projects while connecting students with nature and the arts, which the school's director says has the ability to enrich them mentally, emotionally as well as physically.

"We've found that this is something families are looking for," said owner/director Heather Heredia, an arts education teacher who has been teaching for 13 years. "Parents want an environment that fully engages their child, reduces behavioral issues and fosters emotional regulation. We've been working around the clock to get everything ready. We're really excited because we feel the school has so much to offer."

Spread across nearly three acres at the base of the Huachuca Mountains thick with cottonwoods and a wetlands area, Heredia and her husband purchased the school this summer from the Arizona Arts Academy. Complete with an outdoor amphitheater, an indoor pool, dance studio, six classrooms and a culinary arts cottage, Heredia already had more than a dozen students enrolled in July. The school plans to have six full-time and six part-time teachers when it opens in August. She anticipates having 75 students – 15 for each grade level – by 2026.

"Since word has gotten out about the school, everything has been moving very quickly," said Heredia, who taught at the American Leadership Academy and at every school in the the Sierra Vista Unified School District as a substitute teacher. "We want to inspire a child's creativity and curiosity through project-based learning, and make education exciting and fun instead of stressful. At least 50% of parents we've talked to about our approach love this concept."

Along with basic subjects, the school will immerse students in hands-on courses like theater, dance, music, culinary arts, swimming, yoga, field sports and agriculture, where they'll learn to grow vegetables, milk goats and collect eggs from chickens. They'll also learn Spanish and explore the outdoors with daily nature hikes throughout the property.

"I saw first-hand how my two children thrived in a nature-based preschool at the Conscious Child Preschool & Learning Center," said Heredia. "It was an empowering, healthy learning experience, and I want to bring that experience into the lives of K-5 students."

Since Sky Island School of Nature and the Arts is a tuition-based private school, parents can access Arizona's Empowerment Scholarship Account

“Parents want an environment that fully engages their child, reduces behavioral issues and fosters emotional regulation.”

— Heather Heredia, Owner/Director

(ESA), a school voucher program that allows students to receive public funds to pay for private school tuition, homeschooling or other qualified educational expenses. It allows parents to choose the best educational setting for their children instead of being limited to an assigned public school.

Heredia said the ESA program will pay 100 percent of the school's tuition.

"This is a school where we want children to ask questions about everything they see and learn and make their early education as enriching and stimulating as it can possibly be," said Heredia. "At Sky Island School, they're going to connect with nature and their peers and have a real sense of accomplishment through the arts. What's not to like about this?"

For more information, call 520-222-9459 or email info@skyislandschool.org. ■

St. Vincent de Paul volunteers and walk attendees gather for a group photo before marching on for the yearly "Friends of the Poor" walk, which raises donations to help their neighboring communities.
PHOTOS BY MONIQUE VARGAS



Food bank becomes a lifeline

St. Vincent de Paul's Food Bank stretches its safety net into a lifeline

By R.J. Cohn

Fifteen minutes before St. Vincent de Paul's Food Bank opens its doors, the parking lot is full, cars are bumper-to-bumper on Bartow Street, and families on belt-tight budgets are also coming for a food box that will keep them fed for another month.

With food prices continually rising — along with a nearly a 1 percent spike in the city's unemployment rate from last August — the little 600-square foot food bank tucked away on the West End since 1995 has become more than a safety net for putting food in the bellies of the impoverished.

With more than 19,000 pounds of donated food distributed each month to Sierra Vista's needy, it's become an absolute lifeline for those faced with the insecurity of something as basic as putting a meal on the table.

"The need here is constantly outpacing the amount of donations we take in," said food bank president Pauline Frederick. "Since Covid blasted the Sierra Vista

economy, the need for assistance on every level from food to rent payments has been significantly greater. We're helping people facing hard times and ridiculously high rents who are just trying to get by."

Donations from individuals, Target, Walmart, Safeway, Fry's, and decades of support from St. Andrew the Apostle Catholic Church parishioners have kept its shelves stocked and refrigerators filled with milk, which arrives on Monday. By Thursday, those gallons are practically gone.

"We're that safety net for many who were hit hard by Covid, circumstances and other factors," said Frederick. "We'll do everything we can to keep them out of homelessness. We've become a lifeline. We're feeding over 4,000 family members with 1,200 to 1,400 food boxes a month. They count on what this food bank can deliver."

For 22 years, food bank manager Stan Garner has been like a ship's rudder, building community connections with grocery stores and food distributors that

have kept St. Vincent de Paul a pipeline for the needy, especially during the last few years when the Consumer Price Index (CPI) says groceries have been 29 percent higher since before the pandemic.

Even though donations are still coming to the Catholic nonprofit, Garner said the amount is less than in previous years. Revenue generated from St. Vincent de Paul's thrift store is earmarked for the food bank and also helps with utility and rent assistance.

"These are tough economic times," he said. "We're seeing a little less than in past years. But I understand the drop off, and I can't fault it. People have to feed their own families first before helping needy ones. Food is expensive. We've had to cut the food bank's budget a few times already this year and have been supplementing other foods for certain products we normally wouldn't. We're making it work. Families are still taking home their food boxes."

Garner and the rest of St. Vincent de Paul's volunteers keep making it workday

after day because they know the need for food among Sierra Vista's impoverished is that great and is not going away.

In a hallway near the food bank's back room, Garner's connections with an independent bread route driver from Bimbo Bakeries brought in dozens of donated pallets of bread — over 10,000

pounds — including brand names like Oroweat that normally sell between \$4 to \$6 per loaf.

"It'll last about a week," he said. "That's how great the need is here right now, more so than ever with winter coming on and the possibility of homelessness for many."

That's why St. Vincent de Paul, which operates one of the area's primary food distribution centers, held its annual Walk for the Poor in September highlighting the growing need for food assistance while collecting donations. Participants also brought a nonperishable food item for the food bank.

While food prices rose by .06 percent from July to August — which according to the latest CPI from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics was the fastest monthly change for groceries since October 2022 — Frederick and Garner know that the need for donations to keep the food bank stocked for what may be a difficult holiday season for many is essential.

"St. Andrews' Fr. Greg Adolf once said we may not be a wealthy parish, but we've always been a generous one," said Garner. "We've been blessed for years for what everyone has given to keep the food bank going for this community. The need is here, and so are we." ■



Saint Vincent de Paul Community Food Bank
Amount of Food that was used in 50 food boxes
on September 4, 2025

50 BOXES CEREAL	\$169.00
HAMBURGER HELPER 66 BOXES	\$ 66.00
98 BOXES MAC & CHEESE	\$ 77.00
50 JARS JELLY	\$100.00
50 JARS PEANUT BUTTER	\$115.00
146 CANS VEGETABLES	\$130.00
48 CANS TUNA	\$ 48.00
106 CANS SOUP	\$211.00
50 CANS CHILI	\$100.00
74 CANS SPAGHETTI	\$148.00
70 SPAGHETTI	\$ 70.00
50 CANS BLACK BEANS	\$ 50.00
50 CANS FRUIT	\$ 90.00
146 PACKAGES RAMEN	\$ 49.00

\$1423.00 RETAIL
160 PEOPLE WERE FED

EXTRA ITEMS ARE ADDED AS DONATED

MEAT	OTHER CANNED GOODS	CANDY
PRODUCE	RICE	BREAD GOODS
EGGS	BEANS	PASTA
MILK	DRY MILK	HONEY
SOFT DRINKS	COOKING OIL	
FROZEN GOODS		

CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE: A poster representing food purchased and how many people were helped helps to keep morale up. Volunteers Jane Chambers and Bert Desvigne fill carts with food in preparation for pick up. "Friends of the Poor" walk begins.





A great romp of a *grape stomp*

By R.J. Cohn

It's sloppy and sticky, gooey and gummy, yet merry participants dressed in white gowns while jumping up and down in wooden vats of grenache grapes during the 13th annual Great Crush Festival at AZ Hops and Vines in Sonoita.

More than anything, the barefoot grape stomp gave them a hands-on — or feet-on — immersion into the ancient process of early winemaking, connecting them directly to the fruit, the land as well as a thick pile of toe jam that took a lot of rinsing from a nearby hose to clear away.

Also known as foot treading or pigeage — a French winemaking term for the traditional stomping of grapes in open fermentation tanks — more than 250 Arizonans from Phoenix to Sierra Vista merrily stomped and clomped over thick clumps of purple grapes, breaking open their skins





TOP: Bella Nugent of Tucson and Sabrina Jordan of Phoenix celebrate the 13th annual Great Crush Festival at AZ Hops and Vines.

OPPOSITE PAGE: Sharon Russell of Fountain Hills, Heather Sunshine of Phoenix and T.J. and Parker Macaluso clomp their feet through vats of grenache grapes at the Great Crush Festival. PHOTOS BY ALAN HOM

ADOBE STOCK IMAGES
BY COMICSANS,
EMMASTOCK,
UNCLE-ICE



to release juice and color while hopefully keeping the seeds intact.

Wine aficionados will tell you that stomping grapes with your bare feet provides more flavor over the wine's flavor profile.

But AZ Hops and Vines co-owner Megan Stranik has turned the method of maceration once used in traditional winemaking into an annual house party filled with music, food and the vineyard's wine that could rival the Roman grape stomping festivals of the Maenads, the female followers of Dionysus, the god of winemaking.

"We haven't gotten rich yet from growing grapes and producing them into wine, but we're definitely having a heck of a good time," said Stranik, who purchased the 10-acre property fronting State Route 82 with her sister in 2011 before opening the following year after planting 8,000 vines. "Even though we have 10 varieties that yield six tons of grapes a year that fill 300 cases, it's always a challenge growing grapes in Arizona."

Along with her sons, Stranik said she and her sister Shannon Zouzoulas are constantly replacing their grape vines.

"We now have 6,000 producing vines and 2,000 that are growing," she said. "It's constant work, but it's a total blast working with your kids. I never get tired of this."

Neither do the annual partygoers and grape stompers, who have been returning for the Great Crush Festival that never disappoints for more than a decade, leaving those wearing white-gowns and togas berry-stained from a half-ton of grenache grapes the vineyard turns into a red wine and two varieties of rose.

"I fell in love with wine before I started this, but I had to learn everything about it from growing to producing by volunteering at wineries in the area in 2007," said Stranik. "They were thrilled to help me, steered me in the right direction, and it's been a labor of love ever since." ■

Women's club inspires a love of reading

By R.J. Cohn

Once flush with more than 120 members, the Woman's Club of Sierra Vista has left an indelible mark on Sierra Vista for more than 50 years.

From initiating the first city park band shell and starting the Meals on Wheels program, to raising funds for a ramada at Veterans' Memorial Park, the nonprofit organization has also championed numerous scholarships and children's programs.

Its contributions to the growth of the community — including handcrafting quilts for veterans in area hospices — has never wavered, even in the face of economic hardship.

Despite a sharp decline in its membership in the last 18 years, the organization is still focused on its commitment to carrying the torch of the city, especially when it comes to raising the bar for children's literacy.

"We saw a big need to develop a literacy program for children from birth to five years of age," said Ellie Mae Frakes, the organization's treasurer and member since 2007. "We found that families either didn't have resources to purchase books for their kids or didn't have a strong interest in reading. We felt we needed to get involved."

The club did more than get involved.

Believing it could make a difference in the lives of young children, it started an ambitious program in 2014 by introducing the world of books to kids and their families through a once-a-month Read-A-Thon project at the Mall at Sierra Vista. It also hosted a well-attended Legos Build-A-Thon in the mall once a year that sparks the imagination of children.

"We're a group of women of diverse interests who want to serve the community and make positive changes," said Frakes. "It was more than just about reading books to children. We added crafts that were related to the stories and made the entire program interactive so that they could have a direct 'feel' of the story with stickers and paper cutouts we made that were connected to the book."

It was a stroke of genius.

Families with preschool children soon flocked to the monthly Read-A-Thons, and the program took off. Not only did club volunteers read stories to children; the woman's club began purchasing and distributing books acquired from a nonprofit that provides children's books for free.

It has become so popular that in the last 12 months, Frakes said it has provided more than 5,000 books to families with young children.

"We have kids who began coming to the Read-A-Thons as babies, and we're now seeing their parents bringing their new

siblings each month," said Frakes. "It feels like it's making an impact on families who are now able to bring books into their homes."

To ensure that books become a focal point for kids, the organization has also provided a free children's mini-library in the mall, stocked with 40 books that the group's vice-president said is being restocked sometimes twice per day. It has also received calls from two local preschools to sponsor similar libraries.

"We hope this will not only encourage their desire to continue reading as they get older but have a positive effect on their reading ability as well," said Jane Dickinson. "When they take a book home with them, we've noticed a pride of ownership, that 'this is my book,' which is lovely to see."

Part of the American women's social movement in the mid-19th Century, women's clubs established the idea that women had a moral duty and civic responsibility to create public policy. They eventually became a source of reform on various issues surrounding education, child labor, temperance, juvenile justice and library creation.

To volunteer or to join the Woman's Club of Sierra Vista, go to membership@svwomensclub.com. ■



Inside the Canyon Vista Medical Center Emergency Room



By Natoyah Swift

Nobody plans for a medical emergency, but when one happens, the ER is often the first stop. At Canyon Vista Medical Center (CVMC), the Emergency Room is the hospital's "front door." On average, about 85 people come through each day, which can grow to about 100 in the winter. About one in 10 patients are admitted to the hospital, while others are treated, transferred, or discharged.

At CVMC, you'll always be seen in the ER, no matter your insurance or ability to pay. Care is provided by emergency doctors or nurse practitioners, with specialists called when needed. CVMC is proud to be a Level III Trauma Center, which means we are prepared 24/7 to assess and treat serious emergencies such as strokes, heart attacks, and chest pain — and connect patients quickly to the right level of care, if needed.

If you or a loved one is experiencing an emergency, always call 9-1-1 — it's the fastest and safest way to get lifesaving care. In the ER, patients are not seen in the order they arrive but through a process called "triage." The most serious cases are treated first, while less urgent issues may wait longer. It can be frustrating, but this ensures those in life-threatening situations get help right away. If your condition is not an emergency, you will still be treated but wait times may be longer and the cost is usually higher than a primary care or urgent care visit.

Want to be prepared? Visit CVMC's website, CanyonVistaMedicalCenter.com, for tips on what symptoms require immediate attention, what to bring, and even current wait times.

CVMC's ER team is always working to improve. The hospital is now Joint Commission Certified as both a Chest Pain Center with PCI and an Advanced Primary Stroke Center — recognition of the advanced, lifesaving care available close to home. Director of Emergency Services Amanda Mancini and CEO Scott Avery are focused on making the ER more efficient by using new technology and streamlining processes to cut wait times and reduce how long patients spend in the ER.

Another recent addition is the Care Navigator role, filled by Kristina Perez. Kristina meets with patients, helps arrange follow-up care, checks in after they leave, and brings a personal touch during stressful moments.

- Persistent vomiting or diarrhea
- Coughing or vomiting blood
- Suicidal thoughts
- Difficulty speaking

At CVMC, the goal is simple: to provide safe, compassionate, and timely emergency care for our community and beyond. ■

Barking up the

By R.J. Cohn

If your wonder dog no longer has that lean, sleek look or the same vim-and-vigor he came into the world with, it might be time to get his canine juices flowing by letting him run wild on a dog-powered treadmill.

Like the three mobile canine treadmills Stephen Zetich operates in a 12-foot-by-6-foot retrofitted trailer he drives to your house to get Fido into tip-top shape in half-hour sessions that will not only shed some weight but make him feel like a healthier pet.

Three years after he rolled out his novel RunDogzRun, Zurich's mobile treadmill business is not only running in high demand among dog owners whose work or health prevents them from exercising their beloved pets on a daily basis.

His doggie workout program has provided the answer they were searching for, and with 25-plus clients per week – 90 percent which are longtime repeat customers – it seems to be barking up the right tree.

If dogs could write testimonials, RunDogzRun's website would be overflowing with dogs penning superlative reviews, gushing with praise from those who have lost weight and got their mojo back.

Like the 110-pound Pit Bull Terrier that started on the treadmill two years ago. Since then, he's shed 30 pounds and now weighs 80 pounds.

While the response from his human clients has been overwhelmingly positive, it's the dogs who Zetrich says can't wait until he pulls his colorfully-designed trailer into their driveway.

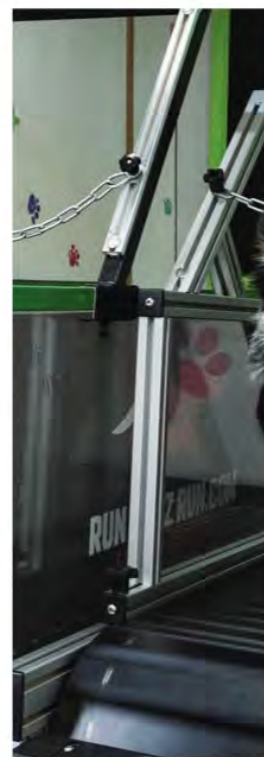
"They absolutely love the treadmill once they get adjusted to it," he said. "Some are so excited that they meet me at the door when I pull up, barking because they can't wait to get on it. A few are looking out the window when they hear the truck coming, and a couple run right into the trailer before I get them onto the treadmill. They can't wait for their workout and are happy to see me. It's like they're saying, 'My friend is here, it's workout time!'"

Inspired when he and his wife, Codi, saw celebrity dog trainer Ceaser Millan exercising dogs on a human treadmill on his Dog Whisperer TV show, the couple saw what an important – yet neglected – training tool a dog treadmill was for pets not getting enough or any exercise.

When they saw no one in Cochise County was offering a canine treadmill business, they went all in. Their fees are half the price of those operating the same service in cities like Phoenix and Las Vegas.



Codi Zetrich and his pack proudly pose in front of the Run-Dogz-Run Trailer.
PHOTOS BY MONIQUE VARGAS



right tree



“Dogs want to have a task, and they want to work,” said Codi Zetrich. “It increases their stimulation, they behave better and become better pets.”

Zetrich’s treadmill workouts consist of a half-hour session that eventually allows many dogs to run close to 2 ½ miles with water breaks along with chew toys while they run. It’s rare for most dogs to jump onto the treadmill and just take off.

“At first, most can’t go a half hour straight,” said Zetrich, who owns three dogs. “Maybe 5 to 10 minutes initially trying to figure out what this strange thing is that’s moving beneath them. They’re scared at first, mentally stressed, and many claw at the treadmill.”

But thanks to Zetrich’s patience and coaxing, most get the idea, and when it kicks in, not only do they run; they build up speed and start having the workout of their lives.

“You begin to watch them exude more confidence and agility, regardless of breed,” said Zetrich. “Sometimes it takes them three sessions to lose their fear and get into running on a treadmill, building up speed. Australian Shepherds like ours take to it immediately, and she runs at an 18 miles-per-hour clip. I had a dog that went from 1.1 to 2.7 miles-per-hour in seven weeks.”

For some dogs, all the coaxing and patience sometimes doesn’t always pan out. But that’s what makes Zetrich special

when it comes to working with frightened dogs. He wants them to succeed regardless of how long it takes.

“It took one dog four months to even get onto the treadmill,” he said. “He had to build trust in me. Now he goes for a 2-mile session from a tenth of a mile when he first started. Anyone can put a dog on a treadmill. It’s winning their trust and seeing how much they enjoy this that fuels me.”

It’s not just the Zetrichs who embrace the benefits of a treadmill for dogs. Professional dog trainers are also on board with them.

Certified Professional Dog Trainer-Knowledge Assessed Pamela Johnson can’t say enough about dogs exercising on them.

“Treadmills can be a great way to get your dog a full-body workout, without the impact,” said Johnson, a dog trainer for more than 20 years.

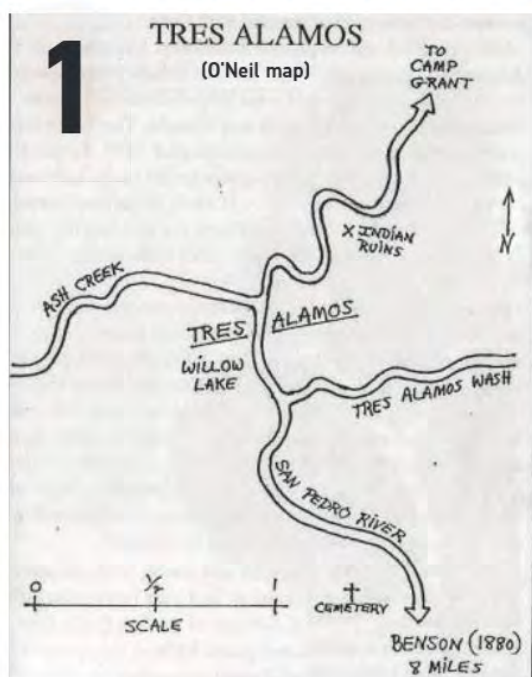
“Though it’s important to walk our dogs, treadmills provide a safer, cleaner and a more rigorous, complete workout,” he said. “It gets their minds and bodies working in such a positive way. Plus, once they get into the rhythm of this, they’re having a blast.”

For more information, go to <https://rundogzrun.com> or call 520-369-3072. ■



Codi uses a tug toy to encourage his young dog to pick up speed on the Slat Mill.

COCHISE COUNTY'S FIRST SETTLEMENTS



Mary
Bernard
Aguirre



First in a series listed in chronological order

By Kathy Klump

1. **Tres Alamos.** (Three Cottonwoods): Originally a prehistoric village inhabited by indigenous peoples including the Hohokam, Salado, and Sobaipuris, it was excavated by the Amerind Foundation in 1940. The village had been abandoned in the 1700s. In 1865, John Montgomery and seven other settlers filed claims under the new Homestead Act. They brought their families, built homes, and constructed an irrigation ditch from the San Pedro River to supply water. The first crop of wheat, barley and beans amounted to 350,000 pounds. In a special 1866 U.S. Census, fifty-nine people lived there. Thirty-five were Mexican, 21 were Anglo American, and three were African American. John Montgomery married Maria Ruiz, and seven of their nine children were born in Tres Alamos. The only other people in what would become Cochise County were at Fort Bowie, established in 1862, and Camp Wallen in 1866. There were no Apache attacks the first year, but for several years thereafter, life was very hard with many of the settlers killed by Apaches, and their animals and crops stolen. The very first school was held in one room in the home of Fred Berthold. Mary Bernard Aguirre was hired as the first teacher for the 1875 school year. At that time, local ranchers were Leonardo Apodaca, A. Blair, G. Gibson, and Frank Long. Jesus



John
Montgomery



Dias and A. A. Wilt were merchants. Thomas Dunbar was postmaster and station keeper. Cassius Hooker was operating Col. Henry Clay Hooker's store and hotel. Dr. Glendy King was the physician, and Levi Pitts was the U.S. Military telegraph operator.

2. San Pedro: An old settlement in existence as early as 1870 a few miles west of the San Pedro river and near an old stage road. Sixty men lived there in 1872. The post office was established March 22, 1872 with Jacob Schaublin as post master and discontinued June 8, 1880.

3. John N. Goodwin: A post office was established on March 5, 1875 with Thomas McWilliams as postmaster. It was discontinued October 18, 1880. It was first known as Cochise Canyon when stage lines ran through Apache Pass. It was called Cochise because he camped here behind the Apache Pass Stage Station with seven hundred of his tribe while another chief, Old Jack, camped five hundred men in front of the Apache Pass Stage Station. By 1889 the name of the Spring and Canyon were named after the first Governor of Arizona Territory, John N. Goodwin, who stopped here.

4. Fort Huachuca: This United States Military post was constructed in March of 1877 by Captain Samuel Marmaduke Whitside and two companies of the U. S. Army 6th Cavalry at the base of the Huachuca Mountains to protect the settlers during the Apache Wars. It was originally intended to be a temporary fort until peace was made, but it is the only fort that has survived. Fort Bowie was abandoned in 1894 and Fort Grant in 1905.



5. St. David: The town's name originally had an "s" at the end, but that was dropped sometime over the years. It was named in memory of David Patten, a leader of the "Saints" before their migration to Utah. It was founded by Philemon Merrill. He and his wife Cyrena, along with four other Mormon families, founded the town on November 29, 1877. Mr. Merrill served as adjutant general of the Mormon Battalion when it traveled through in 1846. He remembered the abundance of ground water and the lush greenery in contrast to the surrounding desert land. During the first year, the colonists built a small adobe fort measuring sixty feet and forming a hollow square. It was located three miles south of the present town. The first site was named MacDonald after a Mormon apostle who was killed by the same mob as Joseph Smith in Missouri. The fort collapsed during the earthquake of 1887, was not rebuilt, and the town was moved to the present site. Mail was received at Tres Alamos until the post office was established on July 24, 1882 with Joseph McRae as postmaster. ■

HOT OFF THE PRESS!

Resting Under the Shifting Sands: the stories of those buried in the Historic Cemetery at Willcox, Arizona by Kathy Klump (Sulphur Springs Valley Historical Society Monograph No. 6). Available at the Chiricahua Regional Museum, or by mail. Send check for \$20 plus \$5 postage to SSVHS, 127 E. Maley, Willcox, AZ 85643. Also available on our website ssvhs.weebly.com

Two feet forward

Losing my precious pet



By R.J. Cohn

He was absolutely precious to me, my eight-year-old Springer Spaniel.

He died suddenly on July 31 of gastric-dilation volvulus, or bloat, when the stomach fills with gas or fluid and turns on itself, twisting the intestines and cutting off blood flow to the stomach and other organs.

It came out of nowhere with the suddenness of a coin flip. It began with a yelping of pain, uncontrollable

restlessness, panting and digging holes in the yard to nest in as his stomach became swollen and hard, twice the size of its normal capacity.

He died two hours later on an operating table in a veterinary clinic.

I have been a mess ever since, absolutely gutted, in such deep mourning and unrelenting grief I didn't know I was capable of feeling.

He was my soul dog in every way possible.

He understood my moods — my high and low tides — would stare at me for hours with those beautiful spaniel eyes, went everywhere and did everything with me, listened to my daily stories, lay at my feet as I wrote and rewrote every article for *Currents*.

I even sang a made-up Springer Spaniel lullaby to him every night before I went to bed, followed by a 'Good night, MacIver, I love you.'

This is how connected we were: When

I caught a cold or had a cough, he would invariably sneeze and cough at the same time, similar to the way Elliot got sick because of the psychic connection he formed with E.T. when he was apparently dying after being captured.

I hated being away from him, even for a couple days. When I was, he sat or lay at the front door until I returned.

We explored isolated sections of deserts, where he ran like a westerly wind after Antelope jackrabbits, flocks of White-winged doves, Verdins and Cactus Wrens he would never catch, his tongue dangling sideways, looking over his shoulder to see where I was.

I rarely missed a moment of his life.

A true field dog who I loved watching rip through the open desert with uncanny speed and vigor, he had finished his daily 3 a.m. morning run through a park with me three hours before both of our lives suddenly turned on a dime.

He was taken from me way too early,

and coming to terms with this loss has sucker-punched me with such a staggering force that it has been difficult to make headway.

I am not the first person to have experienced the death of a beloved pet, nor will I be the last.

I have lost four wonderful Springer Spaniels in my adult life, and though each one hurt with a heart-wrenching

me to my knees.

Friends tell me talking about it, or writing a column like this, will help ease the pain.

Don't believe it for a second because it doesn't.

I once saw a framed quote on a veterinarian's wall that went something like this: They're not with us for a long period of time, but dogs come into our lives to teach

“They're not with us for a long period of time, but dogs come into our lives to teach us about love.”

us about love. They depart to teach us about loss. A new dog never replaces an old dog, it merely expands the heart.

ache and brought me to tears, this one has ripped a deeper hole in me than all the other four combined.

We bonded immediately from the get-go with such an instantaneous connection and never let go.

Thank you, my dear beautiful Springer Spaniel, for every precious, wonderful moment you gave to me while you were here.

I hope the moments I gave to you were equally precious to you.

I just wish that, like E.T, you could phone home. ■

I hope the moments I gave to you were equally precious to you.

I just wish that, like E.T, you could phone home. ■



DECEMBER'S FAVORITES

By Ted Forte

For casual stargazers, December is a great month. Sunset comes early, and the winter cold is still somewhat at bay. As darkness falls, the winter sky, dominated by brilliant Orion and containing the brightest stars in the heavens, is rising in the east. High overhead is the Great Square of Pegasus. And sinking in the west, the Summer Triangle, centerpiece of the Autumn sky, is still available. Saturn is perfectly placed, in the south at sunset, and an hour later, Jupiter rises among the stars of Gemini: an easy target by 10 p.m.

Some fascinating deep sky objects populate the December sky. The easiest to find with your telescope or binoculars will be the Andromeda Galaxy which transits the evening sky in late November. From the northeast corner of the Great Square, follow the line of two bright stars,

Delta and Beta Andromedae, that sweep northeast. From Beta, turn northwest and jump to the next bright star, Mu Andromedae. Another jump of about the same distance and your eye can't miss the fuzzy glow that is the Andromeda Galaxy aka M31. At 2.5 million light years away, M31 is the most distant object we can see with the naked eye. Stretching almost 6 full moons edge to edge, the galaxy is a remarkable object for binoculars. A serious observer with a large telescope might spend a whole night here exploring its numerous knots and star clusters, occasionally wandering to its two satellite galaxies, M32 and M110.

The constellation Andromeda consists of two curving lines of stars stretching northeast from the Great Square. The northernmost line extends past 51 Andromedae to Phi Persei and just about a degree northwest of Phi is the Little

Dumbbell, M76. This bright, bipolar planetary nebula looks like a little peanut. It's the remnant of an evolved sun-like star that is likely around 3,400 light years away from us. You'll need a telescope to enjoy it.

Follow that same line of stars that forms the northern string of Andromeda a little further and your eye will pick out a large fuzzy patch of light. Put your binoculars on it and you'll be amazed by a splash of stars arranged in two groups. This is the Perseus Double Cluster. Each cluster is a half degree in diameter with the western cluster, NGC 869, having over 200 white and bluish-white members. NGC 884 to the east has 175 stars. They are approximately 700 light years away and just a few hundred light years apart.

Swing your binoculars about 12 degrees southeast to the bright star

M31 by
Richard Pattie



M76 by
Michael Boreland



DEEP SKY

M33 by
Zane Landers

Mirfak (Alpha Persei). The bright star anchors a beautiful cluster of stars, Melotte 20. The cluster is visible to the naked eye but is spectacular in binoculars. Spanning 3 degrees of sky, the 517 members are around 560 light years away.

Nine degrees south-southeast of Mirfak is the "Demon Star" Algol. This famous eclipsing binary is usually 2.1 magnitude, but drops to 3.4 magnitude every 2.87 days (50 hours, 49 minutes) as its companion eclipses it. The eclipse lasts 10 hours. Check the web to find its next expected minima and you can watch it dim.

From Algol, the open cluster M34 is 5 degrees northwest. This cluster of about 400 stars is approximately 1400 light

years away and can be detected with the naked eye in a dark sky.

Halfway between M34 and the bright double star Almaak (Gamma Andromedae) lies a challenging edge-on galaxy that is 30 million light years from us. NGC 891 can be a difficult catch. See if you can detect the faint glow of this slim beauty in your telescope. I'd recommend a scope of at least 10-inch aperture and moderate power of 120x.

If NGC 891 eludes you, don't despair, just swing your telescope 3.5 degrees west to enjoy a lovely double star. Almaak is a brilliant orange primary of 2.3 magnitude that seems to touch a whitish blue secondary of 5.1 magnitude. The pair are about 390 light years away.

For our last stop on this short tour,

look directly south of Almaak to the three stars that define the constellation Triangulum. They form an isosceles triangle with its apex, the star Metallah, pointing southwest. About 4 degrees north-northwest of Metallah, you'll spy the large diffuse glow of the Triangulum Galaxy, M33. This open-faced spiral is the third largest member of the local group of galaxies to which the Milky Way belongs. Look for a faint oval glow surrounded by three graceful arms that will be made apparent by a number of knotty clumps of nebulosity. As with any faint object, the longer you look, the more you'll see.

Hope you enjoy this small sample of the many splendors of the December sky! ■

SULPHUR SPRINGS

CALENDAR *of* EVENTS

Visit the many festivals, historical sites, deserts, national parks, and mountains of southeastern Arizona on a scenic hike, a road trip, or a mountain climbing expedition to test your endurance.

NOVEMBER 15

Pet Blessing

11 a.m. to 1 p.m. • Unity of the Huachuca Church

Veterans' Park, Ramada No. 2, in Sierra Vista will be the site for the second annual Pet Blessing, hosted by the Unity of the Huachuca Church, from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. Please make sure all pets are leashed or in carriers. Find out more at unityofthehuachucas.org. Also, come see us for a meditation every Thursday, from 1 p.m. to 1:30 p.m., at Unity of the Huachuca, 7487 East Larkspur Lane, in Hereford.

SIERRA VISTA

DECEMBER 5 AND 6

Old Fashioned Christmas in Benson

Friday, 2 p.m. to 8 p.m.

Saturday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Cochise Service Veterans and the City of Benson will host an old fashioned Christmas celebration with seasonal gifts, crafts, food and

live music, among other attractions! There will also be ice skating, Santa's elves, and the Pony Express will pick up letters to Santa!

BENSON

NOVEMBER 21

Candy Cane Lane

5:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.

Join us for the 45th annual Holiday House Candy Cane Lane, held at the Willcox Elks Lodge. LCO AZ Beta hosts the event, which features a Traeger Pro Series 22 grill, donated by Willcox Ace Hardware, as the top raffle prize. Come see handcrafted gifts and decor enjoy home baked good and refreshments, visit with Santa, and win a door prize! Tickets are \$3 for adults and \$2 for children at the door. Raffle tickets are \$1 each, or six tickets for \$5. Proceeds go to support the LCO Beta scholarship programs.

WILLCOX

CHRISTMAS VARIETY SHOW

Heartwarming! Funny!
Singing! Dancing!
Skits!
Audience Participation!
Christmas Trivia with Gifts!
and SANTA!

Purchase tickets at
the door or online at
www.thekpalacetheater.com

TICKETS

\$20 Adults
\$17 Military, First Responders,
55+, Children under 16

SHOW DATES:

December 4-5 & 11-12, 2025 @ 7pm
December 6-7 & 13-14, 2025 @ 3pm

The K Palace
THEATER
290 S. HUACHUCA BLVD

520-222-8711 / tolmarizona@gmail.com / www.thekpalacetheater.com

Step into the Magic of THE NUTCRACKER

A Multi-Genre Show
FEATURING BALLET, JAZZ, LYRICAL, HIP HOP, TAP & AERO

**SATURDAY
NOVEMBER 15TH 2025
AT 6:00 P.M.**

Klein Center For The Performing Arts
2225 E Buena School Blvd, Sierra Vista, AZ

PURCHASE OPTIONS
\$15.00 (2 and under FREE)

- Prior to show: 156 W Fry Blvd on Fridays from 4:00-6:00 p.m.
- Online and pick up at the show: Scan the code with your phone camera or www.sierravistadanceco.com
- Tickets will be sold at the show starting at 5:00 p.m.

THANK YOU TO OUR SPONSORS:

HERALD/REVIEW
MEDIA

Sierra Vista Dance Company
The Nutcracker

November 22 Holiday Craft Fair

9 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Come out to the Vista View Resort, 526 S. Clubhouse Lane in Sierra Vista, and enjoy our wide array of handmade pieces and clever gift items! Don't resort to giving boring gifts this season - begin and end your holiday shopping at our craft fair! The annual event features the very best quality and gift ideas for the holidays!



NOVEMBER 30

Ben Albertson, TSO Harpest

3 p.m. to 4:30 p.m. • Santa Cruz Foundation for the Performing Arts

Award-winning concert harpist Ben Albertson will grace our venue with a program that is unique and perfectly paired with the elegant tonality of the harp. Prepaid admission is \$30 for an adult or \$15 for a student. Pay online (<https://scfpapresents.org>) until noon on the day of the concert or by sending a check to SCFPA PO Box 875, Patagonia AZ 85624. Tickets purchased at the door on the day of the concert are \$35/\$20 (if seats are available).

PATAGONIA

Would you like to experience the music of Patagonia, close and personal in Patagonia, Arizona? You won't! Join us for a performance by Maxi Larrea, Diana Peralta, Jenni Grubner and Andrés Pantoya plus their special guest Esteban Hernandez Parra. Prepaid admission is \$30 for an adult or \$15 for a student. Pay online (<https://scfpapresents.org>) until noon on the day of the concert or by sending a check to SCFPA PO Box 875, Patagonia AZ 85624. Tickets purchased at the door on the day of the concert are \$35/\$20 (if seats are available).

PATAGONIA

DECEMBER 12 TO DECEMBER 14

December Holiday Market

1 p.m. to 5 p.m. • The Sierra Vista Mall

There will be a variety of vendors set up each day in the middle of the mall, business owners promoting offering services, sweets, crafters, direct sales, find your perfect holiday gifts, and much more. Come shop and support small businesses.

SIERRA VISTA

DECEMBER 20

Winter Ballet Showcase

Beautiful Balance Ballet Studio will be presenting a Winter Ballet Showcase on Saturday, December 20, 6 p.m. at Buena High School's Klein Center for the Performing Arts, 5225 E Buena School Boulevard. The performance is free to attend, and it will be held in conjunction with a food drive for Peach's Pantry, a local non-profit whose mission is to fight child hunger in Cochise County. Those attending the performance are invited to bring non-perishable food items to contribute. Come support this worthy cause, enjoy wonderful dancing shared by youth in our community, and help us celebrate the joyful spirit of the holiday season!

SIERRA VISTA

DECEMBER 13

Sonoita Small Town Christmas

10 a.m. to 4 p.m. • Sonoita Fairgrounds

The Santa Cruz County Fair & Rodeo Association invites the community to celebrate the holiday season at Sonoita Small Town Christmas celebration at the fairgrounds at 3142 AZ-83, Sonoita, AZ 85637. Enjoy barrel racing, team roping, jumping castles, over 40 local vendors, food trucks, yard games, and a special visit from Santa from 10 a.m. to noon! Free admission — shop local and make holiday memories in Sonoita!

SONOITA

DECEMBER 20

Sierra Vista Glow Ride

3 p.m. • Veterans Memorial Park

Get Ready for the 8th Annual Glow Ride! The streets of Sierra Vista light up once again for the biggest Christmas event in Cochise County — the Sierra Vista Glow Ride! Join hundreds of festively decorated vehicles as we roll out from Veterans Memorial Park in a glowing celebration of holiday cheer, music, and community spirit. Secure your spot today: 8th Annual SV Glowride Tickets, Saturday, Dec 20. Let's make this year's Glow Ride the brightest one yet!

SIERRA VISTA

DECEMBER 14

El SurCo – A Benderly Concert Event

3 p.m. to 4:30 p.m. • Santa Cruz Foundation for the Performing Arts

DECEMBER 21

Handel's "Messiah"

7 p.m. • St. Andrew The Apostle Church

Join us for the 17th Annual Community Presentation of Handel's "Messiah." It will be on Sunday, December 21 at 7 p.m. at St. Andrew the Apostle Church in Sierra Vista, 800 Taylor Dr. The director is Reynaldo Romo, and the performance will feature local soloists, musicians and choir members. Admission is free. An offering will be taken to benefit the St. Vincent de Paul foodbank.

SIERRA VISTA

DECEMBER 31

ReadAround

Join the Sierra Vista Woman's Club at 11 a.m. at the Mall at Sierra Vista (carpet area near Food Court), 2200 El Mercado Loop. We'll read Five little Penguins Slipping on the Ice and make Penguin/Snowflake headbands. Free book to attending families. Get to know us on Facebook by searching for Sierra Vista Woman's Club.

SIERRA VISTA

JANUARY 4, 2026

The Cynosure Trio

3 p.m. to 4:30 p.m. • Santa Cruz Foundation for the Performing Arts
Captivating, elegant and engaging, the Cynosure Trio (Edward Zilberkant, Yue Sun and Charly Akert) returns to the Opera House to present a program of "Passion, Romance and Dance". Prepaid admission is \$30 for an adult or \$15 for a student. Pay online (<https://scfpapresents.org>) until noon on the day of the concert or by sending a check to SCFPA PO Box 875, Patagonia AZ 85624. Tickets purchased at the door on the day of the concert are \$35/\$20 (if seats are available).

PATAGONIA

JANUARY 11, 2026

Trobár – Arizona Early Music Ensemble

3 p.m. to 4:30 p.m. • Santa Cruz Foundation for the Performing Arts
"Songbook for a King" performed by Allison Monroe (vielle, rebec, psalter, voice), Karin Weston (voice, flute), Sian Ricketts (recorders, reeds, bagpipes, voice) and Nathan Dougherty (voice). Prepaid admission is \$30 for an adult or \$15 for a student. Pay online (<https://scfpapresents.org>) until noon on the day of the concert or by sending a check to SCFPA PO Box 875, Patagonia AZ 85624. Tickets purchased at the door on the day of the concert are \$35/\$20 (if seats are available).

SANTA CRUZ

JANUARY 15 TO JANUARY 18, 2026

Wings Over Willcox

It's time for the 33rd Annual Wings Over Willcox Birding and Nature Festival! Join us for birding field trips, a nature expo and the annual festival banquet. Come visit the Willcox Community Center at 312 Stewart Street, Willcox, to see what Wings Over Willcox Birding and Nature Festival is all about. During the Nature Expo there will be live animal displays, educational exhibits, and vendors showing a wide variety of nature-related items that you can purchase. Additional information about the event is available at wingsoverwillcox.com. Registration is Open • Email: info@willcoxnature.org Phone: (520) 384.2874.

WILLCOX

FEBRUARY 1, 2026

45th Annual Tombstone Quilt Show

Tombstone Art Gallery

Entry deadline for the annual show is January 10, 2026, with the show February 1 through February 24, 2026. Come out and see the area's best work by the area's best quilters at the Tombstone Art Gallery, 383 Allen Street. Open 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. every day. Free admission. Reception, awards, and drawing for the raffle quilt on February 21. For more information email: tombstonequiltshow@gmail.com.

TOMBSTONE



**We welcome
your calendar
events!**

For the January / February
2026 edition, we have to
receive the information by not
later than **December 3, 2025**.

The publication is due in mailboxes around
January 15, 2026. Events should be dated to
occur no earlier than **January 25, 2026**.

If you are looking to promote your event

**SUBMIT
TO events**
epetermann@ssvec.com

There is no charge for contributions to the calendar.



ADOBESTOCK
IMAGE BY JALIA



Retro Rewind Series - Willcox Historic Theater

\$6 Admission - Includes a baby popcorn and bottled water with ticket purchase

RED CARPET SHINDIG

November 8, 6:00 PM

Elks Lodge, Willcox

It's a night like no other in Willcox! This year's theme—Clue: Murder at the Shindig—promises an evening of mystery, laughter, and immersive fun featuring local talent in an unforgettable interactive experience. Enjoy dinner, entertainment, and a fantastic selection of auction items and unique experiences—all while supporting Arts and STEM education in our rural community.

OUR TOWN

November 14, 1:00pm

Drama, Family, Romance

Change comes slowly to a small New Hampshire town in the early 20th century.

THE GREAT RUPERT

December 13, 1:00pm

Comedy, Family

A little squirrel with lots of charm accidentally helps two poor, down-but-NOT-out families overcome their obstacles. With Jimmy Durante and Terry Moore.

ONGOING ART CLASSES (FREE!)

Restarting in September

- Kid's Art Club (Fridays)
- Pencils of Doom (Fridays)
- ACE of Arts (1st & 3rd Wednesdays)
- Intro to Art (1st & 3rd Thursdays)
- Creative Cartel (Saturdays)

Whether you're looking to learn something new or just unwind, our free art classes offer a comfortable, welcoming space to get creative—no registration needed, just show up and enjoy!

THE ST. LOUIS BANK ROBBERY

January 9, 1:00pm

Drama, Crime

A gang's plans for a St. Louis bank robbery are complicated when the sister of one of the thieves starts voicing her well-founded suspicions. With Steve McQueen.

Whether you're looking to learn something new or just unwind, our free art classes offer a comfortable, welcoming space to get creative—no registration needed, just show up and enjoy!



Purchase tickets here!

(520) 766-3335
willcoxtheater@gmail.com
willcoxtheater.com



Check out events here!



By Chef Chris
ClownChef@Yahoo.com

I've been roughing it kitchen-wise the last few months, so these recipes are easy to make even in the most rudimentary of cooking situations. Don't be fooled though, they're still plenty special for your holiday table, but will allow you to stay merry and bright.

As one with formal culinary training in New York, I know how to make good pie dough. However, when the holidays come, there's often a rushed feeling in the air — "as the shoppers rush home with their treasures" — and ready-made crust is just fine as long as you fill it well.

I was raised on my mom's version of "mock apple pie" as a kid and later discovered in cooking school that her rustic apple tart could actually go by the fancy name of galette. This one should be served whole at the table for maximum wow factor, as cutting it does diminish its beauty a bit.

On the subject of beauty, you may see in the picture of the galette that I am using a "silpat" or a silicone non-stick mat. There happened to be one in the kitchen I was working in, so I used it. I do like

them but also find them tricky to clean. So, I tend to use parchment paper in my own kitchen. I recommend using one or the other for entertaining to ensure what's made comes out looking good, or at least out of the pan.

Always remember though, whatever you're making for your holiday table this year or how you would rate it, just be sure to add love. Then everyone will have a lovely meal and wonderful memories to last a lifetime.

LEEK AND CHEDDAR BISCUITS

These are simple, yet extra special. For those uninitiated into the ways, or even identification of leeks, you can use scallions, which don't need to be sautéed. If you're a regular here, you may have bought self-rising flour for the "picnic loaf" in the last edition, and now you can use it again! My lazier self is loving the self-rising bit.

If you make a soup with holiday leftovers, these biscuits will be an incredible addition if you don't have time for homemade for the main meal. The recipe will double well, but trickier to work with, so I'd suggest 2 batches. Makes 8 biscuits.

2 cups self rising flour
1 large or 2 small leeks*
3 Tbsp. butter, plus some for sautéing
2 tsp. Dijon mustard
½ cup grated cheddar
Scant ½ cup milk

Pre-heat the oven to 400 degrees and line a sheet pan.

Trim the root end and dark green parts of the leek (some come with the dark green already trimmed) then chop finely. Sauté with a little butter, just until softened, about 5 minutes. Stir in mustard and let cool.

Cut butter into small pieces, working quickly so that it doesn't warm too much. In a medium mixing bowl add the flour and butter, then cut together using two forks or a pastry cutter until no large pieces are visible. Add about 1-2 tsp. salt and the cheese, then toss to combine well. Add the leeks and toss again.

Using your fingers or a silicone spatula, slowly add the milk and gently combine. If the mixture seems too dry you can add a little more, but it is a sturdy batter.

With a small serving spoon, scoop out 8 biscuits onto the prepared pan, shaping into rounds. Lightly brush with a little milk (I didn't have a pastry brush for the one pictured, so skip this step if you don't either).



EASIER THAN PIE GALETTE

I do love pie, but when there's a lot of cooking going on this "galette" comes together easily, and looks fancier than it really is. I like the look of two types of apple, but as always, it's baker's choice. My mom would whip one up when she wanted a simple autumn dessert and none of us had any remarks about its appearance. In fact, it disappeared in minutes.

Cut into irregular squares to preserve the apple slice effect, and serve with a good vanilla ice cream or whipped cream. 6-8 servings.

- 4 cups self-rising flour
- ½ tsp. salt
- 8 Tbsp. cold butter
- 5 oz. ham
- 6 oz. good cheddar cheese
- 2 dill pickles, chopped
- 4 sprigs fresh thyme
- ¾ cup milk, plus some for brushing

Preheat oven to 375 degrees and line a baking sheet with parchment paper - optional but ideal.

Put flour and salt in a mixing bowl. Using two forks, your fingers, or a pastry cutter rub or cut the butter into the flour until crumbly. Cut ham and cheese into 1/2 inch pieces. Stir in ham, cheese and pickles and mix well. Pull thyme leaves off the stem and stir into mixture. Mix in the milk with your hands until well combined.

Transfer dough to baking sheet forming a dome about 3 inches high. Brush with milk and place in the oven. Bake for about 30 minutes or until deep golden brown, brushing with milk again half way through if not browning much. Let cool a few minutes before cutting.

Place in the oven for 15-20 minutes or until golden brown. Check with a toothpick or skewer as needed. Serve warm, or gently reheat.

** NOTE: If using scallions, substitute one bunch.*



ADOBE STOCK IMAGES
BY ALLIE, JSMAHMUD,
KEEWEEGIRL, KY



CINNAMON MOCHA ROLLS

After you make a galette and have one crust left, you can make these cookie-like rolls. Kids will love helping to make them and are delighted by the swirl. Adjust sweetening to your family's preferences by using cinnamon sugar in place of plain cinnamon. Makes about 10.

- 1 frozen pie crust, defrosted
- 1 cup chocolate chips
- 1 Tbsp. butter
- ½ tsp. vanilla
- 2 Tbsp. espresso powder
- 1 Tbsp. cinnamon

Pre-heat the oven to 350 degrees and line a sheet pan.

Place chocolate chips in a small bowl with the butter and microwave at 30 second intervals, stirring until melted. Be careful to not burn the chocolate. Stir in the vanilla, espresso powder, and cinnamon until smooth.

Unroll the piecrust onto a cutting board. Trim 2 sides, adding the trim to the uncut sides to form a rectangle. Gently roll dough to smooth seams and cracks. Using a rubber spatula, spread chocolate mixture evenly over the dough. Roll one long edge of the pastry to form a log, then place in the freezer or fridge for about 10 minutes.

Using a very sharp knife cut the log into even slices, then place them on the prepared pan. Bake for 15-20 minutes or until golden brown. Let cool or serve warm with ice cream.



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LOCAL STORIES ABOUT LOCAL COMMUNITIES

CHECK IT OUT

To provide you with a more integrated experience, SSVEC has launched a NEW website dedicated to CURRENTS Magazine!

SSVECCurrents.com

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SSVEC has launched a Facebook group for CURRENTS. It's the new go-to spot for all things co-op and community! Log in, stay a while, and join the conversation.

The power of community starts with a connection.



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