

SSVEC Currents

SEPTEMBER | OCTOBER 2025

Volume 4, No. 5

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SSVEC Currents is published bimonthly, serving parts of Cochise, Graham, Pima, and Santa Cruz counties, and is made possible by your friends at Sulphur Springs Valley Electric Cooperative (SSVEC), 311 E Wilcox Drive, Sierra Vista, AZ 85635, to keep you informed of noteworthy community happenings and important news from your Cooperative. Periodicals postage pending at Sierra Vista, AZ, and additional mailing offices.

Members acknowledge that the electric rates reflected on their bill encompass an annual subscription to Currents magazine, having an annual value of \$12. To opt-out of Currents subscription, please request a notification waiver form by directing an email to epetermann@ssvec.com.

PUBLIC RELATIONS MANAGER

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SUBSCRIPTION SERVICES

Nonmember subscriptions are \$12 (U.S.) per year.

POSTMASTER

Send address changes to Eric Petermann, SSVEC Currents, 311 E Wilcox Drive, Sierra Vista, AZ 85635

REPRINT PERMISSION

Direct all requests to Eric Petermann, epetermann@ssvec.com

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ON THE COVER

They met at New Mexico State University and won just about everything there was to win in collegiate rodeos. They followed the professional circuit, got married and had three children on a ranch in McNeal. Call it cowboy love. See the story on page 16.
COVER PHOTO BY TIM LAWSON PHOTOGRAPHY



Jason Bowling, CEO
Sulphur Springs Valley
Electric Cooperative

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

Co-op Month: What it means to be member-owned

Every October, cooperatives across the country celebrate Co-op Month. It's a reminder that our structure is different by design. SSVEC is not a for-profit utility. We are a nonprofit cooperative, owned by the people we serve.

That ownership shows up in the decisions we make, the way we invest, and the values we hold. Our goal is not to generate returns for outside investors. It is to provide reliable, affordable electricity and to support the communities we call home.

Events this October highlight how that mission comes to life.

- First, we'll welcome participants from the Sky Islands Regional Partnership leadership program for our second annual Energy Day October 9. These community leaders will meet our team, explore our facilities, and learn how SSVEC delivers power across 4,000 square miles. More important, they will see how our employees approach their work—with pride, purpose, and a deep sense of service.

- We'll also hold Development Day for all SSVEC employees. On October 13, while our offices are closed for the federal holiday,

we'll gather our team for updates and training. This kind of internal investment helps us serve you better. And because crews remain on standby, we can hold this event without compromising member safety or service.

- This month, we're also cheering on our linemen as they compete at the International Lineman Rodeo in Kansas October 15-18. This event brings together the best utility workers from around the world to test their skills and showcase the craft of linework. We're proud to have SSVEC crews representing us on that stage. Follow along on our social media channels for updates from the competition.

All of this is part of what makes us different. We are owned by you, and we work for you. That means transparency, long-term thinking, and a strong focus on people. It also means that every dollar you pay goes into the system you own and that serves you.

This Co-op Month, thank you for being part of the SSVEC community. Your ownership is what powers everything we do.

Sincerely,
Jason Bowling, CEO, SSVEC



Making the Navajo Nation a bit brighter

Ten employees representing Sulphur Springs Valley Electric Cooperative (SSVEC) traveled to the Navajo Nation in July, joining in a national effort to extend electric service to those without power.

Participation in the "Light Up Navajo" program, now in its sixth year, began July 5 and involved a convoy trip of five vehicles and two trailers to the Native American reservation — the largest in the United States.

Each team spent a full week installing utility poles and extending wires to homes that were without electric service. Currently there are approximately 10,407 families living on the Navajo Nation that do not have electricity.

This year "Light Up Navajo" included linemen representing 16 different states from coast to coast. On average, 13 homes were connected each week with 4.2 miles of new powerline built.

"We are incredibly proud of our crew and the work they did," said Jason Bowling, Chief Executive Officer at SSVEC. "Participating in this program and providing electricity to homes and businesses that have been without this vital service says a lot about the character and quality of our people."

SSVEC employees who participated in the Light Up Navajo project from July 5 to July 12 included Eric Hessert, Chris Stephens, Frankie Bracamonte, Tyler Rios and Dylan Layton. From



One of the two SSVEC crews working on providing service to homes and businesses without electricity on the Navajo Nation.

SSVEC is in its sixth year of participating in the "Light Up Navajo" program

July 12 to July 19, the SSVEC crew included John Vandermuelen, Efren Gallego, Gabriel Ornelas, Brandon Torres, and CJ Putnam.

"I'm proud of our employees for stepping up and representing SSVEC with integrity and heart. Their work on the Navajo Nation is a powerful example of what service looks like in action," said Nathan Hodges, Senior Vice President of Operations at SSVEC.

The crews set out early each Saturday from Benson and Willcox, respectively, for a more than eight-hour drive to the reservation. Each day consisted of 12 to 14 hours of work.

On the Thursday evening before returning to the SSVEC service territory, each team member was honored at a celebration hosted by the Navajo Tribal Utility Authority (NTUA).

The program was created through a partnership between NTUA and the American Public Power Association (APPA). APPA has a mutual aid program that sends electric crews to areas hit by natural disasters like hurricanes and tornadoes.

"The visiting volunteer line workers signed up to travel here to help make a life changing difference for families," said NTUA General Manager Walter W. Haase. "They left with an immense pride of accomplishment, especially when families thanked them for leaving their families and communities to help bring positive change to their lives."



Members of the first team to travel to the Navajo Nation left on July 5 and included (from the left) Chris Stevens, Tyler Rios, Dylan Layton, Frankie Bracamonte and Eric Hessert.

Washington Youth Tour

High school students entering their senior year earned an all-expense paid trip to the nation's capital through the Washington Youth Tour program, sponsored by SSVEC. The group left June 14th after gathering in Benson, for a week full of activities that included visiting national monuments, meeting federal legislators and their staff, and touring historic sites in Washington, D.C.



Pictured (from the left) are Isabella Garcia, Buena High School; Isabella Laura, Benson High School; Elizabeth Frederick, Veritas; Lyneea Kartchner, San Simon High School; Emerson Owens, Benson High School; Chris Gonzales, Valley Union High School; Ethan Bailey, Veritas; Travis Allred, Willcox High School; Caden Richins, St. David High School; Jaxon Savage, St. David High School; Aaron Edington, St. David High School; Dezireh Mejias, Buena High School; Esperanza Lepley, Tombstone High School; Jacob Cruz, Patagonia High School; and DeAndra Carabez, Tombstone High School.

Honoring a visionary: Randy Redmond and the legacy of the Arizona Firefighters Fund



By Eric Kriwer, Director
Arizona Firefighters Fund

At the 52nd Annual Arizona Fire School, we proudly recognize Randy Redmond, whose vision and leadership transformed firefighter training in Arizona. Beginning in 2026, the scholarship program will be renamed the Arizona Fire School – Redmond

Family Scholarship, honoring his enduring legacy.

Randy's journey began in the early 2000s as a member of the Arizona State Fire Training Committee (SFTC) executive board. Alongside Polly Elson, he traveled statewide, discussing ways to improve training access and simplify grant processes. When the Arizona State Fire Marshal's Office ended Fire School funding in 2008, Randy, then the SFTC Chair, guided the committee through the transition — ushering in a more independent, service-driven approach.

Following that pivotal year, Randy proposed creating a nonprofit foundation to fund scholarships for firefighters from

small and rural departments. By 2009, with support from John Hayes and corporate sponsors, he co-founded the Arizona Firefighters Fund, starting with \$25,000.

The Fund grew rapidly. By 2012, Randy had secured \$60,000 from 14 donors, leading to the awarding of 50 scholarships in 2013. Ongoing support from organizations like APS and the Kemper & Ethel Marley Foundation helped expand its reach.

In 2014, Randy launched the Arizona Firefighter Training Specialty License Plate, a four-year effort that now generates over \$30,000 annually. From 2014 until his retirement at the 50th Fire School, the Fund consistently awarded 100 percent of eligible scholarships, reaching up to 400 firefighters annually, with 100 percent of donations going directly to training.

"His determination and leadership to ensure we were able to support Arizona firefighters for many years to come has been beyond visionary," said Eric Kriwer. "The opportunity for Arizona firefighters to train and return home better prepared will be remembered through the Redmond Family name."

Thanks to Randy, the Fund has moved over \$1 million, supported more than 3,500 firefighters, and established a model that will serve generations to come.

SMART ENERGY TEAM SOUTHEAST ARIZONA



SET volunteers seek to help members

What began as an issue-focused group of volunteers anxious to save rooftop solar systems has become an influential organization that works closely with the SSVEC Board of Directors and the Cooperative's leadership to represent the interests of members.

Formed in 2015, the Smart Energy Team (SET) continues to provide independent information to potential and existing residential solar members within the SSVEC service territory. The group also promotes the installation of affordable and efficient solar solutions as part of a diverse and reliable energy future.

"Our relationship with the SSVEC board and the leadership team has evolved over time," said SET volunteer Steve Scheumann. "It's an example of a community of SSVEC members with a focus on rooftop solar. I'm sure there are other groups with shared interests within SSVEC that could also be represented."

Ross Lampert organizes a quarterly newsletter which is distributed to some 50 members who share the group's primary interest in privately-owned solar systems.

"Our mission is to empower SSVEC members with information and provide resources on residential solar," Lampert said. "We also work constructively with SSVEC, other pro-residential solar advocacy groups, and regulatory agencies like the Arizona Corporation Commission (ACC) to develop solar energy solutions."

Staying in touch with developments and policies unfolding in the solar industry is one resource that SET members can offer members, Lampert said.

"People have a variety of reasons for considering solar. Because

we've worked with our own contractors and have a relationship with SSVEC, we've been able to keep track of what's happening in the industry and how to engage with SSVEC. One of our goals, with the help of our current and future members, is to build a list of recommended contractors."

The number of residential solar installations continues to grow throughout the SSVEC service territory. Currently, there are 3,646 private photovoltaic (PV) systems, capable of generating almost 20 million watts connected to the Cooperative's system. Added together with SSVEC-contracted grid scale solar-generation systems, the amount of electricity produced by the sun is approaching one-quarter of the total energy distributed by the Cooperative.

"With the completion of two projects currently in development, we're anticipating that solar generation will soon contribute up to 40 percent of our energy portfolio," said Daniel Wilson, Senior Vice President of Member and Corporate Services.

Membership in the Smart Energy Team is free and open to SSVEC members and others in the area who are interested in residential solar, Lampert said. They can join by signing up via the contact form on the organization's website, <https://smartenergysteamsoutheastaz.wordpress.com/>, or by emailing him at setincochise@gmail.com. SET does not share its membership list with anyone.

"We want to encourage and empower SSVEC members to utilize the opportunity to install affordable and efficient solar solutions as part of a diverse energy future," Lampert said.

Farm tours



On July 17, Lea Marquez Peterson (red blouse, seventh from left), a member of the Arizona Corporation Commission and its past president, visited Turkey Creek and Curry Farms near Willcox to find out more about each operation. Lea is the first Hispanic woman to serve in a statewide seat in the history of Arizona and is the only Commissioner based outside the Phoenix area. After her appointment by Gov. Doug Ducey in 2019, she was elected to four-year terms in 2020 and 2024.

During her tour she was accompanied by SSVEC and Arizona Electric Power Cooperative (AEPCO) representatives at each facility.

Earning honors

Sierra Vista teen Khloe Markel continues earning honors and preparing for international competition. Above, SSVEC Chief Executive Officer Jason Bowling (left) presents a sponsorship check to Khloe (center) with Cory East, Vice President of Member Engagement. Khloe was featured in the July/August edition of Currents as she prepared for the 2025 World Archery Youth Championships in Winnipeg, Canada, in August. Markle beat the best of the best at the World Archery Youth Trials in Newberry, Florida in April to represent Team USA at the championship.



Khloe placed third at the JOAD Target Nationals in New Mexico in July and is pictured accepting her award.

Know Your Outage Tools!



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Update your cell phone number with SSVEC to receive outage notifications for your area.



If a new outage has not yet been reported, call 1-800-422-3275

ssvec.org/outage



ATTENTION!
PLEASE

CALLING ALL HIGH SCHOOL JUNIORS...

in the SSVEC service area!

Washington Youth Tour competition is here!

High school juniors located in the SSVEC service territory are invited to compete for an all-expenses paid trip to Washington D.C.

To qualify, the initial test
MUST be completed by
September 29, 2025.

[Learn More](#)

For details, you can email
ssvecyouthprograms@ssvec.com
or scan the QR code.





SSVEC **CURRENTS** is staying current

We're making a significant change in this edition of Currents magazine

Due to the increasing costs of postage and printing, we've launched a website for the magazine, and we are encouraging our readers to take a look and provide us some feedback and direction.

Currents has amazing content contributors who tell stories about our community that bring all SSVEC members a little closer together. They capture the essence of life in our shared four-county service territory by relating stories and photographs of neighbors who have remarkable talents, histories, hobbies, and passions.

Unfortunately, there are a lot more stories to tell than our pages have space to provide and that our Cooperative can afford. Our mission with Currents is focused on keeping members informed about what's happening at SSVEC and building a sense of community. We're confident this can be accomplished, in part, by providing some of that information by utilizing a well-attended website, conveniently available on your computer, tablet, or even on your smartphone.

Articles and photos on this page have a QR code that links directly to the newly-created website. Or, you can navigate to the site at www.ssveccurrents.com.

Either way, we appreciate your feedback and direction. Send me an email if you have suggestions, constructive criticism, or comments. I'm happy to hear from you.

Eric Petermann
epetermann@ssvec.com

**To read the full stories, visit SSVEC
Currents' Facebook page or website**



www.facebook.com/groups/ssveccurrents



\$ Better Bucks SIERRA VISTA

Only valid at participating Sierra Vista locations

Our Sponsors:



ICU in the sky:

Arizona Lifeline airborne medical response

In August, Arizona Lifeline celebrated its 30th anniversary in Cochise County. While I've seen their helicopters fly over many times, I never had the opportunity to meet the people. Finally, it's happening. And, naturally, I wonder what sort of people they are...

My first contacts are Shane Clark, Program Director, and Greg Featherston, Business Development/Outreach Manager - himself, a former Flight Paramedic. Definitely a great source of information, and the sort of guys I love to connect with personally.

Greg and I met several times with on-duty crews based in Saint David and Douglas. I learned a flight crew consists of three members: Pilot, Flight Nurse and Flight Paramedic. There are also aircraft maintenance technicians.

Members are highly skilled in caring for patients suffering from severe illnesses and traumatic accidents. In extreme cases, they perform emergency surgical procedures normally done by a trauma team at a big-city hospital.

The helicopter brings advanced skills to our communities that might otherwise not be available. It's an ongoing process.



Better Bucks

and better work programs
changing lives for the better

The little booklet that offers \$1 coupons resembling money that can be used at businesses like Fry's Foods Store, McDonalds, Culver's and Goodwill has not only been a lifeline for needy families and the homeless in Sierra Vista.

For many, the vouchers – along with a work program paying cash-on-the-barrelhead for day labor – has helped change their lives in a direction most felt was impossible to attain.



Coronado Cave

A treasure to behold, even for armchair explorers

I always wanted to be someone like Gary Tenen or Randy Tufts, the cavers who were exploring the limestone hills at the base of the Whetstone Mountains in 1974, looking for a cave no one had ever found and found it, which eventually became Kartchner Caverns State Park.

I used to wonder what the moment was like for Howard Carter, who breached the seal on a door inside a pyramid in the Valley of the Kings that opened the "Eureka" discovery of King Tut's tomb.

Astronomer's Corner

Treasures of the summer triangle

Don't let the nickname fool you. The area of the sky defined by the "Summer Triangle" takes center stage in Autumn. The stars Vega, Deneb, and Altair, the brightest stars in the constellations of Lyra the Harp, Cygnus the Swan and Aquila the Eagle form a recognizable triangle that transits (is due south in the sky) on fall evenings. Within and around this triangle are some of the sky's most fascinating targets.



The Patagonia Railroad: TRANSFORMING

By Frank Whitehead

In the summer of 1881, surveyors employed by the Santa Fe Railway trekked through the lush grass of the Sonoita valley, roughly following the curves of the Babocomari River. Behind them followed teams of men and mules, grading and scraping earth to make way for what would quickly become the Patagonia Branch of the New Mexico & Arizona Railroad. Just over a year later, freight and passenger trains were transporting people and goods through a remote section of Arizona that had previously only been accessible via horseback or wagon. By 1962, however, the Patagonia Branch was abandoned, and the steel tracks were pulled up and salvaged. Although it lasted only a brief eighty years, the Patagonia Branch thoroughly transformed the towns of Elgin, Sonoita, and Patagonia.

Shortly after the Southern Pacific Railroad completed its first line across Arizona and connected with the Santa Fe Railway in New Mexico to create the nation's second continental railroad in 1880, the two companies began negotiations over an additional line to Mexico. The recent discovery of coal in Sonora and a potential direct line to the Gulf of California via Guaymas made the profitability of such a line obvious. The two railways eventually agreed to joint use of the tracks between Deming and Benson, at which point the Santa Fe would construct a railroad south to the border. On June 17, 1881, the

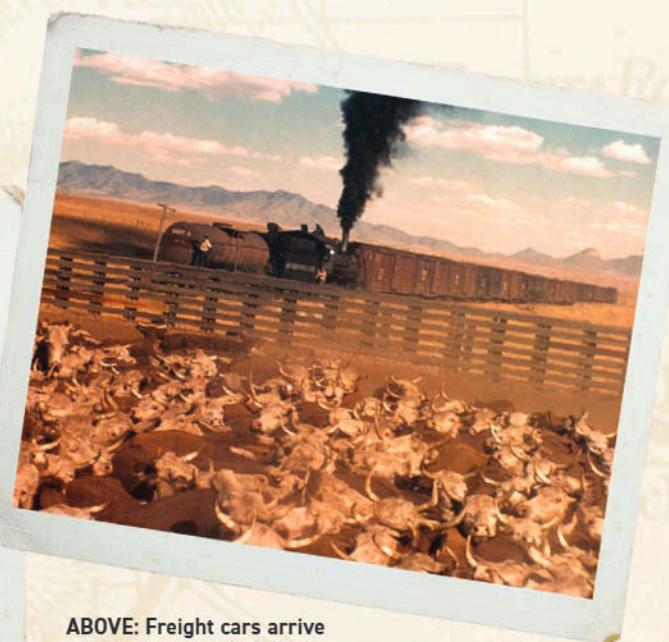
Santa Fe incorporated the New Mexico and Arizona Railroad Company for construction of the line, and soon a route was finalized which would wind south from Benson to the confluence of the Babocomari River and the San Pedro, then follow the Babocomari to Sonoita Creek, from where it would head through Patagonia to Calabasas and eventually to Nogales.

From the moment the first rails were laid in September 1881, construction was not without frequent, perilous incidents. Just two months after work began, two men were thrown from the top of the construction train when the engineer attempted to reconnect with an uncoupled car. One was sent to St. Mary's hospital in Tucson, while the other underwent an emergency amputation of both legs on site. Amazingly, both survived. Railroad workers continued to face deadly hazards even after the tracks were completed. In 1914, a laborer named Albert Hall was repairing a damaged trestle when a gust of wind blew him off the tall structure, breaking his neck and killing him. He was buried near the worker's camp in Sonoita, where his grave can still be visited today.

Aside from the dangers of the work itself, law and order were tenuous and life seemed constantly precarious for



ABOVE: The Patagonia Railroad Depot opened in 1900. Today it is owned by the Town of Patagonia and houses the town's offices.
PHOTO COURTESY OF THE BOWMAN STRADLING HISTORY CENTER AT THE SONOITA FAIRGROUNDS.



ABOVE: Freight cars arrive at shipping corrals full of cattle in Sonoita, 1950s.
PHOTO COURTESY OF THE EMPIRE RANCH FOUNDATION

RURAL ARIZONA



The original railroad section house in Elgin. The Elgin station was cast as Claremore, Oklahoma in the film *Oklahoma!* PHOTO COURTESY OF THE BOWMAN STRADLING HISTORY CENTER AT THE SONOITA FAIRGROUNDS.

railroad workers. At a time when the Earps feuded with the Clantons and McLaurys in nearby Tombstone and the Army pursued Geronimo's band of Apache across the region, laborers were frequent victims and perpetrators of frontier violence. Beatings, shootings, and robberies were so prevalent in the small communities that sprung up along the worksites that one newspaper correspondent from Tombstone reported that "the amount of lawlessness in this vicinity is scarcely credible and is something fearful to contemplate."

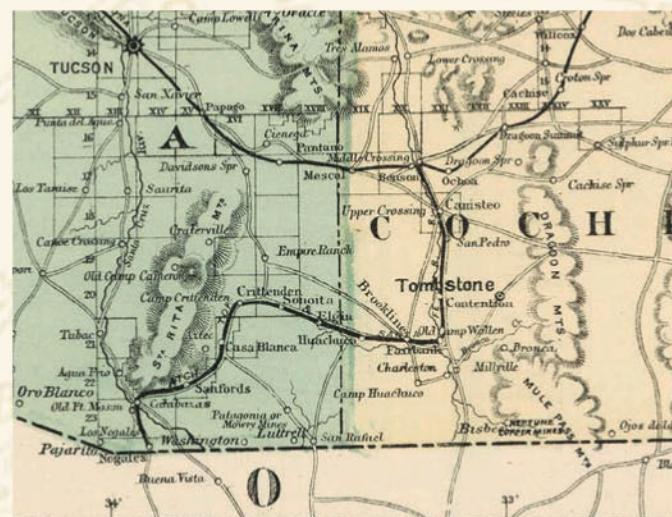
After over a year of construction, a silver spike was tapped into place as the Patagonia Branch finally connected to the Sonora Railway in Nogales on October 25, 1882. The residents of Elgin, Sonoita, Patagonia, and others along the route suddenly had access to goods that previously would have been unattainable, and easier access to markets for the region's cattle ranches and mines.

In terms of passenger service, the journey from Tucson to Mexico and vice versa was expedited significantly with the addition of a small, daily passenger train affectionately referred to as "the burro." After the Patagonia station opened in June 1900, the burro would stop there for meals every day on its trek to and from Tucson.

By the 1950s, the Patagonia branch served as the backdrop for numerous westerns such as *Red River*, *Gunfight at the O.K. Corral*, and *3:10 to Yuma*. The Elgin station specifically played a prominent role in *Oklahoma!*, serving as Claremore, Oklahoma, with hundreds of locals serving as extras or crew for the film.

Nearly as soon as it was completed, the Patagonia branch faced frustrating financial challenges. The operational cost regularly exceeded revenue from traffic. Flood damage

alone – caused by monsoon storms that swelled the multiple waterways the branch traversed – required nearly half a million dollars of repairs within its first fifty years of operation. Over fierce objections from residents, especially ranchers, the Patagonia Branch was abandoned in 1962. Today, the remnants of the former railroad – from the Patagonia station and the Elgin section house to the still-standing trestles and empty railbed – are sources of pride to locals in this special section of Santa Cruz County. ■



The Patagonia Branch of the New Mexico & Arizona Railroad as illustrated in H.R. Page & Co. 1885 atlas. The route of the railroad can be seen from Benson south to Fairbank, then west through Elgin and Sonoita and eventually south to Nogales. MAP COURTESY OF THE DAVID RUMSEY MAP COLLECTION, DAVID RUMSEY MAP CENTER, STANFORD LIBRARIES

Brewed for success

Family-owned Dos Cabezas Coffee Co. keeps Willcox buzzing

By R.J. Cohn

If you've missed being inside a real coffee house with a veranda-style porch and a soft couch across from a brick fireplace that you can sink into, then you haven't stepped into the Dos Cabezas Coffee Company in Willcox.

It's not just the historic 110-year-old Harry Saxon House – added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1987 – that draws customers to Dos Cabezas for outstanding brewed coffee, a host of espresso drinks, or a strawberry-lime scone at 6 a.m. seven days a week.

It's the genuine, small-town charm delivered to everyone who walks in with an engaging smile and real-time conversation by the five members of the ever-busy Finley family who keep Dos Cabezas hopping, making the coffee house the hub of a ranching, agricultural community.

For a family who never drank or even liked coffee, had zero retail business exposure and just a smidgen of experience making lattes and cappuccinos, the Finleys – Ashley, Jake, Jasper, Chloe and Dakota – jumped headfirst into opening Dos Cabezas two years ago after a former coffee business in the Saxon House abruptly closed.

"Big-time leap of faith," said Ashley Finley, a real estate agent whose family – the Martins and the Grahams – were two original Willcox families. "The owner of the house asked if we'd like to buy the equipment and run a coffee house. Big decision, yet it took us less than a weekend to think it over and say 'let's do this.' We didn't know what we were getting into, but everything came together so we knew it was God's will. We preserved."

Chloe and Baby Annaleigh helping a customer.

ADORE STOCK IMAGES BY
MICHAEL MEDARD



There is something for everyone with Dos Cabezas' large menu.

But not before struggling through their first year in a business they had to learn on the fly, even though Dos Cabezas was the only coffee house in town at the time. It was not just about learning how to make caramel cartwheel and pistachio dream lattes; it was learning to run a business, dealing with profit margins, inventory, payrolls, developing a marketing plan, and a customer base.

"It was a rough road at first," said Ashley. "We opened in April, a slow season, not knowing how we were going to make the next rent check. We love this community because it's our home, and we wanted to keep this open as a place for everyone to come for coffee in a comfortable, historic house with two big couches where they could enjoy being with friends. We realized we had some work to do. Our first year felt like one big, hot mess."

But the tight-knit Finley's regrouped, got their family dynamics in order and made it work.

"After the first year, we decided not to have employees and run the business as a family," said Chloe Finley. "We're a strong, close family. We refocused and turned things around."

Suddenly they had a business that was beginning to flourish, and the buzz in the Willcox about the coffee shop on South Haskell with the big, white metal coffee sign in front of the Saxon House that went out of its way to make you feel like family was quickly spreading.

"We wanted to make sure that everyone who walked in was cared for with a personable touch they can't get anywhere else," said Ashley. "We really mean it when we say good morning, how's it going. We wanted to talk to our customers and hear how things are going in their lives. It's what neighbors in a community do."

The Finley's downhome friendliness didn't go unnoticed.

Last year, the community voted Dos Cabezas as number one in the Herald Review's 'Best Of' in customer service.

Since then, their clientele has grown steadily. They have three major morning rushes, created a massive menu board of practically every latte drink imaginable, along with dozens of tea selections – even prickly pear – and a variety of smoothies and Italian sodas.

Even more impressive, Ashley starts baking Dos Cabezas' pastries at 4 a.m. each day with homemade delights like pecan pie cookies, lemon-poppyseed scones, cheesecake smores and chocolate croissants along with breakfast burritos.

"We literally had to learn everything on the seat-of-our-pants from day one," said Ashley's son Jasper, who had only a shred of experience as a barista years ago. "It was a lot of a lot of trial and error, but now it feels like we're a smooth, well-oiled machine. We feel we're a big part of this community, and we're behind everything that's local."

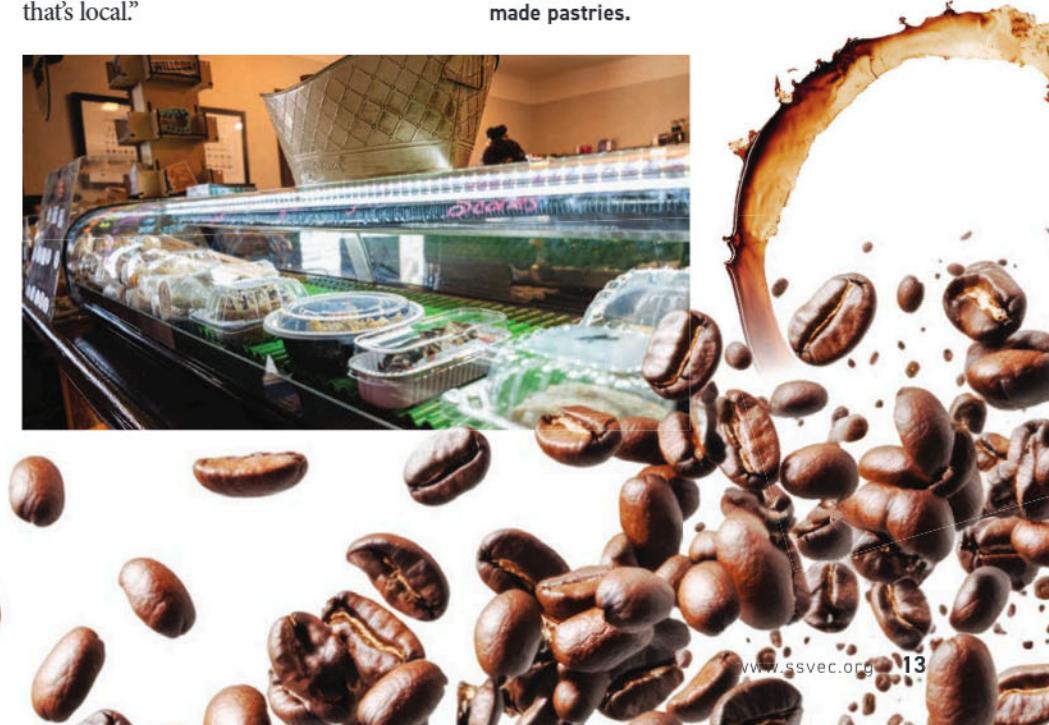


The Finleys still have more irons in the fire for Dos Cabezas. They're working on outfitting a coffee trailer for local events and adding a line of deli sandwiches to their menu. They also hope to purchase the historic Saxon House in the near future.

"We've got a long way to go yet," said Ashley. "But we're loving every minute of it, especially balancing our lives with a coffee shop that's open seven days a week. It's a challenge, but we're getting the hang of it just fine." ■

BELOW LEFT: The whole Dos Cabezas family posing for a family photo. From left are Jasper, Dakota, Jake, Ashley, Chloe, and Baby Annaleigh.

BELOW RIGHT: You can enjoy a sweet treat or something for breakfast with freshly made pastries.



Pickleball

grabs hold of Sierra Vista



TOP: Sky Island Pickleball Club members posing for a group photo before hitting the courts. Pictured from left to right are Julie Ramirez, Tammy Lao, Carolyn Regan, Mary Jostes, JoAnn Adams, Julie Power, Beth Amsdell, Susan Rabits, and Deena Hudson. **BOTTOM:** Mary Jostes moves to make a return. PHOTOS BY MONIQUE VARGAS

Sky Island Pickleball Club Hosts National Tourney Sept. 26

By R.J. Cohn

It's no longer a trendy, hodgepodge activity with a funny name.

America's fastest-growing sport has mushroomed into a worldwide phenomenon, encompassing nearly 20 million players.

It has taken Sierra Vista by storm.

Pickleball's near-seismic growth and popularity in the Hummingbird Capital has been so overwhelming that it spawned a 200-plus member club which has hosted five major pickleball tournaments in the past six years.

Similar to the hula hoop craze that captivated the American landscape in the 1950s, pickleball has exploded through the community with such an embracing, addictive force that almost everyone and their neighbor is suddenly playing pickleball and loving every moment of it.

And regardless of age, players can't wait to hit the courts at the Oscar Yrun Community Center and slap the little green wiffleball for all its worth.

Thanks to the emergence of the nonprofit Sky Island Pickleball Club, now with nearly 210 members since it began in 2019, the sport has become more than just a sport in Sierra Vista.

It has become as close to an extended family as it gets.

What's triggering a game that looks like part-badminton, part-pong rolled into tennis and racquetball on a court half the size of a tennis court?

“What’s so great about pickleball is you don’t have to kill yourself playing it,” said club president Mike Whetzel. “In tennis, you’re constantly running, you’re bending, you’re reaching, and you’re trying to react to a powerful serve. With pickleball, it’s the playability at any level, age and athleticism that makes it so attractive and fun. You don’t have to be a John McEnroe to play. We have a member who’s 92 and having the time of his life playing pickleball.”

But it’s the club’s family atmosphere that has almost made pickleball a huge part of members’ lives.

“We’re like a community more than a club,” said club member Deena Hudson. “We’re providing a healthy activity, friendship, social connections, occasional get-togethers, so in that context, we’ve become one big family.”

What Sky Island Pickleball also provides is four major tournaments per year that have been bringing in pickleball players throughout Arizona to Sierra Vista, which has had a significant economic impact for the area. Whetzel said this year’s High Desert Classic VI tourney, scheduled for Sept. 26-28 at the Oscar Yrun Community Center’s eight courts, is a national event and has been placed on the national pickleball website. He’s expecting about 300 players nationwide, up from last year’s 240. The deadline for the \$40 pre-registration fee is Sept. 21.

Since the popularity of the sport has skyrocketed in Sierra

Vista, there’s often wait-time at the courts at prime playing hours, which the both the city and the club are addressing.

“The city has allotted the basketball courts, which aren’t used much anymore, that are behind the eight pickleball courts, to be turned into more courts for us, about,” said Whetzel. “We’re absolutely thrilled how this is all coming together.”

But the project won’t come cheap. Whetzel said the price tag is around \$225,000. While the city will contribute some funding, the club’s fundraising committee and grant writing team are pooling their efforts to raise the bulk of the cost.

It’s not just the tournaments or the addition of new courts that has Whetzel and Hudson excited about the future of pickleball in Sierra Vista. It’s how the community has embraced the sport as well as embracing each other.

“I’m teaching someone who’s 75 how to play, and he’s loving every second of it,” said Hudson, who also taught her two 40-year-old sons to play. “Whether you’re brand new at this or playing at an experienced level, everyone on the court is helpful and friendly. You can ask practically anyone for some tips or help, and you’ll most likely get it. That’s why this is like a family.”

Competitive and athletic most of his life, Whetzel turned to pickleball in his mid-50s.

“At this age, I can’t do what I used to do playing basketball, especially with all the jumping and running,” he said. “But with pickleball, I have a great time, a great workout, I’m meeting great people who enjoy doing what you’re doing. What’s not to like about this?” ■

Tammy Lao (left) and Mary Jostes (right) tap paddles after a pickleball volley.



And they call it COWBOY

A bull rider, a barrel racer, and the rodeo they built in Tombstone

By R.J. Cohn

He was a champion bull rider a dozen times over who grew up in the whirlwind of rodeo circuits in California's Central Valley. His aunt was a chute boss and his grandfather organized rodeo events.

She was a top barrel racer, goat-tying and pole-running standout from Wyoming who could bring a crowd to its feet.

They both received rodeo scholarships to New Mexico State University, where they met and earned a top reputation at collegiate rodeos. They followed the professional circuit for prize money that sometimes came in big payouts – and sometimes just gas money – got married and had three children on a ranch in McNeal.

Call it cowboy love.

But Robby and Kati Jundt weren't

done living the cowboy life.

You don't shake out rodeo dust that's been in your boots your entire life and walk away to become an insurance adjuster.

At least not the Jundts.

They wanted their own arena to host what they felt could become one of the best-staged rodeo events in the Southwest.

Five years after purchasing a rundown, hardly used arena without seating in Tombstone, the Jundts' Shoot Out Arena has carved a niche as a top bull riding rodeo, drawing big-name riders from throughout the West, filling the 1,100-plus coliseum-bleachers, VIP and O-Chute seating with high-caliber events four times a year.

"It's not a career choice you make to live a rodeo life," said Kati Jundt, who still competes in top barrel racing events. "It's a lifestyle that chooses you because it's been in your blood ever since you could practically walk. You don't know a life that's different."

Even though the Jundts wanted an arena, finding one for a price they could afford was a different

story. Robby had once competed in the Tombstone arena, but as a top bull riding competitor, it hardly ranked as a quality venue.

"It was completely run down," said Jundt, who was raised in a family of bull riders. "The chutes and corrals needed a lot of work, and there was no spectator seating. I grew up with rodeo arenas, so I know a thing or two about them. This wasn't in great shape."

But he also saw potential in the 10-acre property where the arena was situated. After some back-and-forth negotiations, the Jundts' got their arena, along with two parking lots, one that became a dry-camper site for 51 campers. Robby immediately went to work rebuilding the chutes, corrals,

Kati and Robby Jundt captured in a photo by The Wild and Wonder photographer, Candace Lostroh.



LOVE

fencing, building a concession stand and countless improvements.

"I knew what we were getting into," he said. "We wanted to make this sensational. We wanted it to become a rodeo where contestants didn't get paid leftovers. We felt if we had our arena, we'd put on great events where bull riders received big payouts."

Opened during Helldorado Days at the height of Covid, the Jundts packed Shoot Out Arena with 30 premier bull riders along with athletic bulls from New Mexico and nearby Elfrida.

"I was hoping for 250 people, but we got 2,000," said Kati. "We brought in bleachers from Willcox and Phoenix. Robby was still building things during the opening event, rigging up lighting with a generator. People came from all over because Covid had shut everything down. It was a fantastically successful opening night for two people who didn't know what they were doing."

The second show the following month was another packed performance. It brought in what the Jundts called a 'godsend.'

"A Tombstone resident saw what we were trying to do, loved every aspect about it and offered to become an investor," said Robby. "I told him there was no way I could pay him back, but he said that was okay. If I could build some horse corrals for some friends, that

would be good enough. Some people just have huge hearts."

With newfound money, the Jundts went to work creating a rodeo arena of their dreams. They cut riders' entry fees to \$60 versus the \$150 to \$200 charged by most rodeos, slashed overhead costs and gave bull riders big-time payouts they promised they would do from the get-go.

"We're doing this to give back to something we're passionate about," said Kati. "Bull riding is a business, and riders want to know how much they're going to walk away with. We have a 40/30/20/10 split of the purse. If it's a \$5,000 purse, the first-place rider is taking home \$2,000."

After putting on monthly rodeos, the Jundts decided it was becoming too difficult to keep that pace up and scaled back to four events a year. The next one will be Oct. 18 during Helldorado Days.

"Now we have time for our lives, our ranch and our two youngest kids, who are riding horses now," said Kati, whose oldest daughter works for a

barrel racing trainer. "Our family is a big part of our lives, and it's something we're not going to miss out on."

With seven sponsors, strong beer sales and a growing word-of-mouth reputation, the two kids on rodeo scholarships who never took a college business course have managed to turn a dilapidated arena into a premier rodeo event in the desert of southeast Arizona.

"It's been quite the adventure," said Robby. "We learned everything about running a business on-the-fly without going to business school. As rodeo competitors, we talked about doing something like this for years and said if we were going to do this right, we had to find a way to do it our way. Somehow we did, and it's worked out, not only for us, but for everyone who loves rodeos." ■



PHOTOS COURTESY OF ROBBY AND KATI JUNDT

From dishwasher to director: Jesse Rowley's journey at CVMC



By Natoyah Swift

When Jesse Rowley started at Canyon Vista Medical Center (CVMC) six years ago, he was hired as a Nutrition Aide—washing dishes, stocking nutrition rooms, and delivering trays to patients. Today, he leads the entire department as Director of Food Services.

“I remember how busy it was on my first day,” Jesse recalls. “But what stood out most was how much the team cared. That really stuck with me.”

His path from entry-level to leadership is a testament to hard work, mentorship, and an unwavering commitment to service. Along the way, Jesse faced challenges—like working more than 30 days in a row during staffing shortages—but always kept his focus on patients. “We can’t let them down,” he says. “They need our support.”

It wasn’t until he became a supervisor that Jesse began to see the broader impact of food service in a hospital setting. “A good meal and a kind word can go a long way,” he says. “We’re part of the healing process.”

Mentors along the way, including an interim director and

executive chef, helped shape his approach to leadership: lead with calm, work hard, and support your team. Now, Jesse is passing that mindset on. Several members of his leadership team started in hourly roles—just like he did.

“Promotion from within has created a culture of growth,” Jesse says. “When people see what’s possible, they start to believe in their own potential.”

That culture has translated into success. Under Jesse’s leadership, CVMC’s Nutrition Department has maintained over 90% employee retention for three consecutive years. He’s also continuing his own growth—pursuing a degree in Healthcare Business Management through a scholarship from HHS, CVMC’s food service partner.

Jesse says he’s proud of the department’s progress, but it always comes back to people.

“If someone I love were a patient here, what kind of care would I want them to receive?” he says. “That’s the question we ask ourselves every day. That’s what guides our work.”

From dishwasher to director, Jesse Rowley’s story is a reminder that growth starts with belief—and that every role in a hospital, no matter how behind-the-scenes, has the power to heal. ■

Isaac Merrill earns leadership honors

By Dana Cole



Isaac Merrill describes his childhood journey as "anything but easy."

It's a journey the 17-year-old shared at a Youth of the Year recognition breakfast earlier this year in Phoenix, an annual event hosted by the Boys & Girls Clubs in Arizona.

Standing before a conference room filled with Club members, staff and leadership teams

from all over the state, Issac was one of seven 2025 Youth of the Year candidates to present a speech at the event where he represented the Boys & Girls Clubs of Sierra Vista. He delivered a compelling story of how he rose above challenges to excel academically and athletically, crediting his years as a Boys & Girls Club member for his successes.

"My father was in jail, and my mother struggled with addiction," Isaac said of his early childhood years. "When my grandparents adopted me, I thought I had found stability, but then a divorce while I was in the third grade left me feeling anxious and lost."

At the time of the divorce, Issac and his grandparents were living in California. His grandfather and adoptive father, Randy Merrill, decided to relocate to Sierra Vista where he could be close to family, a move he felt would be in Issac's best interest.

"As a single father with a full-time job, I wasn't sure how I was going to balance work and raising a son by myself," Randy recalled. "A friend told me about Sierra Vista's Boys & Girls Club, so I checked it out and enrolled Isaac into the program. It has been a positive, life-changing experience for both of us."

Isaac echoed his father's words with, "The Club became my foundation of peace, hope and stability. Between my father, family members and the Boys & Girls Club, I have the support I need to be self-confident and successful."

Through the Club's sports programs, Merrill discovered

football and soon excelled in the sport.

"I'll never forget my 2023 season with the Berean Academy Eagles," he said. "We were on an 11-0 run when I scored 11 touchdowns and helped bring home a state championship."

Merrill wears his championship ring with pride and emphasizes its significance as a "symbol of discipline, hard work and perseverance." He will be graduating from Berean Academy with the class of 2026 and plans to continue playing football through high school and college. While he credits football for giving him purpose, Merrill also shares words of praise for those who have been instrumental in shaping his future.

"Through the Boys & Girls Club, I met mentors like Detric Miles who guided me beyond my passion for football. He taught me how to control my destiny, both in sports and music," Merrill said. "Miss Liz (Cruz) is always there to make sure I stay on track academically for high school and beyond. And then there's Jay (Hamwright), the Club leader who pushes me to believe in myself and rise above my circumstances. Their support transformed me into the person I am today."

Merrill says the Boys & Girls Club not only helped him grow as an athlete but also shaped his leadership skills.

"I learned that true leadership isn't about personal success, it's also about lifting others. The valuable lessons I've learned at the Boys & Girls Club will stay with me for years to come and will always have an impact on my life."

Merrill hopes to attend college on a football scholarship as he continues to develop his skills on and off the field. While he aspires to be a professional football player, Merrill's backup plan is to major in sports medicine. ■



**BOYS & GIRLS CLUBS
OF SIERRA VISTA**

Stories of Fort Grant

1



2

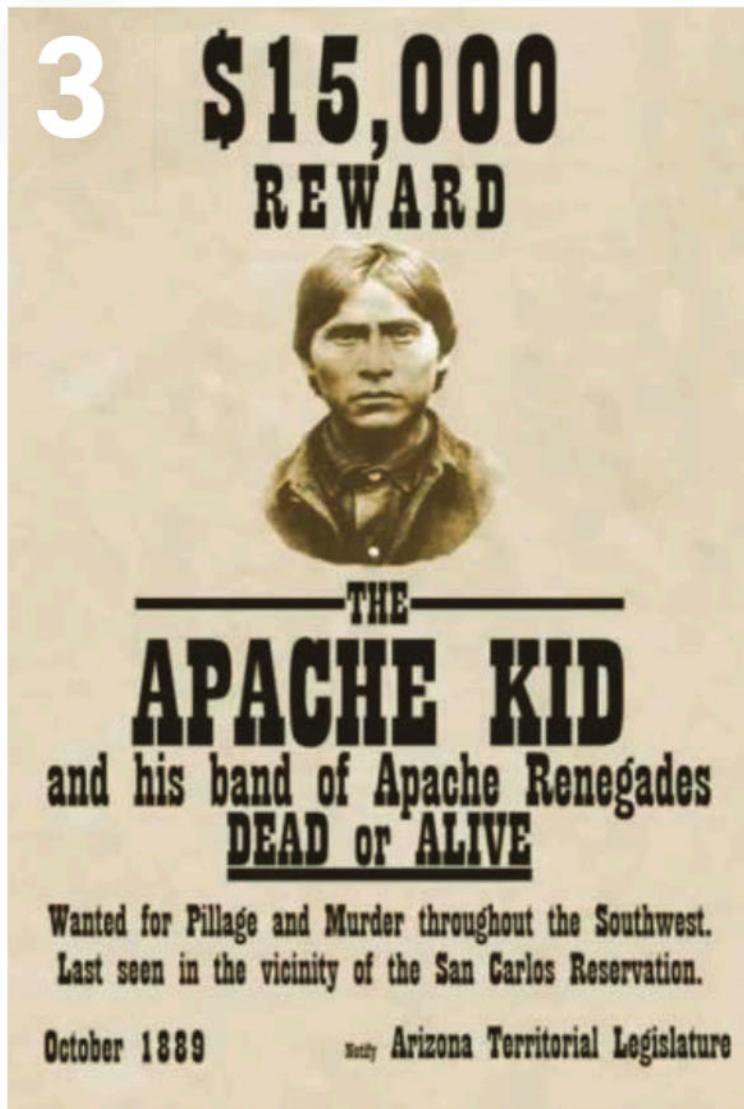


By Kathy Klump

1. Fort Grant has a history under five different names. It was the second military fort to be built in Arizona after the Gadsden Purchase. It was first called Fort Aravaipa, when it was established May 8, 1860 at the confluence of the Aravaipa and San Pedro Rivers. It was named Fort Breckinridge a few months later on August 6, 1860 after Vice President John C. Breckinridge, the youngest Vice President in history. The name was changed to Fort Stanford on May 24, 1862 after California Governor Leland Stanford. It was reestablished after the Civil War as Camp Grant in October 1865 named after Ulysses S. Grant. After the horrific Camp Grant massacre of April 30, 1871, the military reserve was moved to a new location and designated as Fort Grant on April 5, 1879.

2. According to his memoir, Edgar Rice Burroughs arrived in Willcox on May 22, 1896. With only one dollar in his possession, he was able to get a room at the Willcox Hotel, supper, and a bath. The next day he boarded a stagecoach heading to Fort Grant with the other passenger being a lady of the evening from the Hog Ranch near the Fort. The stage coaches, like the one pictured that went from Willcox to Bonita, were not very fancy. Life was pretty boring at the fort, except for Edgar's time helping to hunt down the Apache Kid.

3. By the 1890s, the Apache wars were over, but the renegade known as the Apache Kid was still causing trouble. He had been a scout for the U. S. Army hunting Geronimo's band in the 1880s. A breakout and melee at San Carlos Reservation



resulted in the Kid's imprisonment at Alcatraz for a time. A \$15,000 bounty was advertised for his capture. There were many stories of his being killed at several different places, but no one ever collected the bounty.

4. **Tom Horn, a legendary figure of the Old West,** was personally hired by the commander of the 7th U. S. Cavalry Regiment at Fort Grant as a civilian chief of scouts to guide troops in the field during the Army's 1896 campaign to hunt down the Apache Kid. He was employed in this capacity from June through September 1896. He was paid \$75 per month. Tom Horn was a cowboy, government packer, interpreter, participant in the Geronimo campaigns, lawman/vigilante in Arizona's Pleasant Valley War, Pinkerton operative, range detective, man hunter, and hired assassin for cattle barons in Wyoming. He was hanged, one day before his 43rd birthday, in Cheyenne, Wyoming on November 20, 1903, for the murder of fourteen-year-old Willie Nickell.



5. **John Slaughter of the San Bernardino ranch** and some of his cowboys teamed up with a military patrol from Fort Grant along with Army Indian Scouts. They took the trail after a band of renegade Apaches who had been stealing cattle among other depredations. On May 8, 1896, they surprised an Apache rancheria in the Guadalupe Mountains. One renegade was killed and a two-year-old Apache girl was captured. John Slaughter took her home to his wife, Viola. With no children of their own, they adopted her and named her Apache May after the month she was found abandoned. They fell in love with the little girl, and she came to adore them. They took her into Tombstone several times where people would line up to see her. During one of these visits, her picture was taken by C. S. Fly, the famous Tombstone photographer. Sadly, little Apache May died in 1900, when her dress caught fire while playing near the big iron kettle in the ranch house yard where water was boiling to wash the clothes. ■

Unplug and Play



AI-GENERATED ILLUSTRATION
BY FREEPIK/BRANDON POMRENKE

Use family fun to teach kids the power of energy conservation

By Drew Woolley

Everyone likes finding ways to save on their energy bill. But watching the thermostat like a hawk, turning off lights behind everyone in the house and sweating an investment in energy-efficient appliances isn't much fun, especially when you're trying to get the kids to play along.

Fortunately, electric cooperatives have been working to make energy savings more approachable for many years.

After decades of educating kids of all

ages, cooperatives have learned a few helpful tricks to resonate with younger audiences. Hands-on activities, such as asking kids to look through their backpacks for electronic devices and calculating how much energy they use, can drive home just how much electricity they use in their daily lives. Meanwhile, avoiding technical terms like "energy efficiency" can help saving energy feel less daunting and more fun.

Even so, some of the most effective ways to drive home the importance of energy conservation are the routine reminders members may have heard from their parents growing up. Luckily, there are still plenty of ways to teach your kids the importance of energy conservation while having fun as a family.

Here are some fun ways to encourage energy efficiency and conservation at home:

Cook a family-powered dinner. Have the whole family help cook dinner with one rule: No electricity is allowed. Avoid using major kitchen appliances like electric ovens, blenders,

mixers or microwaves to teach kids about common ways your family uses electricity during peak demand times. Top it all off with some no-bake treats.

Take turns on power patrol. Every child enjoys being in charge from time to time. Take turns letting everyone in your family be responsible for enforcing good energy habits around the house for a week. You can even set up a point system for every time they notice a light left on in an empty room, unplug unused electronics chargers or adjust the thermostat to a more efficient setting. Offer prizes and rewards to encourage them to be mindful of energy use every day.

Build an energy-efficient dream home. Encourage everyone to design their dream home with energy-saving features in mind. This is a great way to introduce ideas like solar panels, efficient appliances and sustainable building materials. Break out the crayons and art supplies to bring their homes to life, or use household crafts to build models.

Play energy-saving bingo.

Make bingo cards with squares for energy-saving actions like using natural light instead of lamps or ceiling lights, unplugging devices, turning off lights and cooling off the temperature by opening a window. Kids can cross out each square as they complete each task, and the first one to bingo gets a prize.

Have power-free fun. Designate one night a week as power-free time when everyone in the family turns off phones, computers and TVs together. Play a board game, spend time reading your favorite books or enjoy some outdoor activities technology-free. Save on your electric bill, teach the importance of reducing energy use during peak periods and get some valuable family time all at once.

Make an energy-saving

scavenger hunt. Make up a list of energy-saving practices, such as updating light fixtures with LED bulbs, turning off lights in empty rooms and

unplugging unused devices. Challenge your kids to search the house and check off an example of each scavenger hunt item. You can celebrate with small prizes or treats for each energy-efficient discovery they make along the way.

Create energy-efficient art. Kids enjoy seeing their artwork displayed, so put those creative skills to work on energy-efficient reminders around the house. Spend arts and crafts time teaching your kids about some of the steps they can take to save energy around the house. Make fun signs to serve as daily reminders to close the fridge quickly, turn off lights and only change the thermostat as a last resort.

Keep "phantom power waste bottled up. Phantom energy—the electricity devices use even when they are turned off—can be a tricky concept for kids to understand. Illustrate it in a fun way by adding marbles to a glass bottle or jar

every time someone spots an unused device still plugged in. Set a goal and reward yourselves when everyone keeps phantom energy use down.

No matter what you do to keep energy savings fun around the house, the most important part of instilling good habits is reliably reminding your family of the little steps they can take to be more efficient. Consistency is key. ■

ADDOE STOCK
ILLUSTRATION
BY CIRODELIA



Footie heaven

Who says pedicures and manicures are only for women?

By R.J. Cohn

Cracked, smacked, whacked and hacked, my fingers look absolutely brutalized, as if they've endured forced labor in a Siberian gulag in the dead of a winter for 20 years without gloves.

Trying to restore a 115-year-old Craftsman-style house for nearly a decade, my fingers have taken a beating from hammers and reciprocating Sawzall's, clobbered from 2-by-6's that have imprisoned more splinters around the edges of my cuticles than I can count.

And my toes?

Calloused and scaly with bunions galore, they look like they've been persecuted, beaten by a stiff riding crop and forced at gunpoint to walk across the frozen north. Regardless of how much ointment and salves I slathered on – from

O'Keeffe's Working Hands Cream to Vermont's Original Bag Balm for chapped goats' teats and cow udders – my fingers and toes are still a mess.

I'm downright brutal to them.

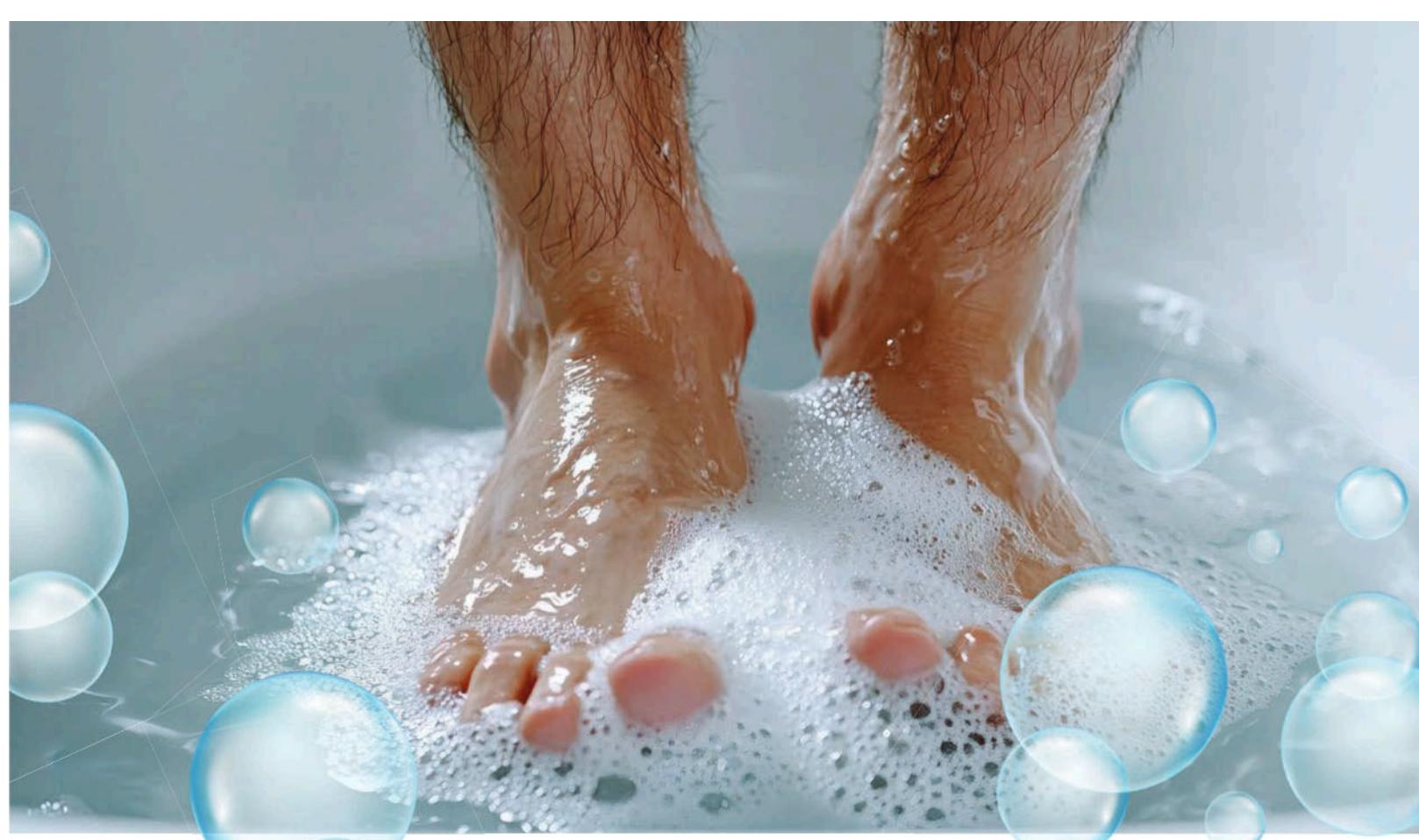
They deserve a lot better, these flexible appendages that hold and carry things and get me from one point to another.

A friend who builds homes for a living year-round in Flagstaff – the coldest city in Arizona with one of the snowiest climates in the entire U.S., where temperatures drop to 17 degrees – has the smoothest hands for a carpenter I've ever seen. He's roofing six high-end houses in a subdivision in December and starts his day when it's 22 degrees outside. Not a mark or a blemish on his fingers. He saw mine and whistled.

"Dude, you need to get a manicure at a nail salon," he said. "How can you even hold a fork with those sore dogs? I bet your feet are even worse."



Robert Cohn has his first pedicure from pedicurist Clara White.



"A nail salon?" I said, looking at him sideways. "You gotta be joking."

"I've been getting them for years, tough guy," he said. "I wouldn't be able to roof or nail drywall in sub-zero weather without them. Give your fingers and those 10 little piggies some love."

After I partially hammered a nail into my forefinger, I decided it was time for a pedicure, as silly it sounded. My fingers were so beaten I had difficulty even getting the key into the slot of the ignition switch.

I walked into Vinh and Nikki Bui's Pure Polish Nail Salon, at 1638 S. Hwy. 92 in Sierra Vista, and held my hands out to manicurist Clara White as if they were diseased, mustered my best Beatles improv in a muddled Cockney accent, saying "Help me if you can, I'm feeling down and I do appreciate you being 'round, help me get my feet back on the ground, won't you please, please help me?"

Oh, she had a lot of work to do.

I sat back, remembering a photo of 7'1" Shaquille O'Neal with his 22" feet crammed into a pedi bath before getting them painted with sparkles in a nail salon, an industry market data said was worth \$6.5 billion in 2020 and is expected to reach \$22.6 billion at the end of this year. They're seemingly everywhere, in every strip mall and shopping complex from one end of the country to another. Sierra Vista lists 26 nail salons. In three months, 15 more could pop up.

No one ever laughed at the Lakers big man who won four NBA championships for a painted-toe pedicure, or the Cowardly Lion for a stopover in Oz for a pedi and mani while looking for courage, so I figured it was time to drop my stigma

of men going to a nail salon and let Clara restore my battered fingers and toes.

"I've seen worse," she said, adding gel to the warm pedi bath. I put my feet into, watching them glow in the warm water.

A half hour of scraping, sponging, buffing and cutting enough dead skin from my cuticles that could stuff a teddy bear, I saw the half-moon portion around my toenails for what seemed like the first time. After Clara sugar-scrubbed them — chased by a warm-lotion massage before placing a hot towel over them — I was ready to propose on the spot.

If that wasn't heaven enough, she put me in another realm during the pedicure with an exfoliating scrub, oiling, buffing and shining my nails before massaging my battered fingers with a lotion made by angels.

"I'm never leaving," I told her.

For men who jump and sprint and pound their feet on a wooden floor like professional basketball players, pedicures are as essential as conditioning.

But you don't have to be a Shaquille O'Neal to be smart about your feet and fingers. They're your personal assistants and need to be nourished instead of neglected like I've been doing.

"Some guys look down on it 'cause it's girlie or whatever you want to call it, but I've done it from the beginning because it's like taking care of your body," former NBA star D.J. Augustin once said. "It makes a big difference."

Does it ever.

If I could book another one next week, the week after and the week after that, I'd be in footie heaven for the rest of my life. ■

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.

SEPTEMBER 25

ReadAround

Beginning at 11 a.m. "Where's Spot?" is the question we will be asking at ReadAround as we read this book. Join us at the Mall at Sierra Vista near Playland. We will each craft a home for Spot and his family. Attending families receive a free book. Sponsored by the Sierra Vista Woman's Club. Get to know us on Facebook.

SIERRA VISTA

SEPTEMBER 27

Dine Under the Stars

Come enjoy an unforgettable night of fine dining, live music, stargazing, and fun at the 23rd annual Dine Under the Stars scholarship fundraiser to be held on Saturday, September 27, from 6 to 9 p.m. by the University South Foundation. Tickets are \$85 for adults. Buy your tickets at <https://www.usfaz.org/dineunderthestars>. Dine Under the Stars is held on the campus of the University of Arizona, Sierra Vista,

1140 N Columbo Avenue. The night includes dinner by our generous sponsor Pizzeria Mimosa, live music, and stargazing at the Patterson Observatory with the Huachuca Astronomy Club. All proceeds support scholarships for Cochise County residents.

SIERRA VISTA

OCTOBER 4, 4:30 P.M.

Free movie night at Amerind

Amerind Museum

Join Amerind and friends from Loft Cinema for a free outdoor film screening. Fun for the entire family is featured! Bring a chair with your family, friends and neighbors. Amerind will supply free popcorn and a beautiful setting! Museum admission will also be free from 4:30 to 6 p.m., prior to the start of the movie. Make it a night of summer fun in Texas Canyon. Please visit the Amerind website for more details coming soon: www.amerind.org/events.

BENSON

R.J. Vandygriff *IN CONCERT*

R.J. will be doing a solo concert of Country, Western Swing, Cowboy classics, Gospel, Pop as well as some R&B with plenty of homespun humor thrown in. R.J. was at The K Palace Theater last year performing his award winning one-man show, "The Cowboy Ain't Dead Yet!"



R.J. TOUR ED WITH:
George Strait
Garth Brooks
Merle Haggard
George Jones
Alabama
The Judds
& many more!

CONCERT DATES:

September 20 & 21, 2025 @ 3pm

TICKETS: \$30

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

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SINGER
SONGWRITER
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AZ Folklore Preserve

"Tis the season for the Arizona Folklore Preserve!

Here is the performance schedule through November.

Reservations are recommended and can be made on the website at arizonafolklore.com or by calling 520.378.6165. Be prepared to respond to a voice mail message with your name, your telephone number, the date of the show you wish to attend, and the number of people in your party.

Performance schedule

- September 20/21, 2025 Liz and Pete
- September 27/28, 2025 Old Pueblo Bluegrass Band
- October 4/5, 2025 Nathan McEuen
- October 11/12, 2025 Ted Ramirez
- October 18/19, 2025 Mule Boys
- October 25/26, 2025 Gary Allegretto
- November 1/2, 2025 Eric Ramsey
- November 8/9, 2025 Jerry Hall and Trick Shot
- November 15/16, 2025 Michael Grande IWMA
- November 22/23, 2025 The Nevermores
- November 29/30, 2025 Jim Jones and Mariam Funke

Sierra Vista Symphony Celebrates Season 31 American Adventures

The Sierra Vista Symphony's American Adventures is a celebration of the 250th birthday of America. The concert dates are: Mysterious Mountain on October 18, Go West! on January 10, 2026, and Canyon Reflections on April 11, 2026

All concerts will be held at Klein Center for the Performing Arts (Buena High School) beginning at 7 p.m. A pre-concert lecture will be held at 6 p.m.

Tickets are available at Eventbrite.com, 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.



OCTOBER 4, 9 A.M. TO 3 P.M.

Sewing Room Sale

The Hummingbird Stitchers Guild will host its annual sewing room sale at the Rothery Education Center, 3305 E. Fry Boulevard, on October 4, from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Items for sale include all types of sewing supplies, sewing machines, fabric by the yard, jelly rolls, layer cakes, craft/quilt books and magazines, notions, thread, quilt patterns. In addition, there are table runners, quilts, wall hangings, and many unique items made by our members. There will also be member-vendors selling their items. Come shop for holiday gifts early! Cash, check, or credit cards accepted. For more information go to our website: www.hummingbirdquiltguild.com.

SIERRA VISTA

OCTOBER 4, 9 A.M. TO 5 P.M.

OCTOBER 5, 9 A.M. TO 4 P.M.

Art in the Park

The Huachuca Art Association presents the 53rd annual Art in the Park at Veterans' Memorial Park in Sierra Vista. The event features paintings, jewelry, candles, glass, wood, ceramics, baskets, metalwork, fiber arts, yard art, lotions, apparel, photography, and gourmet foods. Admission is free, parking is free, and there will be a food and beverage court. No dogs or pets are allowed at the event, except for service dogs.

SIERRA VISTA

OCTOBER 11

Cars in the Park

Shine your classic car and show it off! Enjoy a day at Veterans' Memorial Park. Dash plaques to the first 200 entries. The event will be held "Rain or Shine". Day-of registration only. Entry fee is \$20 per car (cash only). As always, there is no entry fee for spectators. Registration is from 7 a.m. to 10 a.m. Judging is from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. "Best of Show", ten "Judges' Picks", and "Best of NEXT GEN" awards at 2 p.m. Cash drawings at the awards ceremony. Gift Basket raffles, oldies music, and food and product vendors. Event shirts, available through Wicked Limitz (<https://wickedlimitz.com> or calling (520) 459-8547). Information flyer and registration form found on the Sierra Vista Car Club Facebook page.

SIERRA VISTA

OCTOBER 18

Kartchner Star Party

The Huachuca Astronomy Club invites you to enjoy the Kartchner Star Party at Kartchner Caverns State Park. Weather permitting, solar viewing will commence at noon. You'll see marvelous solar phenomena such as sunspots, filaments, and prominences through safe solar telescopes. There will be a talk by Dr. Vinicius Placco, Associate Astronomer at the NSF National Optical-Infrared Astronomy Research Laboratory (NSF NOIRLab) at 5 p.m. in the Discovery Center theater. After dark, our astronomers will treat you to fantastic views of Saturn and its family of moons with its magnificent ring system seen nearly edge-on, as well as stars, nebulae, star clusters, and distant galaxies through a variety of telescopes. Park admission applies but the star party is at no extra charge.

BENSON

OCTOBER 24 7 P.M. • OCTOBER 25 2 P.M.

Gospel Concert

The Sierra Vista Community Chorus will present its free gospel concert at the First Baptist Church, 1447 S. Seventh Street, Sierra Vista. The director of the chorus, Roger Bayes, says, "For the Gospel concert this year, we will be treated to some of the greatest, foot stomping, knee slapping, soul stirring, heart up-lifting music that Gospel Music has to offer. From traditional classics to modern offerings, there will be something to touch every heart, and delight every taste. This will truly be an unforgettable evening leaving the concert goer filled with joy."

From the old "Will the Circle be Unbroken" to "His Mercy is More"; from time tested "The Holy City" to the newer "Holy Is He"; from the lively "Ain't no Grave can Hold my Body Down" to the Quartet favorite "I'm Bound for that City," you will be delighted.

SIERRA VISTA

OCTOBER 25 10 A.M. TO 4 P.M.

Autumn Fest

Amerind Museum

Join us for our 14th Annual Autumn Fest, where we celebrate the rich cultural heritage of Indigenous peoples of the Southwest with a day of talks, music, dancers, artist booths, food, and more. \$10 per vehicle.

Please visit the Amerind website for more: www.amerind.org/events.

BENSON

NOVEMBER 1, 9 A.M. TO 1 P.M.

Fall Craft Fair

Find that perfect holiday gift and decoration at the Sierra Vista Village Craft Fair, at 733 S. Deer Creek Lane, off Highway 90. The event includes a bake sale and a raffle. Come on over and catch the holiday spirit!

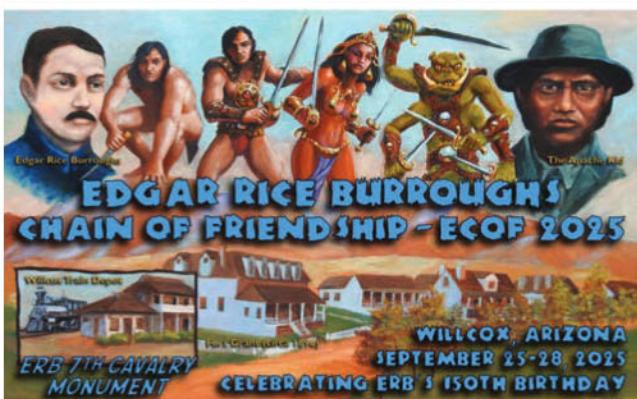
SIERRA VISTA

NOVEMBER 13, 14, 15

Holiday A'Fair Art & Craft Show

The 48th annual event featuring Sierra Vista's local artisans will be held at Cochise College (Sierra Vista) in the Student Union Building in the Community Room. Free admission. Show hours: Thursday, Nov. 13 (9am-3pm), Friday, Nov. 14 (9am-3pm), Saturday, Nov. 15 (9am-3pm). Cochise College, 901 N. Columbo Ave., Sierra Vista.

SIERRA VISTA



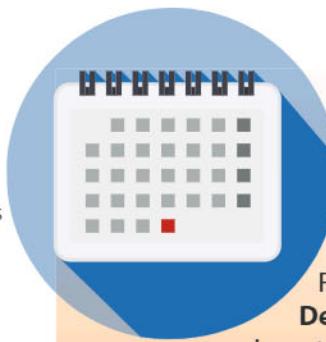
"Tarzan" Creator and Pop Culture's Influential "Grandfather of Science Fiction and Fantasy" Commemorated for His 150th Birthday

The renowned "Master of Adventure" Edgar Rice Burroughs arrived in Willcox in May 1896 to serve as a cavalryman at Fort Grant. Celebrate the late author's 150th birthday with a monument unveiling at 10 a.m., Saturday, September 27, at the historic Southern Pacific train depot in Willcox.

Guest speakers include Burroughs' great-grand-daughter Kathy Bonnaud and participation of Buffalo Soldier re-enactors. All other convention events on Friday, September 26, and Saturday, September 27, will take place at the Elks Lodge #2131 in Willcox. There are discussion panels, a "huckster" (vendor) room, Guest of Honor and speaker Jeffrey J. Mariotte (author of Tarzan and the Forest of Stone), Edgar Rice Burroughs, Inc. speakers, a Saturday night banquet, a Tarzan movie screening, and other surprises. Presenters include Dr. Deni Seymour (New Discoveries of the Coronado Expedition in Arizona) at 10 a.m. Friday; plus Floyd Gray, Bernd Brand, Henry G. Franke III, Scott Tracy Griffin, and Gary Buckingham, day and time to be announced.

Burroughs was influenced by his stay in Arizona for his first Martian story, Under the Moon of Mars. The John Carter Martian stories influenced generations of science fiction and fantasy books and movies, and inspired many young people to become scientists, engineers, and astronauts. His books The War Chief and Apache Devil, are set in Arizona during the Apache Wars of the 1860s-1880s.

The events are sponsored by the Sulphur Springs Valley Historical Society and the Apache Devils chapter of the Burroughs Bibliophiles.



We welcome your calendar events!

For the November / December 2025 edition, we have to receive the information by not later than **October 3, 2025**.

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

9th ANNUAL SKY ISLAND TOUR

Benefiting NAMI SOUTHEASTERN AZ

SATURDAY, OCT. 4th
3800 EL MERCADO LOOP
Start/Finish Line at
The Mall at Sierra Vista
(Dillards East Lot)

5 MILES • 20 MILES • 30 MILES • 44 MILES • 62 MILES

FOR MORE INFORMATION & TO REGISTER, VISIT www.SkyIslandTour.com

After your ride, head over to Art in the Park...
Saturday, October 4 • 9:00 am - 5:00 pm | Sunday, October 5 • 9:00 am - 4:00 pm | Veterans Memorial Park

NAMI Southeastern Arizona
National Alliance on Mental Illness



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Ongoing Art Classes

SMITHSONIAN SPARK! PLACES OF INNOVATION

Sept. 21 – Nov. 1

Studio 128, Willcox

WTA is proud to host this traveling Smithsonian exhibit celebrating the creativity and ingenuity of rural communities across America. It's the first show in our brand-new Center for Arts and Heritage gallery—come be inspired! This program was made possible by Arizona Humanities.

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED!

Help staff the Spark! exhibit on weekends or lend a hand at the Red Carpet Shindig. It's a fun, meaningful way to support local arts and

be part of something special! Construction of WTA's new building is still underway!

RED CARPET SHINDIG

Nov. 8 @ 6:00 PM

Elks Lodge, Willcox

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

ONGOING ART CLASSES (FREE!)

Restarting in September

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



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

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

Snacktiv

Story and photos by Chef Chris

ClownChef@Yahoo.com

I had an extra cheerful grandmother with her own made up vocabulary for lots of everyday things. We grandkids, for example, were "kidder-kadders" and it was said with pure joy. In the afternoon or on a long car ride she would offer us "snicky-snacks" which made them all the more a treat. We experienced pure joy letting her spoil us, and very likely our appetite for dinner.

She was always the life of any party and a wonderful hostess as well. Although my mother threw great parties and dinners, she didn't necessarily love it. Grandma did. She ran a cafe in Cleveland during the depression and people came as much

for the food as for her effervescence, stories, and hilarious one-liners.

To this day, I will almost always refer to any kind of nibble as a snicky-snack, and when I don't really feel like cooking I'm happy for them to stand in as a meal. Guests at the parties I catered in New York would sometimes sneak back to the kitchen to shovel a few extra hors d'oeuvre down their throat with a "this is my dinner" announcement. I couldn't blame them as it just wasn't done, as they say, to take more than one when the server passed them.

These days I favor more relaxed entertaining and am fond of a

snacktivites kind of gathering. Snicky-snacks also make a perfect offering at a potluck and I absolutely love the suspense of what will turn up at such get together. It's sad that some feel the need to plan them, which renders them devoid of luck... and a lot of the fun in my book. I know, "but what if there's no salad?" As if! Even if every single person did bring a pie, would we not still have a grand time?

So, please enjoy the recipes in this edition in the spirit in which they are intended — as fun to make and harbingers of joy with others,

CAPRESE CROSTINI

This is summer's favorite salad made even better with a little crunch from toasted baguette. I like to use bocconcini for the mozzarella, but any fresh mozzarella size will work.

PRO TIP:

Rub the toast with half a clove of garlic and the top stem slice of tomato for added flavor.

1/2 baguette
1 clove garlic, optional
3 small tomatoes, sliced
4 oz. fresh mozzarella
4 Tbsp. pesto
Fresh basil leaves
Olive oil

Cut the baguette into 4 inch pieces and toast in a toaster oven or in a regular oven. Rub with garlic, then tomato slice. Spread pesto on top, then add slices of mozzarella and tomato. Tuck in some basil leaves and lightly drizzle with olive oil.



ities



HAM, CHEESE, AND PICKLE PICNIC LOAF

I spend a lot of time in the UK and this is a bit of an homage to a “ploughman’s lunch” found at every pub. It’s light yet filling, and can be made with plant based cheese and meat. A perfect snack, but add a salad and you have a nice meal. Using self rising flour it’s really quick and easy. About 6 servings.

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

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

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

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

Perfect Hard Boiled Eggs

Put your eggs in a pot appropriate for the number you’re cooking and cover with water by 1/2 inch. Bring to a boil, cover and remove from heat. Let’s stand for 10 minutes, then drain and cool. Peel while still slightly warm.

DEVILISH EGGS

These are extra special deviled eggs, but you can decide just how special you want to make them. I like taking these to a potluck, because people love deviled eggs, but hardly ever make them for themselves. I used a favorite vegan jerk for mine, although the recipe calls for bacon. The longer you soak them in the beet juice, the pinker they’ll get. Mine are very lightly dyed as you can see..

6 hard boiled eggs
 ½ cup beet juice
 2 tsp. Dijon mustard
 6 Tbsp. hummus
 1-2 Tbsp. olive oil
 2 pieces cooked bacon
 Smoked paprika

Place the hard boiled eggs in a plastic container with the beet juice and store in the refrigerator. From time to time give the eggs a gentle shake to mix the juice. Leave for up to 12 hours.

Halve the eggs and put the yolks in a small mixing bowl. Add the mustard, hummus and olive oil, and stir well. Season with salt and taste, adjusting as needed. Please egg mixture in a zipper sandwich bag and trim a corner. Pipe mixture into egg halves. Sprinkle with paprika and finish with a piece of bacon.



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starts with a connection.**



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