

SSVEC

Currents

LOCAL STORIES ABOUT LOCAL COMMUNITIES

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immerses kids
in nature

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PHOTO BY ALAN HOM

SSVEC Currents

MARCH | APRIL 2025
Volume 4, No. 2

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ON THE COVER

Sierra Vista resident Kemp Curtis is still turning glass into figurines and intricately molded flowers from a torch he made 60 years ago.



Jason Bowling, CEO
Sulphur Springs Valley
Electric Cooperative

Spring into savings

Prepare your home for the warmer months

As the first signs of spring begin to emerge, it's the perfect time to start thinking about preparing your home for the warmer months ahead. With summer's high temperatures fast approaching, now is the ideal moment to make changes that can save you money and boost your home's energy efficiency. Here are a few simple, yet effective, ways to stabilize your monthly bills and ensure your home is ready for the heat.

Stabilize Your Monthly Bills with Budget Billing

One of the easiest ways to manage your energy costs consistently throughout the year is by enrolling in the Budget Billing program. Budget Billing helps smooth out the highs and lows of fluctuating energy costs, allowing you to pay a fixed amount each month based on your average usage. This can prevent those shocking spikes in your bills when the summer heat sets in and air conditioners start running nonstop. By signing up now, you can start the season off with predictable, manageable payments, making it easier to stick to your budget.

Schedule an SSVEC Home Energy Audit

Before the temperature really starts to rise, consider scheduling an SSVEC Home Energy Audit. This service offers a comprehensive evaluation of your home's energy efficiency and identifies areas where you could save energy (and money). Whether it's improving insulation, sealing leaks, or upgrading appliances, a professional audit will provide you with a detailed action plan to boost your home's energy efficiency. By taking advantage of this service now, you'll be ahead of the game, ensuring your home is running as efficiently as possible when the summer heat hits.

Energy Efficiency Tips for Spring

- In addition to the audit, there are several

simple things you can do to improve your home's energy efficiency this spring:

- **Seal Air Leaks:** Check around windows and doors for drafts. Sealing leaks can keep cool air inside and reduce the strain on your air conditioning when summer arrives.
- **Upgrade Your Thermostat:** Consider installing a programmable thermostat to better manage your home's temperature. Set it to automatically adjust when you're away or asleep to save on energy costs.
- **Clean Your HVAC System:** Ensure your air conditioner is ready for the summer heat by scheduling maintenance or cleaning your HVAC filters. A clean system runs more efficiently and uses less energy.
- **Use Natural Light:** Take advantage of the longer days and reduce your reliance on artificial lighting by opening blinds and curtains during the day. This small change can make a noticeable difference in your energy consumption.

By implementing these energy-saving strategies now, you can make your home more comfortable and reduce energy costs over the long term.

In Conclusion

Spring offers the perfect opportunity to get a head start on summer savings. By stabilizing your bills with Budget Billing, taking advantage of a home energy audit, and implementing simple energy efficiency tips, you can reduce your energy consumption and save money as the temperatures rise. Start today and be prepared for the warmer months ahead!

Ready to save? Contact SSVEC today to schedule your home energy audit.

Sincerely,
Jason Bowling, CEO, SSVEC

Jason Bowling is the Chief Executive Officer at Sulphur Springs Valley Electric Cooperative (SSVEC). He can be reached at jbowling@ssvec.com.

SSVEC's Fairbank Project

A 13-year effort to reduce wildfire risk in a sensitive ecosystem

Sulphur Springs Valley Electric Cooperative (SSVEC) recently completed a long-anticipated infrastructure project in the San Pedro Riparian National Conservation Area (SPRNCA), addressing wildfire concerns while navigating a highly sensitive environmental landscape. The Fairbank Project, 13 years in the making, involved replacing aging power lines and poles within a critical habitat corridor, ensuring both electrical reliability and environmental stewardship.

A Historic Infrastructure in a Changing Landscape

The power infrastructure in the Fairbank area dates back to the 1950s when SSVEC secured a right-of-way agreement with Boquillas Ranch. In 1983, ownership of the land shifted to the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), significantly increasing the environmental and regulatory considerations required for any infrastructure work. The project area spans 6.09 acres between Highways 90 and 82, along Highway 80, and included replacing 25 poles within the conservation district.

Balancing Utility Needs with Environmental Sensitivity

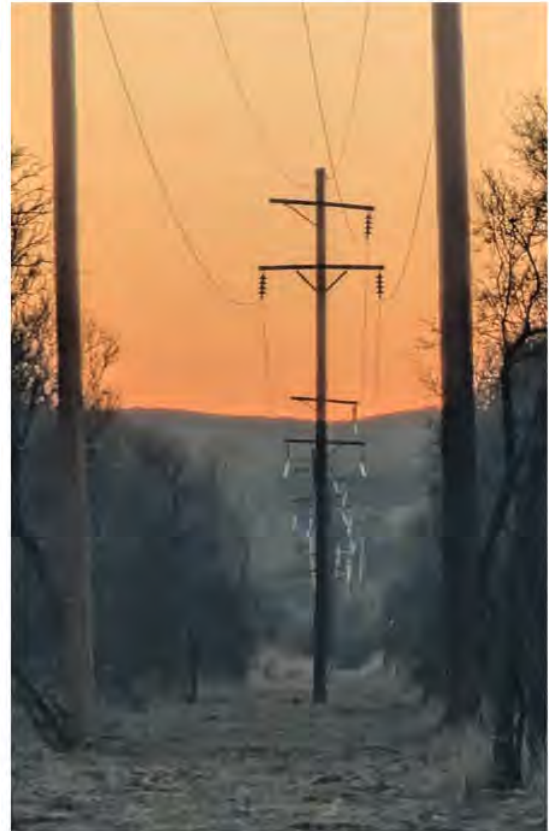
The project faced unique challenges due to its location along the San Pedro River, a designated critical habitat for species such as the Mexican garter snake, the yellow-billed cuckoo, and the southwestern willow flycatcher. To mitigate impacts on wildlife, construction activities were restricted to periods outside the nesting season, occurring only between December and March. Additionally, all construction work was monitored by certified biologists and archaeologists to ensure compliance with environmental regulations and cultural preservation requirements.

SSVEC worked closely with the BLM through the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process. This involved submitting applications, conducting cultural and biological reports, identifying sensitive habitat areas, and determining appropriate monitoring procedures. Construction plans within the SPRNCA were reviewed in collaboration with BLM and other federal agencies, with particular emphasis on preserving critical habitat during and after construction of the SSVEC improvements.

Reducing Wildfire Risk in a High-Vegetation Corridor

One of the project's primary goals was wildfire prevention. The dense vegetation in the area, combined with electrical infrastructure, posed a significant fire hazard. Utility poles, guy wires, and even minor electrical sparks could potentially ignite a fire. To mitigate this risk, SSVEC de-energized the transmission line during the summer while rerouting power and scheduled numerous meetings with BLM representatives to work collaboratively on solutions that promoted safety.

A site host for the BLM remained on location to monitor the area. This required SSVEC to ensure continuity of power on the distribution system while minimizing fire hazards. Distribution lines remained in operation with protection devices set to a one-trip configuration to prevent sustained faults



limiting the opportunity of lines to spark a fire.

A Model for Future Infrastructure Projects

The Fairbank Project demonstrates how utility providers can successfully modernize infrastructure while upholding stringent environmental and safety standards. Through collaboration with regulatory agencies, environmental specialists, and community stakeholders, SSVEC has set a precedent for responsible infrastructure development in ecologically sensitive areas. The completion of this project marks a milestone in balancing energy reliability with conservation efforts, ensuring a safer and more sustainable future for the region.

Air & Space Forces presents plaque to Association



Ross Lampert (left), Vice President of the Arizona State organization of the Air & Space Forces Association (AFA) presents SSVEC Chief Executive Officer Jason Bowling with the plaque denoting the co-op as a Community Partner of the Cochise Chapter of AFA.

Teacher mini-grants



The Sulphur Springs Valley Electric Cooperative Foundation presented a check on January 17 to the Cochise Education Foundation (CEF) at the Innovations in Education conference, held at Cochise College. The Foundation award will supplement teacher "mini-grants" offered by the education foundation, supporting classroom activities in local schools.

Accepting the check were (from the left) Johanna Scott, Principal at Portable Practical Educational Preparation (PPEP) Tech High School in Sierra Vista; Vada Phelps, CEF board member and Superintendent of the Center for Academic Success (CAS) school in Sierra Vista; Dr. Jacqui Clay, CEF board member and Cochise County Superintendent; Leticia Sanchez, School Liaison Officer for Child and Youth Services on Fort Huachuca and CEF board member; Cynthia Meyers, Outreach Manager for the Cochise County Superintendent's office, and CEF board member; and Kristin Gray, Community Relations Manager at Sulphur Springs Valley Electric Cooperative, and CEF board member.

Legislative Conference



The annual Legislative conference offers an opportunity for SSVEC representatives to meet with state lawmakers and discuss industry issues.

SSVEC was well-represented at the annual Legislative Conference organized by the Grand Canyon State Electric Cooperative Association (GSECA) January 23. Pictured from left at the conference are GSECA Director of Government Relations Casey Ratlief, SSVEC CEO Jason Bowling; SSVEC Board Director Secretary Lex Herron; Arizona Senate President Warren Petersen; Julie and Curtis Nolan. Curtis is a Director on the SSVEC Board; Social Media Coordinator Kate Cox; Laren Jones, Arizona's Washington Youth Tour state delegate and St. David High School student; and Dan Barrera, Vice President of the SSVEC Board of Directors.

Renewable energy grant adds to SSVEC solar portfolio

Electric consumers across the desert Southwest stand to benefit from big investments in renewable energy thanks to an award of more than \$485 million to an Arizona electric cooperative.

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) announced January 21 a \$485 million award to Arizona Electric Power Cooperative (AEPSCO) through its New Empowering Rural America (New ERA) program. This funding will be used to invest in large-scale solar and battery energy storage system projects benefitting rural cooperatives and public power utilities that serve communities across Arizona and parts of California, Nevada and New Mexico.

Patrick Ledger, AEPSCO Executive Vice President and Chief Executive Officer, discussed the importance of this funding in transitioning from older, less

efficient electric generating assets that came online in the 1960s and 1970s.

“The New ERA program will enable us to make major new investments in renewable power, which will modernize our fleet, substantially lower emissions and help keep costs stable for years to come.”

AEPSCO is a not-for-profit generation and transmission cooperative that provides wholesale power and energy services to utilities in Arizona, California, Nevada, and New Mexico. Projects supported by New ERA program funding will enable its cooperative and public power members to diversify their power portfolios through broad participation in large, competitively priced renewable energy projects.

In an area of the country with plenty of sunshine all year, the new resources will include 730 megawatts of solar and 2,910 megawatt hours of battery energy

storage. The company expects that these new renewable resources will help AEPSCO reduce emissions by about 70 percent.

“These new projects will produce a tremendous amount of energy, and the battery storage will enable us to move that energy to cover evening peaks or to dispatch it according to each member’s individual needs,” said Ledger.

The benefits will flow directly to rural communities throughout the desert Southwest, who are often economically disadvantaged and who have not had an opportunity to participate in large-scale lower-price renewable projects. The New ERA program is the key to bring smaller not-for-profit cooperatives and public power utilities together and making low-cost renewable power accessible to those who cannot develop these resources on their own.



Members are the focus of the annual meeting

Klein Center for the Performing Arts, inside Buena High School will host the 87th annual meeting of the Sulphur Springs Valley Electric Cooperative (SSVEC) on May 29, 2025, with registration beginning at 6 p.m. and the business meeting starting at 7 p.m. All Cooperative members are invited to attend.

The Center is located at 5225 E. Buena Boulevard in Sierra Vista.

When SSVEC was incorporated in 1938, each member contributed an equal share to gain access to electricity that benefited individual families and businesses, as well as the larger community. Each member had an equal vote in co-op matters.

That sense of equity and inclusion is still

how we operate today. SSVEC was built by, and belongs to, the diverse communities and consumer-members we serve. Membership is open to everyone in our service territory, regardless of race, religion, age, disability, gender identity, language, political perspective or socioeconomic status.

By virtue of paying your electric bill each month, you're a member of the Cooperative, and every member has an equal voice and vote when it comes to governance. This ties back to our guiding principles of equitable economic participation and democratic control of the cooperative.

The annual meeting is an opportunity for members to learn about their Cooperative. Randy Redmond, President of the

SSVEC Board of Directors, will report on significant events that occurred in 2024. Jason Bowling, SSVEC Chief Executive Officer, will report on the financial health of the organization and provide insights for the year ahead. The results of director elections will be announced, and newly elected directors will be sworn in during the meeting.

We encourage all members to vote in SSVEC's director elections, and we invite all members to participate in cooperative meetings to weigh in on discussions that set the cooperative policies and priorities, such as affordability, incorporating renewable sources of power, serving our members and our community.

PUBLIC NOTICE OF HEARING AND PUBLIC COMMENT MEETINGS ON SULPHUR SPRINGS VALLEY ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE, INC.'S APPLICATION TO SET RATES AND CHARGES FOR ELECTRIC UTILITY SERVICE DOCKET NO. E-01575A-24-0246

Summary

On November 8, 2024, Sulphur Springs Valley Electric Cooperative, Inc., ("SSVEC") filed an application with the Arizona Corporation Commission ("Commission") for approval of new rates and charges to be effective no later than January 1, 2026. SSVEC is seeking to increase its annual revenues by approximately \$10,418,780 or approximately 7.79% over adjusted test year revenue of \$144,234,009. The Cooperative requests approval of its revised and updated Standard Offer Tariff, its Service Conditions, and its revised and updated Interconnection Requirements, including but not limited to, a \$5 increase to its monthly availability charge, a fee for service calls determined to be caused by the member or the member's contractor, a finance charge for deferred payments, new fees and requirements for various services related to the interconnection process, the elimination of net metering tariff NM-1 for new commercial connections, and modification of the Distributed Generation Energy Export Rate Plan of Administration.

SSVEC states that its requested rate design and proposed revenue requirement would result in the current average monthly bill for an average SSVEC residential member based on 752 kWh consumption to increase from \$114.90 to 125.05, an increase of \$10.15, or 8.83%.

NEITHER THE COMMISSION'S UTILITIES DIVISION ("STAFF") NOR ANY INTERVENOR HAS YET MADE ANY RECOMMENDATION REGARDING SSVEC'S APPLICATION. THE COMMISSION IS NOT BOUND BY THE PROPOSALS OF SSVEC, STAFF, OR ANY INTERVENORS. THE COMMISSION WILL DETERMINE THE APPROPRIATE RELIEF TO BE GRANTED IN RESPONSE TO SSVEC'S APPLICATION BASED ON THE EVIDENCE PRESENTED IN THIS MATTER. THE FINAL RATES APPROVED BY THE COMMISSION MAY BE HIGHER, LOWER, OR DIFFERENT THAN THE RATES PROPOSED BY SULPHUR SPRINGS OR BY OTHER PARTIES.

If you have any questions concerning how the Application may affect your bill or other substantive questions about the Application, you may contact SSVEC at:

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(520) 452-3901
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Sara Ransom, General Counsel
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Sierra Vista, AZ 85635

How You Can View or Obtain a Copy of the Application

Copies of the Application are available from SSVEC on its website, which may be accessed at: www.ssvec-rateinfo.org; at the Commission's Docket Control Center at 1200 West Washington Street, Phoenix, Arizona, and 400 West Congress Street, Suite 218, Tucson, Arizona, during regular business hours; and on the Commission website (www.azcc.gov) using the e-Docket function. Any member may request a hard copy from SSVEC by contacting Member Services ((520) 458-4691) and making arrangements to retrieve a copy from the most conveniently located SSVEC business office.

Commission Public Hearing Information

The Commission will hold a hearing on this matter beginning **September 18, 2025, at 10:00 a.m.**, at the Commission's Tucson offices, Room 222, 400 West Congress Street, Tucson, Arizona 85701.

If you do not intervene in this proceeding, you will receive no further notice of the proceedings in this docket unless you sign up to Follow the Docket. However, all documents filed in this docket are available online (usually within 24 hours after docketing) at the Commission's website (www.azcc.gov) using the e-Docket function. **Information on how to Follow a Docket is available on the Commission's website clicking on "Divisions", then "Hearing" and "Following a Docket."**

Public Comment Meetings at Commission Offices

The Commission will hold the following public comment meetings in this matter at the Commission's Tucson offices, Room 222, 400 West Congress Street, Tucson, Arizona 85701:

DATE	TIME
September 4, 2025	5:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m., or until the last caller is finished speaking, whichever comes first.

During public comment meetings at the Commission's offices, **both telephonic and in-person** public comment may be provided.

To provide **telephonic** public comments, call 1-877-309-3457 and enter passcode **24601833204##**.

Written public comments may be submitted by mailing a letter referencing **Docket No. E-01575A-24-0246** to Arizona Corporation Commission, Consumer Services Section, 1200 West Washington, Phoenix, AZ 85007, or by submitting comments on the Commission's website (www.azcc.gov) by clicking on "Divisions" then "Hearing" and "eFiling Services" and clicking on "Make a Public Comment in a Docket" If you require assistance, you may contact the Consumer Services Section at 602-542-4251 or 1-800-222-7000.

The Commission may impose a **3-minute time limit per speaker** to ensure that everyone who desires to speak has an opportunity to do so.

About Intervention

The law provides for an open public hearing at which, under appropriate circumstances, interested persons may intervene. An interested person may be granted intervention if the outcome of the case will directly and substantially impact the person, and the person's intervention will not unduly broaden the issues in the case. Intervention, among other things, entitles a party to present sworn evidence at hearing and to cross-examine other parties' witnesses. **Intervention is not required for you to appear at the hearing and provide public comment, to file written comments in the record of the case, or to receive emailed notice of each filing made in the case by following the docket.**

Information about what intervention means, including an explanation of the rights and responsibilities of an intervenor, is available on the Commission's website (www.azcc.gov) by clicking on "Cases and Open Meetings" and then clicking on "Intervene in a Case." The information includes a Sample Intervention Request and a Fillable Intervention Request Form.

To request intervention, you must file a written request to intervene, either (a) by filing a hard copy request (meeting filing requirements) with Docket Control (Docket Control, 1200 West Washington, Phoenix, AZ 85007), or (b) by eFiling the request. **Your request must be filed or eFiled no later than March 31, 2025.** Instructions and restrictions for eFiling are available on the Commission's website at <http://azcc.gov/hearing/efile-for-utilities-instruction>. You also must serve a copy of the request to intervene on each party of record, on the same day that you file the request to intervene with the Commission. Your request to intervene **must** contain the information below:

1. Your name, address, and telephone number;
2. The docket number for the case in which you are requesting to intervene;
3. A short statement explaining:
 - a. Your interest in the proceeding (e.g., a customer of the regulated company involved, a property owner in an area to be affected by the case, etc.),
 - b. How you will be directly and substantially affected by the outcome of the case, and
 - c. Why your intervention will not unduly broaden the issues in the case;
3. A statement certifying that you have sent a copy of your request to intervene to the regulated company or its attorney and to all other parties of record in the case; and
4. If you are not represented by an attorney who is an active member of the Arizona State Bar, and you are not representing yourself as an individual, sufficient information and any appropriate documentation to demonstrate compliance with Arizona Supreme Court Rules 31.1, 31.2, 31.3, 38, 39, and 42, as applicable. This only applies if you are NOT representing yourself and you are not a licensed attorney.

The granting of motions to intervene shall be governed by A.A.C. R14-3-105, except that all motions to intervene must be filed on or before March 31, 2025.

ADA/Equal Access Information

The Commission does not discriminate on the basis of disability in admission to its public meetings. Persons with a disability may request a reasonable accommodation such as a sign language interpreter, as well as request this document in an alternative format, by contacting the ADA Coordinator for the Hearing Division, E-mail HearingDivision@azcc.gov, voice phone number 602-542-4250. Requests should be made as early as possible and no later than 48 hours in advance of the event to allow time to arrange the accommodation.



SSVEC MEMBER SURVEY COMING APRIL 2025.

**This survey is an opportunity to share your thoughts
and help shape the future of Your cooperative!**

The SSVEC Mission continues to be providing safe, reliable, and affordable service to our Members. We are teaming up with the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA) to ensure the survey is conducted with excellence and accuracy. So, get ready! Your feedback is invaluable to us.

More details forthcoming.



**Sulphur Springs Valley
Electric Cooperative, Inc.**
A Timesharing Energy Cooperative
OWNED BY THOSE WE SERVE



It's
almost
time!

Thousands expected for **RISE!** **ARIZONA**

By R.J. Cohn



Jai Rocha

When it comes to throwing groundbreaking community events, no one does it with the passion and drive of Jai Rocha.

For the last seven years, Rocha has coordinated more than a dozen events throughout Sierra Vista – from the popular SV Glowride and Dad Olympics to the Mom-Owned Business Expo – celebrating family values while creating a sense of community among city residents.

But on April 26, Rocha and his committee of volunteers are rolling out what he feels will be the largest music festival the city has ever witnessed that's expected to draw thousands to the free Rise AZ rockfest in Veterans' Memorial Park, headlining six bands from Tennessee, Florida, California, Colorado and Texas.

In the works for more than six months, Rocha has been promoting the concert with the same overdrive energy he has poured into the Rotary Westend Spiritfest and 3-on-3 Basketball Tournament he organized over the years.

"I've heard from people as far away as Canada who are planning to come," said the 37-year-old Rocha who was raised

in Sierra Vista since he was age 5. "I'm hoping this will be the biggest music festival this city has ever had and will be so successful that next year it'll be a three-day concert. Events like this help drive our economy the way the Bisbee 1000 Stair Climb and Blues Festival have for Bisbee."

Sponsored by Sulphur Springs Valley Electric Cooperative and Prestige Remodeling and Restoration, Rocha believes Rise AZ has the foundation to become a game-changer that will not only launch Sierra Vista as a destination for top-tier entertainment; he also feels it can make the city shine as a showcase community in Arizona.

"We want this festival to become an annual fixture," said Rocha. "I have friends who drive to Tucson and Phoenix for concerts, but I want to reverse that trend. I want to see people driving to Sierra Vista and have us become a fixture of entertainment in Arizona. People want to see real quality music here, and it's coming April 26."

Rocha searched high and low for artists whose music fit the venue he wanted for an event for families to attend.

"We wanted a music festival that's family-friendly with artists who aren't inappropriate on stage with their lyrics," said Rocha, a father of three. "We want events that not only support the community, but ones where entire families can enjoy."

Rocha – who was the general manager of Native Grill & Wings before he got "event fever" after becoming involved with SV Glowride seven years ago – has a deep-rooted passion to make Sierra Vista a city powered with a sense of community.

"I grew up here, and there was never a

lot to do, especially for kids," he said. "I've always felt Sierra Vista has had an identity crisis for decades, unlike Tombstone and Bisbee which created their own niche. While doing these events, I saw how they were impacting the community, and I fell in love with that. With thousands of visitors coming here for Rise AZ, it will be a major boost for our economy."

But it's not the financial aspect that drives Rocha to continually come up with events. He genuinely wants to see his city flourish and radiate with a sense of community.

"I've never in my life seen someone so passionate about his community as Jai Rocha," said Heather Davis, co-owner of Prestige Remodeling. "He does whatever it takes to bring people together. He's like the energizer bunny, he just goes and goes, always doing something for this community."

Rocha sees it differently.

"I'm just the guy who comes up with an idea of an event," he said. "It takes a community to raise a community. None of this would be possible without our volunteers and businesses who are the backbone of it all."

Rocha's belief in creating community with events is almost part of his DNA.

"If it was up to me, I'd hold an event every week to see if Sierra Vista could become the entertainment capital of Arizona," he said. "Even if that doesn't happen, this concert could be a model for small Arizona cities to create similar events that would help bring their communities together. Wouldn't that be something?"

To volunteer for or sponsor Rise AZ, contact Jai Rocha at (520) 270-3924. ■

FREE CONCERT

PROUDLY PRESENTED BY PRESTIGE REMODELING POWERED BY SSVEC



BRIAN WELCH



SEVENTH DAY SLUMBER



SPOKEN



ASAP PREACH



JOE NESTER



D.CURE



SYL NOISE

Local Talent



MOG



TRUTH UNTOLD



CLEA MCAA



JEFF DAVENPORT



PROFILE

NINETY9



RISE! AZ

APRIL 26, 2025, SIERRA VISTA AZ, VETERANS MEMORIAL PARK

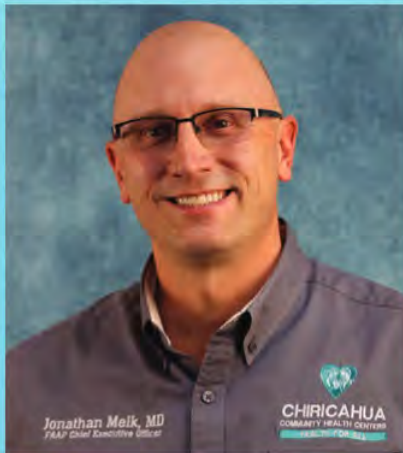


FREE CONCERT

10 years at

Dr. Jonathan Melk trailblazes a decade at Chiricahua Community Health Centers with unprecedented growth

By R.J. Cohn



He could have joined any high-end medical practice in the country with a top-tier salary and all the perks that go with it.

But after graduating from the prestigious Weill Cornell Medical College in New York City – ranked ninth overall for Best Medical School five years ago by U.S. News & World Report – Dr. Jonathan Melk took a different path than most physicians fresh out of med school.

Since becoming a pediatrician and the Chief Executive

Officer of Chiricahua Community Health Centers, Inc. (CCHCI) in 2014, he has been on a mission of improving healthcare for everyone in Cochise County regardless of their ability to pay.

Committed to families receiving optimal health through CCHCI's "Health for All" maxim, Melk wouldn't change the path he chose for anything. He has made a significant impact for thousands of patients who depend on its community clinics in an underserved county as a lifeline for healthcare that the vast majority would be unable to access on their own.

Melk also knew that taking over the reins as the organization's CEO would be an overwhelming challenge, especially when healthcare was undergoing massive changes.

"I never expected this work to be easy, and serving rural and border (communities) was precisely what motivated me to go through medical school to begin with, so I feel continuously energized for the challenge," he said.

Melk was more than braced for the challenge. He came from a strong work ethic growing up on a multi-generational Wisconsin farm with operations dating back to 1916. Since he took over the reins as CEO 10 years ago, CCHCI's budget has grown from an approximately \$13 million to \$65 million staffed with 80 providers and 465 employees

that provide adult and behavioral health, pediatrics, pharmacies, lab work, dental, radiology, women's health and acute care.

In a diverse rural county 100 miles from the nearest big city, Melk has been able to recruit a team of experienced professionals to the region's only nonprofit federally-qualified health center who are just as committed as he is.

"They join and stay for many reasons, but it is often exactly this idealism to make a positive impact in our world that most appeals to others that join in our efforts," he said. "The result is a team of extraordinary Chiricahua professionals ... that is unheard of in most similar rural and/or border regions."

When it comes to idealism and a desire to serve, Melk and his wife, CCHCI's Chief Medical Officer/ pediatrician Darlene Melk, are loaded with the kind of idealism that helped the growth of CCHCI. It's what brought them to the area in the first place.

"Throughout my medical training, I unwaveringly focused on a path in which I could have a significant and positive impact on the lives of children and families," said Melk. "Although there are countless opportunities for a pediatrician in the cities and suburbs, my goal was to serve rural people in a community that had significant unmet needs."

In medical school, he learned of the vast disparities in rural communities experienced in healthcare, illnesses and even lifespan compared to urban and suburban populations, something that weighed heavily on

the helm

him. He began to see his calling as a physician.

"This troubled me to my core, and I decided that I would dedicate my career to bettering the health and advocacy for rural people in underserved areas," he said.

It became the guiding North Star of his life, one that sent him to countries like Costa Rica and Bolivia, where he developed a strong interest in the Spanish language. He founded the Rosa Vera Fund (RVF), a not-for-profit charity for children with special healthcare needs named for a young girl who died during a heart surgery Melk fundraised for during an international rotation as a medical student in 2003. Both he and his wife are still connected to the organization.

"Over time, the RVF has had the honor of fundamentally improving the lives of many children and their families in a community that few have even heard of or much less visit," he said. "Experiences and knowledge gained developing and running the RVF have been among the richest and most worthwhile in my life."

What's also been worthwhile was becoming the first pediatrician in Douglas when he joined the CCHCI staff 20 years ago.

"The chance to apply my new pediatric skills in a starkly underserved rural community on the

US/Mexico border in an idealistic not-for-profit community health center couldn't have been

more perfect for me," said Melk. "That was exactly what I had dreamed of even prior to going to medical school. Both my wife and I have enjoyed and appreciated the Douglas community so much that we and our

children have called the community home for well over a decade."

But "home" for Melk is also CCHCI's model of a not-for-profit, community-based safety-net primary healthcare organization that accepts federal funding under the condition that no person is turned away based on the ability to pay.

"That was compelling to me," he said. "I am deeply aligned with Chiricahua's mission of 'Health for All.' I do not accept that living a rural life should mean that one also lives a shorter life. I have been totally committed to the organization, our communities and the patients we serve for nearly 20 years and remain so today. Pulling off high-quality rural and border health is and will likely always be extremely difficult."

But that's why Melk chose to become a community pediatrician in the first place. He embraces the healthcare challenges in Cochise County and looks for solutions. He's considering practicing as a pediatrician regularly in 2025.

"The primary healthcare needs in Cochise County remain tremendous, and it brings me profound satisfaction to be a proactive part of the solution," he said.

For Melk and his team, CCHCI remains what he refers to as an unabashedly idealistic organization that tries to make Cochise County a healthier and better place to live and visit. Though all the changes and challenges in the complex world of healthcare over the years, CCHCI has adapted with remarkable progress and growth.

"This has been a rollercoaster adventure and quite the team effort of countless hours over the course of years to bring the founders' vision closer to fruition, to most currently include the imminent opening of a small clinic in the northern region of the county in Willcox," said Melk. "One saying we have ... that grounds us is that 'we think outside of the box, but we don't leave our square' ... meaning our team's complete attention is on the square-shaped Arizona region named Cochise County." ■



The history, growth and upcoming season of the

Sierra Vista Community Theatre

“Entertainment should be synonymous with our name; that’s what we’re hoping for.”

By Natalie J. Plumb Lucey

You’re grabbing a pair of shoes at the Sierra Vista Mall before seeing a movie at the Cinemark 10. You see a phone accessories booth, the batting cages, a soap shop, Kay Jewelers, and something odd. It stands apart. Written on its clear window in big, bold letters, it says: “Sierra Vista Community Theatre.”

Is there really a community theater here? You ask. Is it any good?

“Every show has been getting better and better,” said Jason Cabrera, Sierra Vista Community Theatre President, and 15-year theater professional. “Really every single facet of the Theatre has grown by leaps and bounds.”

“If you were initially watching our shows, you would not expect what you see today; it’s a whole new experience,” said Scott Conklin, one of four Theatre founders.

The SVCT was founded in 2019 to entertain, educate and inspire artists and audiences in Southeastern Arizona through live performance, workshops and community involvement. Cabrera said a large part of the SVCT’s success is training and education.

“Initially it was just the four of us who did everything,” Conklin said.

Currently, the Theatre averages about 60 to 75 core members, said Suzy Lusk, SVCT Vice President and longest-standing Board Member.

“Now we’ve got double digits worth of people who can direct a show, run sound and lights,” Cabrera said. “It’s a much more stable foundation and we’re a real community.”

The Theatre is an all-volunteer, community-funded, non-profit organization. They welcome all, with any background, and well over 200 volunteers have helped in the past few years alone, Cabrera said.

“Truly anyone can come and be a part of the Theatre at any time; you can just walk in,” said Mike Buck, SVCT Secretary. “You would be surprised to see how much talent is showcased on our stages, and we are all volunteers. On a very small budget, we aim to provide an experience that you could find in theaters from New York to Chicago to San Francisco.”

For every show, there is a \$500 base budget allotted for the set, costumes, props, you name it, said SVCT Treasurer Vanessa Call. The Theatre also recruits show and season sponsors. But to put this in perspective, budgets are “much higher, in the thousands, for even the ‘small’ theaters in Tucson,” said Call. And yet, the quality does not suffer, said Dave Dahl, SVCT Artistic Director.

“We want to create shows that the audience will value and want to come back to,” said Dahl.

Dahl has been a professional in theater for almost 30 years, and directed shows all over the nation. Next summer,





Community Theatre

he heads to Alaska to direct Comedy of Errors for Cyrano Theatre Company. It is Dahl's job to evaluate shows for quality and content to create cohesion in the production elements (acting, directing, lighting, music, set design), and host workshops. In the 2025 Season, SVCT hopes to increase their educational offerings to the public, and really connect with the surrounding community. The Theatre has even reduced the number of mainstage shows—six instead of up to nine—to focus on more projects, and to give their community the opportunity to really develop the shows.

"I want a larger section of the community to be involved," Cabrera said. "We want to expand our educational offerings for adults, with workshops showing how a theater fully functions. I would love to become more integrated...be more plugged into the community."

The list of shows for the 2025 Season may be shorter, but it sure has some big-name classics: The Producers, Clue and Much Ado About Nothing name a few. There is a wide range of show styles and topics, but primarily the season focuses on comedy, Buck said.

"The idea is to make experiences for youth, couples and families to create long-lasting memories for them to be able to appreciate some of the bigger names and players in the theater world - right here in Sierra Vista," Buck said.

The Youth Theater makes up a huge part of SVCT's mission to entertain, educate, empower and inspire all ages, and it is a great space for them to learn and develop skills and confidence, Buck said.

"I think the Theatre means family to me," said Kayalynn Fiddes, 17, Youth Theatre member since 2021. During her time in the Theatre, Fiddes has touched acting, stage management, songwriting, playwriting, marketing, lighting, sound, music directing, and Youth Summer Camp counseling. The impact it has is life changing, she said. "It definitely helped me get through a lot of difficult times."

"Where do I see the Theatre in five years? I would hope we are in our own space, still doing quality entertainment," said Lusk.

Presently, the Theatre can seat roughly 70 at each show. SVCT hopes to accommodate more and is actively looking to expand and grow into a permanent space independent of the Mall. It would not be their first time to expand; the first space was now less than half the size of their current space, Conklin said, which they moved into in 2020.

"This is definitely my favorite theater that I've been a part of," said Lusk.

"When we put on a show, we want it to be the best; we're really excited to put something on and have people enjoy it," said Robin StClair, SVCT Committee Leader. "I just love the Theatre and I love being here." ■



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BAREFOOT IN THE PARK
BY NEIL SIMON
JUNE 13-29

THE PRODUCERS
BY MEL BROOKS AND THOMAS MEEHAN
AUGUST 15-31

CLUE: ON STAGE
BY JONATHAN LYNN AND SANDY RUSTIN
OCT 17-NOV 2

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BY VALENTINE DAVIES
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For show times, or to donate, visit svcommunitytheatre.org

Arizona's *wildlife*

**By Chris Harbard, President,
Southwest Wings**

The Sky Islands of Southeastern Arizona are renowned for their unusual bird species, attracting visitors from all over the world who come to see them. They are also known as the Madrean Archipelago which is another apt name for them, for as well as rising like islands out of a sea of desert and grassland, they are also an extension of the Sierra Madre Mountains of north-west Mexico, with a similar range of trees and plants, with associated wildlife. This makes them a biodiversity hotspot, with a wide range of species found only in this

region within the United States. The varied habitats in SE Arizona are easily seen when transitioning between desert, grassland and mountains. Travelling from the San Pedro Valley up into the Huachuca Mountains the vegetation changes from riverine Cottonwood and willows through mesquite/creosote-filled grassland, to Sonoran desert with Ocotillo and cacti. Scattered Emory Oak and Arizona White Oak woodland starts to show, with additional Alligator Juniper appearing, and then denser woodland which eventually gives way to other oak species, with Arizona Sycamore in the canyons and conifers at higher elevations, including Arizona and Apache Pines.

These varied habitats mean that the biodiversity of the region is nothing short of spectacular, with mammals such as White-nosed Coati, Javelina and the recently identified Mexican Long-nosed Bat. More than 100 species of reptiles and amphibians can be found in southeastern Arizona from the Chiricahua Leopard Frog to the Gila Monster. Insects abound, making Arizona the top state for ants in the US, with more than 300 species and there are also an amazing 1,300 native species of bees in the state plus more than 130 species of dragonfly and damselfly. More than 350 species of butterfly have been seen in Arizona,



Two-tailed Swallowtail butterfly.
PHOTO BY PRISCILLA BRODKIN

wonders

ADOBE STOCK PHOTO BY MAXSOI 7

with most of these in the southeast, from the tiny Western Pygmy Blue, the smallest butterfly in the US, to the large Two-tailed Swallowtail, Arizona's state butterfly. The huge Saguaro Cactus produces Arizona's state flower, while the state tree is the green-barked Palo Verde, and the many hundreds of plant species found in Cochise County include the rare Cochise Pincushion Cactus and the Huachuca Milkvetch, both found only in a few locations here and nowhere

else in the US. In Arizona, Cochise County alone has recorded 485 species of birds which include many Mexican species which just make it into the US, including Lucifer Hummingbird, Arizona Woodpecker, Elegant Trogon, Buff-breasted Flycatcher, Thick-billed Kingbird, Red-faced Warbler, Painted Redstart, Five-striped Sparrow and Yellow-eyed Junco.

If you would like to experience the wildlife wonders of this area, then join one of the Southwest Wings Spring Festival trips, led by local experts, which explore several of the Sky Islands and areas nearby. This year the spring festival runs from Tuesday May 6,

2025, when the pre-festival Jamboree takes place, until Saturday May 10, 2025. There are more than 30 full-day or half-day trips field trips, including several night outings to look for owls, moths and other nocturnal creatures and at least 200 bird species are usually seen over the four days of the festival. The full-day trips are in vans, setting out from Cochise College, Sierra Vista, with the shorter half-day trips in own cars. Registration for the field trips is open until April 1, 2025 and full details can be found on the Southwest Wings website www.swwings.org/spring-fling-2025.

The 34th annual Summer Festival will be held from Tuesday July 29 to August 2, 2025 and is Southwest Wings' main festival with all of the field trips plus a fabulous indoor event with lots of free talks and a wide selection of vendors and exhibitors, all held at the Mall at Sierra Vista. There is also a Keynote Dinner on Thursday July 31 with special speaker British author, birder and TV producer Stephen Moss. ■



Painted Redstart. PHOTO BY CHRISTIE VAN CLEVE



Javelina. PHOTO BY CHRIS HARBARD



Red-faced Warbler. PHOTO BY TONY BATTISTE

Walking in the shadow

of the Murray Springs Mammoth Kill Site

By R.J. Cohn

As a boy, I grew up with field trips as my guiding light to the natural world, navigating me through its cycles of its life and how it was continually reborn.

I became fascinated by marshes, bogs and brackish wetlands, where a habitat of

reeds, sedges and cattails flourished. It was where I learned how beavers build lodges and dams.

I learned more from field trips to cave sites and cliff dwellings inhabited by Paleo-Indians and the culture they created than anything between the binders of classroom textbooks. I could ask questions that were answered with insight

by knowledgeable guides, whose brains I loved to pick about extinct civilizations that once inhabited our world.

That's why I jumped at the chance to go on a hike offered by the Friends of the San Pedro (FSP) for a tour of the Murray Springs Mammoth Kill Site, where an archaeological expedition in the 1960s unearthed the bones of a 20,000 pound Columbian Mammoth and 12 bison killed and butchered by the Clovis-Paleo Indians



13,000 years ago in a dry wash just walking distance from Moson Road. Tools and other artifacts belonging to the tribe were also found.

I knew the San Pedro Riparian National Conservation Area was rich in history, and FSP conducted tours that included the Clanton Ranch and the Presidio of Santa Cruz de Terrenate.

But I had never heard of Murray Springs – which is managed by the Bureau of Land Management – or the stunning discovery sponsored by National Geographic and the University of Arizona that helped renowned archaeologist Vance Haynes and his team excavate “black matt” that formed on top of extinct megafauna and Clovis tools from 1966-1971.

In the world of archaeology and paleontology, this was a major find just outside Sierra Vista.

I also knew if FSP was conducting a tour of anything in the San Pedro Riparian National Conservation Area, it had to be exceptional.

I was not disappointed.

Led by FSP docents Chris and Dwight Long, who have been guiding visitors on the Murray Springs tour for 10 years,

27 hikers followed a trail that led down steps into a deep, dry wash where the remains of a dozen bison, a horse and a 20-ton mammoth that stood 14 feet high were unearthed.

“This was a big, big deal when this was discovered,” said Chris Long. “It was one of the biggest concentration kill sites discovered, and it was the first place where Clovis (Indian) points were found embedded in the bones of a Columbian Mammoth.”

What made that discovery so important, she added, was that it was generally thought that humans and mammoths didn’t coexist.

“The discovery in Murray Springs helped create changing views of how the early Clovis hunted and lived in the San Pedro,” she said. “Since the discovery, so many Clovis sites have been found around the country.”

To date, 29 Clovis sites have been located in 16 states.

“But what makes the Murray Spring

Kill Site unique and important is that it’s the only one that had a campsite where megafauna were butchered and their skins were scraped,” said docent Dwight Long. “Plus, the Clovis ‘point’ was a unique kind of technology for making a specific point that was easy for hunting. And with its fluted base, it could be easily mounted on a carved stick as a spear.”

Long not only showed visitors reproductions of Clovis points and scraping tools, but took them to the campsite area by the wash and to the deep hole at the trail’s end where the remains of the Columbian mammoth were excavated.

And like a history class in-the-wild, they also learned what types of animal roamed the San Pedro 13,000 years ago, when the habitat resembled the Serengeti Plain filled with high grasses to feed on and was devoid of mesquite that now fills the area.

FSP regularly conducts guided walking tours of historical significance in the San Pedro area. To learn about upcoming tours, visit sanpedroriver.org or their facebook page. ■



Still busy busting after all these years

By R. J. Cohn

That's Reed Booth, the legendary Killer Bee Guy in what looks like a frumpy astronaut suit with a screen helmet killing a hive of 50,000 Africanized killer bees inside a whiskey barrel planter in the backyard of a residential Sierra Vista home.

There he is again, going after another swarm of 50,000 on a wellhead at a ranch at the Arizona/New Mexico line; now he's at a church in Benson,

"exorcising" it, he says, from a siege of killer bees, and before he can answer another phone call for help, Booth is getting rid of 50,000 more that have built a swarm on a wellhead at the Naco Sewage District.

The guy hasn't stopped going after them all winter.

"Nothing stops them," said Booth, who has appeared on the National Geographic, Discovery and Fox channels as a nationally recognized Africanized

killer bee expert. "Weather – rain or cold – means nothing to them. It's an invasion of a new species that was never on this planet before. They've adapted to our climate, and they've become a deadly invasive species that kills. When temperatures soar this summer, their swarms will double in size. They don't just sting when they attack. They mean to kill you."

Booth is seemingly everywhere, hunting down killer bees that have locked



Our Photographer Monique Vargas (featured on the right) suits up and joins The Killer Bee Guy Reed Booth (Featured second from left) and his team for a killer bee removal at Skyline Baptist Church on January 21, 2025.



ing bees rs

onto Cochise County with ferocity and singular vengeance over the last decade, braced with a mindset bent on attacking anything in their path, sometimes for no reason.

The hybrid bees that were crossbred in Brazil to increase honey production in the 1950s are also seemingly everywhere. They've become so terrifyingly aggressive that in 2020 four people died in Cochise County from killer bee stings. That year, Booth experienced 78 days straight without a break and 60 to 80 phone calls regarding incidents. Livestock and pets are killed regularly by them each year.

"They're evil," said Booth, 66, who's been removing bees for more than 35 years. "They're like Vikings that come in mass to kill and have become more unpredictable than ever. I've seen a 1,000-pound hog killed by a swarm in 35 minutes. Every week in Cochise County, they kill a dog, a horse or a goat. I never saw a meaner 'bee year' than last year."

Booth, who also owns the Killer Bee Honey Store in Bisbee, is in big demand and that demand is growing due to the explosive growth of Africanized bee swarms that have thrived in the Southwest's warm, arid climate since spreading through Arizona in the 1990s. He's removed thousands of bees for Homeland Security, FEMA, and Border Patrol throughout the state. He gets calls for removals throughout the country but doesn't have the time to go.

"We're so busy just keeping on top of our killer bee situation in Cochise County," said Booth, who claims to have been stung more than 1,000 times in

his life. "Last year, there were 10,000 removals in Tucson alone. These bees are wiping out our native pollinators and now make up 100 percent of Arizona's bee population. It's almost unimaginable."

Every year, Booth says he received more calls for bee removals than the previous year.

"2024 was off the charts," he said, "This year I expect more, not just a little more, but a ton more."

What Booth is now up against is a species that each year becomes more aggressive.

"When they crossbred them, they never imagined they'd become like this," he said. "We were once chased by killer bees in our truck for 10 miles past Slaughter Ranch in Douglas. They're relentless. Even after they're removed, they leave smells of pheromones that soak into the area of their former hive that still attract bees."

Last year, Booth said he was called by Fry Fire Station to rescue them from a killer bee swarm.

"I've seen them roar out of a hole at 1,000 bees per second," said Booth, "with a pressure hose effect. Years ago, in Naco we removed a 200-pound swarm that was two feet thick and the length of a compact car. These bees kill people every day in Latin America. Nobody in their right mind keeps bees in Arizona anymore. When they attack, they send every bee out to defend the hive."

Booth charges \$400 for three types of removal with a guarantee that they won't return for two years. They include swarm removals, where often 50 percent



Killer bee removal streaming live for YouTube channel "Killer Bee Guy."

are building honeycombs on tree limbs, something Booth said he never saw before. There's also a removal-and-seal, where he kills the hive and seals the hole, entombing it to mitigate the threat.

"That's our number one goal," he emphasized. "Sometimes they're so bad we have to remove a wall or a shed floor to get to them, and that's when all hell breaks loose. It's like being in a science fiction movie."

Despite their increasing abundance, Booth said Cochise County is on the forefront of the bee war.

"We're training fire departments by teaching them what to do and not to do when removing them without getting stung," he said. "By promoting and educating everything we know about this invasion, we're making headway. They're not going away, especially in Cochise County."

"We won't win the war with them, but we'll fight each battle as they come." ■

NCCH, Benson Hospital

Taking quality health care to new heights

By R.J. Cohn

Making quality healthcare a priority in underserved rural hospitals like those in Willcox and Benson is more than just a challenge for Gary Kartchner.

It's a flat-out driving passion for the CEO of both Northern Cochise Community Hospital (NCCH) and Benson Hospital, where Kartchner is trying to set new benchmarks in the direction of healthcare.

The Benson native grew up exploring the underground limestone caverns filled with 50,000-year-old speleothems on his grandfather's property before it became a state park.

Kartchner was raised in an extended family of physicians and is doing a masterful juggling act that's making a significant impact on rural healthcare along with creating a community's connection to its hospital that is stronger than ever.

"I'm more interested in what I'm doing healthcare-wise for these communities than having a fancy title," said Kartchner, who took on the CEO position at Benson Hospital in 2023 and NCCH's last November. "We have a real opportunity to bolster people's lives in Cochise County significantly, and that's

absolutely as huge as it gets. We are making quality healthcare happen here in a big way."

Part of that "big way" was partnering both hospitals with Tucson Medical Center (TMC), which has been something like a mothership of unlimited resources that Kartchner says has made all the difference in the world. Without TMC, Kartchner stressed that Benson Hospital and NCCH would be floundering. In December, TMC gave both communities \$10,000 each for their respective food pantries.

"TMC really understands how rural hospitals work, and their importance to us is off the charts," he said. "In 2018, Benson Hospital was on the verge of shuttering before TMC came in. It went from almost door-closing to flourishing in five years. We're able to provide quality care close to home instead of people having to make the drive to Tucson, which is super-important."

What's also super-important is Kartchner's understanding of communities in the San Pedro and Sulphur Springs valleys. While establishing both hospitals as rock-solid anchors in their community, he knows the tricky business of healthcare in rural Arizona can be a tough balancing act with razor-thin profit

Sign outside of Benson Hospital pointing the way to the entrance.



healthcare

margins that can sink a rural hospital the way Benson's almost did.

"Healthcare operates on tight margins," said Kartchner, who's more comfortable walking around hospitals as a CEO in a sweatshirt than winged tips and a 3-piece suit. "But I feel quality care should be the primary focus. In these two hospitals, we've built a strong team that focuses on both quality care and financial accountability. Everything goes through that filter."

NCCH and Benson Hospital – which together employ more than 200 – have made big inroads in their communities, both as major employers and local supporters.

NCCH began as a 25-bed hospital in 1968 and is now a critical-access hospital with specialty clinics from urology to cardiology. It serves a hospital district the size of the state of Delaware that includes Willcox, Bowie, San Simon, Sunsites, Sunizona, Dragoon, Cochise and Pearce. It runs two diaper banks that last year donated 4,000 diapers a month, a gently-used blanket drive, and donates to almost every local organization while it raises money for a "Grow Your Own" scholarship fund.

It's also the face of the community. Public relations liaison Heidi Dehncke-Fisher serves on the boards of the Chamber of Commerce and Willcox Against Substance Abuse. She is also a Rotary Club member and serves on a Cochise County workforce team to help invigorate the number of county healthcare workers. Additionally looks after the elderly with its Senior Life Solutions program, an outpatient group therapy program targeting the needs of seniors.

"We are an anchor of the community and have built a lot of trust here as we have in Benson because we've created and are still creating a positive environment," said Kartchner. "These are quality professionals who work here, and I want to create the best possible place to work. Is it a challenge? Sure, but I always enjoy a good challenge. We're out to improve healthcare in Cochise County.

"Just you watch." ■



Front entrance for Northern Cochise Community Hospital proudly surviving the residence of Wilcox and surrounding Cochise County communities.



Benson hospital medical team reviewing patient imaging results.



Gary Kartchner returns to his Cochise County home roots to step into the CEO role of Benson Hospital and Northern Cochise Community Hospital.



Curious

immerses kids in nature

By R. J. Cohn

For preschoolers in Cochise County, the world outside is a portal to the pathway of nature, ready to be explored.

All they have to do is be shown how to reach out and touch it.

Thanks to the Curious Quails Youth & Nature Initiative, families with preschoolers can do just that, enjoying nature through safe, accessible outdoor activities in their own communities.

Grant-funded by the University of Arizona Cochise County Cooperative Extension and AZ Health Zone, the innovative outdoor program designed to get youngsters actively involved with Mother Nature – many for the first time. The program is getting rave reviews from parents whose kids have participated in the year-old program, modeled after the U of A Nature Ninos program in Prescott.

It's impossible not to like a program that encourages curiosity, learning, and play in Cochise County's natural wonderland.

"Our hope is for families, educators and children to realize nature is at our fingertips where kids can become more engaged in it," said Jacob Salcido, the program's lead. "It becomes another learning situation where they become curious about their surroundings along with enjoying it."

In a county that boasts historical parks, scenic landscapes and a wide variety of plants and wildlife, Salcido isn't the only one who sees the affect nature can have on children.



ADOBESTOCK/ILLUSTRATION BY SYAHCREATION

Quails

The National Environmental Education Foundation says outdoor activities can enhance school performance, cognitive and social development, community involvement and creativity.

"We want to hopefully get children indoctrinated to nature and what it has to offer," said Rhagan Derfus, AZ Health Zone coordinator. "In two events we held, the feedback we received was off-the-charts positive. What we heard was it increased family interaction, and we saw that kids were so excited being outdoors that they didn't want to stop hiking after a mile. They wanted to keep going."

Organizers of Curious Quails envision the program becoming a launching pad for groups like schools to plan nature hikes for preschoolers. After hosting events in Palominas and Douglas, they're planning six more in 2025. The potential they see for community partners like schools, libraries and fire departments to become involved with Curious Quails is limitless.

A hike Curious Quails organized along the Palominas Multi-Use Trail last summer got kids and families immersed in nature in their community.

"Many didn't know the trail even existed," said Salcido. "We created a scavenger hunt along the way, pointing out birds, bugs, trees and shrubs to identify and touch. They were learning to appreciate what nature has in store for them in their own backyard. That's a big learning experience for children."

They got their hands involved with nature-themed crafts, using mesquite pods, leaves and twigs to create personal artwork. They were also given a pocket journal to draw their favorite bird, cactus and flower along with their impressions of the hike.

"For many, it was the first time they had seen or touched a mesquite pod, and they were excited by the rattling sound it made when they shook them," said Salcido.

It was also the first time most of them walked on a nature trail, absorbed with everything they saw.




EVENT CALENDAR

COCHISE COUNTY

WINTER 2025		FALL 2025	
FEB 08	Pearce-Sunsites Evelyn Williams Memorial Park		
MAR 15	Huachuca City Gordon W. Leffingwell Park		
APR 12	Hereford - Palominas Palominas Multi-Use Trail		
APR 26	Willcox Keiller Park		
MAY 17	Elfrida Van Meter Park		
JUN 07	Douglas 8th Street Veterans Memorial Park		
AUG 09	Hereford-Palominas Palominas Multi-Use Trail		
SEP 13	Douglas Airport Park		

- All events scheduled for 9 to 10:30 a.m. -
*Each date falls on a Saturday. **Dates included here are tentative to change.


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This material was funded by USDA's Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program - SNAP through the AZ Health Zone. This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

"In the beginning, we saw nature was foreign to most of the children until they felt at home in their surroundings," said Derfus. "Getting children outside touching things and becoming inquisitive about bugs and butterflies no matter where they live is not only a way to experience nature.

"It's an opportunity for learning that keeps them moving and active instead of sitting."

For questions on arranging an event through Curious Quails, contact Jacob Salcido at 520-676-7271, ext. 5. ■

Hiking the h

I think I can... I think I can...

By Kathy Routledge and Larry Scott

I wake to the early morning chill of high-country; sounds, fragrance, colors — and the excitement of new-born adventure.

I leave camp and head up the mountain. The trail is heavily wooded and rocky. Careful — watch your step. It's going to be a big day — 10 miles out-and-back with 3,333 feet of elevation gain. There will be others out there, but not everyone makes it. For some, it takes several attempts to finally reach the summit. But hey I've got this! (I hope)

Several hours in, I reach the steep part — one mile and a thousand feet

of elevation to go. A hard climb above the trees, gasping for oxygen in the thin air. The old kid's story: "I think I can... I think I can..." Then the final leg — along the rocky ridge — onward, upward, through chill wind, to the summit! And the sign — Humphreys Peak, elevation 12,633 feet!

I did it! But I'm not done yet. Descent can be as challenging as the climb. And don't dilly-dally. The weather can change in a minute.

Finally, my adventure ends and I'm back before dark, bone-tired and sore. What a day! Certainly, I wasn't the only hiker on the trail. But unlike many, I'm

not a young athlete. I'm a 60-year-old Grandma — hiking solo!

My passion for hiking began when, as a child, my own Grandma took me hiking. It was heaven! When I was 15, she and I hiked the Grand Canyon to Havasupai. Memories!

For a time, as my husband and I raised our family, my love of the outdoors was placed on hold. But now, I'm back!

Made it!

KINDA VINTAGE
KINDA SAVAGE
— Old Lady Gals



High country

I typically get out every week, mostly close to home, in Cochise County. We certainly have plenty of beautiful places to hike.

Chiricahua Monument is wonderful, with spectacular rock formations and well-maintained trails ranging from easy to difficult. And the view from trails in the Huachuca Mountains and Cochise Stronghold can be awesome. The San Pedro Trail between Fairbank and San Pedro House is beautiful and relatively easy without a lot of climbing.

I suppose my favorite destination is Arivaipa Canyon, in the remote region along the Southwest side the Graham Mountains. Incredibly beautiful — but definitely a warm-weather choice as, in the absence of regular trails, hikers

follow the canyon by wading the river.

For me, hiking is essential to a full and healthy life. Beauty, solitude, physical challenge — time to think, time to pray, time to be grateful.

Should you take up hiking? Give it a try. Of course, you need to be reasonably healthy. Carry plenty of water and prepare for the unexpected. My small day-pack contains a flashlight, matches, rain gear, first-aid kit, and a few other essentials. And, consistent with my law-enforcement training, I do travel armed.

If you find my story interesting, swing by and let's talk. You'll find me at my business, Country Girl's Vintage Shop, at 330 E. 4th Street in Benson. ■



Time for rain gear on Mount Graham.



Wading the trail in beautiful Aravaipa Canyon.



You never know what awaits at Chiricahua National Monument.



Cochise Stronghold, East side

PHOTOS COURTESY OF KATHY ROUTLEDGE

Lock box program helps seniors during emergencies

By R.J. Cohn

A novel program allowing first responders easier access to the homes of seniors and disabled residents during an emergency is rolling out in Cochise County.

“They’re ecstatic about it. The only problem is not that many residents know about it.”

Instead of breaking a door or window to gain access to a fallen or suddenly ill senior, first responders locate a hidden lock box at the address of the emergency, dial in the combination, and use a house key to enter the home.

Organizers are hopeful the program will reach thousands of residents throughout Cochise County in 2025.

Even better, the boxes are distributed free by both city and county fire departments.

Known as the Elderly Box Program, which began four years ago, the initiative got its wings thanks to fundraising by Sierra Vista’s Real Wishes Foundation – which joined forces with the nonprofit West and Southeast Realtors of the Valley (WeSERV), an association of 30,000 members of five statewide realtor groups.

Set up by local fire departments, a lock box – the ones used by realtors to show homes to prospective clients – is placed in a secure location on or near the front door, providing quick access to a key,

instead of breaking a door or window.

“Everyone loves this program, especially first responders,” said Shari Ward, chairwoman of both WeSERV and Real Wishes, who is also a realtor for Preference Properties. “They’re ecstatic about it. The only problem is not that many residents know about it.”

Since it began in 2021, Ward said about 360 lock boxes have been distrib-

been involved with Real Wishes since it began 20 years ago. “We’re hoping more and more seniors look into the program and apply or contact their local fire department. We have the funds and ability to raise more to blanket one end of the county to the other with lock boxes. It’s an absolutely great program.”

After an application for a lock box is accepted, the local fire department will choose the location of the lock box at a resident’s home. The code is only known to the department and other first responders. If a dispatcher receives a 911 call from a home with a lock box, they will contact a specific first responder depending on the type of emergency.

Welfare checks requested by adult children who live in another state or calls from someone unable to get to their feet after a fall would benefit residents having a lock box.

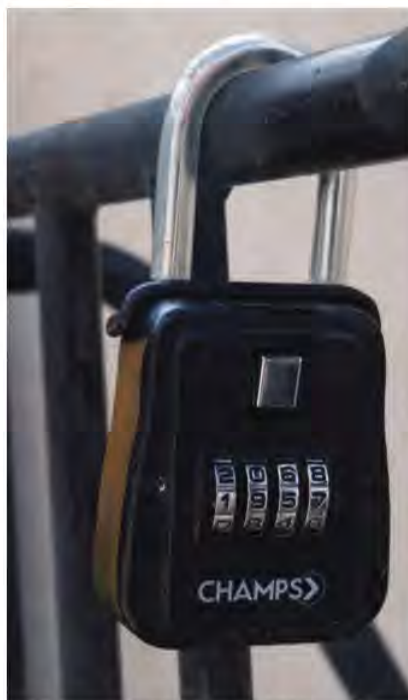
“They give everyone, especially out-of-town adult children, a sense of security and peace of mind knowing that first responders can easily access their parents’ home in an emergency without frightening them by breaking down the door to get in,” said Ward.

Greenberg couldn’t emphasize enough the importance of the program.

“We will always have money to get these lock boxes,” he said. “If you need them, we’re here.”

Sierra Vista seniors can apply for a lock box by downloading the application at <https://www.sierravistaaz.gov/home/showpublisheddocument/5984/637968371511570000>.

County residents are encouraged to contact their local fire department or watch for information about the program later this year on the Cochise County website at www.cochise.az.gov. ■



Lock box provided to the WeSERV program recipients.

uted, primarily in Sierra Vista. More than \$5,000 in donations were initially raised to purchase the boxes through Real Wishes Foundation’s fundraising efforts.

“We’re now getting them to residents in the San Simon and Willcox communities,” said David Greenberg, an Arizona Homestores realtor, who has

Firearms Training Complex opens with a bang!

By R.J. Cohn

In the works for more than 15 months, the cutting-edge Firearms Training Complex at Cochise College got a baptism by fire, including a ribbon cutting that was more like a scene lifted from the pages of a Wild West paperback.

Forget about supersized scissors cutting a ceremonial ribbon for the 9,338-square foot facility built with more than five miles of steel columns and beam.

Instead, eight shooters – including a state senator and the Mayor of Sierra Vista – fired a roaring 48-round fusillade that shredded a ribbon backed by targets with Cochise College logos from the complex's shooting lanes, filling the room with the smell of gunpowder.

The state-of-the-art complex features a 20-lane indoor firing range, an armory, and an 11 weapon-cleaning. The facility was originally projected to run between \$6 to \$8 million and came in "on time and on budget," words that administrators of major construction projects love to hear.

"Considering this was an unused parking lot several months ago, this is a remarkable accomplishment," Cochise College's Governing Board Chair Tim Quinn told a crowd of nearly 100 gathered to celebrate what was billed as the first-shot ribbon cutting. "This is not just a firing complex.

It's about training, certification and recertification for future peace officers graduating from our Southeast Arizona Law Enforcement Academy."

Outfitted with what Cochise College President J.D. Rottweiler called one of the most advanced indoor training ranges in Southeast Arizona, the facility is designed to the same exacting standards as many law enforcement, U.S. military, and federal training centers throughout the country.

"Cochise College has centered on all things local, moving our community forward," Rottweiler said. "This complex is only one of its type in rural Arizona that has the ability to provide real-world, night and daytime training at our Sierra Vista campus. This doesn't happen without local collaboration and partnership with our community. We are making a difference."

Rottweiler also praised Sen. David Gowan, who "...championed the project from the get-go and helped bring it to financial fruition."

"These state-of-art facilities are usually found in large metro areas," Rottweiler said. "Now we have one here

locally, and it's an outstanding one."

The firearms complex is the second phase of several ambitious challenges undertaken by Cochise College, including an estimated \$21.85 million building project targeting First Responders Academy initiatives. The initial phase — a \$4.85 million driving track on nearly five acres on Giulio Cesare Avenue in Sierra Vista — was completed in June 2023.

The third phase — a projected \$10 million, 45-bed student housing complex between the Student Union building and the University of Arizona South on Columbo Avenue — opened in January.

"For many years, we wanted to have a (law enforcement) academy close to home," Sierra Vista Police Department Chief Chris Hiser said. "This endeavor has been the best thing that has happened here for an academy like this. We are just so fortunate to have this." ■



astronomy

Mobile planetarium brings astronomy to everyone

By R.J. Cohn

In a day filled with awe and wonder of the earth's solar system, the Arizona Science Center brought galaxies, shooting stars and even the Milky Way into the Sierra Vista Public Library with a mobile planetarium, providing a stunning display of what lies hundreds of thousands of light years away in the skies above.

And what a marvel it turned out to be on a hot June afternoon for both adults and children who filled the double-walled, inflatable dome-shaped planetarium where they were treated to a viewing experience of our cosmos.

The dark sky display drew "oohs" and "wows" at dazzling images of spiral galaxies, and super clusters projected on the walls inside the dome.

The planetarium visit was made possible by Kal Mannis, senior director of Rural Engagement at the Arizona Science Center. Groups of 25 sat inside the darkened dome in amazement as Mannis explained what was visible, from the Andromeda Galaxy and constellations, to how a large spiral system of several hundred billion stars makes up the Milky Way.

"This is so super cool," a youngster whispered to her father as a colorful band of stars and irregular dwarf galaxies orbiting the Milky Way were projected on the dome's wall and ceiling.

"Let's get some books about this before we leave the library. I can't wait to look at more stars and planets and stuff."

That's exactly what Mannis hopes kids will take away from

the mobile planetarium. He asked a library worker to track astronomy books checked out for that day.

"That's the impact I'm looking for," said Mannis, who received funding from the National Science Foundation to start a program that supported the development of STEM Learning Ecosystems in rural Arizona. Funding is now provided by a NASA team looking to broaden participation in rural and tribal communities.

"I hope kids leave with a feeling of awe about what they saw here," he added. "I also hope some will be so moved by our cosmos they saw a glimpse of today, that it will turn into a lifelong fascination for astronomy, that they become citizen scientists and eventually get a telescope in their home."

Mannis believes so strongly in reaching kids through the mobile planetarium that he's been taking it to libraries in small, rural communities throughout the state like Snowflake, Campe Verde, Sedona and Pinetop. He also brought it to Bisbee High School before COVID in 2019. The response from each community was overwhelmingly positive.

"Two hundred people showed up in Snowflake, and that's a little place, but this has such a universal appeal," he said. "Everyone wanted to know how soon I could come back. As an educator, this is what you want to hear."

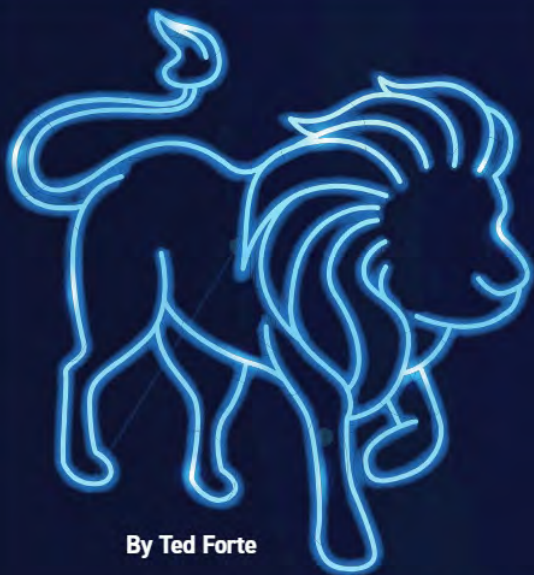
"What they're seeing is that astronomy is no longer just for scientists in white coats. It's for everyone." ■



only for all

“Let’s get some **books** about this
before we leave the **library**.

I can’t wait to **look** at more **stars**
and **planets** and stuff.”



By Ted Forte

The constellation of Leo is one of the more familiar patterns in the heavens and it dominates the spring sky. The naked eye figure of a crouching lion is composed of 9 or 10 bright stars that stretch across 30 degrees of sky and covers an area of 947 square degrees. Most recognizable is an inverted question mark, a sickle-shaped asterism that forms the lion's head and mane, anchored by the bright star Regulus (Alpha Leonis) that represents the heart of the lion. The lion's body stretches eastward to the 2nd magnitude star Denebola (Beta Leonis), representing the lion's tail in the

Leo the lion

modern depiction of the constellation. All of the ancient Middle Eastern and Mediterranean cultures saw a lion here. The most prominent surviving legend comes from Greek mythology where Leo represented the Nemean Lion slain by the hero Hercules.

In the middle of the sickle asterism is a beautiful double star named Algieba (Gamma Leonis). Two golden yellow stars of 2.6 and 3.6 magnitude are currently just over 4 arc seconds apart and splitable in small telescopes. Located 126 light years from Earth, the pair take about 600 years to orbit each other.

Algieba is considered one of the finest double stars in the sky and is well worth a look; however, when amateur astronomers think of Leo, they think of galaxies! There are over 32,000 cataloged galaxies within its boundaries and at least 30 of them are excellent targets

for small telescopes. Let's visit a few.

A well-loved and frequently imaged group of galaxies sits under the hind quarters of the Lion. The Leo Triplet consists of three bright galaxies that will easily fit in the field of view of a low power eyepiece and are visible in binoculars. The group is found about halfway between 3.3 magnitude Theta Leonis and 4.1 magnitude Iota Leonis. Messier 65 is a large bright spiral galaxy seen edge-on to our line of sight. About 20' away to the east is Messier 66, a large bright spiral seen at a more intermediate angle. The third member of the triplet is NGC 3628 which is a bit fainter, but still easily seen as a very slender sliver with a prominent dust lane. M65 and NGC 3628 are both about 35 million light years away. M66 is a bit closer at 31 million light years. Charles Messier discovered the M65/66 pair in 1780.



Leo Triplet PHOTO BY MICHAEL MORRISON



NGC2903 PHOTO BY LEN AMBURGEY



NGC 3628 in Leo PHOTO BY RICHARD LIGHTHILL



Hickson 44 PHOTO BY MICHAEL BORLAND

William Herschel discovered NGC 3628 in 1784.

An imaginary line extending from Regulus to Denebola will pass through the 10th magnitude elliptical galaxy, M105. It's nearly halfway between the stars, but closer to Regulus. M105 also anchors a trio of bright galaxies. Its companions are the 11th magnitude lenticular NGC 3384 and the much smaller and fainter spiral NGC 3373 which probably requires an 8-inch telescope to detect. M105 is 36.6 million light years from us.

M96 is a 10th magnitude spiral about 48' south-southeast of M105. It lies in the same field of view with a companion, M95, a 10th magnitude barred spiral. They are both just over 30 million light years away. The pair

were discovered by Messier's younger colleague, Pierre Méchain in 1781.

In the middle of the sickle asterism, just 2.5 degrees north-northwest of Algieba, is a remarkable galaxy group sometimes called the Gamma Leonis Group. It is also famous as Hickson 44, the brightest compact galaxy group in a catalog of 100 such objects created by the Canadian astronomer Paul Hickson in 1982. NGC 3190 is the brightest galaxy in this grouping and is easily seen in an 8-inch telescope. Its three companions are NGC 3185, NGC 3187 and NGC 3193. All four will fit in the field of view of a medium power eyepiece, but it will probably take at least a 10-inch telescope to detect them.

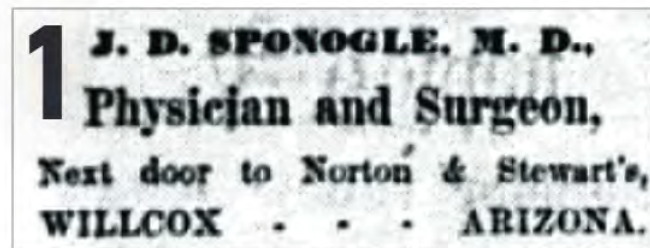
Off the nose of the Lion lies an often overlooked gem of a galaxy: NGC 2903.

This galaxy is about 4 degrees southeast of the 3rd magnitude star that marks the top of the sickle asterism. The star, Epsilon Leonis, is sometimes called Algenubi or even Ras Elased Australis which roughly translates "the southern star of the Lion's head". Off to the east of Algenubi, about 3.3 degrees, is the 4th magnitude star Alterf (Lambda Leonis). NGC 2903 is 1.5 degrees south of that star. The galaxy is an attractive, open-faced spiral that shines at 9.5 magnitude. William Herschel discovered it in November of 1784, but thought it was a double nebula. Consequently, it is listed in the NGC as two objects: NGC 2903 and 2905. It lies about 30 million light years away.

A star map or planetarium program will help you find your way to many more galaxies in the celestial Lion. ■

EARLY WILLCOX HOSPITAL HISTORY

By Kathy Klump



1. The first known doctor to have his office and drug store in Willcox was Dr. J. D. Sponogle. It was located next to the Norton & Stewart store (The Commercial) on Railroad Avenue in 1884. With reports of gold being found in nearby mountains, he quit his practice to try mining.

2. Dr. Robert Alexander Aiton came in 1899. He followed Dr. Benjamin Holcombe, Dr. Charles Porter (who poisoned his wife), and Dr. Malcolm Nicholson. Aiton's home and office was on east Maley Street. The building was known as Wynn's Discounts Store, when it was torn down. Old timers remembered that Dr. Aiton would sometimes keep patients upstairs and considered this as the very first hospital.

3. There was still no official hospital by the 1940s. Dr. John C. Wilson and Dr. Benjamin Briscoe would travel as far as Fort Grant, Bowie, or Johnson, or wherever needed to tend to the sick or deliver babies. Some women, however, from as far away as the mines at Klondyke would come into town when their time was near to have their babies delivered in rooms set aside in the Willcox Hotel. Those rooms were called "The Stork's Nest" and even listed as that on birth certificates from that time period.

4. Dr. Robert Alan Hicks assumed Dr. Wilson's practice in 1944. He built the Valley Hospital Infirmary on Railroad Avenue soon after. The buildings still stand as the Green Gables Apartments. There would be one patient in each cottage. They



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: **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".

would summon the nurse by turning on the outside light over their door. One evening in 1949, Dr. Hicks got a call from the 76 Ranch that one of the cowboys was having a heart attack. He and his nurse left town in the car he used as both an ambulance and a hearse. When they never returned with the patient, the deputy sheriff was put on the trail to see what happened to them. He couldn't find them on the Fort Grant road, so headed over Stockton Pass thinking they might have decided to take the patient to Safford instead. Inquiring in Safford if anyone had seen Dr. Hicks, he was told they had hit the bars there and drove away. Calls were made to the highway patrol and local law enforcement agencies. A policeman reported he had seen the ambulance on the Main street in Lordsburg. They were finally found about eight o'clock the next morning outside Bowie where they had also been imbibing and found the doctor and his nurse where they had run off the road. The patient was still inside the vehicle and was amazingly still alive. He was brought to Willcox and we are told lived to a ripe old age. The Arizona Medical Association suspended Dr. Hicks license, and he left town. In 1946, Dr. Hicks applied to join the Willcox Rotary Club. He was turned down after letters from townsmen were received stating that he was unfit to be a Rotarian because of his addiction to alcohol. Dr. Hicks remarked, "If I want to go out and howl, that is my own business."

5. Dr. Hicks had been a doctor with the U. S. Navy for many years. He built a huge house in Willcox to resemble a battleship. The house was known as Fort Hicks. After Dr. Hicks left town, the building became Koehn's Funeral Home. The building still stands on Cochise Avenue and has been the residence of several different families.

6. In 1952, barracks were moved from Douglas Army Air Field to west Maley Street to be used as the Willcox Municipal Hospital. There were twelve patient rooms. It was torn down after 1967, when the Northern Cochise Community Hospital was finished. The Elsie S. Hogan Community Library was built on the site. When the library needed a larger building, it was moved into the old Willcox Market building. The ambulance service is now located on the old Municipal Hospital property. ■



Diary of a Cochise

By R.J. Cohn

APRIL 3 – Just moved into my new house in southern Arizona’s Cochise County. God, it’s beautiful! Sun’s always out, sky’s constantly blue, and the people are incredibly friendly, especially my neighbor Hank who’s giving me lots of advice. After decades of frigid cold and snow, no more studded snow tires, Sorel boots, cutting wood or thermal underwear. Should have moved here years ago. I love this place.

APRIL 11 – Got stung by the weirdest-looking thing with two pincers and a pointed tail that looks like a miniature monster. God, it stings. My ankle is red and swollen. Hank came by, gave me some stuff to put on it, said not to walk around barefooted. Claims there are lots

of these “scorpions” here. Advised me to get the house sprayed by a pest control company like he does. I think it’s just an isolated incident.

APRIL 16 – What an experience! Was walking Pepper in a park at 4 a.m. when he started barking his brains out at what looked like a gigantic hippopotamus and 10 baby hippos. Ugliest things I ever saw. Went after us like a tank, chased us out of the park. Hank said they’re an endangered species called javelinas that wander in from the mountains. Told me what to do when I encounter them. Hank knows a lot about everything.

APRIL 22 – Stung two more times, on the elbow and wrist, by these scorpions. Arm feels like it’s on fire. Helpful Hank said I should get a “scorpion

flashlight” that shines an ultraviolet light and search for them at night in my yard like he does. Told him I have better things to do. I’m getting sick of Hank.

MAY 1 – Skunks are stinking up this whole area. Not only are they piling up dead on highways, but along with these gross javelinas, they’re everywhere at night. This place is like Africa! Mr. Know-It-All said I should scatter mothballs in the yard, boil a chopped onion and a jalapeno, add cayenne to two quarts of water and strain it into a spray bottle. What an idiot. Like I’m going to go around spraying skunks. If Hank offers any more advice, I might just spray him. How does he know so much?

MAY 16 – Will these blasted scorpions ever leave? Weather-stripped and



ADOBE STOCK IMAGES BY LUMOS MAXIMA, VACLAV, DANICHA

County newbie



duct-taped every door and window from top to bottom. They're still pouring in like a parade, coming up from the sink and bathtub drains. Who can live in a place like this? Only Happy Hank, who just waved while washing his little turquoise Mini Cooper with a recyclable water machine. I'm thinking of keying the entire right side of his car.

MAY 30 – Bitten head-to-toe from every kind of mosquito that ever lived. Bites turned into huge welts. Itching is intolerable. Nothing, including Calamine lotion, Benadryl cream and an anti-itching gel, gives any relief. But here comes Helpful Hank again with his worldly wisdom, telling me he can whip up a homemade concoction of honey, baking soda, oatmeal, tea, garlic and onion he guarantees will bring instant relief. Told him if he does, I'll shove it down his throat.

JUNE 8 – While Everyone's All-American was searching for scorpions with his magic flashlight last night, I loosened the bolts to the fender of his Mini Cooper. Best thing I've done since I've moved to this Godforsaken desert.

JUNE 30 – Will the freaking mosquitos ever stop? Now a thundering rain is pounding with such force that the street looks like a river. Been without hot water for two days. Basement got flooded, water took out the pilot light on the water heater. Happy Hank said these "monsoons" are part of summer life, and I should have installed a sump pump. One more word from Mr. Perfect, and he's going to need a new set of teeth.

JULY 12 – Tornado-like winds tore off half the roof. What civilized person could live here? Estimate for a new roof, sump pump, hot water heater, plus new water lines for the entire house (plumber said old ones are ready to

collapse) is verging on \$17,000. Hank says his cousin can do it cheaper. If his family sets one foot on my property, there will be violence.

AUGUST 4 – Will the heat ever stop? Every day is boiling, hotter than the next. AC unit broke in this infernal heatwave. Here comes Happy Hank in shorts and sandals, cool as a cucumber, says he knows how to fix it. Decked him with a right cross, then keyed both sides of his Mini Cooper. Squadrons of police cars are racing down the street.

AUGUST 15 – It's nice and cool in this room, and the little white pills they keep giving me make everything wonderful. Just can't figure out why in the world I'm strapped to this bed. ■



Beautiful Balance

BALLET STUDIO

Where dancers can find joy in music,
in movement, and in themselves!

By Jenny Kartchner

On December 21, 2024, dancers from Beautiful Balance Ballet Studio performed *The Nutcracker*! This free show was a gift to Sierra Vista and surrounding communities from the charming instructor, Janna Squires. Those in attendance experienced an evening of magic and delight as the dancers brought the classic holiday-tale to life!

A note from a fan: *"I can't believe it was such a high-quality and free production. Thank you for putting it on and for preparing the wonderful performers!"*

Family is at the center of Janna Squires' life. Her mother inspired her with a love for dance. Janna's formal ballet education began in kindergarten. Her family gave Janna and her

siblings endless support in the busy classes and demanding performance schedules required of company dancers.

In high school, Janna offered affordable ballet classes for youth in her neighborhood. Her father, a schoolteacher, helped her gain an understanding of effective classroom management. Her mother provided artistic advice and creative costume construction that helped keep recital costs low.

Janna studied Early Childhood Education and Dance at Brigham Young University. She continued to teach ballet after her marriage and in between the births of her three children, with help from her younger sister, also a dance instructor.

Janna moved to Sierra Vista in 2015 and took a break from teaching to dedicate more time to her children. Her youngest is now in high school, and with love and encouragement from her





husband, Janna is excited to be teaching again! Janna loves the artistry of ballet, the expressiveness of music and dance, and loves creating choreography.

"The goal of our company is to help dancers learn the beauty of classical ballet in a healthy, fun, and positive environment. Ballet provides incredible opportunities to train the body, educate the mind, and enlarge the soul, and we believe that dancing should be a joyful experience! We emphasize modesty in costuming and movement, we dance to wholesome and uplifting music, and we strive to help the dancers feel confident and successful in their efforts. Our curriculum is not focused on competition but rather promotes steady progress." ■

Classes

- ▶ Once per week 60-to-90-minute classes organized by age and ability. Offered to ages 4 and up.
- ▶ Advanced dancers: Option of taking multiple classes a week, includes free weekly pointe class.
- ▶ Adult Registration still open (all levels, ages 18 and over).
- ▶ Spring 2025 registration for youth classes is closed.
- ▶ Summer registration begins in May.
- ▶ Recital Scheduled for Saturday, May 24, 2025, at the Klein Center for the Performing Arts.

Cost

- ▶ Semester Registration Fee \$20 per family. Youth Performance \$55/month. Youth Non-Performing Technique \$40/month. Adult \$40/month once/week. \$65/month twice/week.

Contact

Beautifulbalanceballet.com
4661 North Commerce Drive, Sierra Vista
602-526-0359
beautifulbalanceballet@gmail.com

Comments from parents:

“Exquisite is the best word to describe ballet with Janna. Our girls learn so much from Janna's exceptional teaching style and choreography.”



“This is a wonderful studio! I can hardly express how happy I am that Mrs. Squires opened her doors just as we were looking for a permanent ballet studio. I watched Mrs. Squires maintain a positive, yet hard-working atmosphere. Best of all, each dancer heads home with a smile!”



“I appreciate the morals, modesty, beauty, costuming and choreography. She creates an environment of cooperation and peace for every dancer.”

Skirts and shirts to dye for

By R.J. Cohn

If you're looking to add some sizzle and pizzazz to your wardrobe with a palette of exciting colors, creative designer Nancylee Ramsey's Copper Canyon Designs can enhance your fashion statement with some of the most eye-catching designs under the sun.

Along with her husband, Jim, the couple has been tie- and ice-dyeing everything from shirts and dresses to tunics, jackets and even palazzo pants with such flair and color that they often have trouble keeping up with the demand.

The stylish slash-skirts she sews from recycled denim shorts and exquisitely ice-dyed cotton fabric sold at the Sierra Vista Farmers Market are usually gone by day's end.

"It's phenomenal how fast they sell," said Ramsey, a retired nurse who has been sewing most of her life.

What's also phenomenal is how a little home business that began in 2006 making placemats and table runners grew into a specialty clothing-design operation that has kept the Ramseys busier than they ever dreamed.

"Someone asked me to make placemats for them, and soon others wanted similar household goods," she said. "They caught on, and after we had them in Brew's Coffee Shop on Highway 92, I realized I needed to add another product line."

She began experimenting with ice-dyeing, an offshoot of tie-dyeing fabric, where ice cubes are placed on dye powders over scrunched-up shirts in a tote in the sun for 24 hours to produce an array of patterns in swirling colors. Jim branched out into tie-dyeing, and business took off.

Starting at \$12 for T-shirts, it never slowed down.

"We definitely had a trial-and-error period," he said. "Our grandkids were wearing errored tie-dye shirts for months."

Blessed with a sense and understanding of colors – especially how blends of hot pink and electric blue might pattern together – Nancylee's creations of ice-dyed clothing soon took on another level. She says people were immediately drawn to them.

"I developed a strong sense for color, especially in relationships to color combinations," she said.

To ensure their clothing wouldn't shrink or bleed, they pre-wash everything in hot water and dry them at high temperatures before the dying process. The shirts also sold at Sun Sea Creations at the Mall at Sierra Vista.

"We're really busy at this," said, "but we're also enjoying it immensely" ■



Nancy Lee and Jim Ramsey, from Copper Canyon Designs, showcase their tie dye products.



Sabrina Harwell of Firesky Farms posing with her lavender essential oil.

At Firesky Farms, it's lavender fields forever

By R.J. Cohn

Four years after leaving the corporate world, Sabrina and Shannon Harwell took one big leap of faith and wound up knee-deep into fields of lavender.

Now boasting 15 varieties of 7,000 French and English lavender plants on 20 acres at their Firesky Farms in Elgin, it's been the best leap the couple ever took.

Two years after their first harvest, the Harwells began distilling lavender plants into essential oils, making lavender into culinary products, creams, lotions, bath salts and even dog shampoo where they sell them to a loyal following at the Sierra Vista Farmers Market.

"We've always been big fans of essential oils, and we wanted to switch gears and pull ourselves away from the corporate world to do something that was more in tune with the earth," said

Sierra Vista native Sabrina Harwell, a retired teacher, whose husband was a director in the industrial engineering field. "We wanted to work for ourselves and remain active with our community. We're pretty happy with how things turned out."

So are the thousands of lavender lovers who flock to the Firesky Farms' booth every Thursday at Veterans' Memorial Park to purchase everything from lavender honey, spices, teas, cooking extract and a lavender brownie-scone mix to lavender oils and salves. The couple held its first annual Lavender Festival in July that drew more than 900 people, along with five wineries, food trucks and 20 artisan vendors.

"We wanted to share our love of lavender with everyone, and we were thrilled at how well-received it was," said Sabrina. "We can't wait for next

year's festival."

But why choose Elgin, the first location in Arizona to engage in commercial-scale winemaking, to grow lavender, of all things?

"We did our homework and knew that wherever grapes were grown, lavender grew well and thrived," she said. "Plus, as teenagers, we used to drive here, saw how beautiful it was and thought it would be a great place to retire. And here we are."

Processing lavender is hardly an easy operation. They devote weeks distilling lavender plants into oils similar to how bootleggers once made whiskey by lighting a fire under a still that produces steam which converts the plants into oil. Making lavender lotion is also time-consuming, a labor of love that takes weeks.

But it's something the Harwells don't mind. ■

The 'Deli' is open

bursting with infused sauces, balsamic & more

By R.J. Cohn

If you're becoming a little bored with the same French, ranch and blue cheese dressings on your salads, and the sauces lathered on your barbecue steaks and chickens aren't lighting up your taste buds anymore, give your palate a treat of a lifetime and see Alex Molina at the Sierra Vista Farmers Market on Thursday.

Molina's Bisbee Delicatessen that features more than an astounding 100 different varieties of Balsamic vinegar and olive oil-infused sauces – along with gourmet salsas, stuffed olives, margarita and martini mixes – will not only put some zing into your foods.

It'll most likely change the way you go about preparing dinner parties as well as your own favorite recipes.

From garlic cilantro steak sauce and prickly pear Balsamic hot sauce to mandarin orange dark Balsamic vinegar and Southwest chipotle grilling oil, Molina has enough colorful bottles of sauces and local honey infused with pecans and red hatch chilis – even a prickly pear anti-aging face oil – displayed on his table that it's almost dizzying taking everything in.

"We go a little crazy crushing and cooking peppers, pistachios and almonds from St. David, ghost and red hatch peppers, blueberries, dates and even chocolate and then infusing it into the finest quality of artisan Balsamic vinegar and extra-virgin olive oil imported from Modena, Italy," said Molina. "But what great flavors we're able to produce. We get really busy here. These sauces and vinegar blends really make a statement and liven up your food."

With a line of customers usually stacked six- to-eight deep buying several different varieties – sometimes before the market even opens – Molina's creations have landed a strong and loyal customer base.

In business for eight years, Molina once had a string of retail outlets in niche markets like Sedona, Tombstone, Bisbee, Tubak and Michigan before Covid shuttered them. Yet his production facility in Tubak, where a crew of about four produce some of the most tantalizing sauces and vinegar blends under the sun, is as busy as ever, keeping up with the demand of the company's website, farmers markets and stores he wholesales his products to.

"We use Italy's traditional dark style Balsamic vinegar as a base that we add natural ingredients to and come up with these great flavors," said Molina. "In Italy, they generally don't add anything to flavor Balsamics, but Americans love flavors, especially in Balsamic vinegar, which can taste a little sour if you're not used to it."

Ask Gwen Paladio – who can't get enough of guava Balsamic vinegar hot sauce and chipotle lemon pepper grilling olive oil – what it's like when her household runs out of the eight-ounce bottled sauces.

"Honestly, it's not a happy place," she said. "Food is just bland without it. Sometimes I find the kids putting churri Argentina steak sauce on bread like it's peanut butter. I almost have to hide it behind the tomato sauce on the top cupboard, that's how fast it'll go if I don't." ■





Sweet Arizona

collars
Cochise
County's
sweet spot

By R.J. Cohn

When it came to creating a market for Cochise County's collective sweet tooth, Debra and Roger Score had a feeling that toffee, peanut brittle and fudge might be a way to sweeten the area's taste buds.

And boy oh boy, did the Scores ever score with their remarkable Sweet Arizona candy company. Every Thursday since the very beginning of the Sierra Vista Farmers Market, the Scores celebrate selling out of more than five dozen varieties of their candy.

"Every week just about everything I bring here is gone before the day's over," said Roger Score, a U.S. Air Force veteran who fueled the Titan II intercontinental ballistic missile, a 9-megaton nuclear warhead considered the most powerful warhead ever fielded by the U.S. "It's been going this way for quite some time."

The Scores' small-scale, family-run business began 10 years ago.

But Sweet Arizona is more than just a little candy business that has filled a big demand with Cochise County shoppers. Weekly buyers can't get enough of their English toffee, hot habanero peanut brittle, and peanut butter/chocolate fudge – along with scores of nut-free, gluten-free and soy-free varieties.

Since they opened shop, the couple has been donating a huge chunk of their proceeds to local and national nonprofits like the Wounded Warrior Project, the Arizona Military Memorial Veterans' Cemetery in Marana and Project 25 – which helps find missing children.

This year, they've earmarked SoulSurvivorInk.com, a national nonprofit based in Phoenix helping human trafficking survivors find providers to cover, remove and lighten branding tattoos traffickers use as a way to show ownership.

"It's something we feel pretty committed about doing," said Score. "That's partly the reason we're doing this."

Despite the skyrocketing costs of ingredients for the production of candy like non-fructose corn syrup, butter, chocolate and nuts which have doubled in cost since 2020, Sweet Arizona has never raised the price of their candy.

Whether it's mouth-watering dark cherry chocolate fudge, sea salt peanut brittle, soy-free espresso toffee or to-die-for toasted coconut cashew brittle, customers are getting sweet treats and a bargain at \$5 for a 3-ounce pack or five for \$20.

But if you're waiting for the holiday season which is just around the corner, plan ahead if you want to purchase Sweet Arizona candies.

"Christmas is really big for us, absolutely huge," said Score. "People seem to come from everywhere, buying just about everything we have at the market and calling us with custom orders. It's a great thing to serve a community and the nonprofits that directly benefit from this." ■



It's 'bon appetit'

with Italian cuisine at Lasagna & More

By R.J. Cohn

If you have a hankering for a top-of-the-line Italian dinner but don't feel like buying a slew of ingredients, then prepping and cooking for more than an hour, you're in luck.

Chef Scotty's Lasagna & More – with an all-natural take-and-bake Italian menu featuring several varieties of lasagna, manicotti, marinara sauce and spices – has some of the tastiest Italian cuisine this side of Genoa.

A longtime vendor at the Sierra Vista Farmers Market – where a loyal fan base often lines up for Chef Scotty's four- and seven-pound frozen dinners before the market opens – Scott Bayer's Italian food business has been going strong for the last 15 years, selling to farmers market throughout the Tucson area, as well as Pinetop and Show Low.

Jesse Damitz, who works the market every Thursday hauling a trailer stocked with six freezers set at minus 15-degrees below zero, says business has always been solid in Sierra Vista and has grown

stronger over the years.

"We take the work out of prepping, cooking and going to a store to buy a lot of different things needed to make a quality Italian dinner," he said. "We have a large fan base for our products in Sierra Vista. Even though fall and winter are our busiest times because of the snowbirds, we were especially busy this summer because of the heat. No one really wants to have a hot oven going when it's over 90 degrees outside."

Instead, Chef Scotty – who operated Italian restaurants for more than 30 years in the Tucson area – brings an Italian restaurant to you. All you have to do is take it home and bake it.

You can even try a sample of Bolognese lasagna Damitz has warmed up on a hot plate.

Offering eight different varieties of lasagna ranging from bestseller two-meat lasagna, barbecue cowboy, plant-based sausage to a vegan/vegetarian version, lovers of Italian cuisine have a wide choice of take-home dinners. They run \$24 while a seven-pound family-size is \$36.

Then there's Chef Scotty's three different manicottis, along with pan-baked penne, Bolognese pastas and chicken Alfredo, which Damitz says doesn't stay in his freezers very long.

"People often say they haven't had manicotti in a long time, and the next thing I know my freezer is just about empty," he said. "We've sold out of manicotti many times here."

But the company has recently branched out from solely Italian cuisine. In the last three years, it added three-meat, chicken and Southwest meat burritos with potatoes and black beans, along with a vegan/vegetarian option. A frozen package of two runs \$12, and if you buy four, you get one free.

"Along with taking a break from cooking, the important thing about this is that Chef Scotty wanted to bring quality Italian food to as many people as possible when he began this business," said Damitz. "We want to make sure that everyone in Sierra Vista continues to enjoy our products as much as possible." ■



Hi-Yo Silver, it's the Hone Ranger!

Putting the edge on his Scott Fisher's stock-in-trade

By R.J. Cohn

Ever since he was a kid, Scott Fisher liked sharp edges.

Especially when he put them on the blades of knives, shears and any kind of cutting tool made of steel that became dulled.

At 72 — the guy locally known as the Hone Ranger — makes his living sharpening anything that cuts, from beautician shears, chisels and drills bits, to reel mowers and woodworking tools. Fisher puts a razor-sharp edge on things that slash, stab, slice, cut, chop, and cleave right before your eyes.

One of the most unique and specialized services at the Sierra Vista Farmers

Market — as well as other Cochise County farmers markets where he has operated his Hone Ranger Sharpening Service for five years — Fisher knows how to taper an exquisite edge on cutting implements that last.

Even on household scissors, which Fisher says he especially loves sharpening.

"There's just more to them, and I like getting every groove and crevice on those blades," he said.

Instead of a great Sabino stallion named Silver that the masked fictional Lone Ranger rode chasing outlaws, Fisher chases down his work out of a compact 2012 Ford Transit Connect van with a belt sander bolted to a workbench.

Whatever the season, the Hone Ranger

is busy putting on an edge.

"Like a lot of businesses, this one is cyclical," said Fisher. "It goes up and down, depending on the season. In the fall, I start getting busy sharpening a lot of hunting knives for hunters. When Thanksgiving and holidays roll in, it's all about carving utensils. In spring and summer, that's when I'm probably the busiest with pruning shears and gardening tools."

Sharpening tools is old school for Fisher. As far back as he can remember, he said had a special love for honing blades to a fine edge.

"My dad had a grinding stone when I was a boy, and I just really liked sharpening things on that stone," he said. "Just really had a thing for it. It's great that

I'm able to bring a service like this to venues like these farmers markets."

Randall McHenry, a Hone Ranger customer, can't say enough about Fisher's sharpening skills.

"Glad I found the guy," said McHenry. "Sharpened some old circular saws and saw chains that had been lying around an old shed for years, plus a bunch of tools I never thought would see a sharp edge again. Fella really knows what he's doing. You can throw just about anything at him, rusted or dull, and the guy gets it right as rain." ■



One of the last of the Red-hot glass

By R.J. Cohn

At 81, Sierra Vista resident Kemp Curtis is still turning glass into figurines and intricately molded flowers from a torch he made 60 years ago when he ran Walt Disney's booming glassblowing operation in 1964.

Once the groundbreaking visionary and wunderkind of the early American glassblowing movement, Curtis almost single-handedly changed glassmaking forever, turning it into an elevated art medium whose early innovations in color and creation are still used by artists throughout the world.

At 29, he was already considered a master in glassblowing and his works have been exhibited in galleries internationally. A documentary, 'Rainbows are Bad' by critically acclaimed filmmaker Stephen Fell, demonstrated Curtis' remarkable work.

One of the co-founders of American Borosilicate Glass Art, Kemp has lived and breathed art ever since he can remember.

The only income in his adult life Curtis has earned has come exclusively from glassblowing and pipe making.

If he hadn't been working at a Carnation Ice Cream parlor at Disneyland, Curtis might not have become the near-legendary glassblower he evolved into.

"I was scooping ice cream for Carnation, and the guy who taught me this was considered the best glassblower in America. He was personally recruited by Walt (Disney) to set up the glassblowing program for the Disney operation," said Curtis. "His son was also teaching me but went to Vietnam so I was asked to be his replacement."

It took Curtis two years to learn the basic technique of glassblowing, including "lacework," a lattice-like base for figures he now creates in minutes. Still in his early 20s, he developed a staff of 15 glassblowers who made sculptures for Disney stores, including one in the Disneyland Hotel. Each was grossing \$150,000 annually, which today is equivalent to \$1.5 million.

"There weren't more than 100 glassmakers in America that had much talent then," said Curtis. "I brought a more artistic element to it from an artistic background I grew up with. The glassmakers that were around were



ssblowers



mostly making souvenirs in carnivals. But in the '80s, it began to evolve into a real art medium with skilled artists, and I was one of the innovators behind that movement."

Curtis' talent didn't go unnoticed. He was offered an opportunity to move to Australia to establish a glassblowing operation at the Sydney Harbor. The Aussies fell in love with his work, embraced him like a national treasure. He set up glassmaking shops, taught glassblowing and was a regular on late-night TV shows for the next 26 years, while wholesaling his work to galleries around the world.

"I ushered in the start of a movement there, and it was big," he said. "It also became a big business for me, selling internationally the way I was doing. I also started using

colored glass, which became another groundbreaking movement in glassmaking that really took off. At Disney, we hand painted each figurine."

Most of the tools Curtis used then were ones he made himself since there weren't many tools for glassmakers in the '60s and '70s.

"There wasn't much of anything really except the designs I had in my head and the talent of my hands," he said. "I'm an old school glassblower, and I love glass because to me it's a magic medium. It takes total concentration. If you drift away, it can bite you. You can get burned. You can cut yourself. It's very hypnotic, and you can really get into it."

Curtis, who is deaf, is an artist of the highest caliber. He sees, feels and thinks art constantly. The walls of his house

“I brought a more artistic element to it from an artistic background I grew up with.”

are filled with paintings from Holocaust survivors and wood-carved sconces mounted in his hallways..

"When I'm on my torch, I can't really talk to anybody because I'm floating around in my head, and the design is going on in front of me and fire is dancing around the glass," he said Fell's documentary. "I can still hear when the temperature of the glass is right because the airflow going around the glass changes. It's a smooth flow."

Nearly 82, Curtis wears only tie dye shirts, laughs often, and though his hand shakes a bit, the guy is having the time of his life. When he talks about art, it's difficult to stop him.

How much longer does he think he can keep creating as a glassblower?

"Put it like this," he said. "I'm six months older than Keith Richards, and he's still drumming for the Stones. Glassblowing keeps me out of trivia parlors. I've lived the life of an artist for over 60 years, and I'll do this until I drop.

"I wouldn't have it any other way." ■

Casa de Esperanza offers a way toward substance abuse recovery

By R.J. Cohn

La Frontera-SEABHS (Southeastern Arizona Behavioral Health Services) has spearheaded a major undertaking to help break the battle of substance abuse in Cochise County.

So far, the community-based, nonprofit behavioral health center that provides a full range of mental health, substance abuse and psychiatric rehabilitation services is putting a dent into a problem that has shattered families and the lives of those suffering from addiction.

With the opening of Casa de Esperanza last July (2023) that has a 37-bed Level II behavioral health center equipped with a fully integrated, evidence-based treatment program promoting recovery from substance use disorders, the organization has signaled its commitment to helping those looking for a way out of addiction.

No other county in southeast Arizona offers such a comprehensive facility aimed at breaking substance-dependency and putting people on the road to recovery.

Located on the Southeastern Arizona Behavioral Health Services campus across from Cochise College, the 24/7-staffed facility provides individual therapy, relapse prevention programs and weekly counseling, among other programs, in the recovering process.

"It's a phenomenal program," says La Frontera's business development specialist Kathy Calabrese. "We're the only facility below Tucson in all southeastern Arizona that has something like this. It's quite the operation, which is why it's important to be part of an organization like La Frontera. We're reaching out constantly

to the county probation office, the courts, anywhere we feel people-in-need can be steered our way. We're here to help."

In mid-April, Calabrese said Casa De Esperanza had 25 patients in its non-mandatory 30-day outpatient treatment facility. If it's medically necessary, they can stay longer with approval by their insurance companies. Once completed, patients can opt toward choosing to spend another 30 days at the Inman House, determined in their discharge planning. The La Frontera-SEABS owned transitional living facility in Benson, a second step on the road to recovery.

"It's such a fantastic opportunity," said Calabrese. "They can learn how to manage their lives and learn more living skills. I look at it as Cochise County's first step to substance abuse recovery. Sometimes this clicks for them, and we don't see them again. Sometimes it doesn't, and they return."

The hope, of course, is once patients start the program that they will be rehabilitated and that they will have a better outcome for recovery and for a better life. La Frontera also operates outpatient clinics in Benson, Willcox, Douglas and Safford.

"We (SEABHS) found it advantageous to join the La Frontera umbrella and make Casa de Esperanza, which means

House of Hope, a reality for substance abuse," said Calabrese. (Calabrese)

Established in 1976 as a nonprofit community mental health center, SEABHS received an eight-year grant two years later from the National Institute of Mental Health to develop a community-based comprehensive network of mental health and substance abuse services for residents of Greenlee, Graham, Cochise and Santa Cruz counties. In 1984 it was awarded a contract by the Arizona Department of Health Services to serve as the Regional Behavioral Health Authority for the area.

Calabrese, like hundreds of specialists (people employed) in the behavioral health field, know how the toll of addiction has affected lives in Cochise County.

"In our community, fentanyl has become so prevalent now that it's frightening," she said. "It used to be amphetamines because they were so cheap. But now it's fentanyl, which is apparently cheaper. It's a horrible addiction. But we're here to do everything we can to help break it and give people a chance for a better life."

For more information, call Casa de Esperanza: 520-459-2290. ■





Club Ophelia

Empowering girls in their battle against bullying

By R.J. Cohn

The repercussions of bullying are staggering.

For elementary school-age girls, it can lead to a loss of self-esteem, isolation, self-harm, substance abuse and even suicide.

Despite an ongoing campaign to stop bullying, it's hardly put a dent in it. From rumors, name-calling, teasing, to public embarrassment, bullying of girls ages 7 to 12 is so damaging it can make them feel insignificant, shutting down their social development and harming their overall well-being.

Thanks to a nationwide, anti-bullying program for girls designed to empower them through mentoring relationships, Sierra Vista youngsters are finding a way to cope and move forward.

Started a year ago at Southeastern Arizona Behavioral Health Services (SEABHS), Club Ophelia is helping adolescent girls who have been exposed to bullying gain confidence and skills that enable them to believe in themselves and take charge of their lives.

"This is life-changing stuff, especially for children who don't have social connections," said clinical coordinator of SEABHS outpatient services Jennifer Adams, who has been involved with the program for more than half her life. "Watching someone go from being socially awkward to blossom into leading group sessions is awesome. Bullying can be brutal, so it's beautiful to see girls

develop new strengths and skills. That's why this is so transformational and powerful."

Founded by Dr. Cheryl Dellasega, a relational aggression expert and author of six books on issues arising in female-to-female relationships, Club Ophelia operates on a peer-led, art-based curriculum, taking bullied adolescent girls through an eight-week course that leads to an emotionally moving graduation ceremony at the SEAHBS office.

"When they come here, they look around and see others are in the same boat, and they're not alone," said Adams, who began mentoring girls when she was 12 after Dellasega noticed her leadership skills. "We create a safe place where they can be heard, challenged, create goals and go forward, something most have never experienced. They're acknowledged, connect in this place and realize their potential, many for the first time."

So far, 20 girls have gone through the two-month program with group sessions where they draw, paint, journal, create motivational boards, and write role-play scripts for the sessions based on events that have happened to them. Adams said several return because they find the support essential to their well-being. Some come back as mentors.

"Bullying will probably never disappear despite all the attention it's received," she said. "But at Club Ophelia, we create supportive and positive group sessions, where everyone is acknowledged as

'Miss.' What they learn here through positive role modeling, helping others and relationship-building makes a huge difference in their lives."

While some respond to the sessions immediately, Adams said others can take a little longer.

"Some say they've never had a friend, feel isolated and persecuted from being bullied, don't feel they fit in, and no one understands them," she said. "They come here and find someone who listens to them instead of attacking them. It takes a lot of work, but you see the promise of turning their lives in a more positive direction."

Even more life-changing are the graduation ceremonies, where the girls wear flower beads that they made and friendship bracelets with positive affirmations they created for each other.

"To see these children suddenly prideful of themselves is so empowering," said Adams. "They feel important, something they've never experienced."

The club also allows them to be confident in figuring out who they are.

"There's no judgments or negative talk here," said Adams. "They write their own expectations they want from the club. They're taking charge of their lives and each other's lives. When you get the right support, you become stronger like these girls have become."

If your daughter has been exposed to bullying, contact SEAHBS benefits to schedule an intake at 520-586-6940. ■

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.

MARCH 15

Shamrock Fun Run

Tompkins Park

Come and enjoy the San Pedro Kiwanis Shamrock Fun Run on Saturday, March 15, starting at Tompkins Park, 2060 S. Seventh Street, Sierra Vista at 9 a.m. Register Online by March 15th for a chance to win one of three Chrono-Max 3 Smartwatch provided by Debby DeRosa Preference Properties LLC. T-Shirts: Available in both women's, men's and children's sizes. Register online by March 1st for race day shirt after this date shirt may not be available race day but will be received after race day. Best Costume: People's Choice. Get into the spirit of St. Patrick's Day for a chance to win various prizes. Shamrock Hunt: Find painted rocks win prize for the Gold rock from our sponsors Online Registration: <https://KiwanisShamrock5K2025.eventbrite.com>. Hosted by Just Kids, Inc. and San Pedro Kiwanis. Proceeds will be used to support Service Leadership Programs. Make donations payable to Just Kids, Inc.

SIERRA VISTA

MARCH 31

Blanket Drive

The Northern Cochise Community Hospital blanket drive runs until March 31st, and we still need your help. It's cold out there and we still need donations of gently used blankets and electric blankets to help those less fortunate. There are drop-off bins in the lobby at each NCCCH location. This includes Northern Cochise Community Hospital, Sulphur Springs Medical Center, and the Sunsites clinic.

WILLCOX/COCHISE COUNTY

APRIL 2

Indigenous Art with Artist America Meredith

Amerind Museum

Join us for this free, public talk, at the Amerind in Tucson at the Tucson Museum of Art, 140 North Main Avenue, in Tucson, beginning at 7 p.m. Artist, curator, art critic, and editor of First American Art Magazine, America Meredith (Cherokee Nation) will present a public talk. Learn more about her art and her work as editor. America is currently holding a mid-career retrospective of her work at Amerind Museum.

TUCSON

APRIL 3, MAY 1

Free Infant and Adult Diapers

On April 3rd and May 1st Northern Cochise Community Hospital will work with the Arizona Diaper Bank at the San Simon Volunteer Fire District. This is held every San Simon Commodities Day and includes infant and adult diapers, free of charge (quantities depending). We also sometimes carry bed pads; period go kits and wipes for babies and

adults. Pick up is at 2249 W Firehouse Lane, San Simon, from 11 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Questions call (520) 766.6511.

SAN SIMON

APRIL 3,4,5

Annual Ann Boyd Wade Spring Show and Sale

Come out and enjoy the annual Ann Boyd Wade Spring Show and Sale at the Community Center, 312 W. Stewart Street, in Willcox. The Willcox Art League has been around since 1969. Its mission is to promote the arts in Willcox, and the surrounding community and this show highlights the spectrum of talent from Southeast Arizona. More information is available at www.willcoxartleague.com.

WILLCOX

APRIL 5

13th Annual Kars for Kids

Join us for the Kars for Kids car, truck, and motorcycle show on April 5, starting early and ending in the afternoon, rain or shine! Held at the C-A-L Ranch/Hobby Lobby parking lot at 673 AZ-90, in Sierra Vista. All years, makes and models welcome. Pre-register at www.bgcsvaz.org. Proceeds benefit the Boys & Girls Club of Sierra Vista and the Fraternal Order of Police, Lodge No. 28. Spectators are always free of charge!

SIERRA VISTA



UPCOMING EVENTS

APRIL 12

Cochise Crafters 2025 Events

Cochise Crafters has some exciting new events planned for this year. We will continue to host our craft and small business expos at the Mall at Sierra Vista on March 15th, July 19th, October 18th, November 15th, and December 6th. New this year will be an Education Fair on April 12th and a Veterans Resource Fair on September 13th. We are also tentatively looking to add two new events at a new location. Watch for these events on our website for October 4th and December 6th at the Rothery Center on Fry Blvd. For the latest updates check out our website at www.cochisecrafters.com or contact Arlette at (520) 678.4852.

SIERRA VISTA

APRIL 9, MAY 7

Diaper Bank Distribution

On, April 9th and May 7 Northern Cochise Community Hospital will work with the Arizona Diaper Bank in Willcox. This is always on the second Wednesday of every month and includes infant and adult diapers, free of charge (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 from 4 p.m. to 6 p.m. Questions call (520) 766.6511

WILLCOX

APRIL 13

Community Easter Concert Celebration

Come join in the celebration of Christ's resurrection! Choir practices are planned March 9, 16, 23, 30 and April 6. Feel free to join the choir by attending our practices, which start promptly at 6 p.m. The event, and the practices, are being hosted at 381 N. Pomerene Road. For more information, contact mwkjhk11@yahoo.com.

BENSON

APRIL 26

6th Annual Texas Canyon Mountain Bike Race

Amerind Museum

Join us for the annual Fun Ride with three routes to choose from. Bikers can participate in a 15.8-mile race, a 7.9 mile route, or a 7.9 mile fun run (non-competitive, with e-bikes welcome). To find out more visit www.amerind.org/events for more information.

BENSON

APRIL 30

SPRAC Scholarship

The San Pedro River Arts Council scholarship is available to seniors graduating in 2025 and studying for a career in the arts. Deadline for application is April 30, 2025. Intended recipient studies include the visual arts in many of the following career choices for the art industry. This year the scholarship is \$2,000. Studies include artist, art curator, graphic designer, illustrator, art teacher, photographer, animator cinematographer, textile designer, art director, and other professions. Students must be a legal resident of Arizona. The scholarship may be used for a university, community college, trade school, technical school, or as deemed appropriate by the scholarship committee. Please submit application packet to the San Pedro River Arts Council (SPRAC), P.O. Box 1358, Benson, Arizona 85602.

BENSON

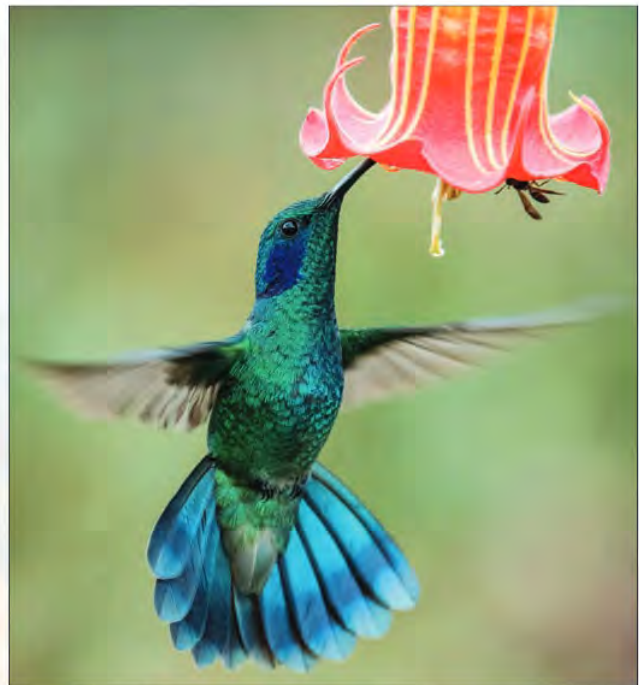
MAY 3

Evening Under the Stars

Chiricahua Astronomy Complex

The Tucson Amateur Astronomy Association (TAAA) will be hosting Evening Under the Stars, a free stargazing event on Saturday, May 3 at their Chiricahua Astronomy Complex in the Turkey Creek area in Pearce, AZ. The site will be open at 7 p.m. with activities starting at 7:30 p.m. Club telescopes will be available for viewing. As the sky darkens, we will observe Jupiter, Mars, and the Moon plus deep sky objects such as galaxies, star clusters and nebulae (gas clouds in space). Reservations are required by e-mail. Additional event details and directions to the site will then be sent to you. Please send your e-mail reservation request (including the number of persons in your party and the number of vehicles) to John Kalas: jckalas@cox.net.

PEARCE



MAY 6

Southwest Wings Spring Festival

If you would like to experience the wildlife wonders of this area, then join one of the Southwest Wings Spring Festival trips, led by local experts, which explore several of the Sky Islands and areas nearby. This year the spring festival runs from Tuesday May 6, 2025, when the pre-festival Jamboree takes place, until Saturday May 10, 2025. There are more than 30 full-day or half-day trips field trips, including several night outings to look for owls, moths and other nocturnal creatures and at least 200 bird species are usually seen over the four days of the festival. The full-day trips are in vans, setting out from Cochise College, Sierra Vista, with the shorter half-day trips in own cars. Registration for the field trips is open until April 1, 2025, and full details can be found on the Southwest Wings website www.sswings.org/spring-fling-2025.

SIERRA VISTA

MAY 17

12th Annual March for Mental Health

Put on your sneakers and join the fun supporting NAMI's 12th annual 3k March for Mental Health on Saturday, May 17th. This year's march will be held at the Rothery Education Center at 3305 E Fry Blvd in Sierra Vista. The event features food, fun and entertainment for the whole family! All proceeds stay in the local community and fund free mental health programs offered by your local NAMI. This exciting event kicks off at 8 a.m., with onsite registration beginning at 7 a.m. Walk as an individual or get a team together. You can preregister at myevent.com/marchformentalhealth, Call (520) 459.3228 for more info.

SIERRA VISTA

JULY 29

34th Annual Southwest Wings Summer Festival

The 34th annual Summer Festival will be held from Tuesday July 29 to August 2, 2025 and is Southwest Wings' main festival with all of the field trips plus a fabulous indoor event with lots of free talks and a wide selection of vendors and exhibitors, all held at the Mall at Sierra Vista. There is also a Keynote Dinner on Thursday July 31 with special speaker British author, birder and TV producer Stephen Moss. Full details can be found on the Southwest Wings website www.swwings.org/spring-fling-2025.

SIERRA VISTA



We welcome your calendar events!

For the **May / June 2025** edition, we have to receive the information by not later than **April 1, 2025**. The publication is due in mailboxes around **May 15, 2025**. Events should be dated to occur no earlier than **May 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.

Sierra Vista Symphony
celebrates season 30

Bach to Mozart

The Sierra Vista Symphony continues to celebrate its 30th Season with its final concert on April 12 at Klein Center for the Performing Arts (Buena High School) beginning at 7:00pm. A pre-concert lecture will be held at 6 p.m. We welcome the direction of Artistic Director and Conductor Maestro Toru Tagawa.

The April 12 concert will feature Dr. Theodore Buchholz from the University of Arizona on cello performing the Dvorak cello concerto. The orchestra will also perform Mozart's Symphony No. 40 and Beethoven's Overture to Fidelio.

Please also join us for the annual

Concert in the Park on June 12 at 6:30pm. This is a wonderful opportunity for community members to gather and enjoy a free concert at the Veteran's Memorial Park band shell. Bring your lawn chair and enjoy the beautiful sounds performed.

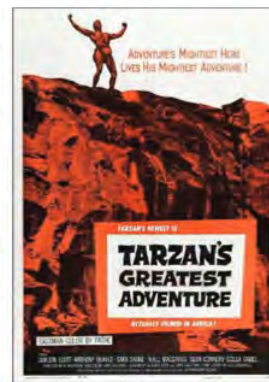
Keep watching for all the events offered by the Sierra Vista Symphony Orchestra and enjoy wonderful music. Maestro Tagawa incorporates a variety of music styles with the goal of pleasing everyone. Your support in person and

financially is greatly appreciated. For Membership information and other ways to support, contact the office or visit our website.

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. ■



WILCOX THEATER AND ARTS



ARTS & CRAFTS

Every second Saturday at 6pm you can amaze yourself by painting your own masterpiece at Paint Night. Upcoming dates are, March 8, April 12, May 10.

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.

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

April 10, 2025 - Christine Reid speaking on The History and Mystery of the Gila River

May 8, 2025 - Casey Dennis speaking on Archeology of Southeast Arizona

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.

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.

Suddenly (1954), Shows April 11, 1pm. In the city of Suddenly, three gangsters trap the Benson family in their own house, on top of a hill nearby the railroad station, with the intention of killing the president of the USA.

Tarzan's Greatest Adventure (1959), Shows May 9, 1pm. Four British villains raid a settlement to obtain explosives for use in a diamond mine. In doing so they nearly destroy the settlement, and so Tarzan pursues them to their mine.

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!

FILM FESTIVAL

Southern Arizona Independent Film Festival, April 11 & 12, 2025

Be sure to join us April 11th & 12th for a weekend full of films, fun and awards! See the best and brightest from students to indie directors! All and more for FREE!

*ENGINEERING & TECHNOLOGY INSTITUTE 2025 June 2-13, 2025

Students in ETI experience nine different disciplines, jobs and companies, complete with site visits, projects, and challenges. They learn about the careers and opportunities available in Engineering and Technology in our area.

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.

Le Cafe Cornucopia

Award-winning
cafe opens
in Sierra
Vista Public
Library

By R.J. Cohn

Since early May, the Sierra Vista Public Library has had more to offer than books and DVDs.

Bisbee's award-winning Le Cafe Cornucopia, renowned for its homemade quiches, soups, sandwiches and freshly baked desserts, has opened up in the approximately 125-square foot space that the Book Nook Cafe formerly occupied.

Last year, Le Cafe Cornucopia was touted as one of the top 10 eateries serving lunches in the world by Tripadvisor. The company operates online travel agencies, comparison shopping websites and mobile apps in 40 different countries, featuring about 1 billion reviews and opinions on roughly eight million establishments. Additionally, Le Cafe

Cornucopia has consistently been voted number one for best lunches in Bisbee in the

Review's annual "Best Of" periodical.

Cafe owner Gretchen Bonaduce couldn't be more excited about launching her new restaurant venture in Bisbee's sister city.

"We're so very happy to be here," said Bonaduce, who is also mounting a campaign in a bid to become the next mayor of Bisbee. "This has potential to become a popular and established cafe in Sierra Vista. The library has tremendous parking facilities, and there are so many more people here who are really looking for great, homemade food for lunch. It's something Cafe Cornucopia knows how to do extremely well."

Bonaduce is no stranger when it comes to turning projects into top-shelf ventures.

A successful author, actress, producer, singer and hotelier who was once married to Danny Bonaduce of the Partridge Family TV show for 18 years, she owns the 10,782-square foot Greenway Manor in Bisbee and rents seven of its rooms – each one decorated in the trappings of famous rock-n-roll stars, like Elvis, Johnny Cash and the Beatles – on Airbnb.

Staffed with three employees at the new cafe in the library, the eatery will have the same menu as Bisbee's Le Cafe Cornucopia, which features

homemade honey-wheat bread, gluten-free green chili- and broccoli-cheese quiches, butternut squash soups, her to-die-for meatloaf sandwiches on thick slabs of bread – along with others – and salads made from scratch.

The same breathtaking desserts that have made Le Cafe Cornucopia's customers utter an "oh wow" at the sight of them – big slices of homemade cheesecake, gluten-free chocolate cakes and oversized cookies – will also be in her Sierra Vista cafe, along with coffee and cappuccino.

And the baker?

He happens to be Bonaduce's son, Dante Bonaduce, who bakes for the Bisbee Cafe and doubles as a chef at Taqueria Outlaw, also in Bisbee.

"We're pretty excited to be able to bring

great food to Sierra Vista, and I think it will do well," said Bonaduce. "The city and the library have jumped through a lot of hoops to help get us here. They've been great. They want us here, and we want to be here as much as they want to have us. With the city hall complex and the Sierra Vista Police building just down the way from the library, I feel pretty blessed with the potential. It feels like a gift that came from God."

Le Cafe Cornucopia is open from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m., Monday through Friday. ■

Le Cafe Cornucopia owner Gretchen Bonaduce behind the kitchen of her new cafe in the Sierra Vista Public Library.



Villas is 'all-in' on B

By Dana Cole



When it comes to fun activities featuring guest appearances from a lineup of quirky characters, you can count on Anthony Villas to step up with a costume for nearly every occasion.

Villas selects creatures from a personal collection of 25 costumes and immerses himself into different personalities that delight youngsters at the Carmichael Branch of the Boys & Girls Clubs of Sierra Vista (BGCSV) where he is the Clubhouse Director.

“There’s a balance to being strict and having fun.”

— Anthony Villas

Whether a goofy dinosaur, giant chicken, quirky frog or the infamous Grinch himself, Villas portrays characters that contribute to memorable Club experiences for the kids he entertains.

A 14-year BGCSV employee, Villas, 33, says he derives personal satisfaction through his position as a leader and mentor by making a positive difference in the lives of young people. As a Club alumnus, Villas’ years with the Boys &

Girls Club extend to his childhood when he first arrived at the Boys & Girls Club of Bisbee as a 9-year-old. He was enrolled in the Bisbee School District from elementary through high school and was a member of the Bisbee Club until he left the program to participate in high school sports.

“So, I grew up in Bisbee, was raised in the Club, got my first job with the Bisbee Club as a staff member when I was a sophomore in high school, met my wife in the Club, and my kids come to the Sierra Vista Club,” said Villas, who has been Director of the Carmichael Branch from the time it opened in 2020. Prior to transitioning to the Carmichael site, Villas worked at the BGCSV Main Branch on Paseo San Luis where he was hired by its current CEO Jay Hamwright in 2010. Both men share a common bond as Club alumni and are good friends.

“Jay was my groomsman when I got

married, and I was his groomsman when he got married,” Villas said. “Working for a place that is driven by a mission you believe in and share with co-workers makes you feel connected to your job. And it makes you feel like you’re a vital part of the community,” he added. “I love putting kids on the path of where they need to be for successful lives, and I especially enjoy being their mentor.”

While in high school Villas competed in wrestling and weightlifting, sports he has passed onto Club kids through E-sport tournaments where they compete for WWE Championship Belts. Villas also helps organize soccer, basketball and flag football competitions for the Clubs’ members.

In addition to his fun side, Villas says he’s often viewed as “the Club tough guy,” the person enforcing rules. “There’s a balance to being strict and having fun,” he said. “I feel as though I’ve achieved



Boys and Girls Club

that balance, and I think the kids know what is expected of them.”

As the Carmichael Clubhouse Director, Villas oversees three employees, works with about 40 youth and organizes numerous activities that contribute to a creative environment that shapes young minds. He also can be found working on

3D printing projects at the Clubhouse.

Through his 14 years with the BGCSV, Villas has been honored as the Sierra Vista Club Coach of the Year, presented with a Boys & Girls Club state award as Keystone Advisor, and has been recognized as a 2023 Cochise County Most Influential award winner by Herald/Review Media.

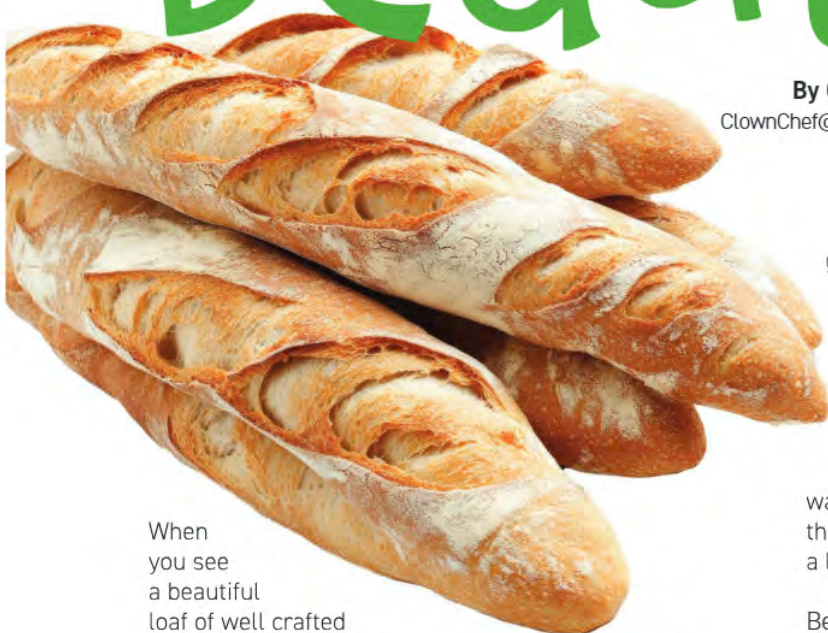
While he loves his work at the Club, Villas puts his family first. He and his wife, Tykea, have been together since 2012 and were married in 2019. They enjoy sports activities, hanging out with their three children, Taden, Karlie and Selena, and watching TV as a family. ■



BOYS & GIRLS CLUBS
OF SIERRA VISTA

A Beautiful loaf

By Chef Chris
ClownChef@Yahoo.com



When you see a beautiful loaf of well crafted bread are you like me and stand there staring at it longingly? Thinking, I can't possibly get through it by myself. Even if there are two of you it can be daunting to finish, but I have a few tricks up my sleeve to help you — even those who are watching their carbs.

Thanks to the pandemic, bread came back into favor as people remembered it's the staff of life. There are few things that compare to a crusty loaf with good butter, especially when parked next to a steaming bowl of hearty soup.

When I first bring home a fresh loaf I do tend to make a pot of soup, and if feeling energetic, will add a salad. At the moment, I'm on a mushroom soup kick and have found it almost as quick as my broccoli soup. With or without the salad, you feel pleasantly sated when there's good bread.

As a classically trained chef, and having visited France many times, I'm a sucker for a good baguette. They might be the most versatile of loaves out there in that they can be used in so many ways. After the initial breaking of bread, I will slice and toast the baguette for crostini (bruschetta), which last just about forever if well toasted. Secretly, a baguette sliced on a sharp bias makes

great French Toast with a bit more texture than softer breads. I call it "double French Toast" for fun.

The greatest trick, perhaps, is that bread freezes well... after you have at least some of it fresh, of course. I cut up a baguette into sandwich sized pieces and freeze. A favorite quick meal is then a (frozen) meatball sandwich on a baguette. Both are just quietly waiting in the freezer for the moment when I think, what the heck am I gonna eat? Bread defrosts very quickly, and a light toast brings back much of its former glory.

Because it has always been a staple every culture has plenty of recipes for using up bread, so when the bread calls to you, go for it!





HEARTY MUSHROOM SOUP

This doubles and triples nicely, but you won't need 3 onions. For added body, you can add a little cooked rice after you puree the soup. Sour cream, heavy cream, or even a splash of half & half will work. 2 servings

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1 medium onion, chopped | 2-3 sprigs thyme, leaves only |
| 1 stalk celery, thinly sliced | 4 cups vegetable broth |
| 2 cloves garlic, chopped | 1-2 tsp dijon mustard |
| 1 pound baby bella mushrooms, sliced | 2-3 Tbsp. sour cream |
| Healthy splash sherry, optional | Butter or olive oil |
| | Flat leaf parsley, chopped |

Heat a soup pot over medium-high. Add a little oil to the pan, then add onion and let brown. Add celery and let cook another minute, then add garlic and cook 30 seconds.

Add the mushrooms and season with salt. Let cook about 3 minutes, then remove about ½ cup and reserve. Add sherry and stir up any brown bits from the bottom of the pan. Throw in the thyme, broth and dijon mustard, then bring to a boil, reduce heat and let simmer about 5 minutes.

Taste and adjust seasoning. When yummy, puree soup until smooth with an immersion blender (or carefully in a regular blender). Add reserved mushrooms and let cook another 2 minutes. Add cream and taste again, then ladle into bowls and top with butter and parsley.



LEMONY WHITE BEAN BRUSCHETTA

I prefer to make this with beans I cook myself, but canned are fine. Just give them a little rinse and pat dry. You can chop the garlic and herbs by hand and then mash everything in a bowl if pulling out the food processor feels like a chore.

- 1 cup white beans
- 1 clove of garlic, coarsely chopped
- Juice and zest of 1 lemon
- Flat leaf parsley, several sprigs
- 1-2 Tbsp. olive oil
- 2 Tbsp. chopped roasted red peppers

Reserve a few beans and some zest, then combine everything but the red peppers in a food processor and blam until smooth. Season with salt, then taste. Add in the reserved beans. Can be made the day before, and the flavor will deepen overnight. Serve with a piece of red pepper, a little lemon zest, freshly cracked pepper, and more parsley. Serve on toasted baguette rounds.



BURRATA ON TOAST

The yummiest thing you may not yet know about is appearing on menus everywhere. If you're a foodie on social media, you may have seen a lot of "Burrata" out there recently. Although it may not be saturating Southeast AZ yet, keep an eye out and start asking for it at Fry's and the co-op, and if out in Tucson you may strike gold.

I was a bit churlish about this cheese from the Puglia region of Italy when I could see that it was the new darling of the food fads – I've been through so many over the years. Then I broke down and had some. Oh my goodness! This cousin to fresh mozzarella has a semi solid casing, like mozzarella, but the inside is a wondrous creamy cross between smoother cottage cheese and clotted cream. On a piece of good toasted bread it's officially a real treat. I will apologize in advance if I give you a new favorite thing.



**Sulphur Springs Valley
Electric Cooperative, Inc.**

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative

OWNED BY THOSE WE SERVE

OFFICIAL NOTICE OF THE

87th Annual Meeting

May 29, 2025 | 7:00 p.m.

Safety Trailer Demonstration 5:30 p.m. | Registration 6 p.m.

The 87TH ANNUAL MEETING of Sulphur Springs Valley Electric Cooperative, Inc., will be held at the Buena High School at 5225 E Buena School Blvd. Sierra Vista, AZ, on Thursday, MAY 29, 2025, beginning at 7 p.m. for the general business meeting.

The purpose of the annual meeting is to consider and act on reports of business that may come before the membership. Registration for the meeting will begin at 6 p.m.

To accomplish this, the following agenda is announced:

- Call to Order
- Report on quorum
- Reading of the annual meeting notice and proof of its mailing
- Reading of unapproved minutes of last year's meeting and action thereon
- Report of director election results
- Report of Board President
- Report of Chief Executive Officer
- Adjourn

Come engage in your cooperative!

Door prizes available. Refreshments provided.

Buena High School | 5225 E Buena School Blvd. | Sierra Vista, AZ