

SSVEC

Currents

LOCAL STORIES ABOUT LOCAL COMMUNITIES

JANUARY | FEBRUARY 2025

LET'S Ride

VeloVets: Cycling for everyone

Page 18

Stu Carter shares his joy of bike racing with the camera, as he quickly pulls away from followers on the return trip to Sierra Vista from Tombstone during the 2nd Annual El Tour de ZONA in March 2023. Stu co-founded the El Tour de ZONA in 2022.

PHOTO COURTESY
OF VELOVETS

ALSO INSIDE >>

Square dancing
with the Thunder
Mountain Twirlers
not as square as
you think

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ON THE COVER

Fancy bikes, ordinary bikes, trikes, ebikes, etrikes, hand-cycles, tandems, elaborate, exotic, and wonderful. Cheerful riders are ready to go! See the story on page 18.

Captain Kristin Clopton and "Hitch" assisted the Arizona Rangers Tombstone Company patrolling the streets at sunset. In the November/December 2024 edition of Currents, we failed to properly attribute the photographer who captured this amazing shot. Photo courtesy of Cody Conrad.





Jason Bowling, CEO
Sulphur Springs Valley
Electric Cooperative

Remaining committed to cost control in the new year

Dear Members, Happy New Year! As we welcome 2025, I want to share how our cooperative has been working diligently to control costs and keep your energy bills as low as possible. Reflecting on the recent past, we've taken several significant steps to ensure financial stability and rate affordability for all our members.:

Stabilizing Energy Costs

We understand that fluctuating fuel costs can impact your monthly bills. To address this, we've taken decisive actions:

- **Applying 2022 Operating Margins to Fuel Bank Debt:** We allocated our 2022 operating margins to reduce the member fuel bank debt. This move directly benefits you by lessening the financial burden associated with fuel cost adjustments.
- **Implementing a Fuel Hedging Program:** To ensure rate stability moving forward, we've instituted a fuel hedging program. This proactive approach allows us to lock in fuel prices ahead of time, protecting you from sudden market spikes.
- **Investing in Low-Cost Solar Energy:** We've secured a low-cost, utility-scale solar installation in McNeal. This addition significantly decreases the blended cost of energy, leveraging renewable resources to provide affordable power.

Eliminating Nuisance Fees

- We recognize that even small fees can add up. That's why we've worked with the Arizona Corporation Commission (ACC) to remove unnecessary charges:
- **Removing the DSM Charge:** Collaborating with ACC commissioners like Commissioner Kevin Thompson, we've successfully eliminated the Demand Side Management (DSM) charge from your bills.
- **Applying to Remove the REST Surcharge:** In the same spirit, we've applied to the ACC to remove the Renewable Energy Standard Tariff (REST) surcharge. While these fees may seem minor individually, we

know that eliminating them can make a meaningful difference for our members.

Operational Savings

Our commitment to cost control extends to our internal operations:

- **Fleet Procurement Savings:** Our fleet team expanded procurement options, resulting in over \$800,000 saved on essential equipment. By broadening our supplier network and negotiating better deals, we've reduced operational expenses, which ultimately benefits you.
- **Renegotiated Long-Term Power Supply Contract:** We've successfully renegotiated a long-term solar power supply contract. This achievement secures more favorable terms and helps stabilize energy costs for the foreseeable future.

Looking Ahead

- These efforts are just a few examples of how we're fighting to control costs for the good of our members. As we move into 2025, our focus remains on:
- **Continued Financial Stewardship:** We'll keep seeking ways to reduce expenses without compromising service quality.
- **Member Engagement:** Your feedback is invaluable. We'll provide more opportunities for you to share your ideas on cost-saving measures.
- **Innovation and Efficiency:** Exploring new technologies and practices to enhance efficiency, improve reliability, and further reduce costs.

Thank You for Your Trust

Your support and participation are what make our cooperative strong. Together, we've made significant strides in controlling costs and improving services. As we embrace the new year, rest assured that our commitment to you is unwavering. Wishing you and your family a prosperous and energy-efficient New Year!

Sincerely,
Jason Bowling, CEO, SSVEC

*Jason Bowling is
the Chief Executive
Officer at Sulphur
Springs Valley Electric
Cooperative (SSVEC).
He can be reached at
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SSVEC shines at international, state rodeos



Apprentice Kieran Maakestad on pole.

Impressive performances at the international and state lineman rodeos are clear indicators that Sulphur Springs Valley Electric Cooperative (SSVEC) has talented crews keeping its service safe, reliable and affordable.

On October 16, 2024, four SSVEC apprentice linemen traveled to Overland Park, Kansas, and participated in the 40th Annual International Lineman's Rodeo. Competing against more than 400 of the industry's best apprentice linemen, SSVEC's own Efren Gallego earned top honors, placing third overall among electric cooperative competitors and fourth among all competitors.

Wednesday, October 30, four SSVEC apprentice linemen earned top honors at the 2024 Arizona Lineman's Rodeo and Technical School, hosted by Trico electric cooperative at its Marana facility. SSVEC apprentices competed against more than 50 other apprentices from across Arizona in individual events, including a written test, hurt-man rescue, an obstacle course, and a challenging mystery event.

Rodeos serve as a valuable opportunity for linemen and apprentice linemen to sharpen their skills in areas less commonly practiced today but critical for maintaining safety and reliability in the field. Competitions like these challenge linemen and



Apprentice Shelby Fulton

apprentice linemen to stay proficient, improve productivity, and ensure that safety remains a top priority.

Gallego's exceptional performance at the international rodeo placed him fourth in the overall international competition. In a series of five challenging events that tested skills essential to the lineman trade — including pole climbing, hot stick use, and working from a pole — Gallego's skills shone brightly on the international stage.

While Efren's individual achievements are remarkable, the entire SSVEC team who participated at the international rodeo, including apprentice linemen Marcus Olivas, Austin Barney, and Gabe Ornelas, displayed exemplary skill, teamwork, and professionalism throughout the competition.

"We're all grateful for the opportunity to participate in such a prestigious event," said Gallego. "The support we receive from SSVEC is invaluable in helping us continue to grow and perform at our best."

At the state competition Kieran Maakestad won the overall "Top Hand" award and finished in first place on the written test. Gallego earned first place honors in both the hurt-man rescue and individual cross-arm change out. Gallego was also on the team that took first place in the cross-arm changeout. Gabe Ornelas earned first place



Pictured from the left are SSVEC apprentice linemen Marcus Olivas, Efen Gallego, Gabe Ornelas, and Austin Barney. The four team members attended the 40th Annual International Linemen's Rodeo in Overland Park, Kansas, recently.

in the team event of replacing a secondary overhead service, and Sawyer McDonald captured first place in the "mystery event." The mystery event was a complex continuity test, and the participants did not receive the rules until just before the event began.

"I'm incredibly proud of the entire team for their performances at the international and state competitions," said Jason Bowling, CEO of SSVEC. "To see our teams compete at such a high level and bring home top honors speaks volumes about the skills and commitment of our SSVEC linemen. It's a reflection of our cooperative's dedication to providing safe, reliable, and affordable power to our members."

Nathan Hodges, Vice President of Operations at SSVEC, echoed the CEO's comments, pointing to the importance of participating in the rodeo events.

"I want to congratulate Kieran, Efen, Gabe, and Sawyer for their amazing performances. I also want to thank all our apprentices for making this rodeo a great event. Additionally, thank you to all the linemen and foremen who helped judge the events," Hodges said. "The lineman rodeo is a great opportunity for our apprentices to compete with other apprentices from all over the state, but it is also a chance to strengthen our relationship with other members of the cooperative family."

Replacing the San Bernardino Line

SSVEC works with national wildlife refuge to replace aging infrastructure



You know the terrain will test your wits when the route to your worksite is called "Dangerous Road."

Atop the 6,513-foot Pedregosa mountain range in the San Bernardino National Wildlife Refuge in southeast Cochise County, are vital communication towers and a still-operating airway beacon.

All require electricity.

"My understanding is that all the poles and the wire providing service were there when our cooperative was formed in 1936," said Jorge Garcia, Willcox Operations Manager at Sulphur Springs Valley Electric Cooperative (SSVEC).

Located near the international border with Mexico, the "San Bernardino line" came due for replacement this year, requiring 17 poles and several miles of new I/O ACSR wire.

Wooden poles measure 30-feet in height were replaced with fiberglass poles, measuring 40 feet in height.

Garcia said federal requirements prompted the need to replace the original copper wire serving the facilities atop the mountain.

"Copper can get brittle, and breaks easily in extreme weather," Garcia said.

The job involved SSVEC linemen working hand-in-hand with a six-man crew from National, a company that specializes in services for distribution and transmission infrastructure, substations, storm restoration, and renewable projects across the Southwest.

The difficult terrain resulted in crew members and materials being flown to the top of the mountain, where cell towers, communication towers serving the U.S. Border Patrol and the Cochise County Sheriff's Department, and the airway beacon were located.

Work involved using jackhammers to dig 6-foot holes for each pole, sometimes breaking up solid rock to place the pole. Crews relied on a compressor, flown to the worksite, to power a jackhammer for the job.

Richie Ellis, SSVEC Journeyman Lineman, joined the National crew during the work and enjoyed the lift to the mountain top.

"That was a thrill ride," Ellis mused. "You're outside the helicopter dangling at the end of a long line, but at least the view was spectacular!"

Once the 17 poles were erected, National crews strung new wire and set up electric service at the worksite. Garcia said, remarkably, the old poles were still in pretty good shape, despite almost 100 years of service.

"The original infrastructure was put in place by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, with the airway beacon serving the Douglas International Airport," Garcia said. "It's really amazing that when this line was put in place, they needed to use mules to get the materials to the top of the mountain."

Garcia said in his 30 years with SSVEC, he's been tasked with restoring service at the worksite just two times.

"Once in a rainstorm we could get a truck about halfway up the mountain, then we had to hike the rest of the way to the top, to replace a fuse," he said. "You know it's not going to be fun when they tell you that getting to the repair requires going up on Dangerous Road."

The pole and wire replacement project required about seven weeks of work and was completed in early November.

Who will win the 'Jumbo' foundation grant?

SSVEC Board approves continuing teacher, entity grant program

In its first year the Sulphur Springs Valley Electric Cooperative (SSVEC) Foundation grant program awarded more than \$120,000 to area teachers and more than \$720,000 to education entities, including local school districts and student learning organizations.

Kristin Gray, SSVEC Community Relations Manager, said even more is in store for 2025.

"I'm excited to announce that this year, the SSVEC Foundation will offer about \$300,000 for teachers and \$700,000 for education entities throughout our service area," Gray said. "In addition, the Foundation plans to offer a 'jumbo' grant of up to \$150,000 for a selected education entity."

Jason Bowling, Chief Executive Officer at SSVEC, said the continuation of the Foundation grant program is consistent with cooperative principles that guide the company's decision-making.

"Supporting the education of the youth in our community is fundamental to improving the quality of life of those we serve," Bowling said. "We're confident that the benefits that will result from the substantial investment by the SSVEC Foundation will make a significant difference in the educational opportunities available to local youth."

The SSVEC Board of Directors, who serve as trustees of the Foundation, approved continuing the grant program for a second year at the October 30, 2024, meeting in Willcox. Funds received by the Foundation are generated from unclaimed Capital Credits. Each year the SSVEC Board determines whether Capital Credits — revenue generated beyond SSVEC operating expenses — will be paid to members of the Cooperative. Since 2002, SSVEC has



Receiving an SSVEC Foundation grant in Patagonia were Terri Schindel (left), Volunteer Senior Lifeguard, Red Cross Certified, and Adahir Ayón, paid Youth Lifeguard, Red Cross Certified and swim lessons instructor.

returned more than \$35 million in Capital Credits to its members.

When a member moves out of the service territory, or discontinues service, and does not leave a forwarding address or contact information, unclaimed Capital Credits are turned over to the SSVEC Foundation.

The Foundation has utilized its funds to support annual programs, including the Youth Engineering and Science (YES) Fair, the Washington Youth Tour, academic and trade scholarships, and the past two years the grant program for teachers and education entities.

For 2025, in addition to the \$120,000 that will be offered in microgrants of up to \$500 for teachers within the SSVEC service territory, the Foundation will partner with the Cochise Education Foundation (CEF) and the Education Foundation of Sierra Vista.

Gray announced that CEF would receive a donation of \$180,000 for its mini-grant program, and the Education Foundation of Sierra Vista would receive \$80,000.

"During 2024, more than 250 teachers within the SSVEC service territory received grants up to \$500 to improve classroom experiences and offer area youth educational benefits they might not otherwise have received," Gray said. "Partnering with CEF and the Education Foundation of Sierra Vista will expand those opportunities and increase the Foundation grant to \$380,000 for local teachers."

SSVEC teacher microgrant applications will be accepted starting late February 2025. The application form will be available at www.ssvocyouthprograms.org/foundation-grants. Awards will be announced beginning in the fall of 2025.

Education entity grants — awarded to school districts and organizations offering youth education programs — funded 47 programs and projects in 2024, totaling more than \$720,000, Gray reported.

Among the awards, Foundation entity grants funded brighter lights in the Elgin K-12 school building, new playground equipment at the San Simon school district, and a \$15,889 award was made to the Patagonia Regional Aquatics Center (PRAC).

For 2025, the SSVEC Foundation plans to award about \$700,000 to entities, with \$200,000 announced in the summer and \$500,000 announced in the fall.

Unlike last year, the entity grant program has been revised to increase the maximum amount that can be awarded. School districts and non-profit education organizations and institutions of higher learning, located within the SSVEC service territory, can apply for up to \$40,000 in grant funding, doubling the maximum award issued in 2024. There will also be one "jumbo" entity grant for organizations seeking up to \$150,000.

Application for summer entity grants will begin in late February.

SSVEC employees attend leadership class



The Sky Island Regional Partnership Leadership Class visited the Sulphur Springs Valley Electric Cooperative (SSVEC) construction and maintenance facility in Benson on October 10, 2024. Class members viewed and participated in a range of SSVEC operations, meeting with linemen, technicians, and Chief Executive Officer Jason Bowling.



SSVEC employees joined in the Leadership Class graduation including, from left CEO Jason Bowling, Key Accounts Manager Cory East, SSVEC General Counsel Sara Ransom, Energy Management specialist and graduate Jenny Downing, SSVEC Controller Curtiss Peterson, SSVEC Records Administrator and graduate Christie Jensen, SSVEC Contracts Administrator and graduate Nadine Saavedra, SSVEC Accounting Specialist and graduate Agueda Guerrero, and Vice President of Finance Ron Lee.

At right, the 2024 Sky Island Regional Partnership Leadership Class received certificates for completing the year-long program. Now in its 24th year, the community leadership program has graduated hundreds of individuals, many of whom have become prominent and influential leaders. This program offers exclusive opportunities and unique experiences not available to the public, ensuring that participants gain insights and connections that will enrich their leadership journey. More information is available at <https://www.skyislandsrp.com/leadership-southern-arizona>.



SSVEC Foundation tabs 15 for Washington Youth Tour

Fifteen area high school students were awarded all-expense-paid trips to the nation's capital at the 42nd annual Washington Youth Tour dinner and awards ceremony, sponsored by Sulphur Springs Valley Electric Cooperative (SSVEC) Foundation on Wednesday, Nov. 6th, in Benson.

Students from throughout the SSVEC service territory participated in the competition which began in August with presentations about the program at local high schools. Finalists and their parents gathered in the multi-purpose building on the Benson school campus for the dinner and awards ceremony.

"It was another banner year for the youth tour," said Jason Bowling, Chief Executive Officer at SSVEC. "The quality and character of the students was again

impressive, and this year we were able to provide this experience for all of those who qualified as finalists."

Students and parents erupted with cheers when Kristin Gray, SSVEC Community Relations Manager, announced that unlike previous years the Foundation would be funding the six-day tour of the nation's capital for all the qualifiers. In previous years, between six and nine finalists were awarded the all-expense paid trip, with the remaining finalists offered the opportunity to take the tour at significantly less cost.

"It's wonderful that this year the SSVEC Foundation was able to provide this opportunity for all of the finalists," Gray said. "Investing in area youth for this educational experience is completely consistent with the mission of the SSVEC Foundation."

Qualifying students registered top scores on a test at the outset of the competition. Top scorers then submitted a video answering a multi-part question, including what life would be like without electricity. Students entering their junior year, representing nine high schools across the service territory were invited to the final day of the competition.

Beginning in the early afternoon on Nov. 6th, the qualifiers had the opportunity to meet with the 2024 and 2025 chaperones, as well as past finalists, to learn more about the trip. In addition, they took a second test, prepared an essay explaining the benefits of a "not-for-profit" cooperative, and participated in an interview with a panel of judges, prior to dinner with their parents and the awards ceremony.



Students representing nine high schools in the Sulphur Springs Valley Electric Cooperative (SSVEC) service territory were awarded all-expense paid trips to the nation's capital at a dinner and ceremony Nov. 6 in Benson. The 42nd annual Washington Youth Tour, sponsored by the SSVEC Foundation, is scheduled for June 2025. Pictured, seated, from the left are, Ethan Bailey, Veritas Christian Academy; Travis Allred, Willcox High School; Chris Gonzalez, Valley Union High School; DeAndre Carabez, Tombstone High School; Cayden Richins and Aaron Edington, both of St. David High School. Standing, from the left, Jason Bowling, Chief Executive Officer at SSVEC; Esperanza Lepley; Tombstone High School; Dan Barrera, Vice President of the SSVEC Board of Directors; Jacob Cruz, Patagonia Union High School; Elizabeth Fredrick, Veritas Christian Academy; Lynnea Kartchner, San Simon High School; Isabella Garcia, Buena High School; Jacob Savage, St. David High School; Dezireh Mejias, Buena High School; Isabella Laura, Benson High School; Randy Redmond, President of the SSVEC Board of Directors; and Emerson Owens, Benson High School.

SSVEC HAPPENINGS

The Washington Youth Tour is funded by the SSVEC Foundation. As a cooperative, SSVEC periodically returns money earned in excess of expenses to its members. These are called "Capital Credits." When members move out of the area and leave no forwarding address, SSVEC transfers the unclaimed funds to the SSVEC Foundation. Money provided by the Foundation also funds the annual Youth Engineering and Science Fair, the SSVEC Foundation Scholarship program, and a Micro-Grant and Educational Entity Grant program.

Students representing electric cooperatives from across the nation, including five other utilities in Arizona, will participate

in the annual tour at the nation's capital in June 2025.

Past youth tour participants, Lauren Jones and Leo Johnson, spoke briefly at the Nov. 6th ceremony. Jones, who was selected last year as the Youth Leadership Council Representative of Arizona among students from across the state, pointed to the impact of touring Arlington National Cemetery while in Washington.

"Arlington gave me a new appreciation for the life that I live," Jones said. "It gave me gratitude for this country that kindles hope, devotion, and love."

Johnson called forth each finalist to receive their award, while Kristin Gray announced at the conclusion of the dinner

that all 15 students had qualified for the all-expense paid trip.

SSVEC board President, Randy Redmond, and Vice President Dan Barrera also attended the festivities.

Interview judges were Melissa DiPeso, former SSVEC board member; Robert Kirschmann, Community Development Director for City of Willcox; Bridgid Ledger, Mandi Greenmyer, Arizona G&T Member and Community Relations Administrator; and David Bane, former Key Accounts Manager at SSVEC.

The chaperones for the 2025 tour are Danna Judd, SSVEC Member Services Manager, and her husband, Bevin Judd.

SSVEC in the community



It took a large crane, patience, and plenty of power to lift a 45-ton, 20-megawatt transformer at the Sulphur Springs Valley Electric Cooperative (SSVEC) Technical Services Yard on October 15, 2024. The transformer was transported to the Stewart Substation in the Willcox area, replacing an old 10-megawatt transformer. The new infrastructure will increase the capacity to distribute electricity in the Willcox area.



Representatives of Sulphur Springs Valley Electric Cooperative (SSVEC), including Journeyman Linemen, Technicians, and Human Resources personnel, attended and presented at a career fair in Tucson on October 23, 2024. High school-age and older students attended the fair and witnessed a Safety Trailer Demonstration, learned about working for an electric utility, and met with SSVEC representatives.



A paper playing piano

perfectionist

Reviving player pianos
no one will touch

By R.J. Cohn

It wasn't dinosaurs or football that gripped Clinton Gray with an all-consuming passion that has charted the direction of his life since childhood. It was player pianos.

The first moment he laid eyes on a player piano, the Sierra Vista native – who's the only player piano restoring technician in Southeast Arizona – was so smitten by the sight of a self-playing instrument making music from a roll of perforated paper he knew this would be his guiding light, the North Star he would follow his entire life.

In a narrow cement building that stored tanks of milk for a dairy belonging to the Miracle Valley Bible College in Palominas, the 2012 Buena High native has been restoring 20th Century player pianos – along with 200-year-old pianos – for the last six years.

And with a two-year client backlog, Gray's daily grind is a work of love and a near-devout dedication to a pneumatic/mechanical instrument with pumping bellows connected to a motor that was the rage during the jazz age and ragtime music.

"When I first saw one owned by a family friend and how it operated, my eyes were practically popping out of my head," said Clay, who's 30. "A piano that plays on its own and then you could switch to playing it manually? I was pretty blown away. I knew I had to have this in my life."

It's something he has never let go of.

And with his phone ringing off the hook from customers willing to pay \$18,000 to restore vintage pianos that can take from 6 to 18 months – many of which have been stuffed in attics and basements, caked in mildew – Gray figures he'll be busy for the foreseeable future. He also tunes pianos for a flat rate of \$125.

"I had no idea as a boy what I was getting into with player pianos, an instrument that operates with bellows to play music on a 88-note roll of perforated paper," he said. "Any task you do is 88 times more intricate, which can be pretty agonizing at times."

Yet for Clay, an Air Force veteran, who managed to restore a player piano living off-base while using the force's

woodshop, it's an agony that comes with an ecstasy from restoring a near-wrecked instrument to a museum-restoration piano resembling a work of art.

Though player pianos were love at first sight for Clay, he also had a musical and woodworking background.

"I was the kid who actually asked for piano lessons and stayed with it," said Clay, who was in show bands that played for school plays and other events. "I was also tinkering around repairing player pianos, but there was so much to know."

He moved to St. Louis, Missouri,

"I was the kid who actually asked for piano lessons and stayed with it."

— Clinton Gray

where he studied under a piano restoration master for a year while working as a tour guide in the Scott Joplin House State Historic Site. But for a kid raised in the desert whose worldly knowledge was primarily Palominas, St. Louis was an off-



the-rails culture shock for Gray. He took a job in a large piano restoration shop in Tennessee before enlisting in the Air Force, then returned home and began his own business.

"It didn't take long to learn the intricacies of player pianos," he said. "I had a good understanding of mechanics and knew how to restore these things."

He also knew how to market himself. He listed his name and resume on a website for piano and player piano technicians. Almost immediately, Gray was getting three calls a week, and business hasn't slowed down for a minute. About 95% of his work is restoring player pianos.

"They're the main focus of my business," he said. "There are so many still around, and because there were 10,000 different brands in the 1920s, each one is a different challenge."

A perfectionist who pays attention to the smallest detail, Clay is in constant

demand. He is one of the few piano restorers in the country willing to work on an instrument weighted with such delicate intricacies.

"Many people rebuild pianos, but player pianos?" he said. "There's only a few of us. We're just a tad crazy and far more crazier than piano tuners. You're dealing with thousands of moving parts, which is just crazy-making. That's why many technicians don't want to touch them. But when I restore one, I know my customer is going to love it as much as I loved working on it."

You can contact Clinton Gray at gray.clinton@icloud.com. ■



Volunteers make

Adopt-A-Highway
volunteers clean
up SR 90

By R.J. Cohn

It's an unsightly problem that won't go away.

But a group of volunteers at Valley View Resort are doing their utmost to put a dent into littering and a windblown trash problem that had been an eyesore along a mile-long stretch of State Route 90 to Canyon Vista Medical Center.

Since last January, they've made a major impact, picking up more than 3,000

pounds of trash along the north and south sides of the highway.

And they're far from calling it quits on their Adopt-A-Highway thoroughfare which they "adopted" from the Arizona Department of Transportation one year ago.

Each quarter, 17 volunteers in yellow vests provided by ADOT walk the north and south sides of SR 90 with blue bags and trashing picking sticks picking up everything from plastic bags and bottle, Styrofoam cups, clothing, metal siding, cardboard – even half a bathtub and an ambulance sign.

The first time they collected trash the group racked up seventeen 50-pound bags weighing an astounding 1,600 pounds.

"You wouldn't believe half the things we find along this stretch," said volunteer Nathan Martin. "This section on the way to the transfer station can get pretty messy between cleanups with debris blowing out

ake it beautiful

of pickups and just plain littering. We're trying to make a difference."

So far, they have.

Before entering into a formal Adopt-A-Highway program agreement with ADOT for a two-year permit, the group decided to stop complaining about the trash problem fronting the entrance to their resort and start doing something about it. Even the snowbirds who visit in the winter volunteer for the cleanups.

After their initial 1,600-pound collection, volunteers have been rounding up between 30 to 45 bags of trash per quarter and say they have seen a vast improvement to the one-mile stretch.

"We want to keep this as clean as we can so people who come to visit or consider living here see a really nice-looking area," said Martin. "We're proud of our resort's appearance and want to keep it looking like this. After all, it's our home."

Along with littering and debris blowing off trucks enroute to the city's transfer, one

of the biggest problems adding to trash buildup on the roadway is Mother Nature.

"Because of prevailing southerly winds, a lot of trash gets built up on the north-west side of the highway and gets hung up on shrubbery bordering it," said volunteer Monte Kern. "It's something we'll always be up against. We're hoping trash haulers on their way to the dump will start tarping their loads and some enforcement regulations will be put in place. The first time we collected it looked awful. People had dumped couches, tires, you name it. ADOT has been really supportive and encouraging with what we're trying to do."

Nationwide, trash scattered across America's highways has been a concerning problem. Nearly 23.7 million pieces of litter has been left on 8.3 million miles of roadway, equalequal to 2,855 pieces per mile.

But ADOT's Adopt-A-Highway program, which started in 1997 – it now has 850 volunteer groups representing

8,645 volunteers – has been making inroads cleaning up 1,983 miles of Arizona highways.

In 2023, the department says Adopt-A-Highway volunteers filled more than 15,000 bags of trash across the state, which translates to an impressive 103 tons of plastic bottles, cigarette butts, beer cans, construction debris and other items tossed from vehicles.

Dollarwise, ADOT says the labor value for the cleanup would amount to nearly \$64,000.

Some volunteers picking up trash in October said they noticed that there was considerably less debris on that mile stretch along SR 90.

"After getting that first big collection last year, which took hours, it wasn't too bad this time," said Sandy Davis. "It's now more about maintaining the area, and it looks like we're keeping it fairly maintainable. Either that, or we're getting really good at this." ■



Lansing,

passionate for music

By Jenny Kartchner

"You're willing to take a chance on a woman?" some questioned.

It was 1953. Mr. J.A. Kartchner (superintendent of St. David Schools) had just hired the first woman band director in Arizona, Mary Pat Lansing (a recent graduate of Arizona State University).

"Build the school a band," he requested.

And she did!

At the first state band directors meeting, the chairman addressed the group as "Gentlemen and Lady." At the tender age of 23, Lansing brought the St. David band to Band Day at the University of Arizona and was initially prevented from entering the field because the officials didn't believe she could be the director.

Through the years, Lansing involved many students in band and choir. At different times, she also taught elementary music, world geography, physical education, and even coached volleyball. She has received numerous awards and been active in music and community organizations.

The culminating event of her career was in 1985 when she brought the St. David High School Marching Band to represent Arizona in the Independence Day parade in Washington D.C. The tiny band took the Spirit of America Award, the highest honor in the nation.

When Lansing came to St. David, her plans were to stay for a year. She was impressed by the talent of the students, and ended up teaching for 33 years, retiring in 1986. But she didn't retire from

music or the community. She has dedicated her life to music.

She helped to provide the community with several "firsts" including the first staging of a Broadway musical, and in 1973 along with Clark Hughes, the first performance of Handel's Messiah.

For many years she contributed to the production by either directing or playing piano. It has been held at local schools or churches for 50 years. This year she will not attend due to health issues. The Messiah pieces have whittled down over the years, but the "Hallelujah" chorus was the next to last number at the Community Christmas Concert Celebration (December 15, 2024). ■





LANSING AUDITORIUM

IN HONOR OF
MARY PAT LANSING
 MUSIC TEACHER
 ST. DAVID SCHOOLS 1953-1986

Shedding light under a different

By R.J. Cohn

After being featured on ABC's prime-time investigative news magazine TV program 20/20 for solving a murder-for-hire case in the Denver area more than 25 years ago, a former Colorado homicide detective decided to rewire her life in Huachuca City.

Angela Coble is no longer sifting through clues and leads that helped put felons behind bars for committing some of the most heinous crimes imaginable.

Yet she's still searching through piles of personal effects.

But along with her husband Andre, the Huachuca City couple is

sifting through discarded machine parts, farm implements, old sewing machines, kettles and cameras and just about anything that says antique.

When they find them – in flea markets, yard sales, even going to one of the largest antique shows in the U.S. in Brimfield, Massachusetts – the Cobles have developed a flair for creating original and distinctive themed-table lamps at their A&A Upcycled Antiques & Light Design business so quirky and iconic that they've become instant showstoppers wherever they sell them.

You won't find anything close to these lamps fashioned from repurposed antiques in the lighting section of big box stores.

"We've had a ball doing this," said Andre Coble, a jack-of-all tradesmith who worked for Mr. Fix It of Sierra Vista. "Everyone loves things that are unique and a little offbeat, eye-catchers like these lamps. These are really different, novel pieces that we've put together."



Each lamp is an extraordinary piece of work with a single Tesla or special LED lightbulb without a lampshade. They're made with threaded pipe with items like old typewriters, vintage Polaroid Land Cameras and miniature Singer sewing machines welded to pipes mounted on mesquite rounds from the Tumacacori Mesquite Sawmill in neighboring Santa Cruz County.

shade

"We're constantly coming up with new ideas when we come across some unusual items so each lamp is usually an original piece," said Angela Coble, who retired from law enforcement in 2017. "We also get a lot of custom orders. We outfitted 24 rooms and a vestibule with tailor-made lamps in a hotel in Old Bisbee, which was a lot of fun."

The Cobles have designed and fabricated more than 3,000 of their one-of-a-kind lamps in their Huachuca City warehouse since they started seven years ago. After seeing how well they sold at fairs and festivals, they opened a store in Old Bisbee last year.

Despite an extensive welding background, Andre Coble credits the majority of the lamp's designs and fabrication to his wife, the former homicide detective who never held a welding torch or wired a lamp until she met her husband.

"She's got that unique vision and ability to put together a lamp from an old set of gears, pulleys, even an old movie projectors," he said. "She knows what she's doing."

After moving to Cochise County to be closer to family, she started making bottle lamps by threading pipes together in angled shapes.

But when she met Andre, her life took a 90-degree angled turn. They married, and he introduced her to antiquing. It changed her entire focus.

"I had never stepped into an antique store before," she said. "It was a sudden awakening, and I saw how I could repurpose small antiques and turn old things into lamps. The designs came to me in a flash. Welding pieces onto pipes to create these lamps has been an exciting chapter in my life considering what I was doing before."

Their 1930s Singer sewing machine lamps, along with military- and baseball-themed ones peppered with vintage baseball memorabilia have been customer favorites.

"There's nothing quite like coming up with an original piece and seeing the look on someone's face when they realize it's actually a lamp," she said.

To contact the Cobles, call 303-304-5225. ■



VeloVet riders at the 2023 Sierra Vista Veterans Day Parade - 29 riders of our then 51 members. Today there are 98 of us. Phenomenal growth.

LET'S Ride

*Are we happy
because we ride?*

*Or, do we ride
because we're happy?*

By Larry Scott

It's Saturday, 8 a.m. at Pueblo Del Sol Country Club parking lot. A happy crowd in bright colors with their bikes. Fancy bikes, ordinary bikes, trikes, ebikes, e-trikes, hand-cycles, tandems, elaborate, exotic, and wonderful. Cheerful riders are ready to go!

Team leader Stu Carter arrives on his road bike (but usually on his hand-cycle), and after a few preliminary words, everyone is off, southward on St. Andrews Drive to Yaqui, then across Highway 92, continuing down Camino Principal, left on San Pedro Avenue,

then left on Anderson Road, to the parking lot of Nirvana's Cup of Joe coffee shop, just before 92. This route avoids 92's high traffic volume and speeds.

Soon, the coffee shop echoes with colorful, cheerful life where, seemingly, everyone knows everyone. Outside, a patio with additional seating, surrounded by that wild collection of beautiful bikes and happy riders.

While the group includes fast riders with fast bikes (Stu is a former U.S. National Military Time Trial Champion),

the Saturday morning rides are for everyone. A happy ride, a relaxed pace, with no one left behind.

As riders leave, I take the opportunity to visit with VeloVets President and CEO Stuart S. (Stu) Carter.

"For me," he says, "my VeloVets story began with a friend and civil service co-worker, Rich, who had to retire in 2015 due to blindness. Later, I learned he was at the Veterans Hospital in Tucson, learning to live as a blind person, and that tandem bicycling was a great way for him to stay active and move on."



Saturday morning gathering at the Golf Course parking lot.

"The organization working with him was VeloVets Tucson. My best friend, Ken Kingsley and I, began working with them. Ultimately, we co-founded VeloVets Sierra Vista, our own 501c3 and 509a2 (public charity), chartered in December of 2016 and officially functional on the 1st of January 2017.

"I got in contact with my blind friend, Rich and, together, we came up with a plan. I commissioned Andy Gilmore, a bike builder in Tucson, to build us a racing tandem road bike.

"So, I'm the pilot and Rich, in the backseat, is the second motor. Over time we learned to communicate and work together, seamlessly, as a team.

"In 2017 Rich and I entered RAGBRAI, Register's Annual Great Bicycle Ride Across Iowa, the oldest, largest, and longest multi-day bicycle touring event in the world. We rode our tandem across Iowa, with me as pilot, for 500 miles over seven days. Actually, we crossed Iowa again in 2019 — same result — we had a blast!"

Another member brought on board was Mark, an active-duty Army Captain, who had a stroke, and was paralyzed on the left side of his body.

"When he got out of the Army, I re-engineered a recumbent bike, so he could shift and brake with his right hand and pedal with his right leg. We put his left leg into a brace on the left pedal and his left arm in a sling. The first time out, he rode about two miles. He was so happy; he cried because he was mobile again.

"Later, we went to Ajo Bikes in Tucson. Brian, the owner, engineered a recumbent trike with electric motor assist for Mark to ride. So, in 2017, he went with Rich and

I to Iowa to ride RAGBRAI. And he rode three 10-mile days with his trike.

"That was our beginning. Our mission is, and has always been, to help military veterans — especially those with disabilities. We started with four members: Rich, Mark, Ken, and I. We now have 98 members — 65 of them with disabilities, including 37 who are classified by the VA as 100 percent disabled.

"Veteran family members and veteran supporters may also become VeloVets members, but we're limited by our charter to serve veterans, and we fund veterans' equipment needs when they are unable. Non-veteran members, known as support riders, are key to supporting our disabled vets' activities. Most of them are able bodied. Seems sort of exclusive — but not really.

"However, we only cater to local Sierra Vista area disabled veterans."

While the VeloVets story is wonderful, there are other cycling groups in the area. Younger competitive road and mountain bike enthusiasts, as well as some who combine road and off-road disciplines in day-rides of 100 miles or more — but that's another story.

Clearly, our cycling community is alive and growing. Sierra Vista, at more than 4,600 feet elevation, provides a great year-round climate for bicycling. During the summer, riders often hit the trails early in the cool of the morning. When the seasons change and the weather cools, early afternoon may see the most bike traffic.

The trail systems in Sierra Vista and the surrounding area are wonderful.

And, as one of the VeloVets leaders



Stu Carter with Beverly Everett - Retired Army / Civil Service. Over the years, she underwent nine knee surgeries. Now, thanks to VeloVets, she rides a trike. Beverly now walks without assistance for the first time since 2016.

told me, "...we are fortunate to have two great bicycle shops..." Those are M&M Cycling at 1301 East Fry Boulevard, and Sun & Spokes Bicycle Shop at 3880 East Fry Boulevard.

Want to learn more about the bike paths and mountain trails in Sierra Vista and the surrounding areas? Check with the great guys at these bike shops.

You can also download from www.sierravistaaz.gov, bicycle and multiuse maps to discover Sierra Vista's multi-use paths, a network of more than 30 miles of pathways throughout the city and Fort Huachuca, as well as several miles of marked bicycle lanes.

Download the Bicycle Mountain Trail Map and ride or hike into the Huachuacas along popular trails. The map also includes trail elevations, descriptions, and advisories.

Download the Cochise Vista Trail Map. This 20-mile loop encircles Sierra Vista from Ramsey Canyon Road to San Javier Road in a narrow funnel route that passes along the Pueblo del Sol Country Club, Veterans Park, and University of Arizona South. The Cochise Vista Trail was developed by Stu, Ken and John Wettack, long-time leaders of the Cochise Bicycle Advocates.

Riding to Fort Huachuca? Download the Fort Huachuca Biking/Walking Routes Map and a Fort Huachuca Visitor Pass Application. Fort Huachuca Visitor Passes are only issued at the Visitor and Access Control Center at the Van Deman Gate, via the Hatfield Street entry (Hwy 90/Bufalo Solder Trail/Hatfield intersection). ■

Open star clusters

By Ted Forte

Stars form through the gravitational collapse of gigantic clouds of gas and dust comprised principally of molecular hydrogen. They are never born alone; they form in groups of dozens, hundreds, or even thousands of stars. We call these stellar families galactic or open clusters.

Open clusters provide telescopic targets of infinite variety and beauty. Many open clusters are relatively nearby and are therefore large and bright - easy targets for even an inexperienced observer, and visible in small telescopes and binoculars. The Pleiades (Seven Sisters) and the Hyades (the vee that makes the face of Taurus the Bull) are

examples of open clusters that can even be appreciated naked eye. The early winter sky abounds with interesting and beautiful clusters that are easy to find and rewarding to observe.

The bright stars Adara and Wezen make the rear leg of the Larger Dog (Canis Major). A line connecting them and extending 2.7 degrees northeast will land you in the area of the Tau Canis Majoris Cluster, NGC 2362. This beautiful cluster contains about 40 stars dominated by the brilliant 4th magnitude star Tau Canis Majoris, from which it takes its name. It lies just over 5,000 light years from earth.

The second magnitude star Murzim lies 5.5 degrees west-southwest of Sirius,

the brightest star in our sky. It forms the front leg of Canis Major. Extend a line between them another 10 degrees northeast and look a bit southeast from there. In a dark sky, you can make out the dim glow of a pair of clusters with the naked eye. Binoculars or your telescope's finder scope will show them well. Messier 47 is a bright cluster of about 30 irregularly spaced stars. Another 1.2 degrees to the southeast is Messier 46. M46 is a rich patch of about 75 faint stars faintly visible to the naked eye. Seemingly embedded within it is a faint, round, patch of light on the north side of the cluster. This is the planetary nebula NGC 2438. The nebula is not really part of the cluster; it lies some 1600 light years in front of it.

PHOTOS BY LEN AMBURGEY

The red giant Betelgeuse is one of the more recognizable stars in the constellation of Orion. Arcing northeast from Betelgeuse are two 4th magnitude stars that form the Hunter's raised arm. The further star is Xi Orionis. About a degree west-southwest of Xi is a small cluster of about a dozen bright stars, NGC 2169. What makes this pretty little object noteworthy is the pattern the stars assume. It's known as the "37 Cluster" because with only a little imagination, the cluster's brightest stars resemble the number 37 emblazoned on the sky.

Eleven and a half degrees northeast of Betelgeuse and at the foot of the Gemini twins is NGC 2264. Several of this cluster's 40 or so stars make the distinct impression of a Christmas tree cookie shape. In fact, it's known as the Christmas Tree Cluster. At the top of the tree shape is the impressive dark nebula,

the Cone Nebula. Some bright nebulosity is visible throughout the object as well.

The third magnitude star Propus (Eta Geminorum) forms the foot of the more northern Gemini twin. Two degrees northwest of Propus is Messier 35, a lovely cluster of at least 40 stars in a donut shape that can be seen with the naked eye. A half degree southwest is the seemingly smaller cluster NGC 2158. They make a fine example of the effect of distance. 2158 is actually more than twice the size of M35, but it's 4.5 times further from us at a distance of over 12,000 light years.

The constellation Auriga is densely populated with bright open clusters. Its three Messier clusters are probably the best known. Ten degrees south of bright Capella and midway between the stars Theta and Iota Aurigae is M38, which will show as many as 30 stars in binoculars. It's the northernmost of the

three clusters that sit close together in a line tending southeast. The smaller M36 lies about 2 degrees southeast and M37 lies another 3.7 degrees east-southeast of it. M37 is an extremely rich cluster that appears as a sparkled cloud that is only partially resolved into stars. It's estimated to contain over 1800 stars, but we see perhaps only 30 individual ones.

Page space dictates that this tour be only a tiny sampling of the open star clusters available to a small telescope in the January and February sky. There are well over a hundred clusters brighter than 8th magnitude (easy in binoculars) conveniently placed at this time of year. The free Patterson Observatory public night on February 6 will be an excellent opportunity to view some of the best winter clusters. Sign up at www.usfz.org/patterson-observatory or email info@hacastronomy.org for more information. ■



Mohave Energy Park: Powering reliability f

By Brinley Waite

Arizona's public power utilities are facing a growing crisis as energy demand soars while available power supply dwindles. Responding to this challenge, Arizona Electric Power Cooperative Inc. (AEP CO) and its member cooperatives are working around the clock to develop new, reliable, affordable and responsible energy resources.

One of the most ambitious and important projects to date—a new, highly efficient natural gas peaking facility in Mohave County called the Mohave Energy Park—is being developed by AEP CO, in collaboration with member Mohave Electric Cooperative (MEC). The project addresses MEC's growing loads to control fuel and transmission-related costs and improve regional reliability.

The Mohave Energy Park consists of two 49-megawatt LM6000 natural gas generating units selected based on the unique needs of MEC and its members. MEC customer energy use peaks during the early morning and evening hours, causing sharp spikes in demand. Because the spikes occur primarily when the sun is not out, solar is unable to support the surge in demand. The LM6000 units offer a flexible, quick-start performance well-suited to support MEC's needs and complement the co-op's growing renewable portfolio. The natural gas units are also equipped with industry-leading emission controls, and will be used 20 to 40% of the time, making them far cleaner, with lower emissions on average, than baseload generators.

The location of the Mohave Energy Park was carefully chosen, and its closest residential neighbors



Mohave Energy Park Benefits

\$10 MILLION
in local economic benefits.

for the future



are more than a mile away. AEPCO completed numerous studies—including predictive sound modeling and viewshed simulations—which showed minimal impact on the neighboring residents. AEPCO will develop an emergency response plan to ensure employee safety and provide support to nearby fire departments to ensure they are properly informed and equipped to assist.

MEC also expects to leverage this local generation to provide emergency backup for hospitals and other essential services in the event of an emergency outage situation.

Not only will the proposed generating station provide a stable energy supply for MEC's growing rural communities, it will boost the local economy and provide support for future economic development within the region. The construction of the

energy park is expected to yield about \$10 million in economic benefits to the area and provide about \$5 million in annual property tax benefits. Once operational, the energy park will introduce new job opportunities to operate and maintain the facility.

The Mohave Energy Park is a monumental step toward a reliable and affordable energy future, not just for MEC but for all of AEPCO's members. The power produced by the generating facility is designed for the benefit of MEC members—not for the sake of profit. Local generation in the Mohave region will avoid exports from Apache Generating Station in Cochise across the state to MEC members, reducing transmission costs and freeing up capacity from Apache Station for the benefit of other AEPCO members. □

The future site of the Mohave Energy Park in Mohave County. PHOTO COURTESY OF ARIZONA ELECTRIC POWER COOPERATIVE

NEW JOBS
to maintain the facility.

\$5 MILLION
in property tax benefits.

The gatekeeper of a city's treasure

By Robert Cohn



Kathy Klump can find any artifact, scrap of paper, lost historical fact — even a blacksmith's signature — from Willcox's rough and storied past, when it was the cattle capital of the nation, shipping more open-range cattle than any place in the country.

The third-generation Arizonan knows exactly where every single item is stored in the Chiricahua Regional Museum & Research Center, from an 1888 newspaper account on cattle rustling, to Warren Earp's shooting death at the Willcox Headquarters Saloon, to an Apache dress donated from Cochise's great-granddaughter.

And, she can locate anything almost at the snap of her fingers, even something about your great uncle if he lived in Willcox.

That includes more than 11,000 old photographs.

Klump — who was selected as one of 10 Arizona Culturekeepers in 2018 for making a positive impact on Arizona's

history, culture and environment — single-handedly has been collecting everything that has to do with Willcox for 24 years. She stores them with an archivist's memory in the museum on Maley Street she helped the Sulphur Springs Valley Historical Society purchase in 1999. There were more than 100 nominees for the prestigious award.

For a woman who didn't particularly like history as a child, Klump has some of the world's most distinguished writers, researchers and archivists calling and visiting her for snippets of history about Willcox and the Old West.

"As a kid, I loved scrapbooks, but history? Not so much," said Klump, who was named Favorite Daughter of the Year in 2023 by the Willcox Chamber of Commerce & Agriculture. "It took me a long time to gather every little thing that has to do with Willcox, storing them in our house until rooms were stacked to the ceiling. I know where every piece of everything is in this museum, including every single Arizona Range newspaper since 1888. I don't throw anything away."

That's why tour buses, like the one filled with history buffs on Band of Brothers author Stephen E. Ambrose's historic tours, visit the museum and the Friendly Bookstore next door showcasing historical literature.





"I've remembered so much of our history and can recall it chronologically by just saying someone's last name," she said. "I've read every single article in every publication of the Arizona Range News — weddings, deaths, cattle rustlings and murders. You name what you're looking for, and I'll find it."

Klump, who has authored nine books on the history of Willcox and the area along with articles in journals, is so respected nationwide as a historian, librarian and archivist that she was one of eight delegates chosen to represent Arizona in Washington, D.C at the White House Conference on Library Information Service in 1991.

She was also named Citizen of the Year in Willcox that same year.

"Funny thing about that was I hadn't really done anything yet," she laughed.

But then she started collecting bits and pieces about Willcox, and she couldn't stop. The more she discovered and collected, the more she realized what a flourishing past the city had.

"Back in the day, Willcox was filled with well-to-do merchants, and everything was happening here because it was a destination point for anything you needed in Southeastern Arizona," said Klump, who was born in Cornville and has lived all over Arizona. "It was growing and prosperous with 100 freighters constantly going to and coming from Globe."

Spearheading a drive to raise funds to purchase the historic Valley Hardware building for the museum, she recalled the historical society was \$700 short for the final payoff.

"I was at a high school football game, mentioned it, and a resident in the bleachers overheard me, took out his wallet

and wrote us a check for \$700," she said. "This community has been so supportive to what we were trying to do."

Because of history buffs' interest in Wyatt Earp's brother, Warren, the community began a Warren Earp Days celebration in 2000.

"It brought in movie stars and celebrities, and it was quite a big event for a few years," Klump recalled. "It outgrew Willcox and continued in Tombstone for eight more years. I still get authors calling as far away as Hawaii about Warren."

Married for 56 years to a man she knew since she was four years old, Klump never tires of overseeing the day-to-day

“I know where every piece of everything is in this museum, including every single Arizona Range newspaper since 1888. I don't throw anything away.”

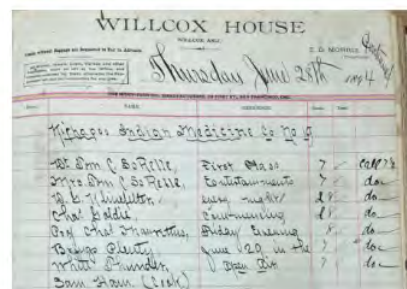
operation of the museum as a librarian and research archivist. Years ago, she spent hundreds of dollars of her own money making copies of pages of history books from the 1880s held in the Bisbee jail.

"I always wanted to have a research library so I started collecting everything I could find," she said. "I told the historical society I'd help raise money to buy a building for it, so I quit my job as a clerk at the justice court. Along with our other volunteers, I'm dedicated to this. My goal is to gather everything I can, have it in chronological order so people who follow me in this endeavor will know where everything is and carry on." ■

FAMOUS WILLCOX

1894 & 1896 REGISTERS

By Kathy Klump



1. The Willcox Hotel (also known as the Willcox House) was built soon after the Southern Pacific Railroad finished building the depot in December 1880, and was located right across the street. Many well-known people stayed in the hotel over the years. Our research center owns an original hotel register from 1896 and a copy of one from 1894. The following stories are about famous people who signed the register during those years.

2. The Kickapoo Indian Medicine Co. arrived June 28, 1894. They gave "first class entertainments every night

commencing Friday evening, June 29, in the open air." Signing in were Dr. & Mrs. Tom C. SoRelle, D. G. Klinefelter, Charles Goldie, Prof. Charles Maurettus, Brings Plenty, White Thunder, and Sam Ham (cook). Their traveling medicine shows featured Indian 'agents' or 'professors' making outlandish claims for quack cure-alls between Indian acts. They claimed their Kickapoo Joy Juice and other potions could cure just about any ailment.

3. Heinrich Horstmann, a twenty-one year old from Dortmund, Germany, arrived in Willcox on June 17, 1876.

He wrote under his signature that he "started May 2, 1895 for a tour around the globe on a bicycle to be covered within two years unless prevented by unknown acts. Covered 29 more miles." Horstmann took on a wager of \$5000 that he could make the tour in two years, taking no money with him and earning all his expenses on the way selling pictures, giving lectures and writing for newspapers. To win the bet, he must arrive back in Dortmund with \$1000 in his pocket. He had several narrow escapes from tramps while on his way through the Southwest. His

The Brown Bag Speaker Series, provided in partnership with the Sulphur Springs Valley Historical Society and the Willcox Historic Theatre are presented free to the public on the second Thursday of each month at noon at the Palace of Theater and Arts, 116 N. Railroad Avenue, Willcox, AZ. Scheduled are: **February 13** – Sharon Kennedy on "The Buffalo Soldiers and the Garfield Monument" **March 13** – Mike Anderson on "The History of the El Paso & Southwestern Railroad" **April 10** – Christine Reid on "The History and Mystery of the Gila River" **May 8** – Casey Dennis – "Archaeology of Cochise County".

HOTEL VISITORS

experiences are covered in a book he wrote after he arrived home August 16, 1897.

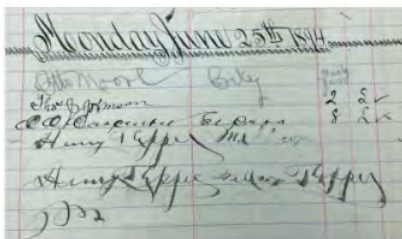
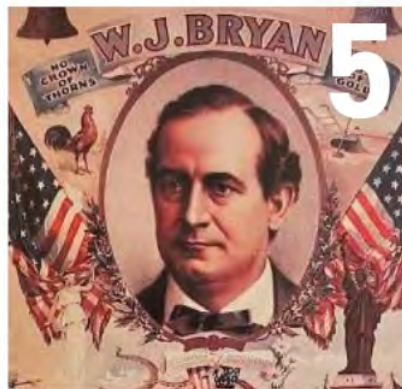
4. Lt. Henry Ossian Flipper signed the register on June 23, 1894. He is famous as the first African/American to graduate from West Point and the first commissioned Black officer in the U. S. Army. He was born into slavery in Thomasville, Georgia in March 1856. He joined the 10th Cavalry of the Buffalo Soldiers assigned to fight Chief Victorio and his Apache warriors. When his military career was over, he remained in the Southwest serving as a Spanish translator and becoming an expert in land rights and property law. He was special assistant to the Secretary of the Interior from 1921 to 1923.

5. William Jennings Bryan of Lincoln, Nebraska signed the register on July 14, 1896. He was one of the most famous orators in America. He is best known as the prosecuting

attorney facing Clarence Darrow for the defense in the famous Scopes Trial (known as the "Monkey Trial") in 1925. John T. Scopes, a high-school teacher in Tennessee, was charged with violating state law by teaching Charles Darwin's theory of evolution. When Bryan came through here, he was the Democrat nominee for President of the United States running against William McKinley. He also ran in 1900 and 1908, but never won. He later served as Secretary of State under President Woodrow Wilson.

6. Major William McKinley arrived in Willcox on August 15, 1896, one month after Mr. Bryan. McKinley was the Republican candidate for President. McKinley won the election. Although he was not President yet when he signed the register, he wrote his address as "The White House." McKinley served as the 25th President of the United States from

March 4, 1897 until his assassination on September 14, 1901. I believe this is the only time in Willcox history that both candidates running for President were here in Willcox within one month of each other during the campaign season. ■



12 veterans honored as recipients to CVMC's Veterans Wall

By R.J. Cohn

The service they gave to their country and community has not been forgotten.

For the ninth consecutive year, a band of military brothers and sisters who served both America and Cochise County in an exemplary manner were honored at a November 7 ceremony as the 2024-2025 class recognized on the Veterans Wall at Canyon Vista Medical Center (CVMC). The event is sponsored by the Legacy Foundation of Southeast Arizona and CVMC.

Long after they hung up their uniforms, 12 men and women were recognized for the lasting impact each has made through volunteer involvement and the years of commitment they gave to the armed forces.

A plaque honoring their achievements has been placed alongside 96 others on the hospital's Veterans Wall.

"This ceremony is a special way of saying thank you for giving so much," retired Col. Tim Quinn, who served as Chief of Staff at Fort Huachuca, told more than 125 people at the ceremony. "We are so grateful for their service."

Beginning in 2015, the Veterans Wall has recognized 12 veterans each year who have continued their military values of selfless service after retiring from active duty by contributing to their communities.

Shaun Phillips, Canyon Vista's Chief Executive Officer, told the crowd that "veterans here bring so much to Cochise County after having given so much for our country."

Guest speaker Col. Brenden Dever, U.S. Army Intelligence Center of Excellence, spoke eloquently of the service and

commitment of veterans.

"Veterans know better than anyone the price of freedom," said the Cochise County native, whose decorated military career has spanned 25 years.

Below is a synopsis of the 12 Veterans



Daniel "Dan" Valle was among the honorees at the annual Veterans Wall ceremony at Canyon Vista Medical Center.

Wall inductees:

- **Charles E. "Chuck" Chambers:** Ret. Air Force Lt. Col. with 20 years of service, including 196 air combat missions. He has supported local agriculture, land conservation and youth sports while serving in various community leadership roles.
- **Darrel Claunch:** Marine Corps veteran with two Vietnam tours who transformed Cochise County's Toys for Tots program, providing 45,000 toys to children over the past eight years.
- **Jose Delgado:** Marine Corps veteran who served as a teacher and active community volunteer, contributing to education and youth programs in Bisbee.
- **Linda Marie George-Wisnom:** Ret. Army Major with 23 years of service. She is active in St. Vincent de Paul, the Lions Club and various initiatives supporting visually impaired individuals and holiday charity.
- **Arthur "Casey" Jones:** Army Lt. Col. with 21 years of service has contributed

to local governance, veterans' affairs, Special Olympics and was inducted into the Arizona Veterans Hall of Fame.

- **Clea McCaa:** Ret. Army Colonel with 30 years of service in intelligence. He founded the Sierra Vista Dream Center, supports local youth, is a pastor, chaplain and Mayor of Sierra Vista.

- **Sarah Pacheco:** Army veteran and founder of Peach's Pantry, which serves thousands of children in need. A former city councilwoman, she volunteers with the Arizona Governor's Commission for Service and Volunteerism.

- **Thomas Ransford:** Army Military Police 1st Sgt with tours worldwide, he has served as a Major Crimes Detective, founded a youth football league and taught criminal justice courses at local universities.

- **Nedra Sealey:** Army veteran and former VFW

Post 9972 Commander who initiated several community service programs, including food drives, blood donation efforts and Memorial Day tributes.

- **Benjamin "Ben" Thompson:** Army and National Guard veteran who transformed Tombstone's Community Food Bank from serving 250 people a month to over 2,500.

- **Daniel "Dan" Valle:** Army Reserve Major with 28 years of service has served on various boards, including those for mental health, local governments and educational foundations. He is involved in the Tombstone Municipal Airport Commission and the Southeast Arizona Hispanic Chamber of Commerce.

- **Michael Zehr:** Army veteran who has contributed significantly through the Disabled American Veterans, Knights of Columbus, Elks Lodge and Warrior Healing Center, aiding veterans with PTSD and other challenges. ■

***Billion Dollar Bullet* takes you to hell and back in SV vet's tale of Vietnam**

By R.J. Cohn

Jerry Bevers was one of the lucky ones.

Commissioned as a second lieutenant during the Vietnam War, Jerry earned two bronze stars, the Army Commendation Medal and the Combat Infantry Badge.

Most importantly, the 1966 Buena High School grad came back in one piece. Not many did.

Some — nearly 58,000, whose names are inscribed on the Vietnam Memorial In Washington, D.C. — never returned alive.

Bevers, who was promoted to Captain at the age of 22, not only survived firefights, minefields and bombings of 60-millimeter mortars in sandbagged bunkers; 57 years later the man who said he graduated at the bottom of his high school class has written a riveting account of more than just surviving Vietnam.

Bevers' harrowing *Billion Dollar Bullet* will not just take you to hell-and-back. Bevers also survived the second TET offensive in 1968, witnessing U.S. helicopters being reduced to a pile of ash during a series of simultaneous attacks under the direction of the North Vietnamese government.

It's Bevers' belief that the bullet he fired from his short-barreled CAR -15 rifle during an attack on his basecamp — it went through the scope of an enemy soldier aiming a rocket-propelled grenade launcher at him — saved 130 U.S. soldiers who cumulatively may have earned \$1 billion over the course of their lifetimes.

He says it was a lucky shot.

Still, it saved an entire basecamp.

"When I saw him aiming it right at

me, it was as scary as I've ever felt," said Bevers, who has strong roots in the Sierra Vista area. Bevers Street off Star Route 92 near the McDonalds restaurant was named after his family, who once owned a portion of that property.

"I know the damage that a RGP can do. It's not pretty."

Like thousands who saw battle in Vietnam, Bevers didn't return unscathed. He lost his hearing for years when an infantryman fired a 90-millimeter recoil-

enemies killed. It's about life in sandbagged trenches, being smart in jungle warfare, surviving, and most of all, making sure those under his command were safe.

"I saw plenty of death, we all did, yet through everything I went through, especially the shock of seeing my first casualty when a booby trap blew off a soldier's leg, I only lost one man under my command," Bevers remembered.

More than 25 years later, the loss of his Sergeant still haunted him when he saw his name on a list of those killed in action at the Vietnam Memorial at the nation's capital.

"I became physically sick when I saw his name," Bevers recalled. "I had to leave without visiting the Wall."

What Bevers gets right and communicates strongly throughout the *Billion Dollar Bullet* is a piercing passage that rings with a haunting remembrance for those who had boots on the ground during the Vietnam War:

"There is no safe place in Vietnam.

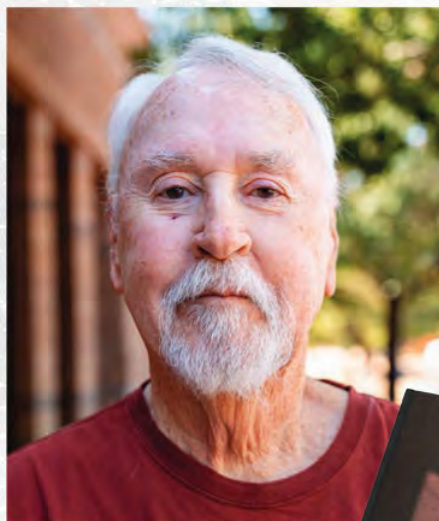
There was always a threat of

mortar and rocket

fire. Booby traps were always a problem, and snipers were all about and dangerous.

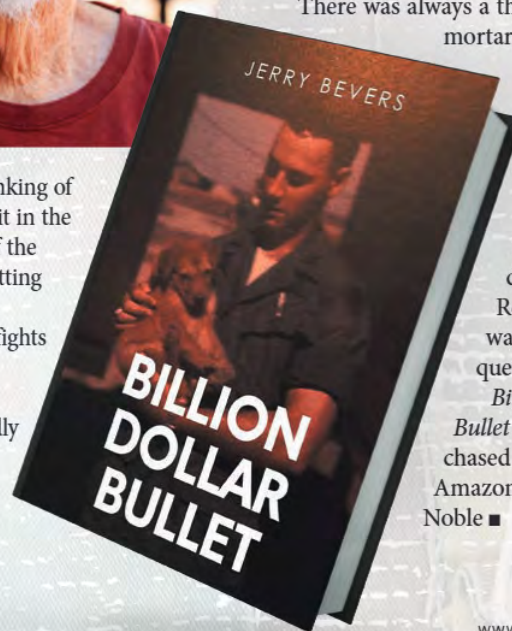
Really relaxing was out of the question."

Billion Dollar Bullet can be purchased online from Amazon or Barnes & Noble ■



less rifle without thinking of the backblast, firing it in the opposite direction of the advancing enemy, setting his fatigues on fire.

Yet for all the firefights and sniper attacks Bevers endured in Vietnam, this is hardly a book by a former soldier boasting about heroics, or



Rottweiler leaves an impressive legacy at



COCHISE COLLEGE



Dr. J.D. Rottweiler

He's fluent in Japanese, organized an outreach program in the heart of Chicago's gang neighborhoods, and turned the local focus of higher education from institutional success to an impressive record of community accomplishment.

Meet Dr. J.D. Rottweiler.

Currently the outgoing president of Cochise College, Rottweiler is looking forward to continuing his

life's legacies of education and social enrichment with a mission trip to a third world country early next year.

"It's not like Cochise College wasn't amazing when I got here," Rottweiler reflects. "The college was already recognized for its academic achievements."

His first official day on the job was just over 15 years ago, July 1, 2009. Rottweiler arrived from Riverton, Wyoming, where he served as the Executive Vice President at Central Wyoming College.

"It's my hometown and it was comfortable," Rottweiler said. "I celebrated my high school 40th class reunion this year (2024)."

It would be a mistake to believe Rottweiler's desire in life is to be comfortable. He became the first in his family to graduate

from college, starting that path at the former Ricks College, which today is known as Brigham Young University-Idaho (BYUI).

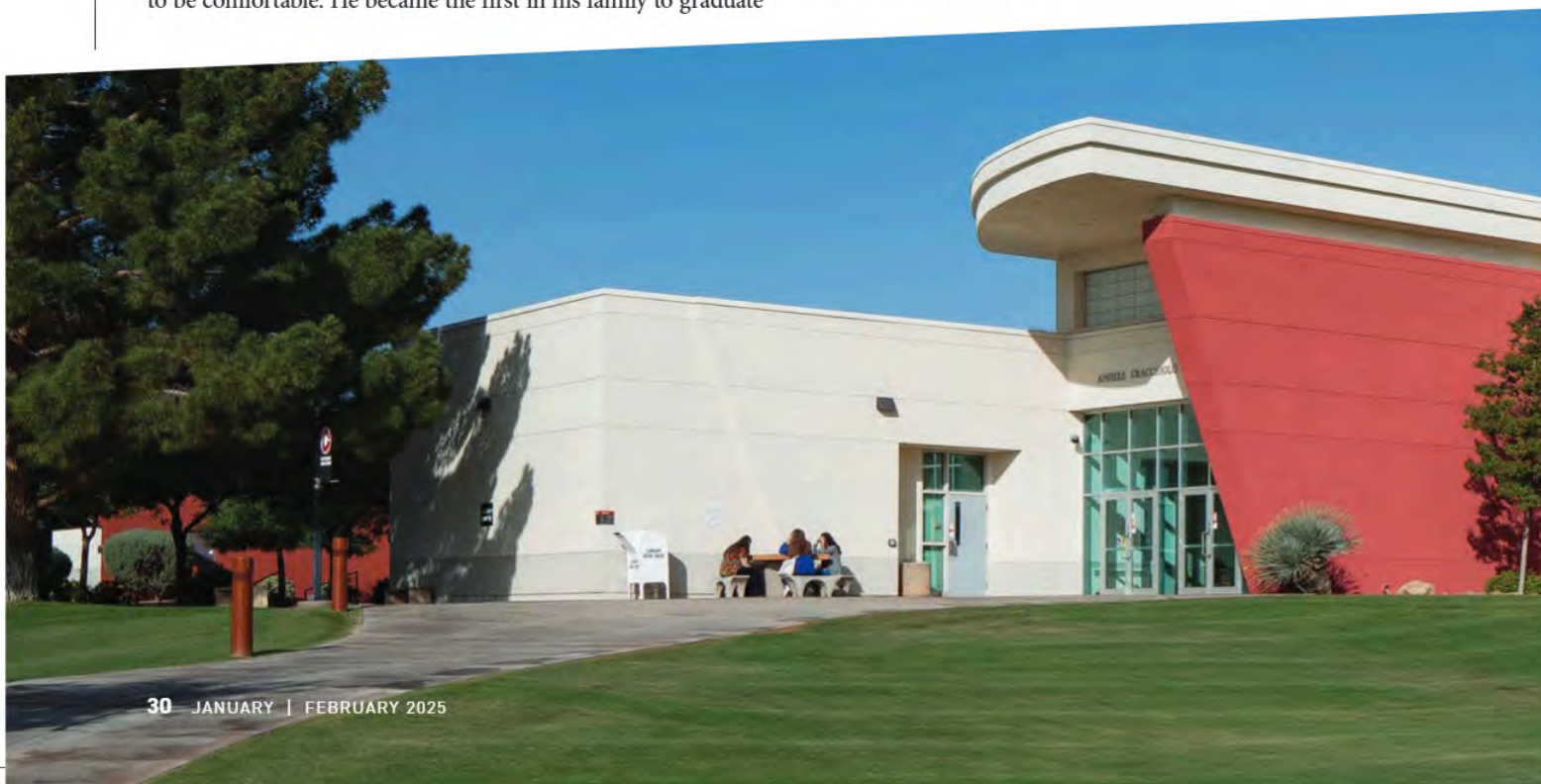
At the tender age of 19, Rottweiler took on a mission for his church, traveling to Japan. After two years in the "Land of the Rising Sun," the future college president returned to Ricks and continued his studies. He spent his summer months as a Japanese interpreter in and around Jackson Hole, Wyoming, which is known for its stunning landscapes and high-brow tourist resorts.

He met his wife, Melanie, in the fall of 1988, while she was studying to become an elementary education teacher. The couple got married and stayed at the University of Wyoming in Laramie, while Rottweiler earned his bachelor's degree and started graduate school. He was both a student and worked as a teaching assistant.

Rottweiler started his future in education as a Sociology and International Studies teacher at Ricks College, where he began a three-year appointment.

During that tenure, he established an outreach program that connected his college students with inner-city Chicago youth to study the "intergenerational transmission of cultural differences."

"Essentially, it was an opportunity for students from rural and Western regions to get to know kids from an urban and inner-city environment and experience the differences in their ways of life," Rottweiler said.



That first teaching job allowed Rottweiler to combine his life's passions: education, cultural studies, social mobility, and community engagement, all while finishing a video documentary on Japanese religious festivals.

"That three-year period really changed my life," Rottweiler said. "Beyond life changes that included starting a family and a career, it was there that I really began to grasp the importance of community, and the role education can play in community development."

Carrying that sense of community distinguished Rottweiler from a field of candidates seeking the President position at Cochise College.

His path included a professorship at Salt Lake Community College while beginning his doctorate degree at the University of Utah and college administration at Western Iowa Tech Community College in Sioux City.

"That's where I really learned and appreciated the importance of the technical and trade skills that lead to jobs in the community," Rottweiler said.

In 2002, he returned to his hometown as the Executive Vice President of Academic Affairs at Central Wyoming College.

"I felt pretty well-rounded with experience at a large, urban school, a tech school in the Midwest, then a small-town comprehensive community college," Rottweiler reflected. "When I look back now, it was just about the perfect blend of experiences to bring to Cochise College."

In his 15 years at the local institution of higher learning, Rottweiler has connected the college with the medical and first-responder trades, establishing a national reputation for nursing education and state-recognized programs for emergency medical technicians, firefighters and police.

His tenure has included construction of new facilities across the county, extending the opportunities of education well beyond the original Douglas campus.

"Every student in the county has access to a full-service facility within 30 minutes of where they live," Rottweiler said.

The college has vastly expanded its construction trades, HVAC, welding, and automotive technology programs, opening a new Automotive Technology Building in 2020.

"Really, it starts with community," Rottweiler said. "It starts by bringing people who can make a difference together and finding opportunities that will benefit the entire community."

Rottweiler's efforts were instrumental in revitalizing Sierra Vista's central city, after the local hospital was sold to a national firm, which promptly constructed the Canyon Vista Medical Center, and abandoned the Sierra Vista Regional Health Center.

Remodeling and reviving the aging facility on Wilcox Drive, Cochise College now offers its nursing and allied health, cyber security, and life-long learning programs at the downtown Sierra Vista center.

Most recently, the list of Rottweiler's accomplishments include construction of the first student dorms on the Sierra Vista campus and the expansion of program offerings to include bachelor's degrees.

"When you really look at what the needs are for a community, and then you work with others who can make that happen, that's been very satisfying for me and the outcomes have really made a difference right here, where we live." ■



Bachelor's degrees

now offered at Cochise College

By R.J. Cohn

One of the first community colleges in Arizona when it was founded in 1964, Cochise College has transformed itself in nearly 60 years as a top-ranked, cutting-edge junior college that has continually revamped and initiated programs to get students work-ready the moment they graduate.

But now the college is taking on one of its most ambitious challenges since it opened its doors – offering two affordable bachelor's degrees approved by the Higher Learning Commission to train the next generation of nurses, first responders and military leaders.

This fall, classes will begin for registered nurses to receive their Bachelor of Science in Nursing.

Additionally, a Bachelor of Applied Science in Leadership, Management and Operations will also be offered.

The new baccalaureate degree programs springs from Senate Bill 1453 that former Arizona Gov. Doug Ducey signed into law three years ago that allows Arizona's community colleges to offer four-year degrees, making it the 24th state where community colleges can grant bachelor's degrees with certain conditions.

"Today marks a new era as we continue to invest to meet local workforce needs," college president J.D. Rottweiler told community leaders in late May. "We are changing how we are delivering education. We heard the requests from

employers for more advanced nursing and leadership skills. We are doing this because our community needs these homegrown graduates in our workforce."

While Cochise College has always found innovative ways to put its best

credit (in state), the same tuition as the college's 100 and 200 courses.

\$95/credit (in state), the same tuition as the college's 100 and 200 courses.

"That one fifth of the cost of what four-year colleges are charging," said

Rottweiler. "And for students who qualify for the Arizona Community College Workforce Scholarship Program, it makes getting a baccalaureate degree almost free."

Canyon Vista Medical Center's CEO Dr. Shaun Phillips can't speak highly enough about Cochise College's nursing program, especially with the new offering of a bachelor's degree.

"Eighty-five percent of our workforce comes

from Cochise College," said Phillips.

"That's well over 300 full-time workers and 100 part-time ones. As the CEO of the hospital, I rely on Cochise College as one of our major partners at CVMC. The baccalaureate program is a big plus for us and the entire medical community."

The Bachelor of Science in Nursing program is tailored for nurses with an RN license and aims to facilitate their educational advancement while they continue their professional practice.

The Bachelor of Applied Science in Leadership, Management and Operations program broadens the career prospects for students in various fields, including first responders and military services, and focuses on the managerial side of the workplace.

For more information, visit www.cochise.edu/bachelors-degree-info. ■



Dr. J.D. Rottweiler outlines new bachelor's degrees at a Cochise College gathering.

foot forward in creating inroads that better students and the community with leading-edge programs, the new baccalaureate degrees is a significant step into the future, emphasizing the college's commitment to providing educational opportunities that support meaningful careers and lifelong learning.

"This ... represents a major step forward in our ongoing efforts to innovate and provide access to affordable programs that are important to our communities," said Executive Vice President for Academics Dr. James Perey. "The approval of the bachelor's degrees signifies a high mark of academic excellence."

What's especially encouraging about the new program is its affordability. Tuition rates for a Bachelor of Science in Nursing is \$133/credit (in state), while the Applied Science degree runs \$95/

The beauty of Mexican folklore



Mariachi Apache Folklorico dancers light up National Hispanic Heritage Month

By R.J. Cohn

Bursting with the sound of Mariachi music and of dancers dressed in colorful Mexican dresses, Nogales High School's Mariachi Apache Folklorico dancers put on a stunning performance Oct. 7 celebrating National Hispanic Heritage Month that lit up Cochise College's Student Union honoring the cultural roots of its country's history, customs and traditions.

It's the third consecutive year the high students have put on a revue displaying a polished performance of traditional Mexican song and folk dance, each one telling a unique story rooted in indigenous and regional influences, fostering a sense of pride and identity.

"I can't believe these are high school kids," a member of the audience whispered. "They're like professional dancers and musicians."

Under the direction of Dion Figueiroa and Sonia Hernandez, the 14 musicians and 10 dancers were absolutely flawless at the annual Mariachi and Churros event, highlighting a cultural tradition of 22 Hispanic countries, specifically neighboring Mexico.

The Mariachi sound of violins, guitars and trumpets didn't miss a beat

while the Flororiko dancers twirled and sashayed with their colorful dresses in perfect rhythm.

For Andy Espinoza, who grew up in Nogales and was part of a Mariachi band in high school, having the Mariachi Apache Folklorico dancers perform at the Sierra Vista campus is a big deal.

"As an institution that serves a binational community, Cochise College is deeply committed to promoting cultural appreciation and diversity," said Espinoza, the college's director of community leadership and activities. "We're creating an opportunity for these talented young students to experience the vibrant atmosphere of a college campus. It's a chance for them to connect with Cochise College and see how we foster an environment where cultural traditions are celebrated, inspiring them to consider continuing their education close to home."

More than just a cultural celebration, the Mariachi and Churros festivity also serves as a connection between Cochise College, the community and traditions that shape Hispanic culture. With more than 45% of the Sierra Vista campus' student body identifying as Hispanic, the college is a designated Hispanic-Serving Institution, which requires at least 25%

Hispanic enrollment. The Douglas campus Hispanic population is 80%.

"Cochise College provides students with an opportunity to engage with cultures and traditions that deepen their understanding of the world," said Espinoza.

For the Nogales High students who performed during National Hispanic Heritage Month, learning the complexities of each folklorico dance – which depict tales of life on the border, ranching traditions and significant cultural moments in Mexican history – is challenging. Espinoza, who grew up around it, said it requires not only physical skill but a deep understanding of the cultural meaning behind each dance step.

"They've dedicated themselves to learning the intricacies of traditional Mexican folk dances and have been immersed in cultural education from a young age," he said. "They've performed multiple times in front of diverse audiences, spreading the beauty of Mexican folklore through their performances ... making it a perfect way to honor the traditions of the Mexican people while recognizing our broader connection to the Hispanic world." ■

Still going strong

Cochise College celebrates six decades of education, community commitment

By R.J. Cohn

At 60 years young, Cochise College never looked as spectacular and glowing as it did at its anniversary party Sept. 19.

Celebrating six decades of unprecedented growth that has seen its enrollment soar from 441 students in 1964 to nearly 10,000 this fall, the little community college that began in Douglas put on its birthday hat with two celebrations at its Douglas and

Sierra Vista campuses on Founder's Day, where it was feted with speeches, a mayoral proclamation, testimonials and best of all, its own birthday cake.

It deserved all the acclaim and applause it received.

One of only two Arizona community colleges honored by the prestigious Aspen Institute College Excellence Program as one of the top 150 community Colleges in the U.S., the school hit the ground running following the passage of a \$16 million

bond that was used to construct the Douglas campus after forming a college district.

It now boasts more than 90 degree and technical certificates and has become a recognized leader in workforce development in Cochise County that places graduates into good-paying jobs the day they graduate, from EMTs to commercial truckers.

"There was no mission statement from the founders because in 1964 we didn't have those kinds of things yet," said JD

Rottweiler, now in his 15th year as Cochise College President. "But from the very beginning, the mission of education at Cochise College was to provide opportunities for students to grow and learn. It still is and always will be."

It was also about enhancing the community, added Rottweiler, and the lives of its students by providing accessible education.

"We have lived up to our promises and the needs of our community," he said.

That need, especially for another campus, became apparent eight years later with the demand to accommodate more students in Sierra Vista. Operating out of Fort Huachuca's Army Education Center, a new campus opened in 1974 where the Valero gas station now sits at the corner of Highway 90 and 92. Even though its first building was what Rottweiler called a "relocatable facility," students still came, and enrollment kept growing.

But in 1977, good fortune was bestowed on the college, thanks to 40 acres of donated land where it currently resides and continues to grow. A 45-bed dormitory is expected to open in early 2025.

Videotaped testimonials, ranging from former Douglas mayor Danny Ortega to Cochise County Sheriff Mark Dannels – both Cochise County graduates – telling how their lives were impacted personally and professionally by their time at the school, highlighted the day's celebration.

"It's not about the buildings we have here," said Rottweiler. "It's about the people who have gone through our halls who have benefitted from their education and how in turn they have benefitted our community." ■



g after 60 years



CVMC rolls out the red carpet for its new inpatient rehab unit

By R.J. Cohn

After a multi-million investment that brought robotic surgeries to Cochise County last year, Canyon Vista Medical Center (CVMC) isn't taking its foot off the pedal toward providing high-quality, patient care closer to home.

CVMC just took staying in Cochise County for extended medical care one step further.

The 177,000-square-foot hospital has sunk another \$1.75 million in building an enhanced 10-room inpatient rehabilitation unit, complete with a state-of-the-art-gym, that opened its doors in mid-September.

For county residents who have suffered a significant stroke affecting their speech, physical movement and overall health, the new, expanded rehab center means they and their loved ones won't have to make the 85-mile to Tucson. They can recover locally in an extended-stay facility that for many is almost like being in their backyard.

"This has been a long time coming," said interim rehab director Jeannette Alexander

of Lifepoint Health, the parent company of CVMC. "It's a courageous move by Canyon Vista to take a big step like this to provide state-of-the-art rehabilitation services to the community. There's been such a tremendous need for this locally for such a long time. No one wants to have to travel close to 100 miles or more to go to a rehab clinic in some other city. Most patients will average about a seven-to-10-day stay, and this facility is going to stay full."

An acute-care rehabilitation unit has always been on the drawing board for CVMC. Since 2000, CEO Shaun Phillips said the hospital had started the planning process, but it was put on the back burner when COVID struck.

"We always knew of the need for one here," said Phillips. "There's an average of seven to eight patients leaving Cochise County per day to Tucson for extended-stay rehab services. There will be three-hours of physical, occupational or speech therapy a day, and these programs make a huge difference toward patient recovery. What we're doing at Canyon Vista is trying to make

the hospital better in every possible way for this community. The rehabilitation unit is another piece of that bigger picture."

That "bigger picture" includes creating a cardiac unit at CVMC, with one or two cardiac-Cath labs providing state-of-the-art imaging technology along with several top cardiologists already on board. Phillips has his fingers crossed that it might start to take shape sometime next year. He knows the need for a cardiac unit locally is tremendous.

"We'll see what happens," he said. "Hospitals are busy places. Who would have thought that we'd be able to provide robotic surgeries here in Cochise County?"

For now, the addition of a new rehab unit – with emphasis on patient recovery independence through extensive therapy and innovative treatment approaches by CVMC rehab professionals – is a major step forward that allows stroke patients to recover closer to home.

"We're very excited about being able to provide this," said CVMC's Chief Nursing Officer Cosette Britten. "This is huge for the community as it is for us." ■



Joined by representatives of the Sky Island Regional Partnership, Canyon Vista Medical Center CEO Shaun Phillips (center) and staff celebrate a new safety rating.



Canyon Vista Medical Center Chief Executive Officer Shaun Phillips, and Chief Nursing Officer Cosette Britton, were instrumental in helping CVMC achieve its A safety rating.

CVMC racks up highest safety grade for hospitals in Arizona

By R.J. Cohn

When it comes to the preeminent level of hospital safety, Canyon Vista Medical Center has a lot to crow about.

The largest healthcare facility in Cochise County hit the gold standard of excellence, earning the highest marks possible with an "A" Hospital Safety Grade from an independent national nonprofit organization that evaluated nearly 3,000 hospitals on their ability to prevent medical errors, accidents and infections.

No hospitals in Tucson — including Tucson Medical and Banner University Medical centers — received the coveted safety rating.

CVMC was only one of 14 hospitals that received an "A" rating out of 50 hospitals in Arizona assessed by The Leapfrog Group, which uses up to 30 performance measures to grade

hospitals, using a methodology calculated by top patient safety experts under the guidance of a national expert panel.

CVMC's top brass couldn't be prouder of what the Level 3 trauma center has achieved in reaching the highest rung in patient safety.

"I was thrilled when we got the news," CVMC CEO Shaun Phillips. "We knew our raw score was pretty darn good. (Chief Nursing Officer) Cosette Britton and her team have been doing a lot of work behind the scenes for two-and-a-half years to make sure we were on the right path. I had a feeling her work was going to pay off, and we were going to score very high. We don't do everything here, but we're the best in class when it comes to patient care in our community. That's significant."

The "A" safety rating is a major milestone for the 100-bed acute care facility and Arizona Cardiac Receiving Center,

which has also obtained the Chest Pain Center Accreditation through the American College of Cardiology.

Leapfrog's "A" grade means CVMC has demonstrated strong systems to minimize risks and safeguard patient health, underscoring the hospital's dedication to the well-being of its patients. It stands as the only hospital ratings program focused solely on preventable medical errors, infections and injuries that kill more than 500 patients a day in the U.S.

"Our team's dedication to patient safety and quality care is unwavering, and this 'A' grade is a testament to that commitment," said Britton. "Every day, our staff work to ensure that our patients receive safe, reliable and compassionate care. We are honored to have our efforts recognized by The Leapfrog Group, and we will continue to strive for excellence for our community." ■

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.

COMING TO
THE K PALACE THEATER

The K Palace Theater presents...

**Home Sweet Nursing Home III
The MURDER
Mystery Weekend**

A comedy

AUDITION DATES
January 2-4 & 8-9, 2025

SHOW DATES
February 28, 2025
March 1, 2, 7-9 & 14-16, 2025

Visit our website for more info:
www.thekpalacetheater.com

Spotlight Studio
January 11, 2025
2-4pm / 6-8pm

Elite Team Showcase
Childrens' Dance Recital
From Benson, Arizona

Cochise Cowboy POETRY & MUSICAL Gathering
February 7, 2025 @ 7pm
February 8, 2025 @ 3pm & 7pm
February 9, 2025 @ 3pm

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

FEBRUARY 1 - FEBRUARY 25

Tombstone Quilt Show

Tombstone Art Gallery, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

2025 Tombstone Quilt Show starts February 1-25 and is open daily 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. The "Best in Show" wins \$500. Entry applications and rules can be found on our website: tombstoneartgallery.com. Deadline for entries with a photo is January 10. The Tombstone Art Gallery is located across from the OK Corral on Allen Street

TOMBSTONE

FEBRUARY 6, 12

Diaper Bank Distribution

Free Infant and Adult Diapers

San Simon – February 6

On February 6, 2025, Northern Cochise Community Hospital will work with the Arizona Diaper Bank and hold our next diaper bank handout at the San Simon Volunteer Fire District. This is held every

San Simon Commodities Day and includes infant and adult diapers, free of cost (quantities depending). We also sometimes carry bed pads, period go kits, and wipes for babies and adults.

Please join us from 11 a.m. – 1 p.m. on Thursday, February 6. Pick up at 2249 W Firehouse Lane, San Simon, Arizona 85632.

Willcox – February 12

On February 12, 2025, Northern Cochise Community Hospital will work with the Arizona Diaper Bank and hold our next Diaper Bank Handout, in Willcox. This is always on the second Wednesday of every month and includes infant and adult diapers, free of cost (quantities depending). We also sometimes carry bed pads, period go kits, and wipes for babies and adults.

Pick up is at 990 Scott Street (The Senior Center) on the corner of Bowie and Scott Streets. 4 p.m. – 6 p.m. on Wednesday, February 12. Questions call 520-766-6511.



FEBRUARY 14, 15, 16

Mata Ortiz Weekend Show & Sale

Amerind Museum, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Featuring Master potters Hector Gallegos Jr. and Laura Bugarini and a book signing with Charmayne Samuelson author of "Mata Ortiz Poetry of the Clay"

UPCOMING EVENTS

SATURDAY, JANUARY 25

Vintage Basketry & Navajo Weavings

Amerind Museum, 10 am - 4 pm

Please join us on Saturday, January 25, 2025, when we host Terry DeWald for a Vintage Basketry and Navajo Weavings Show & Sale at the Amerind Museum. The show will feature vintage Navajo weavings and vintage baskets from California, the greater Southwest, and contemporary Tohono O'odham baskets.

DeWald is a prominent dealer, lecturer, appraiser, and author of Native American art for more than 40 years.

DeWald will give a talk on Vintage Basketry and Navajo Weavings at 11 a.m. This event is included with regular Museum admission.



Visit Amerind's Mata Ortiz Show and Sale and meet Award-winning pottery artists Hector Gallegos Jr., Laura Bugarini from Mata Ortiz, Chihuahua, Mexico. Come and meet the artists, learn about their work, and have the opportunity to purchase one of their incredible works of art. The artists will conduct demonstrations, talks, and firings (weather permitting)

This event is included with regular Museum admission.

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 21, 7:30 PM, & SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 23, 2:00 PM

Indigenous Amerind in Tucson Event at the Tucson Symphony Orchestra

Linda Ronstadt Music Hall

Composer Event: Raven Chacon
Sponsored in part by Amerind
Tickets \$14-\$95 on Tucson Symphony Orchestra website

Dvořák' and the American Experience

Paul Huang returns to perform Dvořák's Violin concerto. The concerto is accompanied by two of Dvořák's Slavonic Dances.

The concert's second half features a work by Arizona-born Raven Chacon, Inscription. Chacon, a 2023 MacArthur Genius Grant awardee and 2022 Pulitzer Prize winner for music for a "Voiceless Mass," is a member of the Navajo Nation and draws upon relationships between

the Western and Indigenous communities. Following Raven Chacon, William Grant Still will perform Symphony No. 1, "Afro-American."

TUCSON, AZ

MARCH 1-2

Hummingbird Quilt Guild Annual Show and Sale

Buena High School

The Sierra Vista Quilt Guild presents a spectacular show with more than 200 quilts on display, boutique sale items, vendors, opportunity quilt tickets, and a chance to win a quilt each day. Saturday 9am -4pm; Sunday 9 a.m.-3 p.m. Admission \$7, children under 12 free. Location: Buena High School with free parking and handicapped accessible.

Find more information at hummingbirdquiltguild.com

SIERRA VISTA



WE WELCOME YOUR CALENDAR EVENTS!

For the March/April 2025 edition, we have to receive the information by not later than **February 3, 2025**.

The publication is due in mailboxes around **March 15, 2025**. Events should be dated to occur no earlier than **March 25, 2025**.

If you are looking to promote your event

SUBMIT TO events

epetermann@ssvec.com

There is no charge for contributions to the calendar.

UPCOMING EVENTS



WILLCOX THEATER AND ARTS



ARTS & CRAFTS

Every second Saturday you can amaze yourself by painting your own masterpiece at Paint Night. Paint Night at 6 pm on January 11, February 8, March 8.

BROWN BAG HISTORY TALK

Free talks at 12pm on Arizona History at the Palace, 116 N Railroad Ave, Willcox, sponsored by the Sulphur Springs Valley Historical Society.

February 13, 2025 - Sharon Kennedy speaking on Buffalo Soldiers and the Garfield Monument.

March 13, 2025 - Mike Anderson talking about the history of the El Paso & Southwestern Railroad.

RETRO REWIND

Watch classic movies on the big screen, see if you can beat our trivia expert and win the month's prize. \$5 for admission and fresh popcorn. Second Friday of every month.

Cyrano de Bergerac (1950), Shows Jan 10, 1pm. The charismatic swordsman-poet and provocateur in 1640s Paris helps a young

guardsman woo the woman he loves, complicated by the politics of the nobility and the war with Spain. Starring José Ferrer and Mala Powers.

Penny Serenade (1941), Shows February 14, 1pm. A couple's big dreams give way to a life full of unforeseen sadness and unexpected joy. Starring Cary Grant and Irene Dunne.

Springtime in the Sierras (1947), Shows March 14, 1pm. A gang, headed by evil Stephanie Bachelor, is slaughtering game out of season. Roy finds the freezer where the meat is kept, but baddie Roy Barcroft finds him there. A famous fight takes place in the freezer. Roy, of course, wins it. Starring Roy Rogers, Trigger & Jane Frazee.

PIRATE WEEK

March 17-21, 2025. Become a pirate during your spring break! Kids of all ages are welcome! This week will include crafts, movies, pirate costume contest, an art show and a create your own pirate map craft!

DOODLING WORKSHOP

Need help with your doodling skills? Jen Score will host a Doodling Workshop in our Palace of Arts and Theater on Friday, January 24 at 4pm.

For a complete schedule of upcoming shows, events, workshops, art classes, and programs, and for tickets and registration, check willcoxtheater.com, 520-766-3335 or follow us at WillcoxTheaterandArts on Facebook.

Sierra Vista Symphony celebrates season 30

Back to Mozart

The Sierra Vista Symphony celebrates its 30th season with fantastic plans for concerts. Mark your calendars for: January 11 and April 12. These concerts will be held at Klein Center for the Performing Arts (Buena High School) beginning at 7 p.m. with pre-concert lectures at 6 p.m. all under the direction of Artistic Director and Conductor Maestro Toru Tagawa.

The January 11 concert will feature the 2024 Youth Concerto Winner, Natalie Rice, on flute. The orchestra will also perform Pines of Rome, Grieg Peer Gynt Suite No. 1, Hooked on Classics, Verdi's Nabucco Overture, Barber Adagio for Strings, and Brahms/Phillips Hungarian Dance No. 5 with the Cochise County Youth Orchestra advanced group.

The April 12 concert will feature Dr. Theodore Buchholz on cello playing the Dvorak cello concerto. The orchestra

will also perform Mozart's Symphony No. 40 and Beethoven's Overture to Fidelio.

OTHER UPCOMING EVENTS:

On February 8, a special Music at Twilight will feature the Takuma Trio with Toru Tagawa, on violin, Dr. Kyungsun Choi on piano, and Robyn Marshall on cello.

On March 1, the annual Men Who Cook fundraising event will be held featuring up to 20 local chefs presenting their special menu creations.

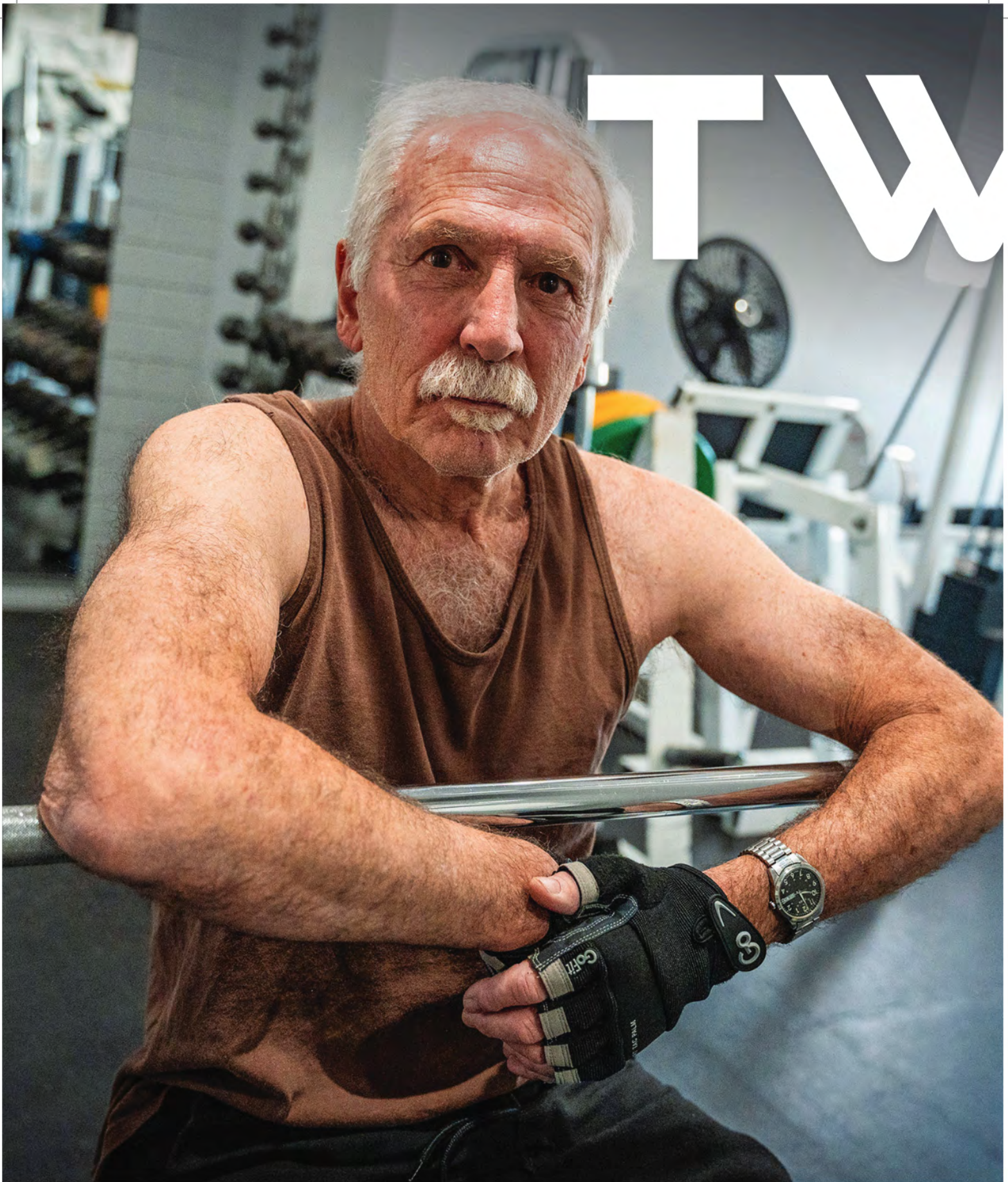
June will present our annual Concert in the Park which is free to the public and will feature Pops music.

Keep watching for all the events offered by the Sierra Vista Symphony Orchestra and enjoy wonderful music. Maestro Tagawa incorporates a variety of music styles with the goal of pleasing everyone.

Tickets for these outstanding concerts and events are available at Eventbrite.com and at Ace Hardware, Safeway, Dillard's,

Sky Islands Regional Partnership (formerly Chamber of Commerce), and the Sierra Vista Symphony Association office at 21 E. Wilcox Dr., Sierra Vista. For more information look for us on Facebook, call 520-458-5189 or visit sierravistasymphony.org. ■





10 FEET FORWARD

Chopping wood, carrying water past 75

By R.J. Cohn

Late into my 75th year, I began powerlifting with a vengeance.

I've tried to find a reason why someone halfway through his 70s weighing 158 pounds would suddenly want to see how much weight he could stack onto a bar, bench press it over his chest and keep doing it and doing it until he hit a benchmark of 240 pounds.

I'm usually pretty good at figuring out things that I set out to do – even the irrational ones – but this one escaped me.

If there's anything I've learned at the 3/4 century mark it's this: Sometimes it's best not to overthink what you're doing, especially half-baked choices.

I have been going to gyms on and off since I was 13, and though I never had a big body, I pounced on free weights, cables, isometrics and fitness machines, hoping to become shredded and stacked with a muscular frame from stem-to-stern.

I kept fit, but like thousands of American boys stung by the promise of Charles Atlas and the posters of Schwarzenegger, I never attained a Mr. America-bod of my boyhood dreams.

Though I enjoyed the chop wood-carry water process of weight training, powerlifting never grabbed me. I didn't possess that kind of bulk or strength despite the hundreds of protein shakes stuffed with wheat germ, molasses, yogurt and everything else that was supposed to bulk you into a mythical figure.

Looking back, bench pressing 135 or 145 pounds was about as much as I could muster as a kid. But I continued to chop wood, carry water in gyms until the routine became regimental, dull and monotonous, and I felt like I was just plodding through a 45-minute workout.

And so I stopped and did other things.

Until I turned 75.

Maybe it was walking past a small, nondescript gym and looking in the window that gave me a "remembrance of things past" moment, a tipping point at a place of age where the challenge of

challenging myself one more time around took hold with the fierceness of a two-fisted clench I hadn't felt in years.

It wasn't about seeing what was left in the tank; it was about chopping wood, carrying water again, only this time seeing how much wood I could chop and how far I could carry the water.

Just for the sheer sake of doing it, age be damned.

Benching 145 pounds at first seemed pretty good, and I began a 45-minute routine designed to increase strength.

At 170 pounds a few weeks later, I thought I'd better find a spotter.

Several months after that when I was benching 3 reps at 225 pounds, I realized I didn't need one.

I also noticed my vital signs – heart rate and blood pressure – had dramatically improved. A notoriously terrible sleeper who was lucky to manage 4 or 5 hours, I was now sleeping soundly through the night.

When I benched 240 pounds, I wondered how this was possible and was stunned by what was transpiring. How much further could I possibly take this? I kept recounting the poundage on the bar to see if my math was wrong.

But it wasn't.

Lying beneath a metal bar loaded to the hilt with 45- and 25-lb. iron plates while taking three huge breaths before lifting this monstrosity was no easy feat. Was benching 250 remotely possible for a 158-pound guy halfway to 80?

"Everything's possible, mate," an Australian powerlifter in his 30s I trained with told me. "This isn't a race. It's one foot forward, sometimes two. Sometimes you'll have a lousy day under the bar, other days you feel can push it through the ceiling. It's part of the process, part of the ride. Take it for what it is."

Now at 76, I'm still chopping wood and carrying water, going one foot forward, sometimes two and taking it for what it is, knowing that the process and the ride matter more to me than what I can lift over my head.

Somewhere in all of that is my triumph. ■



Square dancing with the Thunder Mountain Twirlers

Not as square as you think

By R.J. Cohn

Once the rage of dance floors in Cochise County, square dancing in a county that once sported clubs dancing the night away from Fort Huachuca to Benson is hoping to regain a foothold that had dancers tripping the light fantastic at festivals and hoe-downs throughout southern Arizona.

And with a firecracker of a name like the Thunder Mountain Twirlers, the traditional American folk dance is hardly your grandfather's barn dance backed by old-time fiddle music.

Now, says club president Bryan Swift, who started square dancing 13 years ago, the 29 club members are promenading not just to traditional country music, but also to recording studio remixes of pop music set in 2:4 and 4:4 time from artists like Lady Gaga, Eric Clapton, Bob Seegar and even to the heavy-metal sound of Kiss.

"For years, square dancing has had this stigma that it's a little hokey, from the music to the costumes, but that's all changed," said Swift, who grew up in a Pentecostal family and never danced until he saw his future wife perform in a square dance troupe in Japan when he was in the Army.

"In the summer I dance in Crocs and shorts, and the music is really something that really gets you going. I danced honky-tonk when I was stationed here from 1989-1996 doing the Texas two-step at Dylan's, and believe me, square dancing is anything but hokey."

The Thunder Mountain Twirlers — formed in 1982 and originally called the Apache Squares when it began at Fort Huachuca — became so popular in the

'80s that two other clubs sprouted in Bisbee and Benson. Swift said it became such a top-shelf venue that festivals held in Tucson had 130 squares on the dance floor, and at four couples per square it was overflowing with dancers.

"Ten years ago, we had about 55 members strong, but people moved and then Covid came along, but we're still dancing," said Swift. "The average age is mid-60s and for a while we were attracting high schoolers because of the music, but when football season starts they stop coming because of Friday night home games. We're hoping to reach more of the community."

Locally, the Twirlers meet every Friday

If you know your left from your right, then you're halfway there. Plus, if you have a caller with great stage presence as well as an entertainer, they can really get everyone dancing and kicking.

— Bryan Swift, Club President

at the Sierra Lutheran Church on North Lenzner Avenue with beginners lessons starting February 21 from 6 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. and regular square dancing from 7:30 p.m. to 9 p.m.

How difficult is square dancing?

"Square dancing is like learning how to march," said Swift. "I was knocked out when I first saw it performed. A lot of people learned the basics in middle school, and some have a knack for it. But it's pretty easy to pick up. If you know your left from your right, then you're halfway there. Plus, if you have a caller with great stage presence as well as an entertainer, they can really get everyone dancing and kicking."

Popularized and promoted by industrialist Henry Ford in the 1920s to "promote cohesive teamwork and stimulate the mind and soul" of his workers and their families, square dancing today has grown so prominent internationally — especially in Germany and Japan — with ballrooms filled to capacity with more than 700 dancers for festivals. It was also the opening event for the 1988 Calgary Winter Olympics.

When it comes to festivals, the Thunder Mountain Twirlers really know how to throw one.

On Jan. 10, the club hosted its 10th anniversary of its Hummingbird Hoe-

down at the Garden Place Suites Hotel with 80 pre-sold tickets with 150 more expected from across the country.

Swift and his wife Harue — who is also a caller — want to see the Thunder Mountain Twirlers regain the toehold it once had in Cochise County 45 years ago. Committed to seeing it grow they have formed a square dance tour company that will tour three cities in Japan in late 2025 hosting square dancing festivals.

"We're booked with 40 people," said Swift, "and there's already a hefty waiting list."

For more information, contact bryanswift@hotmail.com or call 520-775-1127. ■

Facing my

FILLO fear

By Chef Chris

ClownChef@yahoo.com

Filo dough (phyllo, fillo) is popular throughout the Middle East and the Mediterranean. It's the dough used to make baklava and spanakopita, those tasty little triangles with spinach and feta cheese you've probably had at a party. I don't know if it's really a fear of filo, or more a fear of being annoyed by filo that kept me away from this incredibly versatile stuff.

In my youth, I believe impatience with properly defrosting filo was the main problem. It may also

be that the quality has improved now that it is more mainstream. Either way, I gave it another go again recently and boy, am I glad that I did!

These recipes are all fun to make without too many ingredients. If you follow the tips I've given, it's not hard to work with and you can be fearless! Two of these recipes should use up a box, and the omelette is a great way to finish off leftovers.

FILO CUSTARD PIE

For your next brunch or when family is in town, this is special. And! Older kids can help. You can make it with just half & half if you aren't a sweetened condensed milk person. You can also add cinnamon, ginger, or freshly grated nutmeg for a little something extra.

- | | |
|------------------------|------------------------------------|
| 8 sheets filo pastry | 14 oz can sweetened condensed milk |
| 8 tbsp. butter melted | 1 tsp vanilla |
| 2 eggs, lightly beaten | Pinch salt |
| 1 cup milk | |

Preheat oven to 375 degrees. Butter a medium casserole dish.

Whisk together the eggs, milk, condensed milk, vanilla, and salt.

Place a sheet of filo on the work surface and brush with butter. Push one longer edge into the rest of the pastry, forming a rough accordion. Tuck one end of the accordion in and roll into a spiral, then place in baking dish. Repeat with remaining sheets.

Bake for about 15 minutes or until golden, then remove from the oven and pour egg and milk mixture evenly over the top. Return to the oven and bake for about 15 minutes, or until the custard is set. Let stand about 5 minutes before serving.





ASPARAGUS & PESTO CIGARS

I love naked asparagus, but these are an easy way to dress them up for a gathering and make it extra special.

- | | |
|----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1 pound Asparagus | About 10 sheets filo pastry |
| $\frac{1}{4}$ cup pesto | About 3 tbsp butter, melted |
| $\frac{1}{4}$ cup parmesan | |

Preheat the oven to 375 degrees. Line a sheet pan with parchment.

Trim the asparagus stems. Place asparagus in a shallow baking dish, sprinkle with salt, and pour boiling water over. Let stand for about 2 minutes, then drain and pat dry.

Place 1 sheet of filo on your work surface, keeping the remaining dough covered, and brush lightly with butter. Cut into squares about 6x6, then make stacks of 3. Place a spear on each stack, drizzle or smear with a little pesto, and a pinch of parmesan. Roll into a cigar shape and place on prepared pan, seam side down. Repeat with remaining asparagus and pastry, then sprinkle cigars with more parmesan.

Bake for about 12 minutes, or until golden brown. Serve warm.

TIPS FOR BEST RESULTS WITH FILO

Always defrost for several hours in the fridge, or overnight.

Be sure to keep the dough covered except for the sheets you are using immediately. Use a lightly damp dish towel for ease.

Each sheet must have some butter or oil brushed on in order for it to flake properly.

In a pinch or if making a large batch, you can use butter flavored cooking spray.

FILO OMELETTE

This is a little bit of magic and a lot of fun... and so easy! It's the perfect thing to make with any leftover sheets, although you may love it and put it in your regular line-up.

The filo gives a bit of structure and a semblance of crust and is kinda quiche-like. You can make this with spinach and tiny feta cubes for true Mediterranean flavor or use anything "omelette-y" that you have on hand.

- 4 sheets filo pastry
- 1 tbsp olive oil or butter
- 4 large eggs
- 2 tbsp milk
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup shredded cheese
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup chopped spinach

Roll the sheets of filo into a tube, then slice into 1-inch pieces with a sharp knife. Gently toss the sliced filo pastry to separate strands.

Heat oil in a medium skillet over medium heat. Add filo and toss or gently stir until lightly golden.

Lightly beat eggs with milk and salt. Pour egg mixture over the filo. Sprinkle with cheese and spinach. Reduce heat, cover and cook on low until eggs are set, about 5 minutes. Serve warm. Reheats well in microwave.





Become a Judge...

FOR THE 2025 SSVEC YOUTH ENGINEERING
AND SCIENCE FAIR IN FEBRUARY 2025!

If you are interested in positively impacting the youth in your community, volunteer to judge the 2025 YES Fair. We are looking for **65 judges** to divvy up projects submitted by fifth through twelfth graders from the SSVEC service territory. These projects may cover Energy & Engineering, Technology, Physical Science, Earth & Space Science, and Biological Science. **Judging takes place February 26, 2025.**

Hundreds of students participate in the YES Fair every year. In 2024, the SSVEC Foundation awarded \$50,000 worth of prizes and awards to students and their mentors. In addition, the SSVEC Foundation sponsored all-expense-paid trip for overall winners to the world-renowned International Science and Engineering Fair to be held this year in Columbus, Ohio.

VISIT WWW.YESFAIR.COM!