

SSVEC

Currents

LOCAL STORIES ABOUT LOCAL COMMUNITIES

MARCH | APRIL 2026



**On with
the show**
Willcox heritage
center opens

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Southwest of
Center

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SSVEC Currents

MARCH | APRIL 2026
Volume 5, No. 2

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ON THE COVER

Pictured on the cover, from the left, Wesley Schofield, Creative Services Director, Willcox Theater and Arts; Gayle Berry, Executive Director, Willcox Theater and Arts; Greg Hancock, Mayor, City of Willcox; and Eddie Browning, President, Willcox Theater and Arts representing Board of Directors. The group toured the newly-opened Willcox Center of Arts and Heritage prior to the grand opening celebrated February 27, 2026.



Jason Bowling, CEO
Sulphur Springs Valley
Electric Cooperative

*Jason Bowling is
the Chief Executive
Officer at Sulphur
Springs Valley Electric
Cooperative (SSVEC).
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Safe, reliable, and affordable:

Spring work with purpose

Spring in Southern Arizona comes with a familiar mix of sunshine, wind, and the start of higher wildfire risk. It is also one of the most productive windows we have to get important work done before summer demand and monsoon weather arrive. At SSVEC, we stay focused on our mission: keeping service safe, reliable, and affordable.

Safe comes first. This season is prime time for digging, fencing, irrigation work, and home projects. Please call 811 before you dig, even for smaller jobs. Striking a buried line can cause serious injury and extended outages. If you see a downed power line, stay far away and call 911 and SSVEC right away.

For ongoing updates and practical safety reminders, follow SSVEC on social media. You will see regular tips from our safety manager, "Safety Matt," plus timely notices when weather or field work creates hazards.

Reliable service is built in the off-season. This is when our crews tackle maintenance that prevents problems later. You may see us working on protective equipment out on the lines, the devices that automatically isolate trouble spots and help keep outages smaller when something goes wrong. We are also continuing targeted inspections and system upgrades across our territory, along with vegetation management in key areas to help reduce outages and lower fire risk.

Affordability takes discipline and planning. Rates changed for usage beginning in January, the first base rate adjustment in about ten years. We know any increase matters, and we do not take it lightly. Looking ahead, we expect SSVEC to move toward a more regular cadence of smaller adjustments over time. That approach helps avoid long gaps followed by larger, more disruptive changes.

There is also some good news on costs we do not control. Your board approved setting our Purchased Power and Fuel Cost Adjuster, a pass-through line item tied to power supply and fuel costs, to zero. That reduces what members pay through that specific adjustment at this time.

Finally, SSVEC was recently awarded a state grant to support wildfire mitigation projects. That funding helps us strengthen the system and reduce risk while easing the financial burden on members.

Thank you for the trust you place in our team. You will see more SSVEC crews and contractors in the field this spring. Please slow down in work zones and give them room. The work is happening with your safety, reliability, and affordability in mind.

Sincerely,
Jason Bowling, CEO, SSVEC

ADOBE STOCK IMAGE BY JULIA



SSVEC Foundation Grants

Grant awards for education entities within the SSVEC service territory were recently announced by Kristin Gray, Community Relations Manager at SSVEC.

The awards are presented by the Sulphur Springs Valley Electric Cooperative Foundation, a nonprofit organization that generates its revenue from unclaimed member equity funds and community

donations. The Foundation is governed by the SSVEC Board of Directors and does not collect any revenue from member electric bills.

Representatives from several of the organizations that received education entity grants recently gathered at the SSVEC Sierra Vista business office.



Pictured below, from the left, are Carmichael Elementary School Assistant Principal John Skarhus; Sierra Vista Unified School District Superintendent Terri Romo; Buena High School Principal Nichole Young; Buena High School Automotive Tech instructor Alex Wolf; Buena High School Assistant Principal Cole Colvin; Buena High School Chemistry Instructor Janica Hontanar; Elgin Schools Principal and Superintendent Dan Erickson; Elgin Schools Business Manager Heidi Gonzales; and Carmichael Elementary School Principal Elizabeth Jimenez.



Pictured, from left to right in the photo above are Kate Holcomb, CANTER Secretary; Joe Farmer, CANTER Vice President; Gail Farmer, CANTER President; Stephanie Lord, Lisa Thurber, and Kandi Zimple of the SKILLS Academy; Michael Smith, President of the SKILLS Academy Parent Teacher Organization; and Judy Murry, representing the Tombstone Art Department.

Three potential elections for **SSVEC Board of Directors**

Three seats on the Sulphur Springs Valley Electric Cooperative (SSVEC) Board of Directors will be up for election in 2026. A board member serves a three-year term. An election is held, when a seat is contested, every year for the board members whose terms are expiring. This year, Districts 3, 4 and 11 — with seats representing the Elfrida, Patagonia and Sierra Vista areas — may be subject to an election.

Incumbent board members include John Shaver, representing District 3, Tom Goodman, representing District 4, and Randy Redmond, representing District 11. A map with the boundaries of each district is available on the website ssvec.org, go to the “About” menu, use the “Board of Directors” tab, and click on “Board District Changes” in the left column.

No election is held if a board seat is uncontested. If more than one candidate seeks election to the board in any of the three (3) districts, members in that contested district will choose to vote electronically or receive a ballot through the mail to decide their representative. In a contested election, each member is entitled to one vote in the district in which the

member resides. Married members must cast a single vote. A business member, whether sole proprietor, corporation, association, partnership, LLC or other business entity, votes in the district they designated when they became a member of SSVEC.

Members may vote electronically or by paper ballot. Paper ballots will be mailed on or about April 27, 2026, and electronic voting will open on April 27, 2026.

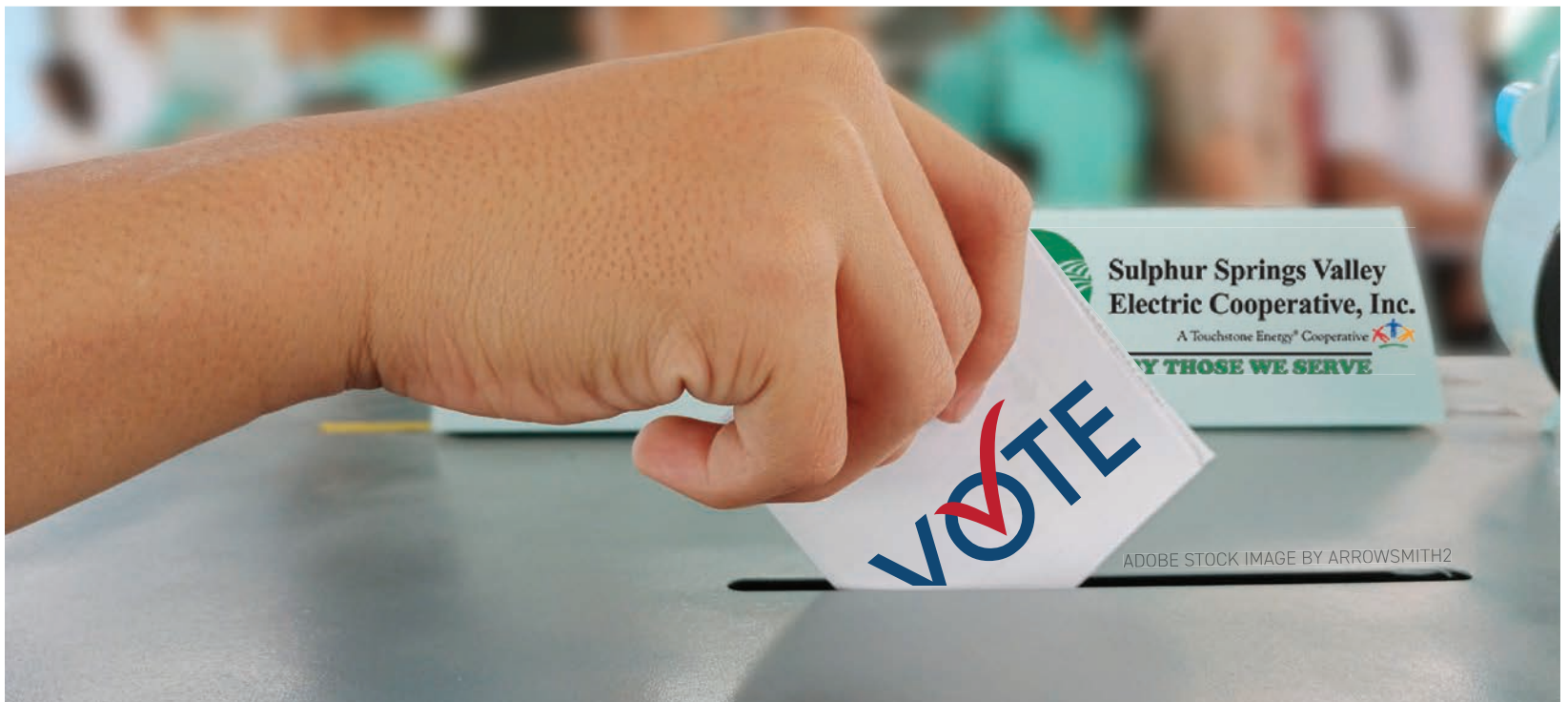
Members are reminded that they can only vote once, so if you vote electronically, please disregard the paper ballot. SSVEC invites members in Districts 3, 4, and 11 to run for the Board of Directors in 2026. Serving on the SSVEC Board of Directors is an important and rewarding task. SSVEC encourages members residing in those districts to seriously consider being a candidate. The Board of Directors has appointed a nominating committee consisting of your neighbors to accept applications and to interview possible candidates for the board. The nominating committee reviews the applicants and nominates qualified people to run in the election. Application packets to run for the board will be available on SSVEC’s website,

ssvec.org, and at SSVEC business offices beginning February 12, 2026.

If you are not nominated by the committee, you can still run for the board by obtaining a Nomination Petition and getting the signatures of 50 members residing in your district and submitting the petition by the filing deadline on April 13, 2026. Nominating petitions are available at SSVEC offices throughout the service area or online at SSVEC’s website.

All qualified candidates, whether nominated by committee or by petition, appear on the ballot. A Credentials and Election Committee will certify the votes the day prior to the annual meeting, May 27, 2026. The results of contested elections are announced at the Annual Meeting. Members are welcome to view the certification of the vote.

The candidate receiving the highest number of votes shall be declared the officially elected director of the district. Should two or more candidates tie in the largest number of votes received for an available term of director from a district, the tie shall be resolved by the method as determined by the Credentials and Election Committee.



Don't Become Electricity's **PATH TO GROUND**



When electric utility equipment becomes damaged, **the ground and objects can become energized.**

If you are in a situation where there could be downed power lines or a damaged pole, guy wire or padmount transformer (green box), **know what to do to save your life and the lives of others:**

CAR ACCIDENT

Stay inside your vehicle or cab since the ground or objects could be energized.



Call 9-1-1 and report that there are downed or damaged power lines or a dislodged green box.

Wait for the utility crew to arrive to deenergize the power.

Do not exit until someone from the utility says it is safe to do so.

ONLY EXIT IF THE VEHICLE IS ON FIRE

Cross your arms over your chest and **make a clean jump out.**

Do not touch the vehicle and the ground at the same time.

Make solid hops with your **feet together** as far away as you can.

Do not return to the vehicle.



IF YOU ARE A BYSTANDER

Do not approach the scene to try and help.

Stay at least 50 feet away and do not lean on or touch anything, including fences or guardrails.



Learn more at:

**Safe
Electricity.org®**

Multiple Town Hall meetings planned

For the first time in its 88-year history, the Sulphur Springs Valley Electric Cooperative (SSVEC) will host multiple meetings for members throughout the service territory, in addition to its annual meeting in Benson on May 28.

"It's an opportunity for people to stay closer to home and still find out what's happening with their Cooperative," said SSVEC Vice President of Member Engagement Cory East. "We're also bringing back the raffle for a pick-up truck, so if you register as a member at one of these meetings, you could be the winner!"

Member "Town Hall" meetings begin May 11 in Sierra Vista at the Ethel Berger Center, behind City Hall, at 2980 E. Tacoma Street.

Meetings continue May 14 at the Elfrida Community Center, May 18 at the Willcox Heritage Center, May 21 at Cady Hall in Patagonia, and conclude May 28, with the 88th Annual Meeting, held at the Benson schools campus.

All the meetings will be called to order at 7 p.m.



Pictured with the students are SSVEC workers Ryan Edsall (left) and Luis Montano (right).

Safety trailer demo

SSVEC Linemen offered safety insights and tips to students at Veritas Christian Community School in Sierra Vista on January 21, 2026. The school hosted energy week and SSVEC brought its Safety Demonstration Trailer to show students the importance of staying safe around electricity. SSVEC was represented by six employees at the demonstration, including Luis Montano, Foreman; Pablo Felix, Journeyman Lineman; Sawyer McDonald, Fourth-Year Apprentice; Ryan Edsall, Pre-Apprentice; and Sierra Vista Operations Manager Mark Roll.

Benson Elementary School

Kind Cats Program

The Sulphur Springs Valley Electric Cooperative (SSVEC) Foundation recently presented a donation to the Benson Elementary School Kind Cats program. Kind Cats is an afterschool, service-learning initiative for young students, focusing on fostering empathy, compassion, and community service. It teaches values like respect, responsibility, and kindness through weekly lessons and projects, aiming to develop future leaders and create a positive impact in the Benson community.

Those pictured include (from the left): Daniel Wilson, Senior Vice President of Member and Corporate Services at SSVEC; Melissa Newton, Dean of Students, Benson Primary School, Jomel Jansson, Principal Benson Primary School, and Jason Bowling, Chief Executive Officer at SSVEC.



Board member award

SSVEC Board Vice President Dan Barrera (right) was honored at the January 28 meeting of the directors in Willcox. Board President Randy Redmond (right) presented Barrera with a pin recognizing his 25 years of service on the board.



Resolution honors



SSVEC board tour

The SSVEC Board of Directors and leadership toured the newly-completed Willcox Center of Heritage and Arts during a break from its January 28 meeting in Willcox. The facility, which held a grand opening February 27, features a multipurpose auditorium, space for community and school arts and crafts classes, and an interactive history and heritage center.



Dave Lock (left), retiring Executive Director at the Grand Canyon State Electric Cooperative Association (GCSECA), and Jason Bowling, Chief Executive Officer at SSVEC, were honored at the January 28, 2026, SSVEC Board of Directors meeting for their work in getting a resolution adopted by the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA). The resolution, approved at the NRECA annual meeting, reaffirms the national organization's focus on rural communities. Mr. Lock and Mr. Bowling were recognized for their leadership and contributions to the successful passage of the resolution.



Sam Bell, Chief of Facilities and acting Superintendent of Chiricahua National Monument, Fort Bowie and the Coronado National Memorial; Katie Hostetler, acting Chief of Interpretation and Visitor Services for the Chiricahua National Monument, Fort Bowie and the Coronado National Memorial; Berni Valenzuela, Facilities Assistant; and Michelle Wu, Monument intern and volunteer coordinator, are just a part of the team who work at the parks.

Volunteer for remarkable landscapes and breathtaking vistas!

By Shar Porier

Volunteering at the Chiricahua National Monument offers more than fresh air and sweeping views. It's a chance to help the National Park Service preserve one of Cochise County's most remarkable landscapes.

With staffing reduced, the Monument relies heavily on volunteers to help care for its 12,025 acres of dramatic rock pinnacles, winding trails and diverse wildlife habitat within the greater Chiricahua Mountains — Arizona's largest Sky Island range. More than 62,000 visitors pass through each year, sometimes 500 a day, even on weekdays.

Ranger Katie Hostetler, whose background in history and archaeology brought her west after years in Pennsylvania, sees the area as a living classroom. From Native American heritage to the craftsmanship of the Civilian Conservation Corps, the Monument tells layered stories of the American Southwest.

Hostetler also supports nearby Fort Bowie National Historic Site and Coronado National Memorial, encouraging visitors to explore all three parks. She believes volunteers are essential to strengthening that connection.

Help is especially needed from January through April, when birders flock to the region. Volunteers greet guests, guide hikes, assist with preventive search and rescue efforts, maintain



Ranger Katie Hostetler points out one of the peaks on the new and much larger topographical map of the Chiricahua National Monument to a frequent visitor from Oro Valley, Larry Morrison.

trails, scan archival materials, and build community awareness. Retired teachers, photographers and resident artists can also lend their talents — documenting visitors' experiences, leading student tours or even spending time in the park creating work inspired by the landscape.

Recognized as an International Dark Sky destination, the Monument also hosts evening stargazing programs where amateur astronomers share views of the Milky Way and distant galaxies.

"Be a steward of our Sky Islands," Hostetler urges. "This isn't just a tourist stop. It's a community treasure." ■

To learn more, visit nps.gov/chir or call 520-824-3560 to volunteer.

Dirty Hands Clean Work

By Robert Cohn

Bryce Smylie's passion for automobiles was forged early, tinkering with V-8 muscle cars and rotary engines alongside his older brothers in the family garage in Sierra Vista. Fifteen years later, that hands-on curiosity has become a thriving business built on skill, hustle and community trust.

A 2017 Buena High School graduate, Smylie excelled in Alex Wolff's CTE automotive program before earning an associate's degree in automotive technology from Universal Technical Institute with a 4.0 GPA. Today, the 26-year-old ASC-certified mechanic is the owner of Dirty Hands Clean Work, a mobile auto repair service that brings professional repairs directly to customers' homes and workplaces.

In less than a year, Smylie has generated more than \$100,000 in gross revenue and served over 250 clients from Sierra Vista to Tucson. His services range from oil changes and brake work to alternator repairs and full engine rebuilds—often completed in as little as one to three days, far faster and less expensive than traditional shops.

"For me, it's about helping people," Smylie said. "I like the one-on-one relationships and knowing I'm making a positive difference."



Ranger Katie Hostetler points out one of the peaks on the new and much larger topographical map of the Chiricahua National Monument to a frequent visitor from Oro Valley, Larry Morrison.

After years working in dealerships and repair chains, Smylie began helping neighbors and stranded motorists, letting word of mouth do the rest. Demand quickly followed.

Looking ahead, Smylie plans to expand his operation in Cochise County, adding employees and making mobile auto repair even more convenient. "People don't want to waste hours at a dealership," he said. "I want to make car care simple." ■

Call 520-366-7104 or email dirtyhandsllc23@gmail.com for more information.



Owner and operator Bryce Smylie poses proudly with his Toyota T100 that carries all his tools to keep the whole operation running.
PHOTO BY MONIQUE VARGAS

Familiar faces, NEW TECHNOLOGY

By Larry Scott

I've always appreciated a good story — well written and thoughtfully designed. The printed page still matters, but it no longer stands alone. Today, CURRENTS shares attention with a new website and other digital platforms that, for some of us, take a bit of adjustment. Change, however, has a way of opening new doors.

One medium that has caught my attention is the podcast: a structured series of audio (and sometimes video) conversations, often built around interviews and in-depth storytelling. Podcasts may be listened to while driving or working around the house, and they tend to go deeper than what traditional media can manage in limited space or time.

That brings us to a familiar face using new technology.

Geoff Oldfather is a third-generation Arizona native who grew up on a family farm in St. David. A University of Arizona journalism graduate, he spent three decades as an award-winning journalist—anchoring television news, writing as a senior correspondent and political columnist, and even hosting a talk radio show.

In 2009, he returned home to serve as Marketing, Communications, and Public Relations Director at Arizona G&T Cooperatives and the Arizona Electric Power Cooperative.

Now retired, Oldfather has launched a Benson-based podcast, Southwest of Center, aimed at covering economic development, politics, and the interesting people who call southeast Arizona home. With local media outlets shrinking, he hopes to help fill an information gap — and early listener response suggests he's on the right track.

One recent episode featured Mark Sankey, Director of Media and Marketing for Mescal Movie Set. Sankey tells the remarkable story of how community members rallied to save the iconic western movie set — featured in classics like *Tombstone* — from demolition. After six years of volunteer-driven restoration, Mescal Movie Set is back.

It's a story worth hearing, told in a modern way, by people who know the value of preserving the past while embracing what comes next. ■





Youth program presents ambitious plans

By Robert Cohn

What began a decade ago as a modest weekend camp for girls — held in the parking lot of a beauty salon — has grown into one of Arizona's most ambitious and empowering youth programs. Today, Black Women in Progress (BWIP) Confidence Camps serve girls year-round, drawing participants from across the country and charting a bold course for the future.

That future includes plans for Hotel Seville, a proposed \$70 million, 100-room hotel and conference center to be built on 170 acres near the Bisbee Municipal Airport. If funding and approvals align, construction would begin in 2028, with doors opening in 2030. The hotel, named for founder Acacia Barnett's great-grandfather, is designed to generate long-term revenue to sustain BWIP's camps for girls of all races.

“This is a major undertaking, and we’re working with architects, hospitality experts and applying for million-dollar grants,” said Barnett, who knows she’ll need a planning and zoning recommendation, and a public comment period before it goes to Bisbee City Council for final approval. “This is going to be a tremendous project.”

Envisioned in an Arizona-Spanish revival-modern style, the hotel would also serve as a summer confidence camp, complete with a STEM lab and a large convention center — meeting a long-standing need for Bisbee while creating significant economic impact.

A Sierra Vista native and Buena High School graduate, Barnett leads BWIP while also directing Cochise College's Small Business Development Center. She holds graduate degrees in architecture and construction management, skills now shaping the organization's next chapter. BWIP was founded in 1970 by Barnett's grandmother, Hattie Barnett, and other Black women at Fort Huachuca to promote cultural education—a legacy Barnett continues through the camps.

BWIP's growth has been fueled largely by grants, including support from the NBA, Freeport-McMoRan, and other national foundations. In 2022, Barnett received the Phoenix Suns' Golden Standard Award for her leadership.

From life skills and STEM to sports and self-esteem, BWIP Confidence Camps continue to change lives. “We’re doing good work here,” Barnett said. “Now we’re building something that will carry it forward for generations.” ■

Restoring balance in Ramsey Canyon

By Larry Scott

It's a busy, noisy scene along the road in Ramsey Canyon. Chain saws hum as crew members trim low branches from towering trees. Others gather the cut limbs, stacking larger pieces for firewood while smaller material feed the chipper. The resulting mulch is spread across the forest floor, where it will enrich the soil without impeding the growth of native grasses.

From October 2022 through March 2025, the Fry Fire District's seasonal fuel reduction crew, working alongside a private contractor, reduced hazardous fuels on nearly 200 acres of private property in the Ramsey Canyon Firewise Community and the wildland-urban interface along the eastern edge of the Huachuca Mountains south of Sierra Vista. The work complements ongoing fuel

reduction efforts on Fort Huachuca and within the Coronado National Forest.

When the dust settles, the land is noticeably more open—and more beautiful—but the mission extends far beyond aesthetics. While some landowners were initially hesitant, they now welcome the crews and the work being done.

"In a fire, open areas burn with flames about six feet high," explains Fry Fire Chief Mark Savage. "The trees survive — and thrive. But when trees are packed too closely together, flames can reach 30 feet, killing trees with intense heat. We can manage six-foot flames. Once the trees go, it becomes nearly unstoppable."

A century ago, naturally occurring lightning fires kept forests open and fuels in balance. Today's effort aims to restore that balance by reducing "ladder fuels,"

increasing canopy spacing, and removing dead-and-down material — especially where dense vegetation meets homes.

Funded by the Arizona Department of Forestry and Fire Management (DFFM), the project reflects unprecedented collaboration among DFFM, Fry Fire District, The Nature Conservancy, private contractors, and local landowners. The results are tangible: improved safety and defensibility for homes throughout Ramsey Canyon, Carr Canyon, and the eastern slopes of the Huachuca Mountains.

The project is ahead of schedule, under budget, and widely praised. "I sleep better at night," Savage says, "knowing that when the next wildland fire comes, our firefighters, residents, and visitors are better protected." ■



Men with a mission! Left to right: Gary Strouse, Sergio Velasquez, Andrew Clay, Jace Johnson and James Flores (Not pictured - Clay Franklin).



LEFT: Jacob Chapman, a SEACOM Dispatcher 1 and Certified Trainer Officer.

BELOW: Tammi-Jo Wilkins, Executive Director at the SEACOM center in Sierra Vista.



SEACOM saves lives

By Larry Scott

Walking into the Southeast Arizona Communications (SEACOM) Regional 911 Center in Sierra Vista feels like stepping into the nerve center of public safety. Dark walls frame a large operations room lined with ten dispatcher stations, each equipped with multiple oversized screens. It is impressive — and purposeful.

“When I came on board a few years ago, I thought my background as a dispatcher had prepared me,” said Executive Director Tammi-Jo Wilkins. “I quickly realized how much more there was to learn. The pace of technology has been incredible.”

When a 911 call comes in, operators instantly see aerial imagery pinpointing the caller’s location, whether in a neighborhood or a remote rural area. As basic questions are asked — location, nature of the emergency, immediate dangers — the conversation is captured, transcribed, and shared in real time with responding units.

But SEACOM’s work goes far beyond dispatching help.

In critical situations where seconds matter, dispatchers stay on the line, guiding callers through lifesaving actions such as

CPR, stopping severe bleeding, or even delivering a baby. That real-time coaching continues until responders arrive, effectively shrinking the gap between call and care.

Fry Fire Chief Mark Savage calls the system a “game changer,” noting that responders now arrive better informed, with updated details on medical conditions, fire behavior, terrain, or suspect activity already in hand.

The backbone of this system is a set of internationally proven, on-screen protocols — more than 150 standardized checklists covering medical, fire, and law enforcement emergencies. Dispatcher training is rigorous, but the results are undeniable.

SEACOM now coordinates search and rescue, supports hazardous materials incidents, and will soon provide after-hours dispatch support for Fort Huachuca and backup services for Arizona DPS.

In a job that may handle up to 1,000 calls a day, the work is intense — but profoundly rewarding. ■

Setting the gold standard for *Customer* *service*

By R.J. Cohn

Sometimes when you're good, you're just plain good.

But when it comes to customer service, Sierra Vista Culver's "just plain good" is not just good.



It's off-the-charts good.

That's a big reason why the family-friendly restaurant on State Route 92, known for its ButterBurgers and frozen custard, has won scores of national awards – including placing in the top five of the Culver's Crew Challenge eight times since it opened in 2015.

It's also why owners Kevin and Sandy Adams and the crew of 87 employees have built one of the most loyal, repeat customer bases in all of Cochise County, one that puts Culver's in a league of its own, along with a parking lot that's rarely empty.

That's why Currents is recognizing the entire Culver's team for setting the gold standard when it comes to customer service in an era when the American Customer Service Satisfaction Index says the level of customer service

satisfaction has suffered the largest decline in 30 years.

From frontline order takers to cleaning crews, Culver's employees consistently bring top-shelf service with smiles and sincere friendliness from 10:30 a.m. to 10 p.m. seven days a week.

"We know we have a high standard to maintain, and that's what drives us toward excellence," said general manager/part-owner Riley Adams. "We never let go of that focus. It's how I was trained and how our crew feels about what they do here. Our customers are our priority, and we try to treat them like family every time they walk through the door."

By company standards, Culver's has been a model franchise, repeatedly in the national Crew Challenge picture year after year and has stamped a lasting impression on the community. It has been involved with agencies throughout the city, sponsoring programs and events from the Sierra Vista Police Department, the Cochise County Sheriff's Office, local schools and youth organizations.

"We're fortunate to have such a great crew who come each day with positive attitudes and want to go that extra mile for our customers," said Adams. "When you have a team that truly cares about the people they serve, it doesn't get much better than that."

That's part of the reason the Adams' distributes financial winnings among its crew whenever Culver wins a piece of the company's franchise competition.

"Do we have high expectations here?" Sandy Adams told me several years ago after winning the prestigious GW Culver Award for the second time as the top franchise of more than 900 Culver's stores. "We sure do, and our crew goes out and meets them every day. They're a huge part of our success. They work with us, not for us. We take care of them, and they take care of us. It's like one big family that pulls together all the time." ■

REMEMBER

Auschwitz survivor still remembers its horrors

By Robert Cohn

When Helga Melmed's number was called at Auschwitz, the trembling 16-year-old was stripped, her head shaved, and her dignity taken in front of Nazi guards at the infamous death camp.

"The humiliation was mortifying," said Melmed, now 98, who recently held a packed audience in Sierra Vista spellbound with her testimony of survival. "You never knew when they would march you to the gas chambers. There was nothing you could do."

Melmed had been transported in cattle cars from the Lodz Ghetto, where her father was shot by German soldiers during target practice. Her mother died soon after — on Melmed's 14th birthday. By the time she arrived at Auschwitz late in the war, the guards were "too busy" to tattoo her arm.

She vividly recalls the smoke, the stench, and children clinging to one another as they were marched to their deaths. She and three girls she befriended prayed and sang as they entered the showers, certain they would be gassed. Water came out instead.

Transferred later to Bergen-Belsen, Melmed witnessed little mercy, though one guard once tossed her a coat and a mysterious figure occasionally left soup at night. By war's end, starvation and typhus had killed more than 50,000 prisoners there, including Anne Frank.

When Allied forces liberated the camp in 1945, Melmed weighed just 46 pounds and was near death. She survived, rebuilt her life in Sweden and America, became a nurse, raised a family, and has spent decades sharing her story.

"Hate and propaganda destroy," she said. "We must never forget — and we must learn to live together." ■



Local Chabad Rabbi Benjamin Shemtov and Auschwitz survivor Helga Melmed

“Hate and propaganda destroy. We must never forget — and we must learn to live together.”

—HELGA MELMED

SHOWTIME *in* Willcox

By R.J. Cohn

Four years after a resident's dream to build a cultural hub in the heart of ranching country, the Willcox Center of Arts and Heritage is a reality.

Staked by a \$1.7 million federal grant that grew to more than \$2 million, the 11,200-square foot facility on historic Railroad Avenue features a 155-seat auditorium, plenty of room for creative arts and technology, and a dedicated space that tells stories of ranching heritage.

At the center of the dedicated effort to turn this dream into a reality is Dr. Gayle Berry, who was instrumental in putting together the complex and often challenging project.

Along with showcasing the theater and arts, WTA will preserve the community's history of western heritage, ranching, and agriculture for future generations.

"The community has been really excited from the get-go," Berry said. "As people walked by and watched it develop,

they became more excited and receptive."

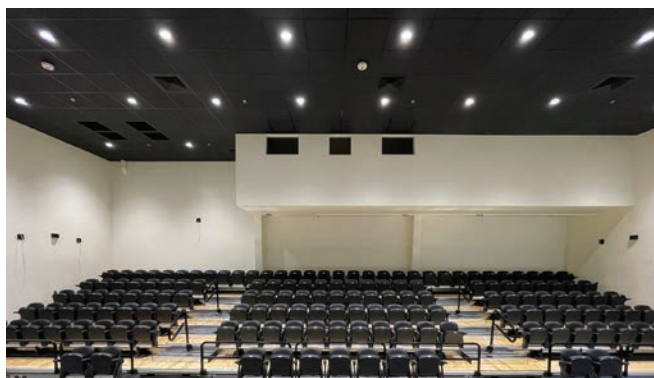
Berry is Executive Director of the organization that oversees the Center — Willcox Theater and Arts. She spent close to a year writing a grant application to the U.S. Department of Commerce through the Economic Development Administration for the nonprofit theater group.

"Now that it's completed, they know we have something very special. It's not just going to be a community cultural hub; it's going to be a living heritage of the West, showcasing the best of early ranching and farming in Willcox."

Both Berry and Willcox Mayor Greg Hancock believe the potential for the

complex as an arts venue and showcase of Western heritage could align itself with Willcox's thriving viticulture industry that could add another tourism opportunity.

"Downtown Willcox is going to be filled with excitement," said Hancock. "This is a big deal and a big project for us. It's a great addition to our quality of life, and tourists are going to love it. What Gayle and her team have done is special." ■



FROM LEFT: Seating for 150 patrons, which can be collapsed to provide more room space, is an impressive feature at the Willcox Art and Heritage Center. Standing at the entrance to the Center are (from the left) Eddie Browning, President, Willcox Theater and Arts; Gayle Berry, Executive Director, Willcox Theater and Arts; Greg Hancock, Mayor, City of Willcox; and Wesley Schofield, Creative Services Director, Willcox Theater and Arts.



COME

celebrate the San Pedro

By Ron Stewart

The Friends of the San Pedro are holding our annual Celebrate the San Pedro! festival at the San Pedro House on the morning of April 25th, from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. This event is free and open to all. We do this every spring to welcome the birds as they migrate north along the San Pedro River.

We will have activities, displays, and speakers to entertain and educate about the natural and historical wonders of the San Pedro Riparian National Conservation Area, or SPRNCA.

Here are some of the activities: throw an atlatl; make an adobe brick; paint a design on rocks; tour the San Pedro House; print a design on cloth; watch butterflies; learn how to

tie knots; learn how to use binoculars to find birds; and, learn about animals.

There will also be displays about the area and activities for kids. We will have a series of talks on the natural and cultural history of the area....and much, much more. Our annual team bird count competition, open to all, will visit the river in five locations to count species. Visit our website, <http://sanpedroriver.org/wpfspr/>, Facebook page, or call us at 520 508-4445 for more information about the event.

The San Pedro House is located eight miles east of Sierra Vista on Highway 82. You can search for it in Google Maps. There is ample free parking. We hope that you come out to help us Celebrate the San Pedro! ■



Ready to rock the region

By R.J. Cohn

The largest country western music festival in southeast Arizona, bolstered by a trio of country western headliners, is set to take center stage for a three-day weekend at the 4EVR Ranch in Benson March 20-22.

This year's star-studded venue is headlined by country music's top-tier performers Tracy Byrd, Mark Chestnutt and Rodney Atkins. Now in its fourth year, festival organizers believe that the 2026 Cochise Country Music Festival is going to be one of the largest and most memorable music festivals to hit the region.

"Every year since 2023, attendance has increased 25 percent," said 4EVR Ranch owner Shannon Thola. "Last year, we had 1,500 festivalgoers each day, and we're expecting to see another 25 percent increase again."

The festival features more than 20 shows with big-name country western entertainers. Kids under 10 are free, the site boasts almost 600 camping spaces, 30 local vendors and five smaller bands from across the state.

"It's turned into a premier country music event drawing people from just about everywhere," Thola said.

While the headliners will play 90-minute sets, opening acts consisting of rising and established country music stars like Chris Cagle, Little Texas, John Foster, Kelsey Hart, Mae Estes, Emily Ann Roberts, Brooklyn Fenn and the Billy Shaw Jr. Band.

There are a variety of ticket and camping packages offered, from a 1-day \$129 festival ticket to 3-days for \$239, as well as 3-day VIP weekend pass under a VIP tent for \$579.

There's also a \$209 general admission drydock camping along with \$309 VIP drydock camping.

A shuttle service will transport festivalgoers from camping areas to the ticket gate. Along with ample security, there's also a spacious parking lot boasting close to 400 spaces for the family-friendly 3-day event.

For tickets, camping admission and other information, go to cochisecountryfest.com. Festival tickets can also be purchased at the gate the day of the eventg. ■





ADOBE STOCK IMAGE BY OLENA

under the big top rolls into Benson in April

By R.J. Cohn

Even if you have the ability to tame a lion, walk a tightrope, or fly through the air with the greatest of ease on a trapeze, you don't have to run away to join the circus.

The colorful big top first used in travelling circuses on the banks of the Mississippi River in 1825 is coming to Cochise County packed with all the thrills of acrobats, jungle cats, elephants and of course, an assortment of clowns.

For the second time in two years, the Culpepper & Merriweather Circus will bring two 90-minute traditional circus performances to the 4EVR Ranch at 714 Madison Street in Benson on April 23.

"People came from just about everywhere to see the circus when it came in 2024, and they just loved it," said 4EVR Ranch owner Shannon Thola. "There were elephants and all kinds of acrobats performing under the big top, and it was quite a show. There must have been about 400 people for each performance, and everyone had a really great time. I'm sure it's going to be just as spectacular this year."

Founded in 1985 by three circus veterans who initially passed-the-hat around after each performance at campgrounds and small festival venues, Culpepper & Merriweather pooled their circus earnings and



hit the road with a crew of six that soon grew to 40 employees.

Since then, they've been on the road eight months each year for almost 40 years, covering 18 states with a performance in a different town every day to the delight packed audiences who fill their circus tent.

"They really put on an outstanding

circus show that's really entertaining," said Thola. "I grew up in Peru, Indiana, which for 60 years was considered the 'Circus Capital of the World,' so I know a few things about circuses. This one coming to Benson is really great."

For more information regarding purchasing tickets, call 4EVR Ranch at 520-649-0903. ■

Remembering APOLLO

By Ted Forte

America is poised to return to the moon. By the time you read this, the Artemis II mission should be nearing launch, sending four astronauts to orbit the moon. As little as a year or two from now, Artemis III will attempt to land humans on the moon for the first time since December 1972. This time the goal is to establish a continuous human presence and build a lunar economy on the moon's south pole. This will be an incredible endeavor to witness.

For people of my generation, our return to the moon can't help but bring back memories of those glorious days

between December 1968 and December 1972 when America's Apollo Program sent 9 missions to the moon. Twenty-four astronauts made the trip; twelve of them walked on the moon's surface. One, Neil Armstrong, the first to leave a footprint, may just be the most famous human of the 20th century. Three men: Jim Lovell, John Young and Gene Cernan, traveled to the moon twice. Cernan has the distinction of being the last human, so far, to stand on the lunar surface.

The Artemis landing sites will all be on the south pole of the moon and

mostly unavailable to observers on Earth. However, the six Apollo landing sites are all on the near side of the moon at mid latitudes and can be fun to explore with your telescope. Of course, we can't see direct evidence of the landings from an Earth-bound instrument. Physics limits the resolving power of a telescope. To see, say a flag on the moon, we would need a telescope 200 meters in diameter, and it would have to be outside of the Earth's atmosphere. The Hubble Space telescope, with an aperture of 2.4 meters can resolve objects on the moon no smaller than

Apollo 11 JUL 69
Mare Tranquillitatis
0.67416°N 23.47314°E
LM: 21.6 hours EVA: 2.5 hours

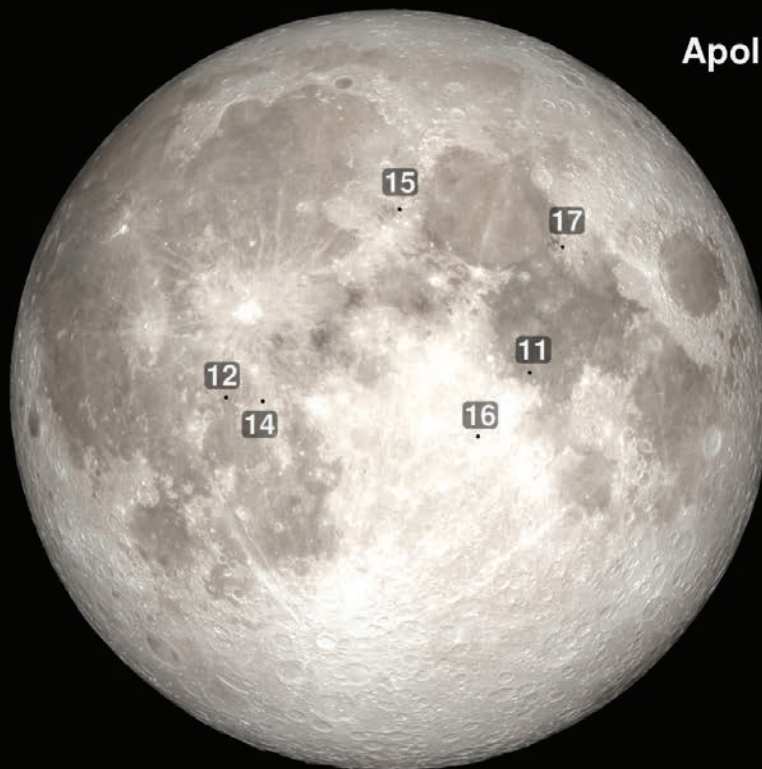
Apollo 12 NOV 69
Oceanus Procellarum
3.0128°S 23.4219°W
LM: 31.5 hours EVA: 7.8 hours

Apollo 14 FEB 71
Fra Mauro Highlands
3.64589°S 17.47194°W
LM: 33.5 hours EVA: 9.4 hours

Apollo 15 AUG 71
Hadley Rille
26.13239°N 3.63330°E
LM: 66.9 hours EVA: 19.1 hours

Apollo 16 APR 72
Descartes Highlands
8.9734°S 15.5011°E
LM: 71.0 hours EVA: 20.2 hours

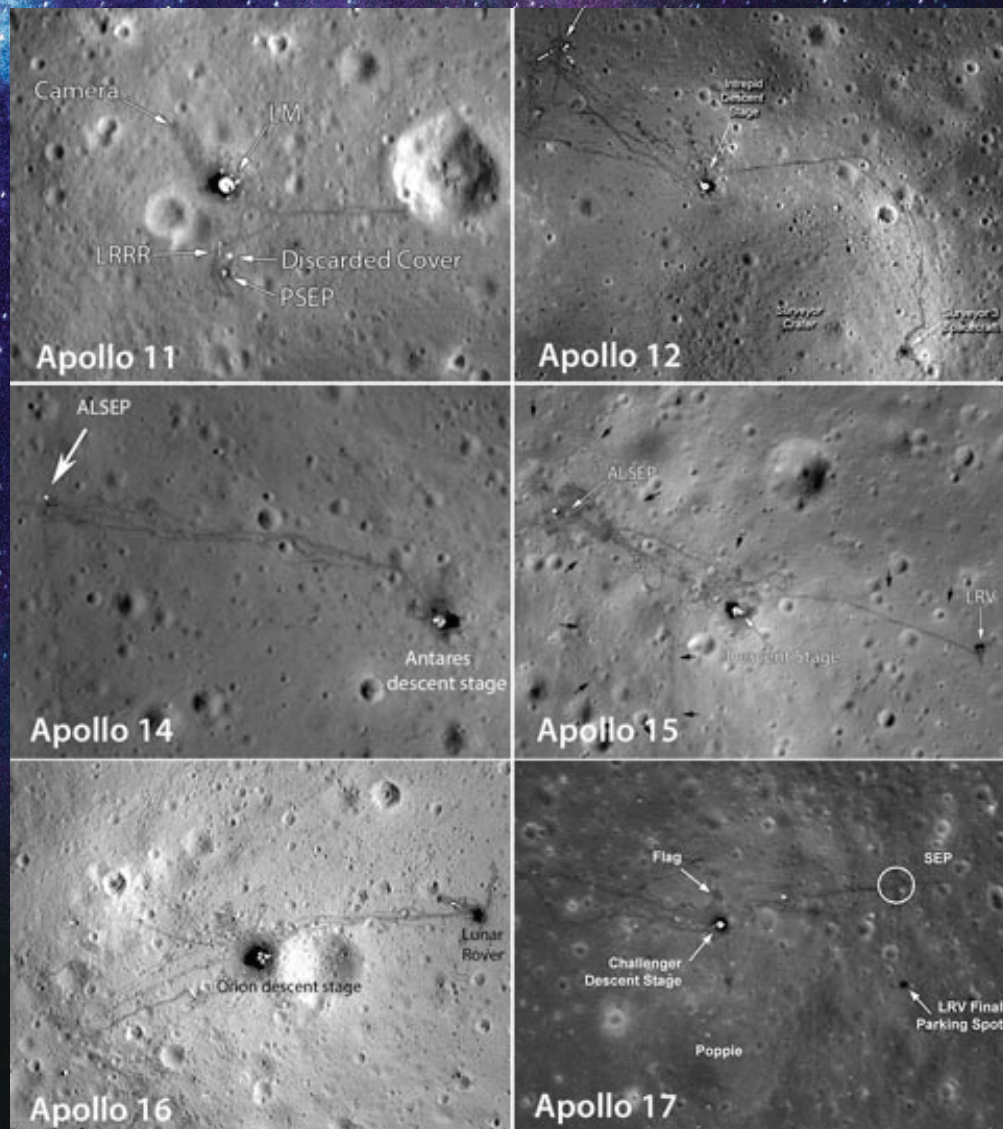
Apollo 17 DEC 72
Taurus-Littrow Valley
20.1911°N 30.7655°E
LM: 75.0 hours EVA: 22.1 hours



Apollo Landing Sites



THE ASTRONOMER'S CORNER



about 280 feet across. We have images, however, from the Lunar Reconnaissance Orbiter (LRO) which orbits the moon and comes to within 12 miles of the lunar surface at closest approach. Its imagery clearly shows the Apollo artifacts remaining at the sites and in the images, we can see the tracks left by astronauts and their rovers. It has confirmed that 5 of the 6 flags remain erect (Apollo 11's flag was knocked over by the rocket exhaust of the departing lander).

To aid in finding the sites, you'll benefit from becoming familiar with the prominent craters Posidonius, Archimedes, Copernicus, Ptolemaeus and Theophilus. They are convenient landmarks to get you

close to the landing sites. You can start your explorations six days past new moon when the Apollo 17 and 11 sites become visible. On day 7 (first quarter), Apollo 16's site is well lit. Day 8 reveals Apollo 15 and then 12 and 14 become available 10 days past new.

The Apollo 11 site is found on the relatively smooth and safe terrain of the Sea of Tranquility just north of the small crater Moltke, some distance north of Theophilus. Three tiny craters a bit north of the site are named for Armstrong, Aldrin and Collins. They are quite challenging to see, but give them a try.

An estimated 600 million people watched the grainy TV transmission from

the moon relayed through the Honeysuckle Creek Tracking Station near Canberra in Australia as Neil Armstrong descended the LEM's ladder to the lunar surface. I was one of them, and the memory is still vivid and moving these many decades later.

Apollo 12 (Pete Conrad and Alan Bean) achieved a pinpoint landing in the Ocean of Storms south of the crater Copernicus. As planned, they landed within walking distance of the Surveyor 3 probe.

Apollo 14 (Alan Sheppard and Edgar Mitchell) landed in the Fra Mauro formation west of Ptolemaeus which was the planned site for the failed Apollo 13 mission. Sheppard very famously hit two golf balls with a makeshift golf club; the longest drives of his life, no doubt.

James Irwin and David Scott landed Apollo 15 beside Hadley Rille in the Apennine Mountains east of Archimedes. It was the first mission to include the Lunar Rover.

Apollo 16 (John Young and Charles Duke) touched down in the lunar highlands near the Cayley Formation, west of Theophilus and north of the

small crater Dolland E.

The final Apollo landing saw Harrison Schmitt and Eugene Cernan touch down in the Taurus-Littrow Valley south of Posidonius. Schmitt was the only actual scientist, a geologist, to visit the moon. They showed their resourcefulness by making an emergency repair to their rover's fender using maps and duct tape.

In total, the 12 Apollo moon walkers spent 81 hours in extra-vehicular activity (EVA) and collected 852.56 pounds of moon rocks. Plans for Artemis seem to dwarf the Apollo missions, but to those of us who witnessed those six historic landings, Apollo remains the most remarkable accomplishment of the 20th century. ■

Fort BUCHANAN



The approximate location of Fort Buchanan as shown on an 1859 military map printed by the United States Bureau of Topographical Engineers. Fort Buchanan can be found on the center-left side of the image, between Tucson and Tubac. MAP COURTESY OF THE DAVID RUMSEY MAP COLLECTION, DAVID RUMSEY MAP CENTER, STANFORD LIBRARIES

By Frank Whitehead

On June 8, 1854, Mexico formally approved the Gadsden Purchase, completing a transaction in which the United States paid \$10 million for an area of land including present-day Pima, Cochise, and Santa Cruz counties. At the time, Tucson was an isolated village of approximately 400 residents, with the area to the southeast populated almost entirely of various Apache bands and a smattering of Mexican and American miners and ranchers.

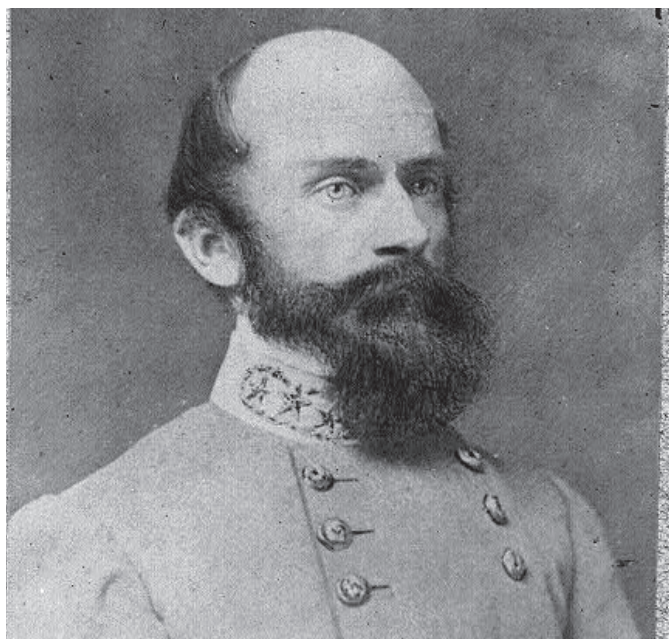
By November 1856, four companies of the First Dragoon Regiment of the U.S. Army finally arrived to the area. Despite orders to establish a garrison near Tucson to protect locals from Apache raids, Major Enoch Steen first selected a location 45 miles south near Calabasas. Following protests from Tucsonans that the soldiers were too far to offer protection, Steen moved the garrison marginally closer, to the headwaters of Sonoita Creek. The new location, near present-day Hog Canyon Road between Sonoita and Patagonia, offered enough water and grass for the hundreds of horses at the post. In honor of the recently-elected 15th president, Steen named the post Fort Buchanan.

Rather than an orderly military camp, Fort Buchanan

consisted of hastily-built adobe structures, temporary huts, and dozens of corrals “scattered about as though sprinkled from a water pot,” according to one report. During dry months, an expansive, flat meadow near the



John H. Cady at the ruins of Fort Buchanan, as seen in 1914. Cady was a U.S. Army soldier stationed at Fort Crittenden during the 1860s and longtime resident of Patagonia.



Richard Ewell was the commanding officer of Fort Buchanan during the Sonoita Massacre. He later joined the Confederate Army and served as a senior commander under Stonewall Jackson and Robert E. Lee.

creek served as an excellent source of forage for the fort's horses and for cavalry drills. During the monsoon season, however, the creek overflowed into the meadow, creating a temporary swamp filled with mosquitos carrying malaria, a deadly disease from which, according to the fort's physician, "the troops have suffered continually."

Without the presence of any civil authority such as a sheriff or judge, Fort Buchanan served as the only source of law and order in the region. Perhaps the most crucial example of this role came in the aftermath of the "Sonoita Massacre" of 1859. Following the murder of a white settler who had participated in the whipping of Mexican laborers, an armed group of vigilantes tore through Sonoita Valley, ransacking property and killing three Mexicans and an Indian. The new commanding officer of Fort Buchanan, Captain Richard Ewell, tracked down the vigilantes and jailed them at the fort, ending a tense period of violence that threatened to shut down the mines and commerce of the region.

The primary purpose of Fort Buchanan, though, was the protection of local settlers from Apache raids. Sylvester Mowry, a prominent local mine owner and politician, complained on January 1, 1861 that "we are eaten up alive by these cursed vermin. Every week [the Apache] kill somebody and drive off scores of horses, mules, and cattle."

Perhaps the most well-known and consequential encounter between the U.S. Army and the Apache came a few weeks later when local rancher John Ward rode into Fort Buchanan and complained that an Apache group had stolen his cattle and kidnapped his 11-year-old stepson, Mickey Ward. Second Lieutenant George Bascom and 70 soldiers gave

chase. The events that followed, which would collectively come to be known as the Bascom Affair, directly incited the decades-long Apache Wars. After Bascom met with Chiricahua Apache leader Cochise and mistakenly accused his band of kidnapping Mickey Ward, and after Bascom ordered the hanging of Cochise's brother and several other Apache warriors, Indian attacks on American and Mexican settlers in the Sonoita Valley drastically increased. As one correspondent noted, "the savages are now incensed and constant trouble may be anticipated."

Despite the amplified threat from Apache attacks, the focus of the U.S. Army shifted eastward when the Civil War broke out in April of 1861. The threat of a Confederate invasion westward from Texas led to orders to abandon Fort Buchanan on June 30, 1861, and for its soldiers to relocate to New Mexico. Fearing that the fort and its



Major Enoch Steen served in the U.S. Army through the Mexican-American War and Civil War, and established Fort Buchanan in 1857.

supplies may end up in Confederate hands, everything was burned and destroyed before departing. Although Fort Buchanan was occasionally occupied over the subsequent years, it was essentially replaced by the construction of Fort Crittenden a half mile away in 1867. By 1873, both forts were completely abandoned and would serve as nothing more than ranch land for the next 120 years until the land was subdivided in the 1990s. Although a sign was erected near the site of the fort by the state highway department in the 1920s, today, no standing ruins or historical markers indicate the location of Fort Buchanan. Faint carvings in old oak trees and hardened patches of dirt serve as the only remnants of a key piece of southern Arizona's history. ■

THE HORSE FIXER

By Robert Cohn

Growing up on a 600-acre horse ranch in Riverside, California, Heather McKay was destined for life in the saddle. By age seven, she was riding daily, driven by a fascination not just with horses, but with understanding how they think and move.

Now 50, McKay has turned that lifelong passion into one of southern Arizona's most respected equine training operations. For the past 11 years, she has owned and operated Narrowgate Sporthorse, a 12½-acre equine center off Moson Road that serves riders and horses from a wide range of disciplines.

McKay's background spans team penning, polo, vaulting, dressage and jumping, and she continues to compete at the national level. At Narrowgate, she applies that breadth of experience to help riders fine-tune performance or address behavioral challenges, from competition prep to issues like bucking or poor responsiveness.

"People come here because they want to be on the same page as their horse," McKay said.

Designed by McKay herself, the facility includes round pens, jump and dressage arenas, cross-country elements and miles of trails. Her favorite feature,

however, is the expansive turnout pasture, where horses spend up to 12 hours a day simply being horses.

What sets Narrowgate apart is its cross-training philosophy. English show horses may work cattle, trail horses may school in the arena, and all benefit from a balanced, nurturing environment.

Despite a demanding schedule, McKay competes several times a year and remains deeply grateful for a career built on trust between horse and rider. "Figuring out how a horse is wired — that's the joy," she said. ■



A glimpse into a champions tack room. Heather McKay, owner/operator seated between staff and boarders, Tish and Meg (featuring the barn greeter, Pip). Boarder and staff member, Meg with her mare, Gloria.





Tax credits make a difference for **BOYS & GIRLS CLUBS**

By Dana Cole

When Chan Robertson walked into Sierra Vista's Friends of the Library bookstore in January 2024, she saw more than shelves of books — she saw potential.

"I wanted this to be magical—a place where kids fall in love with reading."

A retired U.S. Army First Sergeant and confessed bibliophile, Robertson has transformed a struggling nonprofit into a thriving enterprise in just 18 months. She consolidated two costly locations, redesigned the store's footprint, and created inviting spaces

like a cozy nonfiction room and a whimsical children's nook, its ceiling painted with hundreds of butterflies.

"The kids absolutely love it. It's their own private book room."

Her vision extended beyond décor. Robertson launched an online sales campaign through eBay, Amazon, and AbeBooks, generating \$5,400 on eBay alone since January, with orders reaching the UK, Canada, and Mexico.

"Our goal is to sell books online to 27 nations by year's end. It's staggering."

Community support has been key. Thirty-five soldiers from

Fort Huachuca volunteered over 100 hours to build the children's room, and 53 volunteers—ages 8 to 94—keep the operation humming. With an annual budget of \$100,000 and growing, Robertson hopes to fund even more library upgrades.

"I used to be like Mary Poppins—fix things and leave. But Sierra Vista feels like home now."

Robertson's efforts promise a bright future for both the bookstore and the library it supports. ■

When *The* MILLIONAIRE

TV show made people millionaires

By R.J. Cohn

I was 10 years old when 'The Millionaire' first aired on television in 1955, and with a moral twist weaved into its plot line, it was a show I never forgot.

I wasn't the only one captivated by the five-season CBS hit.

Running 207 episodes for six seasons, the half-hour show captured a huge audience in early television, finishing in the Nielson ratings at #9 for its first season, offering a mesmerizing drama about

multi-billionaire John Beresford Tipton – only seen on camera once in six years – whose hobby was giving away \$1 million each week to complete strangers to see how a bonanza of

unexpected wealth enhanced or unraveled the course of their lives. Most of the time, it upbraided their lives toward total ruin.

Planted behind a huge desk with his back always to the camera, all we ever saw of John Beresford Tipton was his arm reaching for a tax-free, \$1 million cashier's check he would give to his executive secretary Michael Anthony, his deep, booming voice commenting about the intended recipient with the same instruction each week: They had to sign a waiver to never reveal their benefactor's identity.

But it was the stories of the new millionaires that was even more fascinating than the unseen John Beresford Tipton that lit the show up.

These weren't hastily-drawn, shopworn stories. They were cleverly written with unforeseen backflips that turned peoples' lives on its head unlike any other show of that era.

The ones I remember were stellar conundrums, like a woman receiving the \$1 million check that threatened her relationship with a man who vowed never to marry someone rich.

“They were cleverly written with unforeseen backflips that turned peoples' lives on its head unlike any other show of that era. The ones I remember were stellar conundrums...”

A career criminal planning a foolproof bank heist momentarily rejoices with his newfound million, but soon realizes he has nothing to look forward to anymore; planning the bank job was the main – and only – thrust of his life.

A nun given the cashier's check suddenly questions her faith and vow to poverty. A writer pays for his blind wife's surgery with some of his newly-acquired fortune, but vanishes when her bandages are removed, believing she won't care for his looks.

This was heady stuff for early television in the 1950s.

But this isn't about a waltz down memory lane remembering the Golden Age of Television.

It's about living your life with some kind of moral high ground if your ship comes in with the gazillion dollar check that's drifted through your fantasies since the lottery got its wings.

After you buy the mansion on the hill, the beach house on the Cote d'Azur, the ski chalet in St. Moritz, a Fountaine Pajot 80-foot catamaran and a Polaris General 1000 4 XP 4x4 you'll use twice, what do you do that's meaningful with the rest of your life besides buying things you don't need with the never-ending bankroll accumulating more interest than you made in a year?

A friend of mine whose cousin won the biggest lottery payout of its time 16 years ago found her life coming unhinged like a character in 'The Millionaire.' The daughter of a north Idaho gyppo logger who moved from one logging camp to another throughout her childhood, her sudden fortune overwhelmed her. After a hog-wild spending spree followed by divorce from an abusive husband who hadn't held a job in years, her lottery winnings were suddenly halved since Idaho is a community property state.

Thanks to a financial advisor, she quickly righted her ship. She purchased a home for herself and her children near Coeur d'Alene, took a deep breath and realized she had the financial ability to do something meaningful for children in need.

"She had a crappy childhood, living in logging shacks and tents with her dad following logging operations in the northwest until she was 16 when she got married," her cousin told me. "You could throw a rock 100 feet in any direction in north Idaho and find 50 kids who grew up like her. She wanted to use her money to make things better."

With help, she established a foundation that created community centers for children that fed them three meals a day, offered free tutoring, counseling, clothing, friendship and anything they needed.

"These kids are flourishing," he said. "She's turned her life and the lives of others into something you'd think you'd only see on television."

Real life – at least one that took a lottery payout and paid it forward – isn't a TV show where a billionaire benefactor is handing out million dollar checks to fritter away on luxury vehicles.

Sometimes it's not the taking, but the giving that makes you what you are. ■



ADOBE STOCK PHOTOS BY STOKKETE, RODWORKS, MASTER1305

www.ssvvec.org 27

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 21

San Pedro River Nature Walk | 9:00 am – 10:00 am

Join our FSPR docents as they guide you along the San Pedro River, one of the last free flowing rivers in the Southwest and home to one of the largest cottonwood-willow riparian forests remaining in Arizona. The walks are 1.5 to 2 miles long over easy to moderate terrain, taking an average of 2 hours, and are suitable for most adults and children. All walks are free, no reservations required. Meet at the San Pedro House, 9800 E. Highway 90. For more information, call (520) 508-4445 or email fspr@sanpedroriver.org. Hosted by the Friends of the San Pedro River.

HEREFORD

MARCH 21

Diamonds in the Desert Annual Gala | 5:30 p.m. to 9 p.m.

Support the United Way of Sierra Vista and Cochise County! Come and enjoy the Diamonds in the Desert Gala. This is the annual Grombacher Assistance Program Gala. Named in honor of Gerd S. "GG" Grombacher, the founding member of the United Way of Sierra Vista and Cochise County, and former Fort Huachuca commanding general, this program sets aside funds for community members in dire straits (i.e. home utilities, food, car repairs) who request assistance through our partner agencies — helping to fill in the "GAP". The event is being hosted at the Community Innovations Center, 4251 Enterprise Way in Sierra Vista. Visit unitedwaycochise.org/diamonds-in-the-desert to buy your tickets!

SIERRA VISTA

MARCH 21

Amerind 13th Annual Texas Canyon Trail Run/Walk | 9 a.m.

Run competitively or walk the 10K or 5K courses through the beautiful Texas Canyon Nature Preserve. Start time for the 10K is 9 a.m., and for the 5K is 9:20 a.m. The event is open to all ages. After the race stay for the awards ceremony to cheer on all the winners from the different age categories, then grab a bite from the food trucks and then explore the Museum and Art Galleries, included with your registration. It is a fun day at Amerind. To register: <https://bit.ly/TCTR26> or visit our website: www.amerind.org/events.

DRAGON

MARCH 24

Sierra Vista Community Connect | 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Sierra Vista Community Connect is moving to the 4th Tuesday of the month

in 2026. It will still be held at the Salvation Army building 180 E Wilcox Dr in Sierra Vista. Sierra Vista Community Connect is the place to find help and assistance. Community Connect is a one-stop-shop resource center, offering a wide variety of assistance to anyone in need. Featuring housing services, mental health/treatment services, domestic violence assistance, employment services, food resources and re-entry help, there will also be a community meal and necessity giveaway.

SIERRA VISTA

MARCH 24

Star Watch Party

Cochise College Willcox Center

Cochise College invites the public to free Star Watch Parties across Cochise County from 7:30 pm – 8:30 pm. Enjoy family-friendly stargazing under Arizona's dark skies with telescope viewing, constellations, and planets—no experience required. All ages welcome.

WILLCOX

MARCH 28-29

Cochise College Rodeo

MWR and the Sierra Vista Riding Club bring Cochise College Rodeo at its best! Bulls, Broncs, roping, goat tying and more at Ft. Huachuca's Wren Arena. Gates open at 12 each day with Exceptional Rodeo on Saturday and Cowboy Church on Sunday. Tickets on sale at Yardley Community Center, Safeway, ACE, Spur Western Wear, Cal Ranch, Tractor Supply and Jem's Feed or Yardley Community Center on Fort Huachuca. Tickets are \$10 in advance and \$12 at the gate. Active Duty with ID and kids 6 and under are free. Two-day wristbands are available for \$18 at the gate. Call Yardley Community Center (520) 533-2404 for more information.

FORT HUACHUCA

MARCH 28

Grand Opening | 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Come and join us on this historic day of our grand opening for our Farm Shoppe and goat cheese creamery! We are so excited we decided to share it with our community, so come on out, enjoy food, wine, vendors and music! The fun starts at 10 a.m. at the Stand Alone Ranch, 11878 S. Elkhorn Road, Pearce. For more information, contact Shawn at standalon ranch@yahoo.com.

PEARCE

Sierra Vista Symphony Celebrates Season 31 – American Adventures

Attend Sierra Vista Symphony's final American Adventures concert of the season at 7 p.m. April 11 at Klein Center for the Performing Arts (Buena High School). This concert is named *Canyon Reflections* and will feature Kiril Laskarov performing the Tchaikovsky violin concerto. Other pieces include Liszt Hungarian Rhapsody

No. 2 in C minor and Flurry's Canyon Reflections. A pre-concert lecture will be at 6 p.m.

Tickets are available at Eventbrite.com, Ace Hardware, Safeway, Dillard's and the Sierra Vista Symphony Association office at 21 E. Wilcox Dr., Sierra Vista.

Please also join us for the annual Concert in the Park on Thursday, June 11 at 6:30 p.m. Gather with community members and enjoy a free concert at the Veteran's Memorial Park band shell. Bring your lawn chair. For more information, look for us on Facebook, call 520-458-5189 or visit sierravistasymphony.org

UPCOMING EVENTS

APRIL 3

Amerind Museum Ethnobotany Hike | 9 a.m. to 11 a.m.

Come out to the Amerind Museum, 2100 N. Amerind Road, Dragoon, and enjoy an Ethnobotany Hike, where you will learn about the plants used to make beautiful baskets and other tools. Participants will begin in the classroom with objects from the museum's collection of contemporary Indigenous baskets and then go on the trails to see the plants used by the weavers. For more information, visit amerind.org or call (520) 586-3666.

DRAGOON

APRIL 17

A Night With Friends | 7 p.m.

St. Andrew's Catholic Church, 800 Taylor Dr.

St Andrews Concert Series presents "A Night With Friends" featuring Ms. Billie Hayes and Ms. Francilia Schofield. These well-known local artists will present a night of organ, piano and flute music. The concert will feature duets, as well as solo pieces. These two ladies never disappoint and will have a few surprise guests performing with them! All are welcome. There will be a freewill offering to support organ maintenance, as well as the concert series itself. Please join us for an incredible evening. For additional information call (520) 226-5574 or (520) 234-0888.

SIERRA VISTA

APRIL 24, 7 P.M. - APRIL 25, 2 P.M.

Sierra Vista Sings Spring Concert

Sierra Vista Sings is excited to announce our upcoming Spring Concert held at Sierra Vista United Methodist Church at 3225 St Andrews Drive, Sierra Vista. Sierra Vista Sings is composed of two coed ensembles — Vocalize and High Desert Singers — and an all-ladies group called the Note-Ables. Vocalize will present selections of light jazz and pop music, while the High Desert Singers will showcase their skills with challenging 8-part harmonies and classical pieces. The Note-Ables will also perform as part of the concert program. This semester's theme is "Celebrate!" To purchase tickets, contact Deb Koltveit at (520) 803-0915. A limited number of tickets may be available at the door.

SIERRA VISTA

APRIL 25

Rise AZ Music Festival | 11 a.m.

Big things are happening as we prepare for Rise AZ Music Festival 2026, coming to Veterans Memorial Park in Sierra Vista, on Saturday, April 25! This year's lineup brings together national headliners, powerful testimonies, and diverse styles — from worship to Christian hip-hop to rock. Follow us on Facebook at OfficialRiseAZ, or on the web at riseazmusicfestival.com!

SIERRA VISTA



Doug Figgs



Sahnas Brothers



MARCH 26

DOUG FIGGS PERFORMING LIVE ON STAGE

Doug Figgs is a horseshoer, a day working cowboy, and a Western music singer/songwriter. In more than thirty years of shoeing horses he has earned the title of "Certified Journeyman Farrier", the highest level attainable through the American Farrier's Association. In the last few years he has turned his attention to his love of music with the emphasis on Western themes.

APRIL 24

SAHNAS BROTHERS - LIVE ON STAGE

Beautifully blending the sounds and rhythms of their native Greek culture with the warm, inviting romance of the classical Spanish guitar, brothers Thanos and Dimitri Sahnas have created a magical and intimate Mediterranean style that perfectly complements the powerful jazz-fusion of their popular Phoenix based band Turning Point. Sahnas—as the brothers are

collectively known—has enthralled thousands of people at clubs and arts and crafts festivals throughout the Southwest with their unique hybrid sound.

RETRO REWIND

CLASSIC MOVIES ON THE BIG SCREEN

MARCH 13: Jigsaw (1949)

APRIL 10: The Amazing Adventure (1936)

MAY 8: The Snows of Kilimanjaro (1952) playing

BROWN BAG HISTORY TALKS

PRESENTED BY SULPHUR SPRINGS VALLEY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

MARCH 12: Sharon Kennedy - "Buffalo Soldiers in Bonita Canyon"

APRIL 9: Craig McEwen - "The Forgotten History of the San Simon River"

MAY 14: Bill Cavaliere - "The Violent Past of New Mexico's Bootheel"

MAY 16

WILLCOX ARTS, MUSIC, AND MOVIES FESTIVAL (WAMM) + SOUTHERN ARIZONA INDEPENDENT FILM FESTIVAL (SAIFF)

WAMM is an annual, free, family-friendly community celebration held at Railroad Park in Willcox, Arizona. The festival brings together live music, hands-on art activities, community booths, food and artisan vendors, and concludes with a free outdoor movie under the stars. This year we are pairing WAMM with SAIFF! Southern Arizona Independent Film Festival is a family oriented festival designed to solicit entries from all levels of experience, age groups and genre interests ensuring that opportunities are broadly available to anyone creating visual stories. We screen G and PG rated short films (under 15 minutes). The festival is geared towards the student filmmaker but fully embraces the work of indie filmmakers as well.

LOCATION: Railroad Park and Willcox Theater and Arts, Willcox, AZ

Keep an eye on our website as summer approaches for more information and registry!

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



The hunger gap

By Chef Chris

ClownChef@yahoo.com

If it weren't for cabbage a whole lot of us wouldn't be here because our ancestors would have perished when things got bad. The in-between season known as the hunger gap, from about April to June, could be exceedingly lean. The crops put by in the fall would often have run out and if it weren't for the likes of cabbage, rutabaga, and turnips folks would have a tough time of it.

Of course, these days, we don't experience such a gap, but I can definitely say that if it weren't for a half a cabbage lingering in my crisper drawer at times, I would absolutely have gone to bed hungry at times. Not only is it hearty, but it's also an incredible source of vitamins C, K, and E, all of which help keep us vertical.

Such an unsung hero, the cabbage.

Red, or purple, cabbage makes a spectacle of itself wherever it appears.

It has the added perk of extra nutritional benefits, such as reducing inflammation, improving gut function, and heart and bone health. Run a wedge over the grater and into your salad for a quick hit.

Although indeed a rather utilitarian veggie, it is capable of culinary greatness, even if we are unlikely to find it at a Michelin rated restaurant. To this day, I long for the tiny stuffed cabbage I was offered in Egypt when I lived there. The braised cabbage recipe here is more than suitable as an upscale side dish and would be at home next to a juicy chop or steak. And a frilly Asian cabbage salad made

with the Napa variety can absolutely keep company with perfectly poached salmon or grilled chicken. In short, what can't you do with cabbage?

It can become a simple slaw with just a couple of ingredients, or haute cuisine when paired with a few more interesting components. The Sesame Slaw I'm offering here gets rave reviews and is a real standout at a potluck or backyard BBQ. Please make it!

Best of all, it's a bargain, and few of us don't need that these days! Need I say more to make one of these appear in your fridge?

ADOBE STOCK IMAGE BY XAMTIW AND ELENA

SESAME SLAW

Be ready, everyone will want this recipe! It's worth adding some of these ingredients to your pantry if you don't already have them because you will absolutely be making it again. You want "toasted" sesame oil and tahini for the most flavor. Secretly, I put in the whole bunch of scallions, but I like the stronger flavor.

About 4 servings

- ½ small head purple cabbage
- 3 Tbsp. sesame seeds
- 1 pack seaweed snacks
- 2 Tbsp. tahini
- 1 Tbsp. soy sauce
- 2 Tbsp. rice vinegar
- 1 Tbsp. mayonnaise
- 1 tsp. toasted sesame oil

- 1 pack seaweed snacks
- 3 scallions, chopped

Using the slicer side of your box grater, shred the cabbage as finely as possible and place in a medium bowl.

Place sesame seeds in small skillet over medium heat. Stir and toast until golden, then reserve. You can technically skip this, but you'll definitely taste the difference.

In a small bowl, whisk together tahini, soy sauce, rice vinegar, mayo, and sesame oil. Taste and adjust seasoning. Drizzle over shredded cabbage. Toss to combine and finish with crumbled seaweed and scallions.





CABBAGE AND POTATO SOUP

This is a brothy base with hearty stew-like goodness, perfect for the shoulder season. The kale is optional, but I like the bit of dark green. Feel free to improvise on this one!

About 4 servings

- 1 medium onion, chopped
- 2 stalks celery, chopped
- 3 cloves garlic, chopped
- 2 medium gold potatoes
- 2-3 sprigs thyme or ½ tsp. Dry
- ½ small Napa cabbage, chopped
- 4 cups broth
- 1 cup cooked chickpeas

About four kale leaves, chopped
½ tsp. dill

Heat a soup pot over medium-high. Add a little oil, then add the onion and celery, and some salt. Let begin to brown, sitting occasionally, then add the garlic and let cook about 30 seconds. Add the potatoes, thyme, cabbage and broth and stir up any brown bits from the bottom. Reduce heat and let simmer for about 10 minutes.

Taste and adjust seasoning, then add chickpeas, kale, and dill, and stir to combine. Let simmer another 2 minutes or until potatoes are tender. Enjoy with good bread!

BRAISED CABBAGE WITH SMOKED PAPRIKA

This simple preparation is a perfect side for any meal, and pairs well with potatoes. You can give it more of an Asian profile by skipping the paprika and adding soy sauce and ginger, then finish sesame oil and scallions.

2-4 servings

- ½ head cabbage, core removed
- 1 medium onion, sliced
- 1-2 cloves garlic, finely chopped
- ½ tsp. smoked paprika
- ¾ cup broth
- Butter, optional

Cut the cabbage into 2—4 wedges, then dust with salt and paprika. Heat a skillet over medium-high. Add just enough oil to coat the bottom of the pan, then add the onion and let brown. When golden, add the garlic and let cook another 30 seconds.

Scoot the garlic and onion over to the side, then add the cabbage wedges. Let brown, then turn to another side. Let brown another minute, then add the broth and bring to a boil. Reduce heat, cover, and let just simmer for about 10 minutes. Remove the lid and let broth reduce. Swirl in butter if using, and serve with sauce from pan.



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