

Patagonia Regional Times



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Harry Hower: A Legacy Set in Stone



Photo by Mary Tolena

Harry Hower stands atop the six-ring brick labyrinth he built for the Patagonia Community United Methodist Church.

By Mary Tolena

Stepping into the inlaid brick labyrinth in the courtyard of Patagonia's Community United Methodist Church, Harry Hower recalled his days of building it in 2012.

"The church wanted a brick courtyard, then decided they wanted to include a maze pattern," he said. The six-ring labyrinth designed by church Trustees Geoff Webb and Regina Medley was a masonry challenge. With patience and careful bricklaying, Hower and his assistant, Michael Brown, achieved the striking geometry of the turning pathway in the courtyard space.

Masonry was a craft Hower picked up in midlife, after moving to Arizona in the late 1990s. He began life in New York City, though his time in the Big City was brief. After his father died when he was eight, young Harry was sent to live with his aunt and uncle in the French Alps. There began his deep affinity for mountain life—ski-

ing, climbing, and simply being in the alpine environment.

Hower did well in school in Europe, and returned to New York for high school. Following a logical academic path, he started pursuing a degree in French at Georgetown University, which he thought would be easy. A little too easy, it turned out—he found it "incredibly boring." So he left college and headed west to the mountains. He ended up in Invermere, a small town in southeast British Columbia along the headwaters of the Columbia River, between the Purcell and Rocky Mountain ranges. "Well, this is paradise," Hower thought. He stayed there for 30 years.

A rugged life outdoors

Climbing mountains was Hower's first love, and the peaks in the area provided plenty of challenge with rock, ice, snow, and glaciers. He joined the area mountain rescue team and honed his climbing skills with their able leader. Eventually he achieved the first

See Hower, p. 8

De La Ossas Cheer Return of Family Land at Annual Picnic



Photo by Dave Lumia

De La Ossa descendants gather in Lochiel to tend to the ancestral resting grounds, a tradition that spans more than 40 years.

By Carrie White

Typically, the wind is Ramon De La Ossa's only companion when tending the Angus herd in Lochiel. But on this fall day in November, the abandoned border town boomed with some 70 extended family members taking part in the annual cemetery cleanup and picnic.

As Ramon Jr. mowed the grass around the family's 67-year-old adobe chapel, De La Ossas, Lortas and other kin—blood entwined—were up on the hill raking, weeding and watching children run amok amid the headstones. A grand place for hide and seek.

One adult helping on this day was Steve De La Ossa, who traveled from Tempe. It was his first rodeo, so to speak. "My dad was part of a group that moved to California for work right out of high school," Steve said. But he has always been aware of his ties to southern Arizona. And now, he's appreciating the shared heritage.

Telma De La Ossa Lorta was, on the other hand, no newbie to the event. She has taken part in the cemetery cleanup for 20 years. A resident of

Patagonia, she believes the gathering brings the family together in a unique way—on land Antonio and Carolina De La Ossa settled six generations previously. The spirit of family, the chance to talk and break bread with relatives known and new at the site where ancestors rest, is a unique opportunity.

The chapel and cemetery were recently returned to the family. The property had been caught up in the scandal involving former county treasurer Elizabeth Gutfahr, who held the deed to the land. In October, ownership of those two parcels—one containing the cemetery and the other containing the chapel—were passed to the newly formed De La Ossa Family Cemetery Foundation.

"It's a time to teach our little ones our history," said Lorta, whose mother—Gloria De La Ossa Lorta—grew up in this remote slice of the state. Like Gloria, Telma attended the little red schoolhouse that has in recent years been renovated. The schoolhouse is located at the north end of Lochiel in the shadow of the chapel and cemetery.

See Lochiel, p. 16

Patagonia Regional Times



MISSION STATEMENT

To be a reliable and engaging source of news for the communities of eastern Santa Cruz County—open to all views, focused on local issues, written and edited by local people, and providing a platform for community education and involvement.

WHO WE ARE

We are a nonprofit news organization, funded by paid advertising, donations and grants. The PRT is distributed in print monthly in eastern Santa Cruz County, weekly in the PRT News Bulletin and on our website.

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Do you have an idea for a story having to do with the Eastern Santa Cruz County region? It could be a person or organization who's doing something interesting, a concern about possible wrongdoing, or a unique approach to local challenges.
Send your idea to editor@prtnews.org

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LOCAL JOURNALISM CAN'T EXIST WITHOUT YOUR SUPPORT

This holiday season is a time to reflect on what makes our community strong and resilient. Here in the heart of eastern Santa Cruz County, the Patagonia Regional Times is more than just a source of news—it's a vital part of our community fabric.

We're pleased to have delivered a year of unique, local reporting in 2025, and we're looking forward to doing more of it in 2026. But none of this work is possible without the ongoing support of our loyal readers.

Local newspapers like the Patagonia Regional Times play an essential role in connecting us to the people, events, and stories that define our rural life. We cover everything from community events and local government to issues that impact the lives of our neighbors.

However, like many commu-

nity-driven organizations, we rely on the support of our readers to continue our work. Donations, home delivery subscriptions, local sponsorships, and even a simple word of encouragement go a long way in ensuring we can continue providing the information that matters most to you.

It's our privilege to do this vital work, but it's only possible with support from people like you, our community.

Here's how you can help: We have about three weeks remaining in our NewsMatch 2025 campaign to reach our goal of \$35,000—and we could really use your support to secure much-needed funding for 2025. Your contribution will be DOUBLED, which is a huge deal for a nonprofit newsroom like ours. That means that if you give us \$20, we get \$40. By helping us take advantage of this high-impact

fundraising opportunity, you enable us to create much more of our difference-making reporting.

We hope we can count on you to help us take advantage of this great opportunity. Visit prtnews.org/donate to help us continue this vital work.

Let's come together this holiday season to support not only the Patagonia Regional Times but also the people and businesses that make our community a place worth celebrating. Whether you're shopping for gifts, enjoying a meal out, or donating to a cause, every dollar spent locally stays in our community and helps those who are working hard to provide for their families and neighbors. Your support helps foster a stronger, more connected community where we all thrive.

Thank you for believing in the PRT.

Nominate Your Neighbor

The 4th annual **PRT Good Neighbor Award** will recognize the efforts of residents who are making exceptional contributions to our communities.

Do you have a good neighbor? Are there any unsung heroes in your community? Perhaps somebody has gone above and beyond the normal call of duty during these challenging times. Whether he or she has provided care and support for others, is always on hand when needed, performs acts of kindness, is an active volunteer in the community or has simply been a friendly face around your neighborhood, you can nominate them for the **PRT Good Neighbor Award**.

If you know someone who resides in Canelo, Elgin, Patagonia or Sonoita who is deserving of this recognition, please nominate them

by providing the following information:

Your Name:

Your Contact Information:

Your Good Neighbor's Name:

Your Good Neighbor's Contact Information:

Why is this person a good neighbor? Share a short story about what this person means to the community and what they have done to make it a better place. The more details you share, the better!

Mail your submission **before December 30, 2025** to PRT, PO Box 1073, Patagonia AZ 85624, or email to editor@prtnews.org.

The Good Neighbor Award winners, and their nominators, will be featured in the February, 2026 issue of the PRT and will be presented with gift certificates to local businesses.

Area Schools See Improved State Grades



Photo by Dave Lumia

School officials say that while the three “Rs” are foundational to professional achievement later in life, activities that bring students together—whether that be clubs or sports—also play a role in academic success.

By Carrie White

Report cards are in. And both Patagonia public schools and Sonoita Elementary School have garnered improved grades as awarded by the Arizona Department of Education (ADE). Patagonia High School earned an “A,” up from last year’s “B.” Patagonia Elementary improved to “B” from a previous “C.” Sonoita Elementary, located in Elgin, went from a “B” to “A.” Patagonia Montessori Elementary School, a K-8 charter school, received a “C,” having not received a grade for the 2023-24 school year. (Private schools do not receive a report card and are largely independent from government accountability.)

“We are very excited about our academic achievement from last year and [our most recent] letter grade,” said Dan Erickson, superintendent/principal of the Sonoita School District. He credits a focus on improving the school culture by embracing a philosophy laid out in “Row the Boat” by P.J. Fleck and Jon Gordon. The book’s philosophy of “energy,” “sacrifice” and “compass” has been embraced by faculty, staff and students.

“The oar represents the energy,” Erickson said. “How much energy are you putting in as you are rowing? The boat represents the sacrifice. The more you give and serve others, the more your sacrifice, the bigger your boat gets, the more people you can take with you. And direction is the compass, the compass points you toward your true north, which is where you want to go.

“When everyone buys into those things, and the culture and climate improves, the kids feel that,” he said.

Over in Patagonia, Kenny Hayes, who heads up Patagonia Elementary and Patagonia Union High School, be-

lieves a continued focus on data-driven instruction is key to success for both students and teachers.

“Honestly, we didn’t make a lot of changes,” said Hayes, who was promoted from teacher to superintendent/principal six years ago. The focus, he said, has been on achieving 80% proficiency in benchmark testing and formative assessment. Benchmark testing assesses students through the year to measure their progress toward grade-level standards and goals. Formative assessment happens during a lesson to adjust immediate instruction.

Every spring, Arizona students take different tests based on their grade level. Grades 3-8 take Arizona’s Academic Standard test, which assesses English and math. Grades 5, 8 and 11 take the Arizona Science Test, which measures student progress toward achievement on standards adopted by the Board of Education in 2018.

High school juniors take the American College Test (ACT), which assesses knowledge in English, math, reading and science, with an optional writing test. Freshmen take ACT Aspire, which assesses strengths and weaknesses in English, math, reading and science. It is designed to help students and parents track progress toward college and career readiness.

Independent of those tests is the College and Career Readiness Index that is administered to high school seniors. This is the self-reporting tool Hayes sees as a measure of preparedness for life after graduation.

While Erickson and Hayes agree that the report card system has merit, they also believe things go on in schools that the system doesn’t measure and yet lead to success. That would include involvement in extracurricular activities.

See Grades, p. 13

Coach Somoza, 5 PUHS Players Earn All-Region Volleyball Honors

By Dave Lumia

By whatever measure one chooses, 2025 will be judged as a superlative season for the Patagonia High volleyball program.

The 16-5 record, No. 7 ranking among 1A schools and second-place region finish are the best for the Lobos since 2015.

Now comes the 1A South all-region honors—one more indication of the Lobos’ excellence.

Patagonia placed four players on the all-region first team: seniors Emma Lewton and Brianna Majalca, junior Amaya Somoza and sophomore Monique Snell. A fifth Lobo, sophomore Nicole Cabrera, was a second-team selection. Ximena Gonzalez earned honorable mention. And first-year head coach Brenda Somoza was named 1A South Coach of the Year in voting by region coaches.

“That’s a huge deal,” Patagonia athletic director Nate Porter said. “Four on the first team, one on the second team, one honorable mention, that’s outstanding. And for Brenda to be honored by her peers, that’s a real honor.”

“I wasn’t expecting it, and it’s very much appreciated,” said Somoza, who guided the Lobos through some unanticipated adjustments after losing two senior starters midway through the season.

With a short bench to begin with, the roster turnover created ripples throughout the lineup. Cabrera moved into a starting position, and Lewton was forced to take on the role of middle blocker.

“We started with four seniors who were experienced, dialed in, ready to go, and it all fell apart halfway through

the season,” Somoza said. “Adjusting to that, putting the girls in different roles halfway through, they stepped up big time, but it was definitely very challenging.”

“Nicole is an incredible athlete, she did amazing, she just didn’t have the experience on the varsity level, so it was tough to be thrown in there like that.”

Somoza credited what she calls her “Core Four”—Lewton, Majalca, Somoza and Snell—with keeping the season on track.

“We relied on them 100 percent every single game,” she said. “I am so proud of them.”

Snell was the team’s top offensive force. “Her ability to put a ball away is unbelievable,” Somoza said. “Without her, a lot of those games would have looked a lot different. She was way more consistent in every respect: Serving, dynamite in the back row, played defense very, very well.”

Amaya Somoza, the coach’s daughter, was a steadying influence as setter and finished first in the state (all classifications) in service aces (1.6 per set). “Setting is a very, very tough position. You control the game, run the plays, it’s a lot of pressure,” coach Somoza said. “Your hitters’ success depends on your setting. She does amazingly well. We worked a lot over the spring and summer getting reps. She ended up No. 1 in the state for aces. I’m super proud of that.”

Co-captains Majalca and Lewton were versatile contributors and emotional leaders of the team.

Lewton’s willingness to take on middle blocker responsibilities was “huge,”

See Volleyball, p. 16



Photo by Carrie White

Patagonia’s 1A South all-region volleyball honorees (left to right): Senior Brianna Majalca, junior Amaya Somoza, Coach of the Year Brenda Somoza, senior Emma Lewton, sophomore Monique Snell and sophomore Nicole Cabrera.

New Teacher at Elgin School: Rachel Lyman



Photo by Marion Vendituoli

Rachel Lyman is "blessed and so thankful" to be working at the Elgin School.

By Sondra Porter

After nearly a full semester, Rachel Lyman, the newly hired fourth grade teacher at Elgin Elementary, is expressing gratitude for a teaching position within her own community.

"I feel blessed and so thankful to be working here," she said. "My home is in Elgin, just five minutes from the school. My own kids went to school here, and now I have two grandchildren in the area."

This semester Lyman has faced the transition from being a specialist to teaching in a classroom with 13 students. "It is different," she laughed. "Luckily, I like being busy. I have quickly developed a new appreciation for what general education teachers deal with each day. The one constant has been that the kids are wonderful."

On the day of our interview, Lyman was busy preparing for the school walkathon, arranging time for school pictures and supervising indoor recess. She also works each day with students who need speech support.

Lyman has an extensive background in speech language pathology, dating back to the 1990s. She earned her B.S. at Rutgers and her M.S. at the University of Arizona in Speech and Hearing Sciences. She has contracted with multiple schools, including those in Elgin and Patagonia, as a speech pathologist.

Starting in 2023, Lyman worked at the Benson Unified School District as Exceptional Student Services Director and Speech Language Pathologist. There she managed speech pathology needs for preschool through 12th grade.

"After working for years in five or six school districts at once, I wanted to become more involved in one school district, so I took the position in Ben-

son," she explained. "I loved the job in Benson, but it was too far from home. I missed being a part of my own local community."

Lyman is currently enrolled in college classes after school, such as Twenty-First Century Teaching Strategies, which have helped Lyman incorporate technology into her teaching. "I am a life-long learner, so I like expanding my skills," she said.

She sees major shifts in teaching since she started. "Teachers always worked with critical thinking skills and problem solving," she said, "but new brain-based research and learning techniques are showing us how to better connect students to material being taught."

For instance, Lyman likes to see students get more hands-on with materials. Research shows that learning is an active process and movement reinforces learning, so Lyman has pupils move about the classroom and become physically active. Vertical lightboards serve as tools that she places in various spots around her room. Smaller groups move from one board to another solving problems. This is particularly effective for math. Groups "steal" problems from each other, and the whole process becomes quite lively. She uses similar techniques with the lightboards for improving vocabulary.

Keeping busy on the weekends is no problem with family nearby, including her husband who is retired from the U.S. Forest Service. "One of my kids is starting a new Sonoita Feed Store, so you could find me there on the weekends," she said. "I like to bake cookies and take them to the store. I like gardening and working outside. I feel so fortunate to be full-time now in Elgin."

Elgin Couple Opens New Feed Store in Sonoita

By Eddie McArthur

Livestock, pet and horse owners have a new local option for all their feed and supplies. Tanner and Autumn Lyman have opened Sonoita Feeds in Sonoita at 3113 Hwy 83, across from the Copper Brothel.

When the opportunity to buy the property that houses their store came up, it seemed a perfect fit for the young couple with strong local ties. Both Autumn, who grew up in Tucson, and Tanner, who grew up in Elgin, have a passion for agriculture, and this was a good avenue to help the local agriculture community. Both Lymans went to the U of A in Tucson and received a BS each in Agricultural Technology and Management. Autumn went on to get a Masters in Agricultural Education.

Besides, Autumn said, "I long wanted my own feed store," and this was it. "We wanted to help the community," Tanner said, "provide what's needed, and keep it affordable."

After buying the property they spent about three months rehabbing the building prior to their July opening. Walk into Sonoita Feeds today and you will find a bright, airy space. Ceiling and floors were repaired and new lighting added. The interior was completely reworked. As you enter the store, straight ahead at the back is the sales counter. The Lymans want every customer to be greeted with a smiling face and helpful attitude.

Pet foods and other pet products line the sides of the store. The Lymans also carry hay, grains, feed, and treats for large animals.

Customers are invited to "tell us what you need." If a customer wants something they don't carry, they will do their best to get it. They strive to have what each customer needs no matter how large or small their animals may be.

Along with animal feed and supplies, they have introduced a number of gift items. Turned wood products produced by a local man, jewelry made by a sister-in-law, and tack items by another local are featured toward the front of the store. Consignment tack, including some beautiful saddles, run down the middle.

Both Autumn and Tanner have full time jobs in addition to the feed store, making for a very busy life. Autumn works mostly remotely for a beef company, procuring cattle from feed lots, arranging transport, and marketing. Tanner is a helicopter pilot. In the summer he pilots for the federal government, mostly for firefighting. Winter sees him building power lines.

Because he is gone a lot, Autumn is most often the one on hand at the store. She handles ordering and does the books in addition to working in the store itself. They agree that logistics is the hardest part of the business. From

See Feed Store, p. 17



Photo by Eddie McArthur

Tanner and Autumn Lyman opened Sonoita Feeds last July.

Local Youths' 'Second Home' Celebrated at PYEC Fundraiser

By Sondra Porter

Hamburgers weren't all that was being served up at the Patagonia Youth Enrichment Center (PYEC) on Nov. 8. The annual fundraiser and celebration highlighted a bit of rebranding and a refreshed commitment to the center's core values of strengthening community and empowering local youth.

The event was a huge success in every way, according to PYEC Director Anne Coleman, who was still working on clean up two days later. "It was a wonderfully exhausting evening, and

I'm still trying to digest the feelings of pride and love in my heart," she said. "I'd like to give a huge shout out to the kids and my daughter Caitlyn, who puts in all those hours nobody sees. The kids can count on her dedica-

tion."

From ticket taking to raffle sales to waiting on tables, young people were front and center at the event.

Throughout the evening, they were called to the mic to talk about the center and how it fit into their lives.

The center has been providing "a safe, healthy, happy environment" for local young people for over 11 years. Magali Santos spoke about how grateful she was for the center. Even though



Photo by Sondra Porter

Supporters of the Patagonia Youth Enrichment Center enjoy dinner cooked and served up by the PYEC youth.

the official age for joining the PYEC is 10, she said, "I started coming here when I was just a little kid with my brother...It is like a second home."

One of the new ways the PYEC is connecting with the community is through the creation of youth ambassadors who were introduced at the event. These are juniors and seniors who have participated with the PYEC since they were 10, and who are now being tasked with taking on leadership roles.

Caitlyn Coleman, PYEC program coordinator, explained, "They [youth ambassadors] represent us in the community. When they are at the center, they are role models, and they help out as much as they can."

Although an official count was not taken, Anna Coleman estimated that about 200 people attended. Ticket sales were booming with 185 sold online before the event, but, at only \$5 a meal, the food was more a thank-you to the community. Actual fundraising came from a raffle, silent auction, and

individual donations. All raffle and silent auction items, mostly collected and organized by Callie Mattus, came from community donations.

PYEC has been hit by federal cutbacks this year. Anna Coleman explained that although PYEC does not directly receive any federal grants or funding, the center's traditional donors and grantors do. PYEC relies on support from local nonprofits who have been hit by the cuts, who have in turn rolled back the grants they had previously awarded. As a result, individual donations are more important than ever.

Caleb Weaver, one of PYEC's eight board members, said the funding crunch was felt deeply by the center's garden project.

"The garden was created by the kids. We are collecting over 10,000 gallons of rainfall to feed plants here," he said. "However, we ran out of grants, so the young people we used to hire to grow food, we can't hire anymore. That is just where we are right now."



Photo by Sondra Porter

Anna Coleman poses with Gavin Arbizo (left) and Alex Ruskowitz at the PYEC fundraiser.

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You Say Tomato, I Say Treemato



Photo by Dave Lumia

The author's volunteer "treemato" has survived beyond all expectations.

By Dave Lumia

I love a great tree. I've been captivated by the PRT's various monthly chronicles of Santa Cruz County's great trees. I was enthralled by the magnificent welcoming cottonwood trees in

Lochiel that served as the backdrop for the De La Ossa annual family gathering (to which I was invited to help document for this newspaper).

But as much as I aspire to sit in the splendor of a giant shade tree on my home turf, I can't grow one.

I've planted, watered and fertilized five trees over the past two and a half years and been rewarded with nothing that even reaches my chin.

The three Arizona Ash—recommended by grassland plant guru Jim Kowek as a "good choice for a fast-growing shade tree"—have been repeatedly strafed and stripped of any greenery by our nomadic deer and invading hordes of grasshoppers, standing no taller or wider and a lot more sickly than when planted.

The lone oak lasted less than a year, buckled beyond salvation by a wind-storm.

Then there's the Santa Rosa plum, which the proprietor said would be bearing fruit within a year.

And so it has. Though not of the plum variety.

The tree itself is no longer visible, but it does serve a surprisingly delightful purpose—as support pillar for the sprawlignest tomato shrub (to call it a plant would not do it justice) I've ever seen.

The bush/shrub is a marvel of Mother Nature. Not planted, but sprung as a volunteer from the compost that has been added to the tree well. It has not only survived multiple scalpings by the local wildlife, but come back stronger each time. And it has even given birth to two little babies that have poked their way up

through the surrounding gravel.

As winter nears, we're harvesting a half-dozen or so of the sweetest mini tomatoes each day, with literally hundreds more waiting to ripen.

I realize that by writing this ode there's a good chance that I'm dooming this natural wonder to its demise—either by critters or the weather or plain old fate—but it deserves to be recognized for the simple joy it has brought.

My tomato tending practices are surely violating every best practice known to man, but if it ain't broke, don't fix it. Mother Nature works in mysterious ways. More often than not, it's best to just go with the flow.



Photo by Dave Lumia

The treemato, which grew despite multiple scalpings by wildlife, produced hundreds of tomatoes

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Photos by Shannon Dudley

With community support, PARA and our partners made major strides to defend the Patagonia Mountains and protect our air and water.

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SUNDAYS ARE FOR TORTILLAS



By Cassina Farley

Cooking runs in my family. It is rare that we have anything store bought at a family get-together. Holidays are for showcasing your best, your most decadent recipes. My aunt and cousins whip out loaves of bread in their spare time; my mother has a personal challenge of making the hottest salsa that no one can eat but they try. My grandma used to make the best chocolate pie and my grandpa could grill anything to perfec-

tion. Cooking is where the expectations are high and failure is not an option.

December is for tamales and my mother is very particular about how they are made. The ratio of pork to beef is exact. The masa is purchased at Food City in south Tucson and the red chile is always Santa Cruz brand. Lard is a must and is usually purchased at the meat market on the corner. Each tamale should have one green olive and a slice of pickled jalapeno. (There's a yearly disagreement on these terms and many are made without the jalapeno.)

Throughout the season, when my mom unwraps a tamale she knows without a doubt who made the tamale. If it's huge, it was Aunt Denise. If the tamale is lacking in masa and just way too skinny, we all know it was Martha. If it lacks a jalapeno, it was my grandma or possibly Mary. If it has more than one olive, it was surely me.

My mom strives to perfect every dish. I've never really tried. So a couple of months ago I declared that Sundays are for tortillas. I started scanning the internet for recipes. I landed on a TikTok account that featured a Mexi-

can grandma who made all the classic recipes, including tortillas. I set out on a mission.

The first batch was a disaster. There wasn't a round one in the bunch. They were too thin in the middle and thick around the edges. Since it took me over an hour to roll out and cook them I couldn't bear to throw them out, so I bagged them and put them in the refrigerator. The following Sunday I got a little closer but still they resembled squares, not circles. They were edible but still lacked the stretch that I longed for. I added them to the pile in the refrigerator.

I went back to the internet. I watched videos of women in Mexico using homemade wooden tortilla presses making perfectly round tortillas.

I consulted with Zach and asked if he could make me one of these presses. His face said "No" so I ordered one from Amazon. My new cast iron tortilla press came within the week and I was back in business that next Sunday. I made a few tweaks to my recipe, and some added rest time to the dough. I rolled and pressed.

Making tortillas is kind of stressful. After you roll and press you have to cook and flip. The cast iron griddle, called a comal, has to be perfectly hot but not so hot that it burns the tortillas. You have to move fast. You have to keep the tortilla balls covered so they don't dry out. You can't overwork the dough.

This last batch was almost perfect. Thanks to the press they were mostly circular. They were also the perfect amount of stretchy. If you know anything about tortillas, a stretchy tortilla rolls better, which makes for a better burrito (says Zach). These tortillas stayed on the counter.

This past Sunday I was out of lard and I took a break, satisfied that I had broken the tortilla code. I am not yet a master but I am confident that I am on my way.

The chickens have received many bad tortillas in the past month. They have stopped laying; I don't blame them. This Christmas instead of cookies everyone on my list is getting tortillas. The chickens don't trust me anymore.

Cassina Farley can be contacted at cassinaandzachfarley@msn.com

WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE? Food Insecurity in an Uncertain World



Photo by Sondra Porter

Volunteer workers prepare food boxes at the Food Bank pantry.

By James Staudacher,
President, East Santa Cruz County
Community Food Bank, Inc

When I began volunteering for the East Santa Cruz County Community Food Bank (ESCCC) more than ten years ago, I was surprised at the amount of food insecurity in what I viewed as a fairly affluent area. It seemed that—on closer look—there was hidden need nearly everywhere. It

made me wonder why in such beautiful communities did this dynamic exist?

In the ensuing years I have come to know that food insecurity exists here largely because of demographics and poverty.

Limited availability of food due to people living in remote rural areas, a long way from grocery stores and other food sources, as well as a lack of

resources to obtain food, combine to leave the elderly, single parents and low-income families relying on government assistance such as food banks and SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program), often scrambling to feed themselves and their families.

Eastern Santa Cruz County fits this dynamic nearly perfectly. It is an area of great natural beauty, but until recently, a dearth of family-supporting jobs. With a poverty level of more than 20%, those experiencing food insecurity here in our community often are forced to make hard choices, sacrificing nutritious food for other basic needs, consuming lower quality but inexpensive processed foods.

Fast forward to the fall of 2025. Suddenly the federal supplemental nutrition benefits relied upon by thousands of people in Santa Cruz County, and across the country, were cut off. Confusion, uncertainty and misinformation enveloped the country and our community. Perhaps the most severe and long-lasting effect of this government shutdown and suspension of benefits was the ongoing ambiguity about the future.

Here at the food bank, we decided to dive deep into research and obser-

vation of the ongoing political process in an attempt to determine what might happen and how we should respond. At the same time, we were scrambling, ordering and picking up food and preparing for the worst-case scenario.

As the initial disbelief and uncertainty faded, it became apparent that federal food benefits would not arrive on time in November. Given this new reality, we observed a wondrous thing begin to happen. Community organizations, churches, businesses and individuals came out of the woodwork to make donations, donate food and volunteer at food banks to do their part in feeding the people whose benefits were cut.

People took it upon themselves to place food donation bins throughout our communities, directing nonperishable items to food pantries, church groups and the food bank. Flyers went up all around, soliciting donations and directing people to food resources they may not have been familiar with. Fundraisers were scheduled to bolster organizations that prepared food and served it to the public.

At the ESCCC food bank we analyzed our continuing response day by day, week by week, after demand for our food quickly rose by 20%. We instituted additional food distributions, especially for people who lost their November food benefits, and saw a

See Insecurity, p.17

Hower (Cont.)

winter ascent of Mount Monica, a rugged 10,079-foot peak in the Purcells.

Hower’s paying work was outdoors, too, starting with his tree service business working for various public and private forestry operations. His crews of up to a dozen specialized in “juvenile spacing” of trees being grown for lumber. “You choose the best tree, and cut the other trees out in a certain radius to give it a chance with no competition. You get increased production, and the trees are ready a lot sooner.”

Being a skier as well, Hower found a perfect match clearing ski runs for Canadian Mountain Holidays, a helicopter skiing company. “Generally, they’d ski on glaciers, but in a whiteout, you can’t ski on a glacier because you can’t see the ground in front of you — all you see is white,” he said. “That can go on for a week, and they’d have to give [clients] their money back. So they decided to add tree skiing [between the glacier and the lodge], because if you have trees around you, you can judge the slope better.” Even in good weather, the expanded runs proved popular with clients, and were more efficient with helicopter time.

Hower picked up certification as an industrial first aid attendant, (comparable to an EMT), which was required for companies in high-risk businesses such as tree work. That led to jobs as an industrial medic all over Western Canada and up to the Beaufort Sea in the arctic.

One project was dredging and building an island for an oil rig. The crew lived and ate aboard their ship, and were even helicoptered back for lunch. “The food was great,” Hower recalled. “Up in the Arctic, they make sure of that. If the food’s no good, they’re in trouble. People won’t stay. The further north you go, the better the food.”

At another camp, “the first aid attendant used to deliver the bucket of food, a bunch of plates covered in tin foil, for the lunches,” Hower said. “I walked from the kitchen to the rig, which is a quarter of a mile maybe. There had been three bears hanging out, three black bears eating the lush new growth.

“I walked past them, and one of them could smell the food,” Hower continued. “I just kept walking, and he kept walking. I walked past them, and

suddenly he was walking, but he was catching up. I’d stop, he’d stop. I knew eventually what would happen there.

“So I put the food down between us, and picked up rocks from along the new road. I just started hurling these rocks, and they’d go whizzing past his head. Then I got a lucky shot. I got him right on the nose, and he just turned around and took off.”

After that, Hower said, “every time I came out of the crew quarters to go to the rig, there’d be the three bears there. One of them would look up and see me and run away.”

Tucson winters led to Patagonia

Hower’s first winter in Tucson was in the mid-1990s when he came to visit an old friend and to run in the Tucson marathon.

The next year, with good sources for trees in Canada, Hower brought down a load of naturally-grown Douglas firs to sell on Tucson’s Christmas Tree Lane at the end of First Avenue. He returned annually for 15 years until he was “the last guy standing” of the independent sellers.

Hower found work with landscaping crews in those first winters in Tucson as well, which is when he learned his masonry skills.


One year, some Tucson friends moved to Patagonia, and Hower came down to visit. “How can you not fall in love with Patagonia?” Hower asked rhetorically. After a few more years going back and forth to B.C., Hower moved to Patagonia for good.

He joined Patagonia Volunteer Fire and Rescue as an EMT and rope work specialist. He still carries a radio in case a technical rope rescue is needed, but says such incidents haven’t really happened since the highway guardrails were improved.


In addition to a lot of tree work around town over the years, Hower’s lasting mark has been the walls, pathways and patios he built for private homes and public spaces, including the wall in front of the Opera House. He also built the flagpole support in front of the fire station, which is a monument to former Fire Chief John Ashcraft. “Everybody in the fire department brought a rock,” Hower said, “and I used those rocks to build the monument.”

The courtyard, labyrinth, stone wall, and bench at the Methodist Church was Hower’s biggest public project.


See Hower, p. 10



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SCAN ME

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DEC12, 5:30PM: TISH HINOJOSA IN CONCERT
www.bordercommunityalliance.org for tickets and event details.

DEC14, 1PM: WREATH MAKING WORKSHOP
www.patagonia-plants.com for details and to register.

Dates and Times Subject to Change

If you would be interested in sponsoring upcoming events, please contact Cassina Farley at 520-394-9369.

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Great Trees of Eastern Santa Cruz County

The Mesquite on Santa Rita Ave.



Photo by German Quiroga

By German Quiroga

My favorite trees are mesquite. Growing up in Patagonia for the first

six years of my life, mesquite trees played an integral part of my childhood. We lived next door to my grandmother Quiroga on Santa Rita Avenue,

time an elderberry tree grew alongside it and almost reached the same height. My grandmother would say



Photo courtesy of German Quiroga

German Quiroga, his grandmother Francisca (Chica) Quiroga, and his sister Rosalina at the Heady-Ashburn ranch near Lochiel, circa 1959.

where were two prominent mesquite trees in that canyon, one in front of our house and one between my grandmother's house and our house.

As you may know, mesquite wood can be used for cooking, heating, fencing, eating, playing and furniture building. My favorite food was the tree sap from the mesquite which we called "chu ke ta." When it hardened, it created a chewy candy. From my grandmother I learned a few other Opatá words which included "wi ko" for a lizard and "chi wi" for a turkey, both of which used the mesquite tree for shelter.

Seventy years ago this tree was huge and it remains so. A silent sentinel to watch over us. At one

that this was the way the elderberry trees would grow in Sonora, alongside mesquites.

This tree growing near my grandmother's chicken coop (back then) was measured by Ken Morrow and me recently. These are the measurements that we recorded: 98" girth of the tree trunk at 54" from the ground, 39 feet in height, a spread of 58 and 52 feet for an average of 55 feet. The composite score tabulated to 151 points.

This score pales in comparison to the champion velvet mesquite of Arizona which was given a score of 257 points by the Arizona Magnificent Tree Registry, which has registered many champion trees hailing from Santa Cruz County. This national champion velvet mesquite had a girth more than double to our local tree, but otherwise was pretty close to our tree in height and spread.

A few years ago, I dedicated a tree to each of my grandmothers in Doc Mock Park when the first 76 trees were planted. Without any input from me, both trees are mesquite.

Do you know a great tree?

Submit photos (or artwork!) and text about your favorite tree to prtadast@gmail.com. It can be any tree on public or private property in Eastern Santa Cruz County. (You don't have to disclose the tree's exact location unless you want to.) Tell us what makes the tree great: maybe it's the tree's size, shape or age; or its leaf color; or the animals and insects who inhabit it; or the special events or family traditions associated with it; or perhaps something more personal. Whatever it is, share it with us. **Let's celebrate our area's natural splendor and heritage!**

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December Schedule

Dec. 14, 3pm: El SurCo – Would you like to experience the music of Patagonia, Argentina up close and personal in Patagonia, Arizona? You won't have to travel far. Join us for a performance by Maxi Larrea, Jenni Grubner, Diana Peralta, Esteban Hernandez Parra and Andrés Pantoya.
Make Reservations \$15.00 – \$30.00

Jan 4, 3pm: The Cynosure Trio – Captivating, elegant and engaging, the Cynosure Trio (Edward Zilberkant, Yue Sun and Charly Akert) returns to the Opera House to present a program of "Passion, Romance and Dance."
Make Reservations \$17.50 – \$35.00

You can pay online until noon on the day of the concert (using your preferred credit/debit card or PayPal) or by sending a check to SCFPA PO Box 875, Patagonia AZ 85624.

Visit www.scfpapresents.org for more information

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Impressed and Thankful

This time of year is one that reminds us to look at things with fresh eyes, to find the good and to be thankful. I had that opportunity during my trip to see my parents in the area they have called home for over ten years now. In that time, they connected with more friends and have been more active with the community than they ever were in their 40 years in Wisconsin. While I miss them dearly, I am happy that they are so happy and thankful they have found a wonderful community to call home.

Mom (Pat McNamara) writes for the PRT and during my trip I had the chance to sit in on a planning meeting for the next issue. While I have always read Mom's articles and often perused the rest of the paper, I never truly took into consideration the planning and dedication it takes to produce this gem each month. Not only is it funded by donations and grants (and is therefore

free to the public), but the many volunteer writers truly care about writing quality, informative stories that are of interest to the readers and good for the community at large. The article ideas flowed, the sensitive topics discussed, and the editor guided the team with ease, I couldn't help but to try to jump in with story ideas.

Patagonia and the surrounding communities are lucky to have access to such a great source of information. The stories told are the ones often lost, yet these are the stories people connect to and need to be told.

So yes, I am absolutely impressed by this team of professionals and their hard work to put out a quality paper and also thankful that my parents are part of such a wonderful community that they love and that loves them back as much as it does. Thank you PRT for all that you do for the community.

Bronwyn Zuchowski
Wales, Wisconsin

TOWN COUNCIL NOTES

By PRT Staff Reporters

November 19, 2025

During Call to the Public, Zander Ault explained the proposal for a multi-use trail that would begin at the first Harshaw Creek bridge, and extend along Harshaw Road to the old Arizona Trail Trailhead. The proposed route lies within Santa Cruz County, and stops near the Coronado National Forest boundary. As an unpaved, nonmotorized trail, it would be of use to hikers, cyclists and horseback riders.

Council approved a new job description for Deputy Town Manager. The primary function of the deputy town manager is to be backup when the Town Manager is not available, particularly in case of emergency. Requests for qualification will go out shortly.

Council approved Manager Ron Robinson to contract for design services with CPE consultants for the conceptual design of a Daycare Center, to be sited on the east side of the Town's recently acquired five-acre parcel on Harshaw Ave, with affordable housing to be positioned on the west side. The cost associated with this contract was not discussed. The town will lease the Center for 1-2 years to an operator, who would assume liability for the operation. For economy, the Center will be a metal building. Initially, capacity will be for 15-20 children and related staff, and the building will be designed and sited for expansion.

The PAC (Pacific-Atlantic-Cycling) cycling group was approved for use of Doc Mock Park Gazebo on portions of three days in March of 2026, for their annual biking event. The times are 11am-1pm on March 9 and 8-9am on March 17 and 24. This event has been held for several years, and the group has a tradition of giving a portion of their profits to the Town.

Council approved Manager Robinson to apply for a \$7,560 South32/Hermosa grant for new Christmas decorations for the town, the current set being 40 or more years old.

Council approved Manager Rob-

inson to begin discussions with CPE Consultants on the design, engineering and management for reconstruction of the Fourth Avenue Public Restrooms' parking area.

Michael Young, president of the PVFR board, has written a grant request that was submitted to the Tohono O'odham nation, which distributes funds to communities in their ancestral lands. The \$14,330 grant is intended to cover radio communications equipment for the Patagonia Volunteer Fire and Rescue. This grant would be facilitated by the Town, who would distribute the funds to PVFR.

Council approved the town manager to make a \$500 contract with Michelle Girard, an approved Forest Monitor. The contract is for her to do inspection and the filing of proper paperwork under the U S Forest Service's Forest Legacy Conservation Easement program. The easement program will ensure that 1,800 acres of land in the Sonoita Creek Wildlife Corridor remains in an undeveloped state. The money will come from interest on \$25,000 which Borderlands Restoration Network had deposited with the Town in May, 2022, a form of endowment.

Mayor Wood was approved by Council to sign a letter of support for Santa Cruz County's request for an Arizona Federal Lands Access Program (FLAP) grant. The grant amount has not been finalized, but its intention is to build a biking and hiking trail along 1.6 miles of Harshaw Road, to separate non-motorized travelers from increased heavy traffic on that segment of the road. This is the project that Zander Ault had discussed in Call to Public.

Alan Sanchez, Santa Cruz County Flood Plain Coordinator, was appointed to the Flood and Flow Committee and introduced to the Council and community members in attendance.

Several items from previous meetings continue on the Future Agenda list, including firebreaks south of town.

Sheriff's Blotter



Nov. 27: Cochise County called and requested security checks on Harshaw Ave. in Patagonia due to receiving a report of a suicidal subject.

Nov. 23: A deputy advised of a traffic stop which resulted in a foreign national load just outside of Patagonia.

Nov. 20: A sergeant reported a possible stolen vehicle at SR 82 and SR 83.

Nov. 15: A deputy requested a call card opened to assist Border Patrol on a failure to yield on SR 82 between Sonoita and Patagonia.

Nov. 14: A caller from Patagonia said they had received information of a mobile home on fire in Saleroa Canyon.

Nov. 13: A caller from Patagonia said their shrine off SR 82 had been vandalized. Caller suspects that Border Patrol was the one responsible, due to them being the station in the area.

Nov. 12: A caller from Patagonia requested a deputy, due to her boyfriend attacking her.

Nov. 6: A caller from Patagonia said they believe someone stole their we-

deater and batteries. The caller thinks there is a lot of theft going on in the general area lately.

Nov. 5: A caller on their way to Patagonia requested a deputy to accompany them as they retrieve their child. The caller claimed they have a temporary custody agreement from a court that does not require prior notice.

A sergeant called to report encountering a male subject at a call with an arrest warrant at SR 83 and Cimarron Road.

A caller from Harshaw Road said they had been scammed through email for \$70,000. They have not reported the incident to their bank.

Nov. 3: A call was received from a Patagonia address with a lot of yelling going on. Later, a deputy requested a call card from the same Patagonia address due to an assault on another deputy. The second deputy reported the suspect had struck his chest with an open hand while he was attempting to place handcuffs on the arrestee.

Hower (Cont.)

The intricate brickwork was also shaped into a slight bowl to drain rainwater away from Thurber Hall, solving a flooding problem. "I think the ash trees [on the street side] like it here," Hower said.

Hower remembers his early years in Patagonia fondly, when it was "a sleepy little town" before sidewalks

and paved streets, when the Big Steer Saloon was open, and tourists had little reason to stop. He misses those days.

"But it's still a pretty tight-knit community," Hower said, and he's glad about that.

You could say that about Hower's fine church courtyard, too — different connected shapes that fit together into a tight-knit whole.

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Apache Gulch



Abandoned buildings can be seen on the hike to Apache Gulch.

By Wayne Tomasi

Very few people have heard of Apache Gulch, and even fewer know where it is, because it is little more than a thin blue line on the United States Geological Survey topographic map. There are no constructed trails in Apache Gulch, which makes the hike more adventurous than those I have described in previous columns.

The hike is relatively short and not dangerous, although it requires some bushwhacking through a heavily forested area and the use of hands to scale several minor rockfalls. If you attempt this hike, I suggest you wear long pants, a long-sleeved shirt, and gaiters if you have them.

To reach Apache Gulch from Patagonia, turn north off of Naugle Avenue onto 4th Avenue (next to the Wagon Wheel Saloon). Drive two blocks and turn left onto Pennsylvania Avenue, which becomes Blue Haven Road once you leave the town limits. From the intersection of Blue Haven Road and Salero Road (FR-143), drive north on Salero Road approximately 10.5 miles where the road crosses Alto Gulch, passes over a cattle guard, and enters the Coronado National Forest. Apache Gulch is the second road on the right approximately 0.2 miles north of the National Forest Boundary. Turn onto the road and park your vehicle near the entrance. Salero Road (aka Salero Ranch Road or Salero Canyon Road) is in relatively good condition where it passes through the Salero Ranch Properties (a private community with private gated roads). However, the southernmost six miles are rough, and

the surface deteriorates significantly after the turn-off at mile 10 for the Copper Canyon Road.

Apache Gulch is home to several abandoned mines, remnants of an adobe home, remains of a few dilapidated stone buildings and the largest concrete dam I have seen in the Santa Rita Mountains. Apparently, no record exists for the mines in Apache Gulch, and who constructed the adobe structure or who currently owns the adjacent land is debatable. A few years ago, a Coronado National Forest archaeologist told me: “A land surveyor and I jointly determined a surveying and mapping error was made decades ago that carried through to the most recent Forest Service maps. Apparently, the privately owned land parcels in and around Apache Gulch were mapped incorrectly and offset from their true location by a quarter mile or so. Consequently, there appears to be a small eight-acre parcel of private land in approximately the same location as the adobe structure in Apache Gulch.”

There are no boundary markers, warnings, or trespassing signs to mark the confines of the private parcel so determining exactly where the private property is located or if the adobe building is on private land is impossible. The National Forest archaeologist also said, “The only way to know for sure is to contact the current owner, if you can find him, or to locate the survey corner markers. If the land is currently owned by a prospector or mining company, I doubt they will talk to anyone about the land or its intended use. Locating the survey markers would certainly be a tedious and

difficult job in the deep grass, dense underbrush and extremely rocky terrain.”

The upper section of Apache Gulch is narrow with steep walls, filled with rocks and boulders, and overgrown with trees and underbrush. However, the route is not dangerous and becoming lost is virtually impossible, although in several places following the route takes patience and determination to navigate around natural obstacles. It is approximately half a mile up the gulch to the adobe ruins and another half a mile to the dam.

The hike begins by walking up the road about 150 yards to the remains of a No Name Mine above the north bank of the wash. The prospect is comprised of several large pits filled with debris. Continue walking up the canyon past a small, unnaturally flat terrace lined with a stone footing, probably the remains of a small building. I saw evidence of several more stone buildings nearby.

At the far end of the mining camp, look for a faint trail leading down a steep bank to the bed of the gulch. Near the bottom of the path, miners sank a vertical shaft on the left, only a few feet above the creek bed. The walls are lined with concrete and shored with sturdy wood beams. They also constructed a stone reinforced cement retaining wall in front of the shaft to prevent someone from carelessly stumbling into the opening.

Approximately a quarter mile upstream from the mine, begin looking through the trees above the right bank for the remains of several adobe walls partially hidden behind a grove of trees. The structure appears to have had several rooms but many of the walls are severely deteriorated and crumbling from exposure. However,



A sign posted outside this Apache Gulch mine shaft warns hikers not to enter the mine.

the frames to either two doorways, a doorway and a large window, or two windows with wood lentils still remain standing. Only the walls located at the corners of the building are still vertical. Several well-constructed stone walls are attached to the adobe structure. The stone walls are probably 18 inches thick or more, whereas the adobe walls are much thinner.

The remains of a second, smaller stone building is located on the south bank about 30 feet farther up the wash near a small concrete slab sitting in the middle of the creek. There are also several exposed vertical shafts in the area so if you wander around the area, walk cautiously.

If you continue up the gulch, the creek bed becomes a long series of cascading rockfalls that require using your hands to scale. The creek bed eventually leads to a large concrete dam across the entire drainage. The dam is approximately 18 feet high, 35 feet long, and perhaps one foot thick. The upstream side of the dam is at the same level as the sandy bed of the wash, so apparently the idea was to direct water flowing downstream over the dam and into the broad but shallow reservoir at the base of the wall. Apache Gulch ends a short distance upstream at the remains of the San Ramon Mine.



The view looking up Apache Gulch.

Photo by Wayne Tomasi

Glimpses Into Our Past

Mary and Virginia Harrison's Trip to Nogales

By Alison Bunting

The Harrison family of Lochiel is described in the April 2024 PRT Glimpses article. A 1926 interview of their eldest daughter, Mary Augusta Harrison Chalmers (1870-1931), provides wonderful information about daily life on the remote Harrison ranch, including a trip to Nogales to purchase supplies and deliver a live turkey. [Reminiscences of an Arizona Pioneer. Personal Experiences of Mary Harrison Chalmers. Effie L. Scott interviewer, 1926].

"Those were great days; full of anxiety and danger, and yet we had our fun, too. I think one of the most amusing experiences that ever happened to any of us was when my sister Virginia (1875-1966) and I went to Nogales to take a turkey to my sister Nell." Nellie Ellen Harrison (1873-1906) married Joel Lincoln Hathaway (1861-1902) in 1889 so this trip probably happened about 1900. The girls' mother was determined that Nell have a live turkey for the holidays, so Mary and Virginia set off with Strawberry and Sid harnessed to the spring wagon. They took the southern route, across "the

line" and soon discovered that each time they stopped, the turkey gobbled—a distinct problem when trying to conceal him from Mexican customs agents they encountered. Fortunately, Virginia "spoke Spanish glibly and had charming ways." They talked their way through three custom stops [Santa Cruz, Davisdaros (sic), Nogales] and successfully delivered the gobbler to Nell.

Once their wagon was loaded with supplies purchased in Nogales, they started home via the Patagonia road. "We knew it would be a long spooky sort of drive and we didn't have either a pistol or blank with us. Everything went along well until we struck a steep hill." Despite coaxing, urging, pushing, and a few punches, Strawberry and Sid refused to move. They were unhitched, fed and watered and still no luck. Mary and Virginia unloaded the wagon, carried everything to the top of the hill and tried again—no dice. Darkness was fast approaching when they spotted a mule. He was soon harnessed next to Strawberry. "I gave old Strawberry a good punch in the ribs and he started."



Photo courtesy Arizona Historical Society

Mary Harrison Chalmers, 1926.

At the top of the hill the wagon was reloaded, Sid was tied behind, and they set off. At a house a few miles down the road they stopped to water the equines. "Just as we drove up out came a lady who said sweetly: 'Why there's old Jerry!' The lady was Mrs. Safford, the governor's wife. Jerry was the name of the mule." Sid was put back into service as Jerry was needed by the Saffords.

Mary and Virginia soon realized that they would never make it home that day, so they stayed overnight at John Harmon's cabin. It was after 2pm before they finally arrived home the next day. "The folks were worrying about us but father said he had told mother, 'Just leave it to Molly. She'll get back some way!'"

Postscript: A.P.K. Safford was governor of Arizona Territory from 1869-



Photo courtesy Ancestry.com

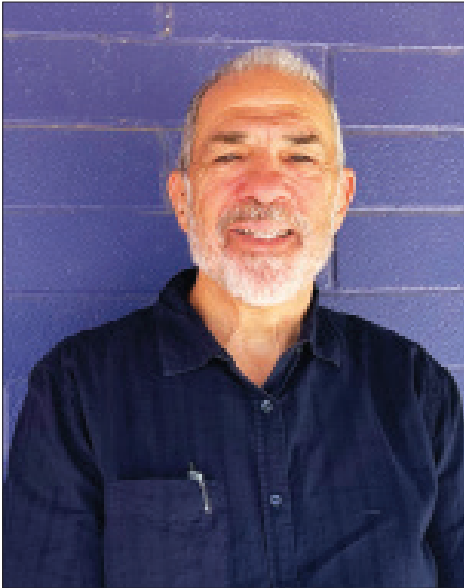
Mary Wilson Harrison, mother of Mary Augusta, Nell, & Virginia, 1800s.

1877. In 1882 he moved to Florida but returned to Arizona in 1889 hoping to be elected governor again. The Mrs. Safford in this story was his third wife, Soledad Bonillas, whom he married in 1881. Safford was involved in mining in Tombstone and Harshaw so perhaps had a home in the area.

Alison Bunting can be contacted at alisbunting@gmail.com.

STARSTRUCK

Comets and Chaos



By Harold Meckler

One night in 1986 I stepped into the bed of my pickup (where I'd be safe from any critters) and pointed my World War II-era binoculars to a spot in the sky that promised a view of Halley's Comet. That floating fuzzball sent my heart soaring. It was, in every way, as predicted. And, I remember how I struggled to comprehend how scientists were able to pinpoint its arrival and its path with such precision. Seeing this four billion-year-old comet that had formed right alongside the Sun and

planets so long ago left me awestruck.

It seemed to me that if we could predict when and where this ancient 9-mile by 5-mile chunk of ice and dust would speed past us there was absolutely nothing that could not be explained or plotted. Everything was ordered, like the seasons and like all of the rites of passage that gave shape and color to our lives.

I came to believe in the beneficence of order, of structure and routine especially when, as a social worker, I learned how much disorder affected the lives of children, and how societal dysfunction imperiled all of us.

So, a lifelong philosophy was born. I would find purpose and design in everything because at least for me, the alternative—chaos—didn't jibe with the genius of science, with hope-filled imagination and with the interconnect-edness of compassion. OK, you can call me idealistic.

Still, it worked out for me in many ways. That I have found endless clues that life on Earth and events far off in space mimic each other has helped to sustain me. It all started that night with Halley's Comet and it has continued with countless other phenomena and too-numerous-to-recall moments—both happy and sad—that have fit snugly into a pattern. Until now.

This past July, the Asteroid Terrestrial-Impact Last Alert System (ATLAS)

network of telescopes discovered an object that blew up my theory about chaos and order. Subsequent observations confirmed that a never-seen-before comet had come from outside our solar system. It was not, therefore, like Halley's Comet and all the others that have been catalogued over the centuries. This one didn't orbit the sun in a well-established manner. In fact, no one knows where it originated or where it will end up.

The only thing we do know is that once it leaves our solar system, it will not come back. It is the third known object that has entered our neighborhood from interstellar space, hence the name: Comet 3I (interstellar)/ATLAS.

Incredibly, 3I/ATLAS has been tracked so well that we have learned much about it. It will reach its closest distance to Earth on December 19 where, even from there, it will pose no threat to us. We know that it is probably about 7 billion years old, meaning it was on the move billions of years before the Sun emitted its first light. We've watched it pass Mars, disappear behind the Sun and expect it to zoom past Jupiter on its way to other parts of our galaxy. It is much smaller than Halley but faster, hustling along at 130,000 mph. At that speed, if things were a bit different and it was on a collision course with us, and if we could not alter that course with any of our

advanced technology, the damage to our planet would be unfathomable. It is just luck after-all, just randomness, that has allowed Comet 3I/ATLAS to not destroy us. That's chaos.

That is why my philosophy has changed. I suppose it should have always been obvious to me that chaos is, indeed, inherent. And, because it is, so much of everyday life is geared to try to thwart it, to push back against it.

Most interesting, though, is its innocence. It's just nature. It's just a rogue comet hurtling along without any realization of the power it possesses, like a lightning bolt striking an innocent looking for shelter.

Understanding and accepting this isn't depressing at all. It's liberating. It helps me to zero in on the question of a lifetime. In the midst of all of the obvious chaos in the heavens and on Earth, does it matter what we do when we fully come to grips with something so overwhelming?

That we keep asking the question provides the answer, for as long as we continue to ask, at the very least, we must still believe that we just might belong, that our role in all of it has meaning, even when chaos weighs heavily against us.

Harold Meckler can be contacted at byaakov54@gmail.com

Notes From SEFD

Making Informed Decisions



Photo courtesy of SEFD

SEFD responds to a rollover accident. The station has had over 700 calls for aid each of the last three years.

By Eddie McArthur

Making informed decisions requires information. The Sonoita-Elgin Fire District (SEFD) captures detailed information regarding service calls of all types. We responded to 68 incidents during October 2025. Of those, four were fire calls and 34 were rescue and/or EMS calls.

Our other activities range from snake removal calls to an ambulance presence (with staffing) at a public event like the rodeo or a bike race.

Our coverage area is divided into five zones. Zone 1 is the area nearest the crossroads and includes most of the businesses within our district. Zone 2 is to the north and contains a great deal of public land. Zone 3 is our easternmost area, including Rain Valley and toward Cochise County. Zone 4 is the southernmost part of the district and includes areas around Canelo. Zone 5 includes areas outside the fire district but within our Certificate of Necessity (CON) which defines the geographic boundaries, and establishes service rules for ground ambulance transport. This area extends west as far as Patagonia Lake State Park and to

the south toward the Mexican border. Most SEFD activity generally centers around Zone 1.

We look at each incident we cover, what it is about, time and day, for each zone. So far this year, SEFD has handled 606 fire and EMS calls. Although every day is busy, weekends are our busiest time. Looking at which days of the week saw the most calls, Mondays saw 73 calls, Tuesdays 91, Wednesdays 88, Thursdays 78, Fridays 83, Saturdays 100 and Sundays 93. The majority of our calls are during the day. Because we track this information, we can confidently say that weekend days are when we handle the most calls.

We also look at the type of calls. Rescue and EMS, at over 60%, keeps us the most busy. Fire calls represent just 4.62%, obviously the most dangerous activity.

What has changed recently is the increase of the number of calls that come in while we are already involved with another call. Approximately 30% of calls coming in are classified as concurrent. Given that normal staffing at the station consists of four firefighters, not including the Chief or Admin, everyone on duty gets called out if two

calls come in at the same time. Each call requires at least two firefighters or firefighter/EMTs. For fire calls, we generally dispatch both a fire engine and an ambulance.

We recently experienced three EMS calls at the same time. The first call sent an ambulance to one of the furthest areas of our coverage. The second went the opposite direction, again far from the station. Both required transport. Then came the third call. That third call involved serious bleeding. Chief Meredith maintains his paramedic certification and is fully operationally qualified just for this type of situation. He was able to stop the bleeding, but transporting a patient requires two of our trained professionals, one driving the ambulance and one in back with the patient. Because of this, the Chief needed to call on another agency to handle the transport.

We are nearing the time when

staffing adjustments may be needed. By the end of the year we will have had over 700 calls for the third year in a row, and that is with a significant decrease in wildland fires the last two years. The next time we have a typical wildland fire year we could have over 800 calls, which may well be the tipping point.

We run three shifts of four personnel each. How to adjust, where/when to add, etc., requires careful analysis of how our personnel are being used. Adding doesn't necessarily mean adding to each shift on each day. Because we have developed a database of calls that we are constantly updating, it will be possible to make a reasonable determination of what may be needed. Whatever decision is made, it will be based on facts and designed with the welfare of our communities as the highest priority.

Grades (Cont.)

"The more involved they are, the more they're around their peers" helps with student achievement, Hayes said. That can include participation in sports and/or clubs, which provides a sense of community that serves to motivate.

Erickson is of the same mind. A school "cannot only be about reading, writing and arithmetic," he said. "There's got to be some things that bring joy to what the kids are doing beyond the core academics." In addition to sports, the school hosts a Veterans Day event complete with patriotic songs and local veterans invited in for brunch. The school's CIMI Club (Catalina Island Marine Institute) raises

money throughout the year to send 8th graders to a science-based field trip on Catalina Island.

Of the state's 1,359 traditional K-8 schools, 469 were awarded an "A," 539 got a "B," 282 received a "C," 41 got a "D" and nine got an "F." Twenty-two schools were unrated due to insufficient data.

In Santa Cruz County, four K-8 schools received an "A," 11 got a "B," five received a "C" and one got an "F."

Of the state's 231 traditional high schools, 117 got an "A," 94 received a "B," 16 earned a "C" and one got a "D". Two schools were unrated.

Among Santa Cruz County high schools, Nogales and Patagonia earned an "A" and Rio Rico received a "B."

What is that??

Curios from the Patagonia Museum



Photo by Linda Shore

By Tom Shore

This item, from the Museum's George Proctor collection, is a Stanley No. 70 Box Scraper that was used to remove inked or woodburned labels from wooden crates, allowing them to be reused. It was adjustable, allowing

it to be pushed or pulled by its handle.

This artifact is missing the small blade and tightening screen; however, it remains a nice example of an early recycling tool. Stanley Tools began producing them around 1877. They were used until cardboard for shipping boxes became dominant in the 1950s.

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earliest breeding bird in North America. The timing makes sense. By laying eggs in early winter, great horned owls ensure that their voracious young are born during a time of plenty in spring. Food abounds just when it is urgently needed.

Exhibiting what is termed “reversed

sexual dimorphism,” great horned owl females are on average much bigger than males. Though weights vary greatly by geographic region and diet, females can average 3.5 pounds and males 3.0 pounds. Regardless of gender, these weights make the species the heftiest owl in the Sky Islands.

It also opens up a veritable feast for them in terms of prey. Though small mammals such as mice and wood rats tend to be staples, these powerful owls can tackle surprisingly large prey items. Squirrels of various species are a step up in prey size, but even an unwary common gray fox, ringtail, and other small predators—including other owl species—had better take heed when great horns are on the hunt.

Still not impressed? How about 20-plus pound Mexican wild turkeys dispatched on their roosts? Add in the very rare slaying of perched diurnal raptors, such as red-tailed hawks, and you begin to fathom the predatory prowess of these masters of the night sky.

One more unlikely prey item: various skunk species! Given the owl’s poor olfactory capacity, it seems these odiferous and seemingly impregnable carnivores have met their match.

Lest you think them invulnerable, great horned owls have evolved their namesake feather tufts—they are just



Photo by Vince Pinto

A great horned owl looks down from his perch at dusk.

that, and not ears or horns, which are located on either side of the head—in part to hide from predators by day. The same raptors they occasionally kill at dusk and at night are now a decided threat to their own lives in daylight. I’ve even found a bobcat-killed great horned owl at Raven’s Nest Nature Sanctuary—a case of an avian predator being one-upped by a feline one. Hence, all the better to break up your bodily outline via the so-called horns, as well as superbly cryptic plumage.

Another locally common species is the western screech owl, which resembles a severely shrunk version of a great horned owl. It too has “ear tufts” or “horns” for the same aforementioned survival purposes. Likewise, it exhibits reversed sexual dimorphism, with local females averaging about 5.1 ounces and males 4.2 ounces. Of course the prey of these diminutive owls is correspondingly small. Like their behemoth cousins, great horned

owls, western screech owls will consume any plausible prey item small enough to overpower. Small mammals, small birds, and insects are all staples. They can even take down mallards and adult cottontails—again demonstrating the power of talons and beak to unwary, often dozing prey.

There are other owls a-wing in December. Barn

owls using old buildings and caves as refuge. Wintering long-eared owls roosting sometimes by the dozens in evergreen trees and oaks. Whiskered screech owls barely breaking the international border into various U.S. Sky Island ranges. Northern pygmy owls hunting by day and dusk. Mexican spotted owls lurking in canyons or dense forests. Truly we host an impressive winter lineup of these “masters of the night.”

To enjoy various owl species, venture out about half an hour before dusk into prey-rich habitat. Sit quietly, in camouflaged clothing. Riparian areas, such as along Sonoita Creek, are prime owl-hunting grounds. Tote a pair of binoculars to try to tell owl from broken branch. Listen intently for the hooo-hoo-hoo-hooo of great horned owls, the plaintive toots of western screech owls, or the blood-curdling screeches of barn owls among others. Even if you fail to see or hear an owl, a sky strewn with stars and the quiet chill of a December night may well be compensation enough.

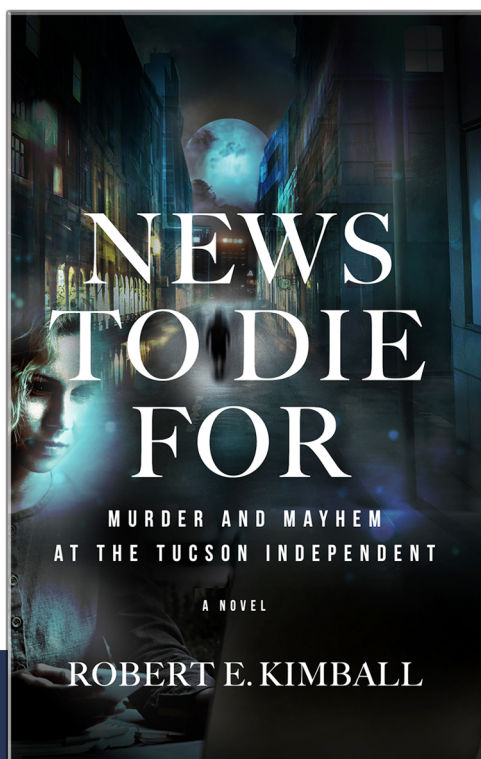
Vince Pinto and his wife, Claudia, run RAVENS-WAY WILD JOURNEYS, their Nature Adventure & Conservation organization devoted to protecting and promoting the unique biodiversity of the Sky Islands region. RWWJ offers a wide variety of private, custom-made courses, birding and biodiversity tours. Visit ravensnatureschool.org



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PARA Gala Honors Environmental Advocates and Supporters

News Release

On Sunday, Nov. 9, the Patagonia Area Resource Alliance (PARA) hosted “Moonlit Blues and Barbecue Soirée,” its third annual gala, at the Patagonia Lumber Company. It was a joyful night celebrating community, conservation, and good company under the stars.

This year’s event was a true “friend-raiser,” welcoming 150-plus attendees, many new faces, as well as a student group visiting from Whitman College in Washington.

The soulful sounds of Tucson’s Porch Rockers set the tone for the evening as PARA honored longtime leader Carolyn Shafer on her retirement from an active role on the Board

and introduced Anna Darian as PARA’s first Executive Director.

Guests celebrated PARA’s 2025 wins and the launch of the Water is Life campaign, which aims to close legal loopholes long exploited by the mining industry in Arizona.

The evening also shone a light on exceptional environmental leadership with the presentation of the annual Golden Ocelot Awards to Aaron Mrotek of The Nature Conservancy’s Patagonia-Sonoita Creek Preserve, Robin Lucky of the Calabasas Alliance, and Louise Misztal of Sky Island Alliance—all recognized for their dedication to protecting the clean air, water, and wildlife that make this region so special.



Aaron Mrotek hoists his award after being honored at the gala.



Honorees are recognized for their "exceptional environmental leadership" at the PARA event.



Anna Darian was introduced as PARA's new Executive Director.

Contributed photos



Attendees enjoy food, music and fellowship at the "friendraising" event.



The crowd dances to the music of the Porch Rockers in the courtyard at Patagonia Lumber Company.



Photo by Dave Lumia

Arnulfo De La Ossa watches as Brandon Beyerle gets the grill fired up using an unconventional tool—a leaf blower.

Lochiel (Cont.)

Once known as La Noria, Lochiel was thriving in the 1880s when Antonio and Carolina arrived from California. At that time there were five stores, three saloons, a brewery, a butcher shop and a bakery. Lochiel benefitted from being a border crossing, an official port of entry with a custom house collecting duties on imported goods, inspecting cargo, and enforcing smuggling laws.

Nothing of those early years is left except a customs house and two residences. But at one time, kerosene-lit homes were part of the landscape. The aroma of freshly made tortillas floated through the air. And gardens flourished, a means of feeding the family in summer and in winter.

"I grew up here," said 77-year old Green Valley resident Ralph De La

Ossa. He remembered walking down the dusty road to a play Loteria with cousins. Loteria is a traditional Mexican game similar to bingo that uses cards and player boards instead of numbered balls.

"I remember getting on a horse and riding over to Washington Camp to buy a Coke and some candy," Ralph said. The trip—one way—sometimes took nearly an hour.

As the memories poured forth, individuals connected with each other. Cousin this. Aunt that, Grandmother who.

Maureen De La Ossa of Patagonia brought out a display she creates every year—the "ought" birthdays. The board is a labor of love bearing photos of family members born in years ending in "5." Next year, it's the "6s" turn. "Where should I hang this?" she asked. Someone assisted, taking the board

from her hands and moving toward a fence where it was hung.

In the meantime, food happened.

Menfolk gathered around a grill as Brandon Beyerle used a leaf blower to grow the flames.

"Don't worry," assured a smiling Ralph, who has a degree in fire science, "there are firemen here."

Once the blaze was calmed, steaks, hot dogs wrapped in bacon and strips of marinated beef were slapped on the grate. Piles of corn and flour tortillas awaited nearby. Homemade beans were warmed. Posole simmered.

And across the road, tables were assembled with food guarded by mesh tents—potato salad, guacamole, deviled eggs. There were more chips than could ever feed a small country. Dessert? How many cookies can one

family eat?

In the blessing given before the start of the feast, Adele De La Ossa Post acknowledged that while much work has been done in the creation of a 501(c) (13) that protects and preserves the cemetery and chapel for generations to come, there is still a lot to do. A website will be created for the De La Ossa Family Cemetery Foundation. Monies must be raised for chapel repairs. Foundations, like gardens, don't flourish on their own.

Today, though, it was about accomplishment. The two properties were safe in De La Ossa hands. And as the meal began, the presence of Antonio De La Ossa, signified by the large white cross up on the hill, was very much felt.



Photo by Dave Lumia

De La Ossa descendant Payson Heiser, daughter of Cheyllie and Tanner Heiser, plays peek-a-boo behind a grave during the annual family cemetery cleanup in Lochiel.

Volleyball (Cont.)

Somoza said. "We're lucky she's just a super-athletic kid. I could play her anywhere and she would step in and deliver. If we could have started training her at middle from her freshman year, she would have been dynamite."

Majalca, likewise, impressed her coach in a variety of ways. "Her defense is amazing," Somoza said. "She's very consistent with her serving and passing, and she's always a leader out there. It doesn't matter what happens on the court, she's out there encouraging her teammates, staying positive."

"Bri and Emma are going to be really big shoes to fill. Their leadership on the court and within practice was amazing. It's really hard with teenage girls to find true leaders. Everything I could have wanted as captains, they had it."

Porter said Somoza deserves credit for putting her imprint on the team.

"She puts in the time. Her attention to detail is outstanding, and she builds positive relationships with her athletes," he said. "She holds them accountable. You watch her during the games, she's coaching them individually to be better."

"She knows it takes hard work to

be great, and she modeled that to her student-athletes. She's a great asset for our school."

Porter said the team's success was a point of pride for the entire school.

"It's been a few years since any of our girls programs have had success like that," he said. "It's the kind of thing you can really build on. Student-athletes see success, and they strive for more success."

Despite Patagonia's loss to Fort Thomas in the state playoffs, Somoza feels good about all the Lobos achieved and is already looking forward to next year.

"We set some goals this year, and we definitely met them," she said. "We beat Tombstone. We hosted a state playoff game. We didn't beat St. David, but we competed with them. We had a lot of opportunity to play in tournaments during the season, and it made us stronger. I definitely want to do that again next year."

"If our school isn't able to get a softball team, I'll start open gym in the spring. I told the girls you need to be getting in your reps in the offseason so that we can hit the ground running when practice starts in the fall."



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The Penningtons: A Brutal Settler Family Saga

By Wayne Tomasi

The Pennington family contributed heavily to the settlement of southeastern Arizona, so it seems appropriate their story be told. The Pennington family has a moving and almost implausible history: they lived during harsh times in an extremely hostile environment and possibly sacrificed more than any other single settler family in Arizona history.

Elias Green Pennington was born on a cotton plantation in Virginia, owned by his father Elias Elijah Pennington who served under George Washington at Valley Forge during the Revolutionary War. Elias Green Pennington left the plantation in 1831 and moved to somewhere in the Carolinas where he married Julia Ann Hood.

The couple immediately began an unrelenting western migration. Whenever they felt civilization closing in on them, they moved farther west. They passed briefly through Kentucky and then lived near Nashville, Tennessee for five years. From there they moved to Honey Grove in what was then the Republic of Texas where their youngest child Josephine was born on October 27, 1854. Josephine had seven older sisters and four older brothers.

Julia never fully recovered from giving birth to her twelfth child within a 22-year span and died shortly before Josephine's first birthday. At the time of her death, Elias was near Keechi, Texas, not far from the Brazos River where he was scouting the possibility of moving his family there. Shortly after Julia's death, Elias packed up the twelve children and moved them to Keechi where they lived for three years. In 1857, the family decided to join a wagon train headed for Golden, California.

After leaving Keechi, the Penningtons headed west with a small herd of cattle and three wagons pulled by teams of oxen and mules. While fording the Pecos River, several of their cattle drowned. Undeterred, the

family continued to Paso del Norte and followed the Rio Grande River north to Mesilla where they turned west, passing through the San Simon, Sulphur Springs and San Pedro Valleys, and Dragoon Springs, headed toward Tucson.

In 1857, the Penningtons stopped on Sonoita Creek near Fort Buchanan. Many of their livestock had been stolen by marauding Apaches and while crossing Apache Pass, approximately 20 miles southeast of the present-day town of Willcox, Josephine's older sister, Larcena, had become seriously ill with what is now believed to be malaria, but at the time was diagnosed as mountain fever. The Penningtons decided to leave the wagon train at Fort Buchanan so Larcena could be under the care of an army contract surgeon named Lewis Kennon.

While Larcena was recovering, the Penningtons took up residence along Sonoita Creek near the present-day town of Patagonia. They constructed a picket house from cottonwood boughs and planted crops.

The Penningtons lived and worked at Fort Buchanan for two years. The men were contracted by the U. S. Government to supply hay and the women sewed uniforms for the soldiers.

While working at Fort Buchanan, Larcena met lumberjack John Hempstead Page and immediately fell in love. They were married on December 24, 1859, when Larcena was 22 years old. Their marriage has historical significance because they were the first couple with American citizenship known to be married in Tucson.

John Page hired on as manager of William H. Kirkland's lumber camp. Larcena was employed by Kirkland as a tutor for his ten-year-old ward, Mercedes Sais Quiroz. John lived at Kirkland's ranch in Canoa, while Larcena remained in Tucson. Page eventually received permission to move Larcena and Mercedes to the Canoa ranch.

See Pennington, p. 20

Feed Store (Cont.)

managing schedules to keeping everything stocked, it's a challenge. In addition to six young part-time employees, family members help out a lot.

Meeting people in the store and hearing what is going on in the com-

munity are important to both the Lymans. Throughout our talk they kept circling back to being a part of the community. They look forward to helping the 4H kids and junior rodeo. They want people to feel free to come in for a cup of coffee and a chat along with some great homemade cookies.



Photo by Eddie McArthur

Consignment tack, including these saddles, is on display at Sonoita Feeds.

Insecurity (Cont.)

number of people seeking assistance who we had never seen before. We invited them to become regular recipients of our monthly food distribution, hoping to help them mitigate future food shortages.

All around Eastern Santa Cruz County and beyond, people came together to help their neighbors get through this crisis. There were some donations made by those who could least afford to donate. This expression of support is clearly indicative of the high-quality community we enjoy here, where we take pride in taking care of each other.

As the government reopened and federal food benefits were slowly restored, we at the food bank turned to analyzing our response to this crisis, with the goal of serving clients and the community better in the future. We

focused on areas such as coordination, publicity and information.

We want to communicate information about our assistance programs to the public clearly in a timely manner. We want to support and coordinate with other agencies, groups and individuals who share our mission of feeding people. We want to urge our clients to plan ahead, stockpile non-perishable food when possible, and budget their hard-earned dollars carefully in case of another calamity.

One thing this crisis has shown us is that as a community, we are not only caring and generous, but we are resilient. We can be assured that when times are tough, we can rely on each other for backing and support.

On behalf of the Santa Cruz County Community Food Bank, I am eternally grateful to you, and am blessed to be living in such an amazing community.

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El Dia de los Muertos Observed at Patagonia Community Garden



Photo by Sondra Porter

Seven women constructed the ofrenda in the Patagonia Community Garden to commemorate El Dia de los Muertos on November 2.

By Sondra Porter

Celebrating the blended cultures that bind us here near the Border has long been an aspiration of many Patagonians. This year the folks who manage the Patagonia Community Garden found a way to bring us all closer together: they made space in the garden to commemorate El Dia de los Muertos (the Day of the Dead), allowing community members to collectively remember loved ones, honor tradition, and share food and memories.

Around 35 locals came to the Garden on Sunday, November 2 for the official event. Several days earlier, seven ladies had gathered there to construct an ofrenda (altar) in the garden’s gazebo. It was a labor of love. The colors and patterns were dramatic.

Traditionally, ofrendas include items that are symbolic of the elements of water, wind, fire, and earth, and the creators of the Patagonia ofrenda stayed true to tradition. The display included bowls of water to call in thirsty souls. Candles and lights representing fire glowed on and around the structure to help guide the way for the spirits. Papel picado, tissue paper cut-outs that blow in the breeze, hung over the display to signify wind. And Pan de muerto (bread of the dead), representing earth, was placed on the altar along with other food favorites such as a frosted cinnamon roll.

No ofrenda would be complete without the traditional marigolds, known as cempasúchil, which represent the sun and are said to guide the spirits of deceased to the living world with their vibrant colors and pungent scent. Some say they also symbolize the fragility of life.

On Sunday, November 2, photo-

graphs of departed loved ones—mothers, fathers, sons, daughters, neighbors, spouses—were placed on the ofrenda by those present. As people moved through the gazebo, individuals who had brought the photos often explained who was being remembered.

“That is my mother. Look at her smile.”

“These are my two sons who died within a year of each other.”

“This was my father, a veteran of the Korean War.”

“Here is my cousin. He died just outside town. He was a Viet Nam vet.”

“Oh, I remember her in town.”

“The sisters were born and raised in the San Rafael Valley right where the wall is being built now.”

“This man lived just down the alley from here.”

“She was 92 when she passed.”

Even pets were represented. A lady explained that she had lost her home and cat in the massive California fires a few years back. She had a picture of a cat and dog to memorialize all the animals, domestic and wild, that were lost in the fire. “People hunted for pets for a long time afterward,” she said. “It was heartbreaking. I want that to be remembered.”

Despite the sense of loss present with death, El Dia de los Muertos is a celebration, and, indeed, the fall feeling in the garden carried those overtones as attendees shared their food, much of which was Mexican-themed, along with their stories.

Patagonia Community Garden president Mary Sky Schoolcraft was pleased with the event.

“We will do this again next year,” she said, “and we hope even more people get involved. It is a way to honor community and cultures.”

LNP Opens New Medical Office in Sonoita



Photo by Pat McNamara

Helene Henager, ANP-BC (left) and her medical assistant Arianne Werito are seeing clients at Patriot Internal Medicine, Henager’s new clinic in Sonoita.

By Pat McNamara

There’s a new ‘doc’ (Licensed Nurse Practitioner, to be precise) in town. Sonoita resident Helene Henager, ANP-BC (Adult Nurse Practitioner-Board Certified) is providing basic health needs for the community at Patriot Internal Medicine, located at 3123 SR 83, Suite E.

Like more than half the states in the U.S., Arizona is a “full practice authority state,” which means that she can practice independently without being under the supervision of a doctor.

Henager, who holds a BS from the U of A and a Masters degree from the University of San Diego, is an Air Force veteran. She practices adult internal medicine for patients 17 and older and is, she stressed, a “Christian-based practitioner.” When asked if she would prescribe birth control medication, which is sometimes not supported by some Christian sects, she replied, “I am not a women’s health practitioner but would refill it for one who asks for it.”

Henager does not provide vaccinations, as maintaining vaccine inventory is not financially feasible for her small practice. Additionally, most patients receive their vaccinations at local pharmacies. “This does not have to do with any politics,” she said.

Henager maintains an office in Tucson, where she practices most days of the week, but was offered the opportunity to open a clinic in Sonoita part time. Having lived in Sonoita for eight years,

the location is much more convenient for her.

Currently, most of Henager’s patients come from her Tucson practice, but she aims to serve the Sonoita/Elgin community as she becomes better known locally. She is assisted by Arianne Werito, a medical assistant, and her office manager, Roxanne Bourassa, also a medical assistant.

Henager said she accepts 90% of the major insurance medical plans. “I’m hoping to increase my services to the local community,” she said. Currently, five weeks into her practice, she is available one day a week, but plans to increase her accessibility in the future if she can grow her practice here. “Maintaining a private practice is very cost prohibitive if I don’t get the patients in,” she said.

Henager plans to expand community services, includes providing a full laboratory. Basic bloodwork and urinalysis are currently available, with more options to increase in the future. This will save local residents trips into Tucson or Sierra Vista for lab work required for their own medical needs. She just needs the paperwork from the appropriate source.

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Community Comes Together for Turkey, Fellowship

By Dave Lumia

As Thanksgiving dinners go, it had something for everyone.

Turkey (both roasted and fried). Ham. Mashed Potatoes. Stuffing. Gravy. Green Bean Casseroles. Green Salad. Cranberries. Pumpkin and Apple Pie. Cookies.

Enough to feed 156.

And the most important item on the menu on this day of gratitude and thanks: Fellowship in abundance.

“People just want to get together and connect as a community,” said Tom Moffett, pastor, along with wife Gardenia, of The Vine Church in Sonoita. The dinner at the Sonoita Fairgrounds was hosted by The Vine, with support from other local churches and area businesses.

“Ultimately that’s our goal, that nobody in this community is alone. They have a place to go.”

This year’s turnout, which included 16 volunteers doing the hard work in the kitchen, was slightly larger than last year, Moffett said.

“Nobody is left out. Everybody belongs,” he said. “Each year it seems to be getting stronger, and we’re very grateful for that.”

While this celebration of food and community was a special event, Moffett noted that there are needs that extend beyond a single day, and there are resources available to assist, including the local food pantry housed at The Vine.

“Anybody who has a need, they can call me,” he said. “There’s no need for anybody to go without.”



Vine Church co-pastors Gardenia and Tom Moffett organized the Thanksgiving gathering at the Fairgrounds.

Photos by Dave Lumia



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Activist Dora Rodriguez Speaks at Library



Contributed photo

Cynthia Matus Morriss (left) leads the discussion with activist-author Dora Rodriguez at the Patagonia Library.

By India Aubry

Voices from the Border and the Patagonia Public Library hosted a book talk in early November with Dora Rodriguez, of Tucson, regarding her recently published memoir, "Dora: Daughter of Unforgiving Terrain." The book is a poignant recounting of her being found near death from heat-stroke and dehydration in Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument in 1980. The now-iconic photo of a completely limp 19-year-old Dora being carried out of the desert by a Border Patrol agent who pleaded with her not to die made the cover of The New York Times.

As a student activist, Dora fled El Salvador's civil war to find safety in the U.S. following the assassination of Archbishop Oscar Romero. She was one of 13 survivors of a harrowing desert crossing that claimed the lives of the other 13 members of her group. As a result of the intense media exposure, Dora became the face of the emerging Sanctuary Movement in Tucson. In the ensuing decades, she has become a U.S. citizen, a social worker, and a humanitarian leader in the bor-

derlands. Founding a nonprofit called Salvavision, Dora and her volunteers have helped countless people fleeing their home countries and seeking asylum in the U.S. She has dedicated her life to helping people just like her in the unimaginable circumstance of leaving behind everything they have ever known in search of refuge—and risking their lives in the process.

Cynthia Matus-Morriss facilitated the engaging book talk at the library, followed by questions from the audience. I have always said of Dora that "to know her is to love her," and the tenderness, admiration, and affection shown towards her by those in attendance was palpable. The talk was followed by a book signing and refreshments provided by Anita Clovesko-Wharton in the library garden courtyard.

Rodriguez's book is available at the Patagonia library and on Amazon, as well as via her website: dorarodriguez.org/memoir

If you're interested in hosting Dora in your own community, she can be contacted at dorarodriguez.org/speaking-engagements



Contributed photo

After her talk, Dora Rodriguez signed copies of her new book in the library's garden courtyard.

Pennington (Cont.)

After Larcena had an apparent recurrence of malaria, John decided to move her to a higher elevation residence in Madera Canyon. On March 16, 1860, the camp where Larcena and Mercedes were staying was looted by a band of Apache warriors. Larcena and Mercedes were captured and kidnapped.

When they reached the present site of Helvetia, the warriors realized they were being followed and tried to step up their pace. Larcena and Mercedes had torn off pieces of their clothing and broke limbs and twigs in an attempt to leave a trail for their rescuers.

When Larcena was unable to keep up, the warriors forced her to remove her skirt, corset, and shoes and then they stabbed her in the back with a lance. The warriors repeatedly stabbed her with lances and struck her with rocks. After she became unconscious, the warriors dragged her behind a tree and left her for dead. Later, she heard her husband's rescue party nearby but was too weak to call for help.

One of the Apache warriors wore Larcena's shoes, and the would-be rescuers followed his tracks until they lost them on the east side of the Catalina Mountains.

After three days, Larcena, who was covered with bruises and pierced with eleven stab wounds, regained consciousness and began her incredible journey back to the lumber camp. She crawled during daylight hours and attempted to sleep at night on her hands and knees because the wounds on her back were so painful. She ate seeds and whatever other edible plants she could find. Larcena struggled for twelve days making her way back to camp where she found coffee and flour from which she made bread and ate real food for the first time in over two weeks. The next morning, she began her journey back to the lumber camp.

John was in Tucson organizing another search party when he received

news Larcena had survived and returned, 16 days after her capture.

Larcena was treated in Tucson by Dr. C. B. Hughes and, over a period of several months, made a slow recovery. Mercedes was later found in a Pinal Apache Camp and returned unharmed in exchange for several Pinal Apache warriors imprisoned at Fort Buchanan.

In 1861, Larcena was pregnant with her first daughter when John was killed by Apaches. After the Civil War began, the Army was pulled from Arizona and Larcena feared the Apaches would begin more violent attacks on settlers, so she moved her family to Patagonia.

In 1867, Larcena's 24-year-old sister Ann died from malaria and a year later her brother Jim was killed by Apaches near Tucson while guarding a load of lumber. On June 10, 1868, while working in a cornfield about 12 miles from the U.S. Army facility at Camp Crittenden, Elias and his son Green were killed by Apaches. Elias died instantly but Green suffered for eight days before succumbing to his wounds.

The remaining members of the Pennington family moved to Tucson where they lived until December 24 when they decided to move to California. Unfortunately, they'd only traveled a few miles before pneumonia overcame Larcena's sister Ellen. They returned to Tucson where Ellen died a short time later.

Larcena and her brother Jack were the only remaining family members. Jack moved to Texas and Larcena remained in Tucson.

In 1870, Larcena married William Fisher Scott, who was a lawyer and judge. They had two children.

Larcena lived until March 31, 1913, when she passed away from natural causes. She is buried in the Evergreen Cemetery on Oracle Road in Tucson. Five additional Pennington graves rest on a lonely hilltop near Arivaca. Pennington Street in central Tucson is named after Larcena and her family. Scott Avenue is named after her second husband William.

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Word Search

Area Hiking Trails

By Carrie White

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It's winter in the East. But it's heaven in Santa Cruz County. That's why people are flocking to your extra bedroom under the pretense of "visiting family for the holidays." The folks are going to want to be outside when they get here. So look up these hikes and see which ones suit your fancy. The Nature Trail is located in Madera Canyon.

Remember: Take plenty of water and snacks when you hike. Wear appropriate shoes. Sunscreen, a hat and sunglasses are advisable. Binoculars are great for viewing wildlife. And make sure you let others know where you are going and when you expect to return.

BTW: The word "trail" has been removed from these designations and names condensed without spaces.

Word List

BlackHawk	GeoffPlatts	PapagoSprings
CatCave	Greaterville	SmithCanyon
CaveCanyon	Nature	SonoitaCreek
Ditch Mountain	OakTreeCanyon	TrainTrack
Gardner Canyon	Overlook	WalkerBasin

Stumped? See solution on page 23

Check It Out at the Library

Now on exhibit: books about legendary photographer Edward S. Curtis

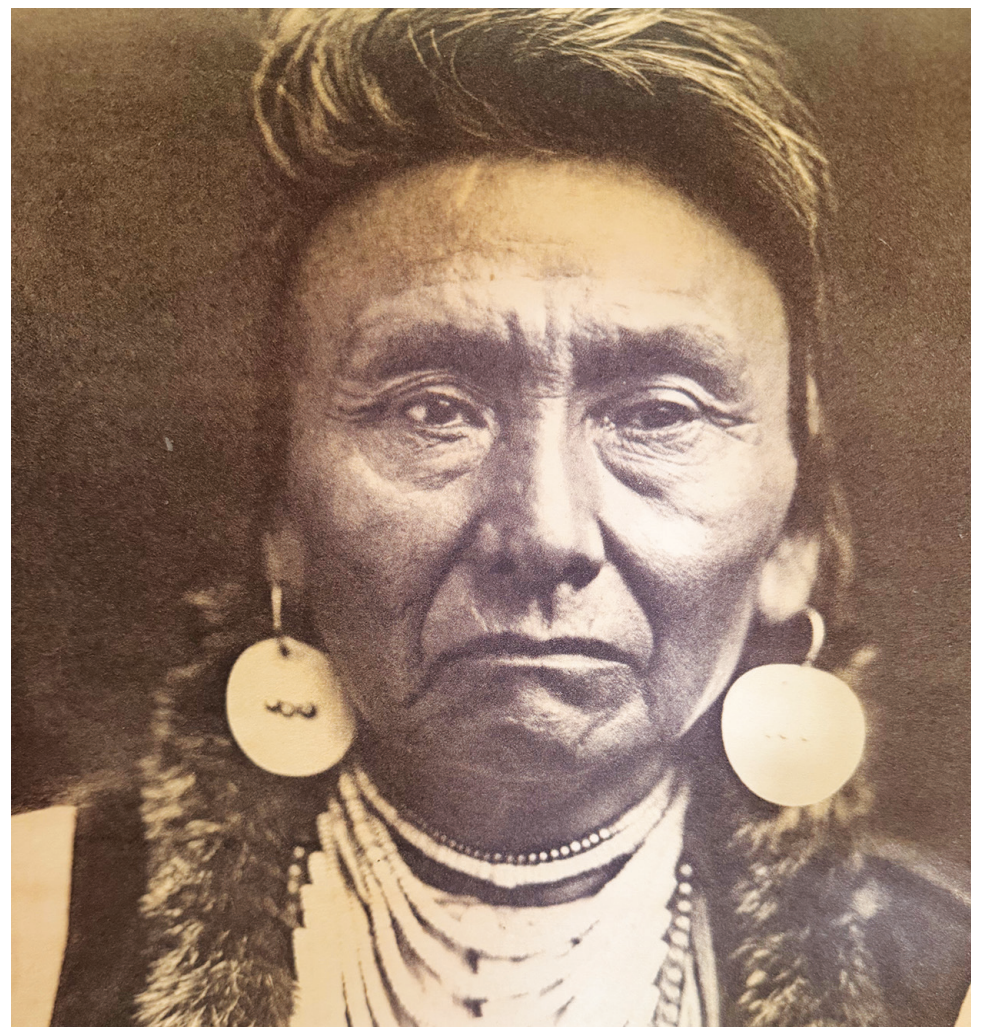


Photo courtesy of the Patagonia Library

Above: A 1903 portrait of Nez Percé Chief Joseph by photographer Edward S. Curtis.

By Sarah Klingenstein

A new Patagonia Library exhibit highlights American photographer Edward S. Curtis, whose 20-volume set of plates and narrative on the Native Americans was lauded in the 1910s, but then languished in rare book rooms and the publisher's basement until their discovery in 1972.

One of the four fantastic Curtis books the library has on display—and the only one not available for check-out—is "Portraits from North American Indian Life," measuring 18 by 14.5 inches and containing over 80 large images on heavy paper. These portraits and "slice of life" photos are a rich look into the world Curtis captured for posterity.

One of the two biographies in the collection, "Short Nights of the Shadow Catcher" by Timothy Egan, fleshes out the details of Curtis's life and exciting work.

Curtis's first attempt at memorializing native peoples was his 1895 photograph of the daughter of Chief Sealth of Seattle. Moved by a fervent desire to chronicle traditional Native American life before its certain disappearance, over the next 30 years Curtis spent months at a time away from his wife and children as he studied, befriended and photographed tribal peoples from the Nunivak of Alaska to the Hopi of New Mexico. Although much of his research was funded by financier J.P. Morgan, Curtis died in 1952 with his work largely unknown.

As Library Clerk Anne Vogt observed, "When you see a portrait that shows such intimacy, you know the photographer or painter has spent the time and earned the trust of their subject." That couldn't be truer than in the case of Edward Curtis. Come check out this gorgeous display, and take one of the books home with you.



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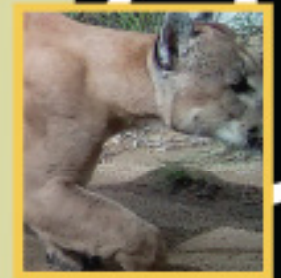
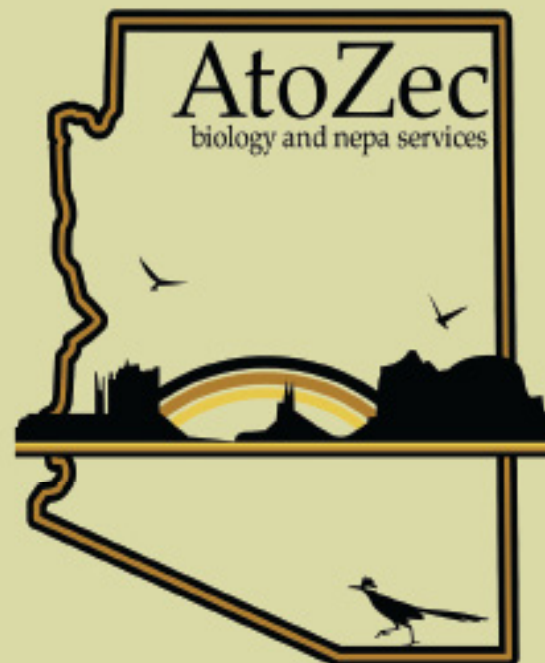
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Solution for this month's Word Search Area Hikes

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KPUP Broadcast Schedule Autumn/Winter 2025

Mon: 5pm to 6pm: Swing Hour
7pm to 8pm: eTown repeat of Saturday's show
Tues: 10am to 12pm: World Jazz with Mark Berg
7pm to 9pm: Jazz and Blues with Fred Hansen
Wed: 5pm to 6pm: Swing Hour
7pm to 10pm: Sean Alexander show
Thurs: 7pm to 10pm: Possibility Explorers. "Celebrating Mushkil Gusha, the Remover of All Difficulties." Hosted by Graves
Fri: 7pm to 9pm: Hook's Sunken Roadhouse
Sat: 12pm to 1pm: eTown - "Educate, entertain and inspire listeners through music and conversation"
6pm to 8pm: Acoustic Café. A bit of country, rock, blues, folk, pop"
8pm to 10pm: Folk Alley "Folk Music Radio from WKSU-FM in Kent, OH"
Sun: 1pm: Sunday Classical Connection
Daily Shows: StarDate: 9am & 5pm/Best of the Oldies: 1pm to 2pm/
BirdNote: 6am and 10am/Growing Native with Petey Mesquitey:
MWF at 7am, Sunday at noon/
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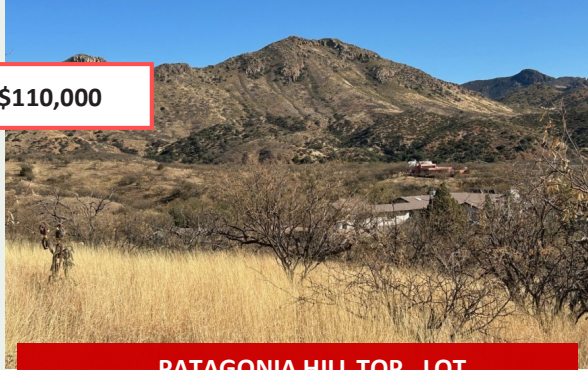


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