

Patagonia Regional Times



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A WITNESS TO HISTORY: Border Monument 111 speaks to the then and now

A no trespassing sign stands outside the wall that cuts off access to Border Monument 111, about a mile east of Lochiel. | Photo by Carrie White

SEE STORY ON PAGE 14

Prop. 417 asks voters to raise county's spending limit

By Dave Lumia

Santa Cruz County voters will decide in November whether to authorize up to \$20.5 million in additional spending by the county as new revenues are generated.

Officials have conducted multiple "Get the Facts" presentations throughout the county to explain the reasons behind Proposition 417 and what approval or rejection of the ballot measure would mean for the county.

Increases in the state-mandated Annual Expenditure Limit (AEL) have been approved by voters in many of Arizona's 15 counties, and residents of Pima, Yuma and Graham counties will also vote on similar spending limit increases in November.

Deputy county manager and finance director Mauricio Chavez has been the county's point man in the public pre-

sentations. His pitch in favor of raising the spending limit is that the county's expenses are growing at about 6 percent per year, but the AEL formula only allows its spending to increase by 3.5 percent per year. Without increasing the limit, services may need to be cut.

The math behind Proposition 417 is as follows:

The county's spending limit is governed by a formula that was passed by voters in 1979, which established a "base limit" of expenditures in 1979-80 and is adjusted annually based on population growth and inflation factors.

Santa Cruz County's base expenditures in 1980 were \$2.3 million for a population of 19,500. Based on the AEL formula, the county's spending limit for 2026-27 is \$30.4 million to serve a population of 66,500.

See PROP. 417, p. 24

Classical music finds a home in Patagonia

By Eddie McArthur

Christina and Fred Wilhelm first came to Patagonia at the close of the millennium, winter visitors avoiding Boston's winters.

Twenty-seven years later, a choral group, a performing arts foundation and an opera house endure, testament to the couple's dedication to music. And, to the vision of Virginia "Gini" Benderly.

It's been quite a journey. Wilhelm, a musician in her own right, had long been a patron of classical music venues in this country and Europe. Additionally, she has formed numerous choral groups, including the Charlestown Chorale in Boston.

Arriving in Patagonia for a few months stay in 1999, she queried Ann Katzenbach if there was "any music around here." Katzenbach, then-owner of a local bookstore said no — but she

had been trying to get a choral group together.

No need to say more. "Okay, next time I come, if you could get a few people together, I'd be glad to" do something, Wilhelm recalls saying.

A year later, there were 35 voices waiting at her proverbial doorstep to sing. One of them was Virginia "Gini" Benderly. And so began the Santa Cruz Singers.

See WILHELM, p. 8



Christina Wilhelm is President and Executive/Artistic Director of the Santa Cruz Foundation for the Performing Arts. | Photo by Eddie McArthur

Patagonia Regional Times



MISSION STATEMENT

To be a reliable source of news for the communities of eastern Santa Cruz County — open to all views, focused on local issues, grounded in community perspectives and needs, and providing a platform for community education and engagement.

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

PATAGONIA REGIONAL TIMES

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LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Vote No on Prop. 417

Santa Cruz County voters should be deeply concerned about Proposition 417, the proposed expenditure limitation increase on this November's ballot. I urge my fellow residents to vote NO and ask the Board of Supervisors to stop treating taxpayers like an open checkbook. If the Board believes an increase is necessary, they should return with a responsible, short-term proposal — not a 20-year leap of faith.

Santa Cruz County already carries one of the highest primary property tax rates in Arizona at 3.997 per \$100, exceeded only by Pima and Gila counties. These taxes fund essential, state-mandated departments such as the Sheriff, Assessor, Courts, Health Department, and Emergency Services. Despite this heavy burden on taxpayers, the Board is now asking for a 67% increase in its spending cap — from \$30 million to \$50 million.

Their justification relies on optimistic projections of future revenue from the South32 Hermosa mine in Patagonia, using a twenty-year horizon. And while we hope that it proves to be the case, it is far too speculative to warrant such a dramatic expansion of spending authority.

There are more responsible paths forward. The Board could request a smaller increase while committing to a 25–33% reduction in the primary property tax rate. They could also create improvement districts, which restrict the use of funds specifically to the defined purpose, such as recreation and libraries, and in turn would free up roughly \$3 million in the budget and make the funds available for operational needs.

Most importantly, the Board has the authority to request expenditure limit adjustments every two years during general elections. This gives voters, when asked, the opportunity to evaluate performance before granting additional spending authority, a safeguard we should use, not bypass.

Prop 417 is excessive, premature, and financially risky. Once you approve a 20-year expenditure limit, it is much harder to correct course. Santa Cruz County deserves a thoughtful, measured approach — not a blank check.

Bruce Bracker
Tubac

Thanks for support of Santa Cruz Humane Society

I would like to send a “thank you” to the communities of Sonoita and Patagonia for supporting the Santa Cruz Humane Society in Nogales, and hopefully preventing their closure. Thanks to all the individuals who have donated money and supplies, and to all the businesses (12 total) who sponsor Dog and Kitty Banks that sit on their counters to receive loose change or bills, and whose proceeds are taken to the Humane Society every two weeks. It all makes a difference for those animals in need of a home, being cared for, lovingly, at our no-kill shelter. Dr. Rojas has retired from his veterinary practice but continues to do spay/neuter surgeries every Wednesday, which he has faithfully done for so many years. May this important work for our companion animals continue.

Thanks on behalf of the Santa Cruz Humane Society.

Stacy Fletcher
Sonoita

We don't need another Border Patrol station

I wholly object to a new Border Patrol station. With all the heightened security at the border, there is absolutely not enough illegal migrant traffic north from Mexico to justify an ugly station blemishing our beautiful grasslands. This is a huge con by a corrupt administration that violates the law with impunity, with an eye towards a clearly fascist ideology.

The wall is bad enough, and mark my words, I will spend my life working to take that wall down. And they are never happy. Now they want a double wall. Can you imagine if you were outrunning a fire and you ran into that foolish wall.

I live 25 miles SE of Sonoita in Canelo. Have you seen the condition of the road south? Despite billions of dollars in a pointless wall, have they ever offered us a cent to repair the road damage they incur driving routinely 20 miles over the speed limit, north and south, 365 days a year.

Mr. Fanning is absolutely right with his seven points, of which I could add several more regarding wildlife and the environment.

Tony Heath
Birdland Ranch
Madrean Archipelago Wildlife Center
Elgin

EDITOR'S NOTE

Summer is officially behind us, and for that we're all grateful.

Changing of the season means the PRT is back on its monthly print production cycle. We have traditionally skipped two editions in the summer because — so I'm told — that summer is the slow season.

And maybe that's true for businesses, as tourism drops off during the hot months and some of the locals check out for cooler climes, but it's hardly a news desert here, no matter the season or the weather.

For that reason, here's a reminder to subscribe to our weekly news bulletin — free for one and all — and visit our website regularly to stay on top of everything going on in our majestic little corner of the world. It's how you would have found out about the Border Patrol's plans for a new Sonoita station, perhaps next to Elgin Elementary School; ongoing discussions of alternatives for the one-lane Babocomari Bridge; the many conquests of Patagonia High School's volleyball team; continued reporting on the

Lochiel cottonwood tree sit; and much more.

Our monthly print edition is the foundation of what we do, but we don't want you to have to wait to find out about the important stories that impact your life, so remember, our bulletin and website are here for you.

Two other items of note now that we'd like you to be aware of:

PRT board and staff members will be hosting “Coffee with the PRT” on the second and fourth Friday of the month from 9 to 11 a.m. at the Quail Covey, starting on Oct. 9. The coffee is on us, so come on over to get to know us a little better and share your thoughts on how to make the PRT a more important part of your life. (Or just say hello!)

For current and would-be financial supporters, and anyone else who's interested, our 2025 Annual Report can now be found on our website. Just click on the link in the green banner that says “2025 Annual Report.”

Satisfy your fright fix at the Haunted Orchard (if you dare)

By Pat McNamara

Lower Elgin Road in Elgin is normally a quiet road with little traffic and perhaps an occasional longhorn escapee sampling the roadside smorgasbord.

However, this Oct. 24, Halloween festivities begin and traffic is sure to pick up! Lena Stephens, daughter of the historic orchard and farm owner, Mark Douglas (for the history please refer to the Jan. 4, 2024, edition of the Patagonia Regional Times), and her friend and artist Kelly Rangel have made this third year of their celebration bigger than ever. It all starts at 4:30 p.m. with an hour of ‘No Scare’ activities and games for tots and adults with heart conditions, followed by ‘The Haunting Time’ with goblins and actors to surprise and shock those with a sturdy constitution and a fearless heart. With the addition of two food trucks, Sonoita Savory Celtic Pies, a hot cocoa stand and a live band, Birds and Arrows from Tucson, the normally quiet Lower Elgin Road will be hopping!

This project started small three years ago with the help of local teenagers. The new addition of a cabin, built with donated lumber from the Canelo

Project/Barefoot Builders, a metal roof from Monument Steel and wooden pallets from Sonoita Feeds has made a structure that will last for years to come. Constructed with the help of family members and local teens, this should make a semi-permanent spot for the anticipated adrenaline rush that Halloween is known for.

“We will have a circus tent erected at the entrance with black lights for the start,” Stephens said.

Of course, no fright-generating experience is complete without a walk on a wood-chip covered trail in the dark woods, lit only by occasional tea lights, with goblins and scary apparitions jumping out along the path, just to keep one on one’s toes. There are exhibits along the trail and appropriately scary sculptures and artwork in the cabin, created by the talented Rangel.

Of course, all of this could not be created without the help of the twenty or so costumed teenagers who are the actors for this dramatic Halloween production. Admission is free, however a donation would be appreciated, as this is the only compensation for the teen actors and helpers. Goodie bags will be handed out to participants, and the



Right: The third year of the Haunted Orchard is bigger and scarier than ever.

Above: Preparations are well underway for frighteningly enjoyable experience. | Photos by Pat McNamara



organizers are hoping that all will have a great time. There is plenty of parking on the property.

“We wouldn’t be able to do this without all of the donations from the

community and are so thankful for that,” Stephens said. They encourage all to come, enjoy, partake of the food and drink and fun and make it a Halloween to remember – in a good way, of course!

37th Patagonia Fall Festival returns to Town Park on Oct. 10-11

By Lynn Davison

The 37th Patagonia Fall Festival, an annual celebration of art, music, food and community, will be Oct. 10 (9 a.m. to 5 p.m.) and Oct. 11 (10 a.m.-4 p.m.). This year will feature 130 vendors in the Town Park, most from southern Arizona. Stellar Patagonia potter Martha Kelly will be among them.

As always, the event is free; no tickets are necessary. Free parking will be available on both Naugle and McKeown Streets, including 25 spaces reserved for people with disabilities between 4th Ave and Red Mountain Foods on McKeown. Paid parking will be available for \$5 in the parking lot just north of Town Hall.

Sky Island Tourist Association (SITA) and Art State Arizona, formerly Southern Arizona Arts and Culture Alliance, are again partnering to put on the Festival. Sponsors are South32, HUSTL, Big Bully Tire, Valley Telecom Group, Green Valley News, Tucson Weekly, Patagonia

Regional Times.

Linda Shore, President of the Board and Webmaster of SITA, says this year should be better than ever. “There are a number of new exciting musicians signed on to perform, plus some old favorites like Jam Pak Blues ‘N’ Grass Neighborhood Band, a highly celebrated, nonprofit youth group based in Chandler, Arizona. Many young people have cycled through the Band since the late ‘80s. It is still led by its founder, Anni Beach. The very popular local Zach Farley will be again playing his gourd instruments with friends.”

Lots of food options will be available, including the Patagonia Volunteer Fire Department’s ever popular concession, the “Burger Burn.” Its hamburgers and beer garden have been a Fall Festival mainstay. All the proceeds support our local fire department. Please note that the Burger Burn will only be serving at the Festival on Saturday.

In 2025, it was a rainy fall festival, so the number of visitors was down



Some 130 vendors are expected for the 37th Patagonia Fall Festival on Oct. 10-11. | PRT file photo

considerably. Art State Arizona hopes to see the

numbers back up to 12,000 to 15,000 visitors this year.

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Arizona Supreme Court rules for farmers in assessment dispute

By Kat Crockett

Late July this year, the Arizona Supreme Court ruled in favor of several Cochise County farmers who challenged skyrocketing agriculture land values.

This all began when Cochise County Assessor Phil Leidecker dramatically increased the land values for about 33,000 acres of nut orchards, and about 500 acres of wine grape vineyards. Nut orchards increased from \$2,500/acre to \$13,800/acre and vineyards from \$1,900/acre to \$9,800/acre, triggering an immediate appeal to the Arizona Tax Court, filed in late 2022 claiming the land values were “excessive, inequitable and erroneous.”

The tax court found that Arizona Department of Revenue (ADOR) tax manual dating back to at least 1983 conflicted with state law by permitting “double taxation” of permanent crops. ADOR considered permanent crops to be improvements on the land, unlike seasonal crops such as hay, cotton, and produce. Permanent crops included pecan, pistachio, almond, fruit, fig, olive and ornamental trees; date palms; grapevines; and jojoba shrubs.

In June 2024, Tax Court Judge Sara Agne found that the statute’s “plain language” neither allows agricultural property to be treated differently based on the crops grown nor supports valuing agricultural land separately from “permanent” crops. Cochise County and the state immediately appealed to the Arizona Court of Appeals, who concurred with the original decision, and ultimately the lawsuit landed at the state Supreme Court.

Historically, ADOR instructions to county assessors defined a two-step process for over 40 years which created the “double taxation” shot down by the court. The first step was the statutory income approach applied only to the land, which Cochise set at \$1,800 per acre. The second step was to assign a market-based value based on the crop, and these two values were added together for the final full cash values. The Supreme Court ruled that state law does not authorize this add-on, declaring the permanent-crop provision “void” and “unenforceable.”

Up until 2020, the ADOR manual provided a table to determine per-acre value of permanent crop plantings, with occasional increases over the

years. The table was removed from the manual in 2020, and assessors were advised to set crop values using local market data, if adequate data was available. In 2022, the old tables were barred, and assessors were directed to use market-based values for their counties.

Santa Cruz County Assessor Pablo Ramos said that in taking a more conservative approach, vineyard agricultural land is valued at \$200/acre, and the county has no other permanent crops. He added that given the limited lease activity and lack of recent sales data for vineyards, there isn’t sufficient market evidence to justify any upward adjustments at this time. Keeping the valuation stable reflects the current market realities and helps provide predictability for local growers.

In Yavapai County, another major wine producing region, Assessor Brett McGee told the PRT that he became aware of the Cochise County legal challenge early and chose a more conservative approach to valuing permanent crops, including wine grapes, while awaiting the courts’ final decision. Yavapai currently values vineyard and orchard land at \$1,734 per acre, plus a \$2,734-per-acre permanent-crop value, for a total of \$4,468 per acre. The added crop value has been used only for the past few years and only after crops reach maturity. Because the court ruling now prohibits adding a separate permanent-crop value, McGee said he plans to spend the next six months correcting land values before Agricultural Notices of Value are mailed to taxpayers in February 2027.

Multiple other counties are impacted by the recent ruling, including Yuma, where figs and dates are grown, and many county assessors are pondering the road ahead and looking for new guidance from the state.

In Cochise County, Leidecker said the ruling will require him to recalculate the land values for the 16 vineyards and orchards that participated in the lawsuit, dating back to the original filing in December 2022. The county will also bear the burden of reimbursing some of the legal expenses to the those who filed the lawsuit, which he

said is now well over \$100,000. He added that final refund amounts and valuations have not been determined, making it premature and speculative to address who will receive corrective action and reimbursement.

Leidecker also said that although the court barred separate valuations for permanent crops, it did not decide the land’s value, only the procedure used to calculate it. He noted that vineyard and orchard leases are scarce, making it difficult to determine the average annual rental of comparable nearby agricultural land as the statute requires. He added that many agricultural properties in the county may be significantly undervalued, in some cases by millions of dollars. “The challenge is finding a way to assess a fair value within the constraints of the law,” he said.

It is unclear whether corrective action would be available to other farmers within and outside Cochise County who were not part of the lawsuit but may have received overvalued property assessment. In mid-August, the PRT phoned and emailed ADOR’s media contact to ask whether corrective action would be available to other farmers who were not part of the lawsuit. ADOR has not responded.

Dos Cabezas, Deep Sky and Flying Leap all have vineyards in Cochise County and may be eligible for corrective action on their assessed property values, impacting prior and future taxes, and may want to take a closer look at their tax records and file a claim.

Farmers who may want to take a deeper dive into potential action that may allow for a claim outside the lawsuit should carefully review their assessed values and the following Arizona Revised Statutes and contact their county assessor:

Title 42: Taxation > Chapter 16: Property Tax Appeals and Reviews > Article 6: Correcting Property Tax Errors

Accurate assessments can affect tax costs, financial viability, business decisions and long-term planning. It might be a good idea to look closely at each annual Notice of Assessed Value issued by the county annually in February.

YOUR STORIES. YOUR COMMUNITY. YOUR NEWSPAPER.

STARTING
OCTOBER 9!



Pull up a chair, grab a cup of coffee (on us), and spend the morning with the Patagonia Regional Times team!

We want to hear your stories, your memories, your ideas, and what matters to you. Come chat with us, get to know the people behind the PRT, and help us strengthen the connections that make our community special.

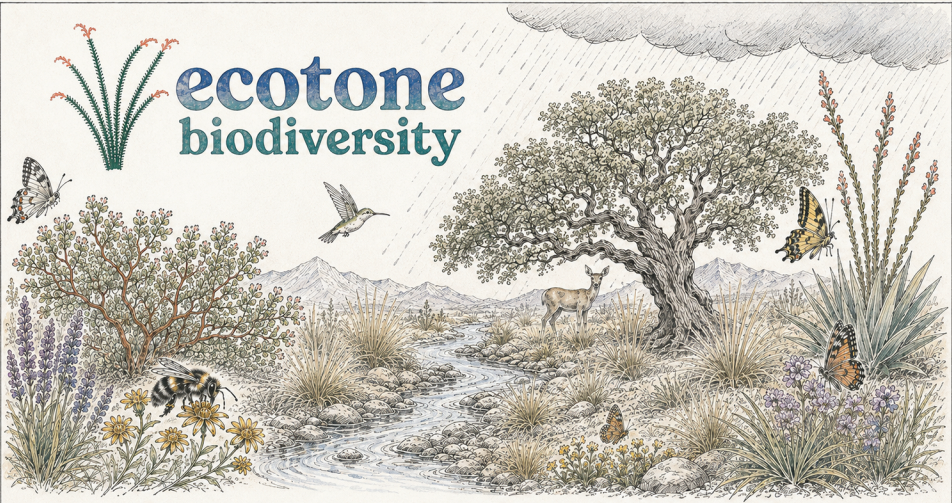
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Organizers Zander and Heidi Ault at the start line on McKeown Avenue. | Photo by Shannon Christine

Spirit World 100 maintains low-key vibe entering 8th year

By Angelina Maynes

The Spirit World 100, bringing together hundreds of cyclists, families and out-of-town visitors, returns to Patagonia for its eighth year, Nov. 5-8.

Gravel riders from all over should expect live music, great food and a whole lot of community. While the event is technically a race, organizers Heidi Rentz Ault and Zander Ault have never been interested in making it a competition.

"It's been my goal all along to make our venue feel like a farmer's market and the actual ride to just feel like a big-ass bike ride," Heidi said. "Like you're going out with your buddies and you have the support of the aid station. And yes, if you want to hammer it out there and go all out and try and win, you can. But the majority of the people who ride the Spirit World are out there for the adventure of it versus the race."

Despite limited advertising, Spirit World has once again sold out, but there is a wait list. Heidi credits much of that success to visitors saying "they want to experience the vibration of Patagonia ... I think people also are drawn to our low-key vibe."

The event's four courses take riders through dirt roads and wide-open landscapes of the San Rafael Valley. The longest route covers 102 miles and climbs over 6,000 feet. There are also 83-, 58- and 30-mile options, ranging from 5,000 to 1,800 feet of elevation gain. Most of the riding will happen on dirt roads, with only 5-6 miles of pavement.

Eight aid stations will be situated along the courses, stocked with everything from pretzels, gummy bears, chips and donuts to electrolytes and energy chews.

The aid stations turn a simple pit stop into something closer to a roadside party. Dedicated team members like Terry and John Waldrop keep the stops lively and full of energy, encouraging riders to the finish line.

Riders will finish at Patagonia Lumber Company, where they can grab a drink, listen to music and spend time with new friends made on the trails.

Organizers said much of the event's growth has been through word-of-mouth, which has helped create a loyal following. Spirit World activities are spread across four days to give visitors more time to explore the area. There is camping at Patagonia High School fields, allowing riders to settle in for the long weekend.

Forbes Meat Company will cater throughout the weekend, including Thursday's fundraiser dinner at the Lumber Company, which will be open to the public and give those who aren't participating in the race a chance to take part in the festivities.

This marks the fifth year Spirit World 100 has raised money for the Arizona Trails Association, supporting projects in the Patagonia Region. Last year the event raised \$30,000.

After last year's race, Zander Ault surveyed small business owners in Patagonia to find out how the weekend

See SPIRIT, p. 17

Heartbreak among the cottonwoods



OPINION & COMMENT



By Cassina Farley

When I'm feeling discouraged, I often retreat to memories of my childhood.

What I didn't know when I was younger was that it was not the same for every kid. While there were some kids trapped in the city, we were left to wander the vast grasslands that we lovingly called the valley.

Borders didn't mean much to a band of kids carrying pocketknives and BB guns. We went wherever it looked most interesting, where there'd be the least amount of adult intervention.

One fall afternoon after discovering a well-hidden cow pond, we hustled back to Nana Crusitas's house to gather all the wood we could find. Behind the work shed we built a raft to sail across the cow pond. We balanced the raft on top of two bicycles and carefully made our way to the pond.

In those days there was hardly a soul on those Lochiel roads. There was no one to question what we were doing, and no Dads around to stop us. Once we made it through the tall grass, we unloaded our vessel on the shore of that muddy pond. The cows kept their distance, choosing to stay away from the noise and confusion. All together we hoisted our raft up and floated it on the top of the water. The little kids climbed aboard, and then the big kids jumped on and shoved off.

We made it a quarter of the way before our vessel started taking on water. The little kids began to squirm. The ship began to sink, and before we knew it, we were all thigh-deep in mud and cow poop.

No one was laughing. The older kids did all we could to save the little kids — our little sisters and brothers. We were bound by the "take care of your brother/sister clause," and the trouble was always worse when they came back hurt. Once everyone was on shore and the raft was at the bottom of the pond, we threw rocks at it until we were satisfied and headed back to the house to start again.

We spent hours, days and months playing in the grasslands of Lochiel. We rode bikes, dug forts into the hillsides and climbed the huge cottonwoods that ran along the riverbed. We never paid no mind to the border or even realized what it meant or why it was there.

Fast forward to now. I couldn't go out to Lochiel. I didn't want to see what was happening. I wanted to retain the image I had in my mind's eye of cattle ponds and untouched dirt roads as far as the eye could see. I wanted to only remember the horizon that looked into Mexico and continued unspoiled until it reached the clouds.

I finally gathered the courage and made my way to the valley. I sobbed the first time I saw the big black gouge that interrupted the horizon. It looked as though it was blocking the clouds from making their journey across the grasslands. I drove further to see giant cottonwoods toppled over to make way for not one but two walls.

What about the birds and the ecosystem that relies on them to stand? What about the kids who will never climb them again?

I sat at the base of the lone standing cottonwood and wondered how the pronghorn will make sense of this? They have such little time to decide what side they are on before the wall closes in on them. I wondered if push came to shove, could a bear, jaguar or coyote climb both walls to be reunited with their family?

I am heartbroken. When you sit among the last remaining trees that look into Mexico, it's like visiting a hospice room. The patients are dying. Those brave enough are standing vigil while the rest of the country is wondering why we care so much about some trees.

If only it were that simple.

Cassina Farley can be contacted at cassinaandzachfarley@msn.com.

A community comes together on pickleball courts

By Dave Lumia

Ed Luther, freshly arrived in Patagonia in January, was out for a morning stroll when a fellow Patagonian pulled alongside him in a vehicle and posed an innocuous question.

Luther's mornings have not been the same since. "I was walking down the street and Dave drove by," Luther said. "And they invited me down here."

"Dave" is David Fain, de facto chef de mission and chief recruiter of the Patagonia pickleballers. "Down here" is what used to be the basketball courts behind the Patagonia Museum/1914 Schoolhouse. It's where you'll find Luther, and Fain, and a varied assortment of pickleball practitioners every Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday morning from 7 to 9 a.m.

"I just rolled down the window and said 'do you play pickleball,'" Fain recalled.

In fact, Luther did not. "I didn't know what it was, really," he said. But now he does.

Luther describes it as "sort of addicting" — both the low-key, enjoyable means of regular exercise and becoming part of a distinctly Patagonia "social circle."

"It's a social thing," Fain said. "It's friendly competitive, and the whole point of this is to have fun. So there's a lot of laughing and a lot of challenging on occasion."

Turnout fluctuates from day to day and week to week, but on a recent September morning, all three of the courts were in use, with eight men and four women whacking the plastic balls to and fro. The group's social media app has 24 members and continues to grow.

The group's evolution and development of its "home court" have followed a similarly organic path.

Fain caught the pickleball bug while playing with his brother on courts in Flagstaff and began reaching out about two and a half years ago to locals who might be interested in playing here. A core group of about five to seven



Above: Adam De La Ossa stretches to make a return while Gisa Krueger and David Sosna are ready to pounce from the other side of the net.
Below: Morning sessions behind the Patagonia Museum have attracted upwards to a dozen pickleballers, depending on the day. | Photos by Dave Lumia

formed, but they needed a place to play.

Fain and Gisa Krueger first set up a temporary net on the basketball court at the museum, and play began among the early adopters. But the courts were in poor shape, so they secured permission to use the high school tennis courts when they were available. It was another imperfect arrangement, so they shifted once again to the public courts in Nogales, but always with the intent of finding a solution closer to home.

"By then we all decided, hey, let's see what we can do to improve these courts," Fain said.

A generous donation from Rick Small got the financial ball rolling, and the hat was passed among 10 other group members to come up with about \$2,500 needed for materials to transform the court from basketball to pickleball. Then it was a matter of doing the work: patching the cement, installing nets, mapping out and painting the courts. The initial goal was two courts, but they found they had room enough



for three, so three it is. They're a little closer together than originally planned, but more courts, more participation.

The transformation started in February and was completed in August, once the monsoon let up enough to allow for the finishing painting touches. It was a community effort in every sense of the word, but Fain credits Gama Leyva and Raub Owens for much of the heavy lifting.

"It's been a shared expense, and people have all contributed to that," Fain said. "What you see here is the end product of a lot of effort from a lot of people."

Leyva, aka Painter Gamma Ray, was the driving force in getting the courts painted and is rightly proud of the finished product. "This is a great thing," he said. "And it was abandoned, you know, unused, for how long?"

Fain said most of the players are relatively new to the pickleball experience. Ability levels vary, but there's always someone willing to work with newcomers on still development.

"We're all learning," Fain said. "Our game has really improved."

Owens takes on a lot of the instruction for new arrivals. "He's very good at it," Fain said. "We want it to be a positive experience so people want to come back."

David Sosna was new to the sport when he joined up in March, not long after shoulder replacement surgery. That he was able to have fun playing left-handed until his shoulder healed says a lot to him about the appeal of pickleball.

"The point is that I could do it, I could play," Sosna said. "You can't do that in a sport like tennis. It's very accessible for beginners."

Fain said the group plans an "open house" sometime after Oct. 17, but in the meantime, new players are welcome to come out any Tuesday, Thursday or Saturday morning and join the group. The courts are open seven days a week, and paddles and balls are stored in boxes at the courts for "drop-ins" to use at any time.



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Obituaries

Eric Richard Quiroga 1971-2026

Eric Richard Quiroga, age 55, of Castle Rock, Colo., joined the angels on July 20, 2026, with his loving family and friends wrapped around him. He was born on July 17, 1971, in Nogales, Arizona, and raised by his mother, Peggy Wright, and his father, Gilbert Quiroga, who were both present for his passing. Eric met his true love, Lorraine (Rain) Quiroga, in Patagonia, followed her to Colorado, and put a ring on her finger on December 7, 2000. He helped Rain raise her beautiful daughter, Jasmine Mollohan, and her amazing grandson, Rome Entsler.

Eric was the most devoted husband, father, and grandfather one could imagine, and he was a lover through and through. He loved his family, his friends, his coworkers, every stranger, dog, cat, mountain, ocean, lake, and plant he encountered. Joy lived and thrived in every fiber of his being. He took the time to learn what brought joy to others and shared his joy with them. He gave to all of us, helped with every task, and sang at the top of his lungs through it all. To be near him was

to experience a roller coaster of all the emotions that healed the soul: laughter, silliness, trickery, teasing, peace, serenity, kindness, openness, forgiveness, and ultimately, pure love. All of us are so grateful that Eric came into our lives. He taught us what it means to be happy, and we will hold his teachings in our hearts forevermore. Our lives are forever changed for the better, having Eric's beautiful soul with us for the last 55 blessed years.

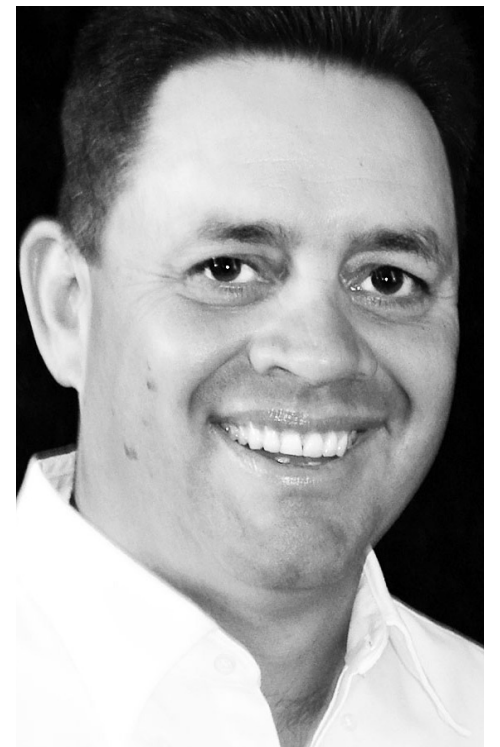
Eric is survived by his beloved wife, Lorraine Quiroga; his grandson Rome Entsler; his mother, Peggy Wright; his father and stepmother, Gilbert & Rebeca Quiroga; his brothers and their spouses: Michael & Angelica Quiroga, Nick & Jessica Quiroga, Clint & Irene Quiroga, Joey & Tina Quiroga; his step-brothers and their spouses: Eduardo & Yohana Cortez, Fabian & Ashleigh Espinoza; his step-sisters: Claudia Cortez, Karla Espinoza; his mother-in-law, Barbie Mollohan; his brothers-in-law and sisters-in-law: Camden & Dawn Mollohan, Mark & Erin Woelfel, and Lorin & Christine Mollohan; his won-

derful aunts, uncles, nieces, nephews, cousins, and other loving family members; and countless fun-loving, loyal friends.

Eric was preceded in death by his daughter, Jasmine Mollohan; his father-in-law, Keith Mollohan; his maternal grandparents, Duke & Mary Ann Wright; and his paternal grandparents, Joaquin & Maclovio Quiroga.

Eric's body was donated to science in hopes of finding a cure for pancreatic cancer. He is still giving of himself, even in death. A Mass will be held for Eric on Oct. 10, 2026, at 10 a.m., preceded by a rosary at 9:30, at St. Therese of Lisieux Roman Catholic Parish, 222 Third Avenue, in Patagonia. After the Mass, a Celebration of Eric's Life will be held by his loving Arizona family at 469 Harshaw Ave. at 2 p.m. All family and friends are welcome to attend both celebrations. Eric would not have it any other way!

The family would like to extend their gratitude and appreciation to Sky Ridge Medical Center's attending staff for



their exceptional care of Eric and for tolerating all of his teasing and pranks during his final weeks with us. He was so grateful to all of you.

Psalm 34:18 The Lord is near to the broken-hearted and saves the contrite of spirit.

Eric, may you be at peace, until we meet again... We love and adore you always!

Robert Cabot 1924-2026

Born Feb. 1, 1924, into a socially prominent Boston family, Robert Cabot's childhood was full of travel and outdoor adventure: skiing, bicycling, mountain climbing, horseback trips, hiking, kayaking and sailing. His love and appreciation of nature and of the outdoors was boundless, right to the end.

Robert enlisted for World War II at the age of 18 and spent four years in action all over Europe, in units devoted to intercepting and translating coded enemy messages. Following the war, he returned to The United States to complete an undergraduate degree at Harvard, married and had two children, Kathleen and Sara.

He got his law degree at Yale, then served ten years with The Marshall Plan — precursor to USAID — while living in Italy, Thailand, Sri Lanka and Washington, D.C. He resigned from the Foreign Service in reaction to American policies toward Southeast Asia, moved to Italy and devoted himself to writing.

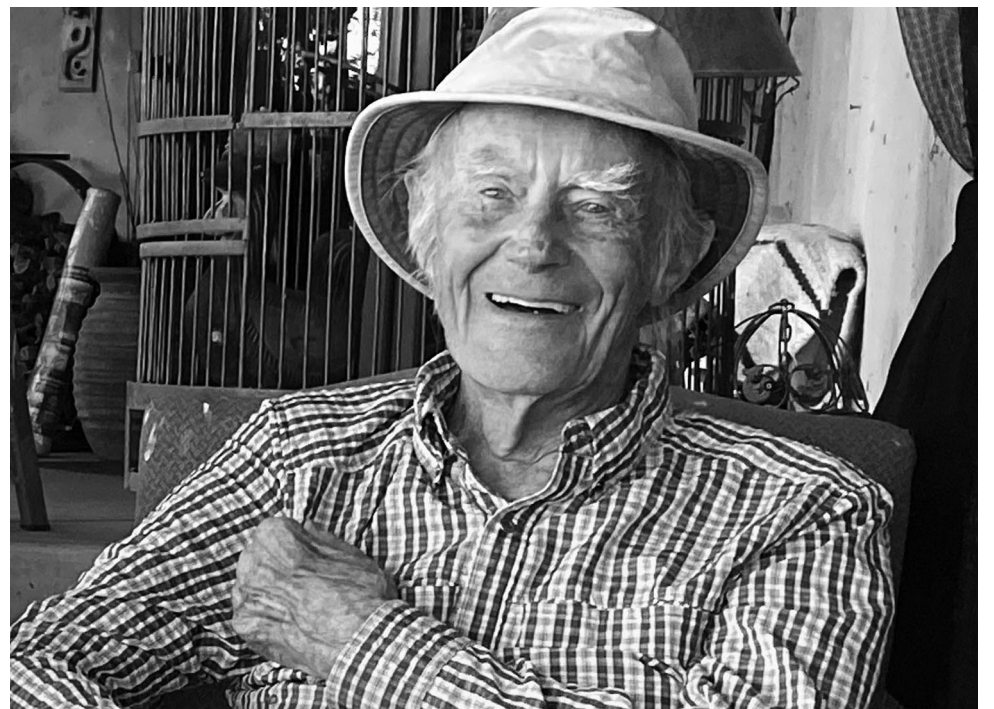
In the mid and late 1960s, intrigued by the counterculture movement back home, Robert returned briefly to the U.S., completing his first novel, The Joshua Tree. He then returned to Italy and married again and became father to a son, Alexis.

His third and most enduring relationship, and later marriage in 1978,

was to Penny, an English woman who had one child of her own, Dominic. Rob and Penny have two sons together, Amiel and Arian.

Among Robert Cabot's brave undertakings were his 30-day solo crossing of the Atlantic in a small sailboat and hiking expeditions including the Khunjerab Pass, above 16,000 feet. Back at home in the U.S., Rob and Penny spent months wandering hither and yon in a camper van, visiting intentional communities, including some which seemed a bit too odd for them to join. Instead, with friends, they decided to establish a new community, Linnaea, on Cortes, a small island in British Columbia: 314 acres of beautiful farmland, where they milked cows, planted potatoes, and raised hay. Robert also learned, perforce, to repair ancient farm machinery.

As part of studying communities, Robert learned a lot about land trusts, then used his resources and the support of community members to assist several conservation organizations in the U.S. and Canada purchase land and establish anti-development protections. This was unique at that time because established conservation networks (such as The Nature Conservancy) were not willing to protect inhabited land. The land trusts Robert and Penny helped create still exist to



this day.

Later, in the 1980s, Cabot joined his friend Bob Fuller, a self-described "citizen-diplomat," helping to improve superpower relations during the Cold War, traveling to the Soviet Union and Afghanistan, fostering citizen-to-citizen understanding in hopes of sustainable peace.

Penny and Robert's primary residence for the last four decades was Whidbey Island in Washington. They purchased a second home in Patagonia in 2014 and spent increasing amounts of time in southern Arizona. His 100th birthday was celebrated in Patagonia and documented by the PRT in its ... At the age of 102, he died peacefully on

Aug. 18, 2026, with Penny at his side in their Patagonia home. He is buried in the Patagonia Cemetery.

Robert had a wonderful, unique and varied life. He leaves behind his wife, Penny, and children Kathy, Sara, Alexis, Dominic, Amiel and Arian, numerous grand and great-grandchildren, Holly, his amazing caregiver over the last year, and many friends and admirers, all of whom feel the loss of his warm presence. Many of us were amazed — and impressed — that a person with such gifts, advantages, and attainments could be as warm, as available, and free of grandiosity as Robert Cabot was. He will be missed ... and is already.

Sirius, the Dog Star



STARSTRUCK



By Harold Meckler

For more than the past decade, whenever I went outside to look at the stars I'd be accompanied by our Lab and Golden mix that we named Jersey Girl and called Jersey, for short. Fearless, gentle yet very protective, she added something to those excursions that can't really be expressed. We had to let her go recently when age and illness caught up to her, but I'll be thinking of her with every long stare at the most spectacular star there is. And, in October, that star, Sirius, headlines a glorious southern sky that is best viewed before the sun rises.

That's right. Who says stargazing has to happen just in the evening? Early morning observing can be just as rewarding and, at least for me, it simply seems easier to get up a little earlier than to try to stay awake a little later when I'm already fighting exhaustion. Before sunup throughout October, think about starting your day with some backyard astronomy.

Views of the magnificent constellations Taurus, Orion, and Gemini and their most famous stars, Aldebaran, Betelgeuse and the twins Castor and Pollux, respectively, are not to be missed. The real magic, however, is further south. That's where you'll find Canis Major, the Greater Dog, and,

within it, our brightest star, Sirius, the Dog Star. It is wondrously informative.

Due to its relative closeness at 8.6 light years away, Sirius appears brighter than other stars that are much more luminous. It is about twice as massive — containing twice the amount of matter — as the sun, and is about 1.7 times larger. Quite interestingly, Sirius is really just a baby at approximately 250 million years of age. The sun has been shining for more than 4.5 billion years.

While no planets have been found near Sirius, it does have a neighbor, a white dwarf star called Sirius B that orbits its big cousin every 50 years. The dwarf is equally fascinating. Well in the past, it was the larger of the two and, as it burned up its molecular fuel, swelled into a red giant before its outer shell was discarded. It is now some 100 times smaller than the sun, but much more dense. You'll need a large telescope under very dark skies to create the necessary visual separation to see it.

Especially now, as I connect my memories of Jersey with a celestial beauty, it seems even more heart-warming to learn that Sirius has always garnered sustained attention from so many cultures. Ancient Egyptians structured their agricultural and social calendars around the rising of this star. In Rome and Greece, Sirius' arrival coincided with hotter temperatures. As a result, they were the first to proclaim the "dog days of summer." In Polynesia, where Sirius was seen as a winter star, locals used it to navigate the seas.

But, of all its roles, the one closest to home for all of us is Sirius as the head of the faithful companion to Orion, the hunter. But really, couldn't Orion be any one of us walking somewhere with our best friend alongside? And, you know the scene. There's always a tail wagging, always a quick detour when curiosity beckons. No, I don't discount what any of the old civilizations saw in her but, for me, in Sirius I imagine the dependable yet carefree pet in whose company all loneliness disappears.

So, the sky will become even more inviting to me. Looking at Sirius and Canis Major will entice me to glance around in the hopes that my mind will play a few tricks and let me have another moment or two with my Jersey Girl. She made stargazing so much better. I just can't help but think how lucky Orion surely is to have Sirius by his side for eternity!

WILHELM (cont. from p. 1)

In no time, she and Benderly were friends, with the former providing seed money for what would eventually become the Benderly-Kendall Opera House. "It had been her dream," Wilhelm said.

But there were other important milestones before the opera house's opening:

Incorporation of the Santa Cruz Foundation for the Performing Arts (2006)

Purchase of a rental space that has served as the SCFPA office (2015)

While the choral group did not have a performance venue upon formation, the creative minds were at work creating musical opportunities for local residents.

The group performed "house concerts" each year. In 2002, they gave their first true concert — a memorial to 9/11 on the Patagonia schools campus.

Still there was no honest to goodness performance space. Not until the "Concert Haul" — a self-contained trailer — arrived in Patagonia. The venue was constructed in Chicago and towed to southern Arizona. It became the organization's outdoor venue.

Alas, still, no "permanent" home for performances.

But the purchase of the foundation's former rental space on Naugle Avenue opened the door for just that.

With years of experience in building design relating to good acoustics, the Wilhelms began planning for the venue even before moving to Patagonia permanently in 2019.

Christina wanted a classic "double cube" design patterned after opera houses in Europe, as it provided the best acoustics. In that design both the length and height would be double the width. That proved impossible in Patagonia due to height restrictions. So the building was designed as 20 feet wide, 40 feet long and 20 feet high. More complications arose when it was discovered the location sat in a flood plain, and the entire building had to be elevated. Wheelchair access was required, and a lift became part of the design. This altered the front elevation, and the opposite side was extended to match.

On Jan. 27, 2017, the Opera House officially opened its doors.

The 2026-27 Benderly Concert Series begins on Nov. 1 and will feature 14 performances, including a special 10th anniversary concert on Jan. 28. It is one of multiple anniversaries to be celebrated: 25 years since formation of the Santa Cruz Singers and 20 years since the birth of the Foundation.

Fred Wilhelm died last December, but Christina continues as Foundation president and artistic director and carries on its mission of providing a special place for area residents to experience classical music and for young performers to get their start.

Evan Kory was the first "artist-in-residence" and has since played roughly 12 concerts there. He will be returning for the anniversary celebration, as well as another performance in February.

"I met Christina in 2008 in Nogales when I was 22-years old," Kory said. At the time he was living in New York City, studying piano. "I had come home to perform at some fundraisers for the Santa Cruz Community Foundation."

The two stayed in touch. And when he returned to live in the area, he would perform at least once a year.

"Having a beautiful venue dedicated to experiencing live chamber music in an intimate setting like the opera house is rare," said Kory, who has also served on the SCFPA board of directors. "Everyone who performs in the venue shares how good it feels to make music in the space with its wonderful acoustics and how warm and receptive the audience is."

Kory is a perfect example of what Wilhelm wanted for musicians at the opera house: "To give young performers who choose to make classical music as their career ..., give them a showcase to start. Because they're crazy enough to make music as a career."

So, she isn't looking for a Pavarotti? "No," she said. "But if he happens to show up at the door, I would be delighted."

The Foundation is seeking volunteer docents willing to spend one day a month give tours of the Opera House. If interested, contact Wilhelm at scfpaexec@gmail.com.

Carrie White contributed to this report.

Upcoming performances

Nov 1, 3 p.m. — Juanito Pascual

From the evocative melodies of Granada, with harmonies and rhythms that encapsulate the essence of Andalusian music, to the classic flamenco style of alegrías, known for its vibrant and celebratory spirit, Pascual blends lyrical melodies and intricate guitar work to create a reflective, story-like journey.

Nov. 8, 3 p.m. — Butter Quartet

The Butter Quartet is a period-instrument string quartet based in the Netherlands, known for their vibrant, historically informed performances of early string quartet repertoire. The ensemble consists of Anna Jane Lester and Chloe Prendergast (violins), Isabel Fransenberg (viola), and Evan Buttar (cello).

Prepaid admission: \$35 adult, \$17.50 student. At the door (if available): \$40/\$20.

Local News Matters

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On your mark, get set, bake: Pie Auction returns on Oct. 17

Patagonia Regional Times

A celebration of pies and pie lovers in all their varieties is the theme of this year's Annual Pie Auction hosted by the Patagonia Community Garden (PCG) on Oct. 17.

PCG is encouraging the participation of the whole community, especially families. To this end, a special event has been added: a category for Junior Bakers, ages 18 and under.

Other family-friendly features include a general admission price of \$10, with no charge for children 12 and under.

Admission includes nonalcoholic beverages and freshly popped popcorn. Local food truck fare and alcoholic beverages will be available for purchase. If you miss out on an auctioned pie, single pie slices will be available to purchase at a nominal price.

The entrance gate will open at 3 p.m. A social hour with music, refreshments and pie registration is scheduled from 3 to 4 p.m.

The auction will begin promptly at

4 and end around 6 p.m.

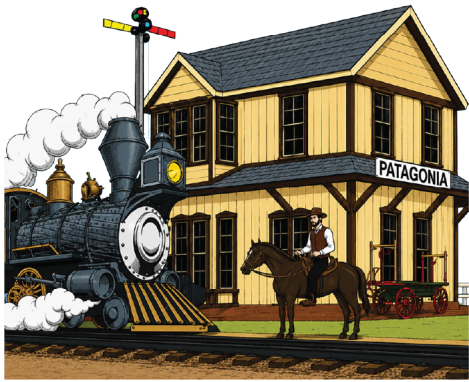
As usual, we anticipate a delectable variety of homemade pies. Past favorites included key lime, membrillo, sweet potato and the All-American favorite apple pie. Raffle drawings will occur during the auction.

The raffle team has collected an amazing array of prizes, including local wine, vacation stays, restaurant gift certificates and local artisan wares. Following the auction, the festivities will continue with plenty of pie eating, music, food truck fare and beverages.

Information about pie registration will be available soon.

All proceeds of the Annual Pie Auction support two endeavors: first, for the upkeep of PCG, and second, for a scholarship to a high school senior pursuing further education in agriculture or similar field of study.

As always, we are seeking volunteers to help with the many tasks of the auction. If you are interested, please call Janie at 520-440-3911. For more details go to patagoniacommunitygarden.org.



TOWN COUNCIL NOTES

Aug. 5 Special Meeting

Results of the July 21 primary election were approved, keeping Mayor Andy Wood in office for another term and adding Caleb Weaver as Councilor. Weaver will be sworn in at the first meeting in January.

Library Director Linda Shore was approved to apply for a \$10,000 grant from Valley Telecom to purchase a camera system for recording community meetings and to replace the Teen Room's four computer systems. These additions will be a revenue stream for the library.

Aug. 12 Regular Meeting

Town Manager Ron Robinson was approved to sign a proposal from KE&G Construction Inc for \$17,560 to cover the repairing of five joint leaks at the Wastewater Treatment Plant. It was explained there would be no stoppage of the workings of the Plant.

Robinson was approved to send a Town Letter of Support to Coronado National Forest Supervisor Kerwin Dewberry to complete the Trust for Public Land acquisition of 90-plus acres of land for preservation and wildlife corridor extension. The location was explained as between Borderlands Restoration Network's northerly corridor parcels and Little Casa Blanca Canyon.

Sept. 28, 2026, was proclaimed as "Sonoita-Elgin Fire District Day," in honor of the district's 20th anniversary, and the Town officially thanked the District for its support of the Patagonia Volunteer Fire and Rescue group. Robinson was approved to sign a Contribution Agreement with South32 Hermosa Inc. to cover up to \$3,000 per month for independent legal services related to the ongoing Community Protections and Benefits Agreement.

Howard Buchanan's resignation from the Town's Flood and Flow Committee was accepted, with appreciation for his years of service.

Zander Ault presented details of the eighth annual Spirit World 100 Cycling event, to be held Nov. 5-8. A portion of profits from selling out 250 rider positions will again go to the Arizona Trail organization. The start and finish will use the block of McKeown Avenue between Taylor and Third, and sheriff's deputies will be at each end. Ault

added that he'd gotten cooperation from Fisher Sand and Gravel to reduce truck traffic on roads shared with the race course on Friday, Nov. 6, and no truck traffic on Nov. 7, the main race day. Primary camping will continue to be on fields at the High School, but Ault's group would like to rent the Town's 5-acre parcel on Harshaw Road for overflow use.

Robinson was approved to sign a \$12,200 proposal from CPE Consultants to advance parking lot and sidewalk improvements at the public restroom and road improvements between Naugle and Pennsylvania Avenues. Funds will come from the Surface Transportation Block Grant.

Aug. 26 Regular Meeting

Resident Will Stack expressed concern that the Town's proposed sale of a portion of Santa Rita Avenue would somehow come out of his adjacent property. Kevin McKay, another nearby owner and Robinson explained that his property would not be affected, and he could request to buy a portion of the right-of-way that did run through his property. The purchaser of the sale piece is Charlee Farley, longtime user of that land as her back yard. The piece is roughly 3,000 square feet and is being sold at 63 cents per square foot, totaling \$1,890. The sale was approved.

Robinson was approved to sign a proposal from CPE Consultants for \$9,925 for conceptual design for a Town Hall addition. The design work would be compensated by South32 under the Early Actions Community Investments Agreement.

The Council approved adoption of Town Ordinance number 26004, repealing Chapter 4, Police and Fire Departments, and adopting in its place a Public Safety chapter covering methods of policing and fire protection and emergency services.

Sept. 9 Regular Meeting

Robinson was approved to sign proposals with CPE Consultants for design and engineering services for three items related to the Early Actions Funding Agreement with South32: the Patagonia affordable housing project (\$286,150) on a five-acre parcel on Harshaw Avenue; the Patagonia Day Care Center (\$138,700), on the same parcel as the housing project, and the addition to Town Hall for court and sheriff's office space (\$79,990).

The Council approved a Special Event Permit to the organization Art State Arizona for the 37th annual Patagonia Fall Festival at the Town's Central Park on Oct. 10-11.

Sept. 23 Regular Meeting

The Council unanimously approved proclamations declaring October as "Breast Cancer Awareness Month" in Patagonia and Oct. 12, 2026, as "Indigenous Peoples' Day" in Patagonia.

The Council approved a Special Event Liquor License for the Volunteer Fire and Rescue Department's "Burger Burn" for the Fall Festival, Oct. 10-11.

2026 SANTA CRUZ COUNTY GENERAL ELECTION

Important Dates for Early Voting

October 5, 2026: Last day to register to vote.
October 7, 2026: Early voting begins / Early ballots are mailed.
October 23, 2026: Last day to request a mail ballot.
October 27, 2026: Deadline to mail back your ballot.
October 30, 2026: Last day to vote early in person at 7 p.m.
November 3, 2026: Election Day (Drop off your early ballot by 7 pm):

Anita Moreno, Santa Cruz County Recorder
2150 N. Congress Drive, Suite 101, Nogales, AZ 85621
Phone: 520.375.7990 • Fax 520.375.7996
www.santacruzcountyaz.gov/986/Voter-Information

2026 ELECCIÓN GENERAL DEL CONDADO DE SANTA CRUZ

Fechas Importantes para la Votación Anticipada

5 de Octubre, 2026: Último día para registrarse para votar.
7 de Octubre, 2026: Comienza la votación anticipada / Se envían las boletas anticipadas.
23 de Octubre, 2026: Último día para solicitar una boleta por correo.
27 de Octubre, 2026: Fecha límite para enviar su boleta por correo.
30 de Octubre, 2026: Último día para votar anticipadamente en persona hasta las 7 p.m.
3 de Noviembre, 2026: Día de la elección (Entregue su boleta anticipada a más tardar 7pm).

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OCTOBER, 2026

Meet the Candidates

District 19 State Senate: Democrat Bob Karp

Place of Residence: Sierra Vista
Education/licenses/certifications/military: BA, UCLA

Recent employment: Retired, previously Real Estate Broker/Owner Karp Properties LLC (Cochise County), Win-Resources Computing (Carlsbad, CA)

Community organizations/activities: 2015 President of Southeast Arizona Assoc. of Realtors and Southeast Arizona Multiple Listing Service. Board of Directors of SAAR & SAMLS 2013-2015

Previous Public Office / Service: City of Sierra Vista Planning & Zoning Commission 2016-2017. Ran for State House in 2018, and State Senate in 2020 & 2024

What qualifies you to serve as state senator for District 19?

My 50 plus years as a business owner provides me with the background the understanding of the budgets and finances. As an prior owner of a

business with over 50 employees and a \$2.5 million annual payroll, I know how government impacts small business as well as how working families navigate everyday challenges.

What are your top priorities (no more than 3) if elected to the legislature?

1. Real term limits for the state legislature. (limit of 12 years of service)
2. Invest in public schools & overhaul the ESA (private school) voucher system to return it to its original intent
3. Protect Arizona's local water resources through enhanced regulation

Do you believe current state funding for traditional public schools is adequate?

No! There are structural issues with state funding because of bad tax policy with too many tax breaks to corporate special interests. The Ducey "flat income tax" is a huge tax break to

the wealthy and should be revisited. Vouchers also syphon off tax dollars from the public schools. We need multi-year budgeting for schools.

Given that rural school districts cannot tax their ratepayers enough to repair, renovate or replace aging facilities, what do you propose to provide our children and teachers safe and adequate facilities that are critical to improving educational outcomes?

Local bond overrides are not the solution to capital expenditures. The state legislature has consistently underfunded (I believe contrary to actual statute) the building fund for schools. A change in the state legislature would change budget priorities. It's been too easy in the past to take money from capital improvement fund because it isn't "money in the classroom."

What reforms, if any, are needed to the state's ESA Voucher program?

Editor's note: Republican Senate candidate Gail Griffin did not respond to the PRT's candidate's questionnaire. Nor did District 19 House candidates Jackie Anderson (Democrat), David Gowan (Republican) and Lupe Diaz (Republican).



I believe the only way to keep the program is to start over. This program should not have been expanded, after voters rejected that approach two times. If we are stuck with the program, means test it. But \$150,000 in-

See KARP, p. 15

District 19 State House: Democrat Aiden 'Addie' Swallow

Place of Residence: Sierra Vista
Education: Bachelor of Science in Game Design

Recent employment: U.S. Army, 19.5 years, Sergeant First Class

Community organizations/activities: Sierra Vista Community Theatre and multiple volunteer opportunities.

Previous public office/service: I was in the military from 2007 to 2026. I served in both Iraq and Afghanistan, which were active combat zones. I served in South Korea and ran investigations in Southwest Asia.

What qualifies you to serve as representative for District 19?

I am more qualified to serve as a representative than any of the current incumbents combined. I served my country overseas, where I ran national-level investigations against National Security Crimes. I actively met with and

influenced foreign policy makers. I've written hundreds if not thousands of intelligence reports. I taught the next generation of soldiers by teaching intelligence and leadership courses.

What are your top priorities (no more than 3) if elected to the legislature?

1. Make everyday life more affordable, including groceries, gas and healthcare.
2. Fully fund our public schools by limiting the use of ESA vouchers to only benefit families who truly need them.
3. Conserve our water supply

Do you believe current state funding for traditional public schools is adequate?

No, Arizona ranks 49th in the country for public school per-student spending and is consequently ranked one of the worst in the nation in terms of educa-

tional outcomes.
Given that rural school districts cannot tax their ratepayers enough to repair, renovate or replace aging facilities, what do you propose to provide our children and teachers safe and adequate facilities that are critical to improving educational outcomes?

Making our education a priority for once instead of ranking at the bottom in school funding.

What reforms, if any, are needed to the state's ESA Voucher program?

We need to start by curbing unlawful and unethical spending by people seeking to misuse taxpayer dollars by providing higher scrutiny before approving any ESA spending. Next, we need to require that no family making over \$150,000 per year may receive ESA funding to ensure that ESA vouchers are used for children who really



need it, as originally intended.
What changes, if any, do you support to Arizona's early voting-by-mail system, which is currently used by a large majority of voters?
No changes are necessary at this time.

See SWALLOW, p. 15

2026 SANTA CRUZ COUNTY GENERAL ELECTION

In-person early voting locations on Saturday

Lugares de votación anticipada en persona en sábado

Sonoita

Library/County Complex Building

3147 Highway 83

October 24, 2026 • 9 a.m. to 12 p.m.

Patagonia

Cady Hall

346 Duquesne Avenue

October 24, 2026 • 2 p.m. to 5 p.m.

Anita Moreno, Santa Cruz County Recorder

2150 N. Congress Drive, Suite 101, Nogales, AZ 85621

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2026 SANTA CRUZ COUNTY GENERAL ELECTIONS

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Safeguarding the General Election

Patagonia Regional Times

Patagonia Regional Times reporter Harold Meckler reached out to Santa Cruz County Clerk of the Board/Elections Director Alma Schultz, asking her to detail the processes that ensure safe and valid elections. All responses are Ms. Schultz's and are unedited.

How is it determined that all who wish to vote are eligible to do so in our county?

Residents can register to vote in Arizona online, by mail, or in person. To qualify, a person must be a U.S. citizen, an Arizona resident, at least 18 years old by the next general election, and not disqualified due to a felony conviction without restored rights or a court ruling of incapacity. Our county follows the 2025 Elections Procedures Manual to ensure these requirements are met. Anyone with questions or needing help registering should contact the County Recorder's office at 520-375-7990.

How is the registered voter list kept up to date?

The voter list is kept up to date by the County Recorder, who follows the 2025 Elections Procedures Manual to routinely update records when voters register, move, or become ineligible. These ongoing updates ensure the list stays accurate.

How are mail-in ballots determined to be valid once submitted through the mail or by drop-off?

The Recorder's Office oversees the process for mail-in ballots, also known as early ballots, whether they are mailed or dropped off. Once the ballots are received, the signature on the affidavit envelope is compared to the voter's signature on file, following the procedures outlined in the 2025 Ar-

izona Elections Procedures Manual and Arizona Revised Statutes. If the signature matches, the ballot is accepted; if it does not, Recorder's staff will contact the voter to give them an opportunity to cure their early ballot, as required by A.R.S. § 16-550. This cure period allows voters to resolve missing or mismatched signatures so their ballot can be verified. Only ballots with signatures that are verified or successfully cured move forward to tabulation.

How are ballots submitted on election day at voting sites kept secure?

Ballots submitted on Election Day are protected through several safeguards. Before voting begins, poll workers open, show and lock each ballot box in front of those present, as required by A.R.S. §16-564. The box stays locked throughout the day, with only the slot available for depositing ballots. After the polls close, poll workers seal the slot of the ballot box and record the seal number. Poll workers then transport the ballots using documented chain-of-custody procedures outlined in A.R.S. §16-621. Our county follows the procedures outlined in the 2025 Elections Procedures Manual to ensure ballots remain secure and properly accounted for from the moment they are cast until they are delivered for tabulation.

Is it possible for the votes of any one race to be manipulated while the rest of the ballot remains secure?

No. All races on the ballot are protected by the same secure processes and audits, ensuring every contest is handled with equal oversight. You can feel confident that every vote is counted accurately.

General election key dates

- Sept. 19:** Ballots mailed to uniformed and overseas votes
 - Oct. 5:** Last day to register to vote
 - Oct. 7:** Early ballots mailed, early voting begins
 - Oct. 23:** Last day to request a mail ballot
 - Oct. 27:** Deadline to return early ballot by mail
 - Oct. 30:** Last day to vote early in person
 - Nov. 3:** Election Day, early ballot dropoff until 7 p.m.
- Early voting schedule and locations
- Oct. 7-29, 8 a.m.-5 p.m.:** Santa Cruz County Complex, 2150 N. Congress Drive, Suite 114, Nogales
 - Oct. 17, 9 a.m.-noon:** Tubac Community Center, 50 Bridge Road
 - Oct. 17, 2-5 p.m.:** Gabilondo-Zehentner Centennial County Service Center, 275 Rio Rico Drive, Rio Rico
 - Oct. 24, 9 a.m.-noon:** Sonoita Library/County Complex, 3147 Highway 83
 - Oct. 24, 2-5 p.m.:** Cady Hall, 346 Duquesne Ave., Patagonia
 - Oct. 30, 8 a.m.-7 p.m.:** Last day for early in-person voting, Santa Cruz County Complex, 2150 N. Congress Drive, Suite 114, Nogales

Official ballot drop box locations

- Santa Cruz County Complex, 2150 N. Congress Drive, Nogales
 - Nogales City Hall, 777 N. Grand Ave., Nogales
 - Nogales Public Library, 518 N. Grand Ave., Nogales
 - Patagonia Town Hall, 310 McKeown Ave., Patagonia
 - Sonoita Library/County Complex, 3147 Highway 83, Sonoita
 - Gabilondo-Zehentner Centennial County Service Center, 275 Rio Rico Drive, Rio Rico
 - El Ranchito Market, 7 Avenida Pastor, Rio Rico
 - Tubac Community Center, 50 Bridge Road, Tubac
- More information: <https://santacruzcountyaz.gov/986/Voter-Information>



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NOTES FROM SEFD

August 2026

Caller from Patagonia reported her

hThere were 55 responder incidents in August, half were medical in nature.

The Board voted unanimously to:

- Recognize the United Firefighters of Sonoita (UFS), International Association of Fire Fighters (IAFF) Local 5597 as the official representative body for Firefighters/EMTs.
- Fund \$40,000 for purchase and installation of a Stryker power cot system to improve patient transport care.
- Appoint Scott Harris to the SEFD Board through Nov. 30, 2028, to replace Robert Garber, who recently resigned.
- Approve the installment of a QuantAQ sensor on Fire Station Property to measure air quality in real time at no cost to the district.



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Chiropractor

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Meet the teachers

Rainey Carpenter. Language Arts/ELL

By Sondra Porter

Rainey Carpenter has tackled her new job as Patagonia Union High School language arts and English Language Learner (ELL) instructor with enthusiasm, color, and music. Carpenter is a first-year teacher with fresh energy to match.

Entering Carpenter's room is an experience, complete with neon lights, music playing in the background, desks arranged in a semi-circle, and bulletin boards filled with colorful posters and collages. Carpenter says she wanted to make students comfortable and happy to be in the room. "This was the Spanish room, and I subbed here last year. I thought it had a bad vibe, and kids would say they didn't like the room," she explained. "My mentor Journee Hayes told me that certain rooms carry a certain vibe and that students will walk in and that's what they'll feel, even if it's a different teacher or a different class. The classroom itself carries its own energy. Over the summer, I decided I'm going to have to dramatically change it, so I did."

Prior to giving birth to her daughter last year, Carpenter was working at the

Patagonia Trading Post for three and a half years. She worked with artists, created displays and helped select items for the shop. She had a good eye for what appealed to shoppers and anticipating what they needed before they knew they needed it. She says that also applies to her classroom. "I've had so many students say that this is their favorite classroom. That is so really fulfilling," she said. "And the music works. When I put music on, kids automatically focus. I'll let them pick their own music as long as it's appropriate. My seniors prefer to listen to Hispanic music, and then they sing it. And all of a sudden, they're comfortable. They like to come in here."

With a variety of classes assigned to her, Carpenter keeps quite busy. She teaches 11th and 12th grade language arts classes for students who are not taking dual credit English classes through the college. "I also teach K-through-12 ELL classes. I have taken the equivalent of a year of ELL training because that's required to be a teacher in Arizona."

"My students are just Spanish speaking. In other states where kids are speaking Mandarin and all different

kinds of languages, you have to differentiate.

"Because I grew up in Arizona and went to Salpointe High School in Tucson, I had 12 years of Spanish. I'm not fluent, but I'm definitely getting proficient at conversational Spanish. I will use that in class just to help them feel more secure. I don't need to teach English to them, as most of them know it conversationally."

Even with small class sizes, Carpenter has learned that being flexible is essential in education. She was a bit surprised by all the interruptions a teacher has to adapt to during any given day. She said, "Being flexible and adapting as I go is probably something that I anticipated, but it's more of a daily thing than I thought. Interruptions and schedule changes are not uncommon. In both 11th and 12th, if one person's gone, it changes everything more than if there were more kids in the class, because we have such an intimate group."

Despite wanting a family and working for a while in retail, Carpenter said, "I felt called to be a teacher. First, I wanted to go to college and then I realized immediately that I needed to teach high school or secondary. My



Rainey Carpenter | Photo by Sondra Porter

stepson helped me make the decision. I realized, wow, he's hilarious and sassy, but he also has such in-depth points of view that you don't expect. I realized I could definitely teach this group."

Carpenter has been hired as a teaching associate while finishing up her college requirements through Arizona State University. "I have two semesters of classwork left," she said, "and then fall 2027 is my student teaching semester."

See CARPENTER, p. 15

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Meet the teachers

Kara Haas, First Grade

By Sondra Porter

With the closing of the Patagonia Montessori Elementary School this spring, Patagonia Elementary picked up not only many of their pupils, but also a teacher. Kara Haas, who was working as an elementary guide for grades 1-3 at the Montessori School, now fills the first-grade teaching position at Patagonia Elementary.

And even though Haas only worked at the Montessori as a teacher for about a year, she brings a wealth of other experience with her — over 25 years of teaching outside the classroom as well as working as an environmental professional. She holds an associate's degree in Theatre, a Bachelors in Geology and a Masters in Hydrogeology from Illinois State University. "I've done a lot of training and I've had a lot of training to do that, so that does translate well to teaching kids."

She came to Patagonia in 2020 as compliance manager at South 32. Even in that role she found herself teaching: "I helped them build compliance systems to make sure they were dotting all the i's, checking t's —



Kara Haas. | Photo by Sondra Porter

all that to help learn about and then put systems in place to protect the environment."

Haas is pleased with her new position. "At Montessori, I had first through third grade, so it was a little bit harder in some aspects because I had to give a lot of one-on-one attention," she said. "There was everything you needed in the classroom, but it didn't necessarily show

See HAAS, p. 21

Patricia Munozcano, kindergarten

By Sondra Porter

With 25 years of experience, Patagonia Elementary School's new kindergarten teacher Patricia Munozcano is definitely not new to education. She has spent six of those years as a certified teacher. This, however, is her first time teaching kindergarten.

"I love it!" Munozcano reports. "At first it was daunting, like with any other grade but then we started getting into a routine, and I started teaching. I did my research."

Munozcano had most recently been teaching third grade at Sacred Heart Catholic School in Nogales, where she started as a paraprofessional in 2003. "I was everything as well as a substitute teacher, and that's what helped me decide to become a teacher."

She said the greatest difference in teaching kindergarten is basic curriculum. "I've been used to the core subjects, since I was teaching third (grade) and up," she said. "We often teach to the test. I'm used to that kind of program. Now I am doing ABCs and



Patricia Munozcano. | Photo by Sondra Porter

123s. Totally different, but we have fun here."

Munozcano has already found joy in watching her students' growth. "Yesterday I was so proud of them," she said. "They each learned three sight words by themselves in just a day. At week seven, that is pretty good for kinder.

See MUNOZCANO, p. 21

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Photo Credit: Wendy Islas

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A Witness to History: Border Monument 111 speaks to the then and now

By Carrie White

For more than 170 years, Border Monument 111 has stood alone in the San Rafael Valley, a witness to the comings and goings of cattle, jaguars and people.

Where once the indigenous music of native grasses and chestnut-colored longspur could be heard, now the drone of heavy equipment in the creation of a 30-foot steel bollard double-barrier system on the U.S./Mexico border drowns them out.

Border Monument 111 watches, a haunting presence behind bars. Located just west of Lochiel, it is a sentry among many — 276 to be exact — between El Paso, Texas, and the Pacific Ocean.

Worn, weather-beaten, tired: 111 speaks to more than weather. The monument addresses the progression of political, social and cultural norms that have changed since the 1853 Gadsden Purchase. That’s when 29,670 square miles of Mexican soil became part of the Union. A big win for the U.S. looking for a more favorable route for a southern transcontinental railroad. A loss, perhaps, to the binational culture that at one time made no distinction between people in Lochiel and those in La Noria.

Now, the border is transformed. Once a line on a map , it evolved to a fence of wood or wire. Then a Normandy barrier.

Today, this: a \$46 billion U.S. taxpayer-funded project — an environmental disruptor and an allegory for relationships with a once-friendly neighbor.

“What I think we’ve seen in border construction in the past 30 — and especially 10 — years is largely about politics,” said Dr. Rachel St. John, history professor at the University of California, Davis. St. John is the author of Line in the Sand: A History of the Western U.S.-Mexico Border.

“It’s important to think about how the idea of what the government is trying to control has changed over time,” she said. “In 1853 many fewer people moved across this border. and neither government was trying to control that movement.”

Initially, fences were erected to control the movement of cattle. The next round of “barriers” occurred as a result of international tensions brought on by the Mexican Revolution (1911-20) and World War I (1914-18.) The intention was more a “gate system” that channeled people through certain areas; a means of monitoring as opposed to stopping the movement of people, St. John said.

The remote Lochiel port-of-entry was shuttered in 1983, with federal officials

citing budget constraints and low traffic volume.

Then came the 1990s with the fortification of entry ports, not in remote locations such as the San Rafael Valley. The Normandy-style vehicle barriers were installed later — in 2008 — and allowed the migration of wildlife while effectively blocking vehicle traffic.

Or could they?

Speaking metaphorically, Janet Napaolitano, 21st governor of Arizona and later Secretary of Homeland Security under President Barack Obama, had this response to U.S. attempts to stymie illegal entry into this county: “Show me a 50-foot wall, and I’ll show you a 51-foot ladder.”

Monument 111 — and its 275 brothers — highlights a time when U.S.-Mexico relationships weren’t so fraught. A time when borders were more arbitrary than definitive.

Following the Gadsden Purchase, a binational survey team was deployed to map the new divide between the two countries, and 52 rock cairns were put in place between El Paso and the Pacific. “The purpose of these border monuments wasn’t so much to keep people out,” said Dr. Carlos Francisco Parra, assistant professor of history at the University of Arizona. Rather, the rock piles were a somewhat primitive way of signaling where Mexico ended and the U.S. began.

The cairns didn’t last long, according to cultural geographer Dr. Daniel Arreola. Arreola, a retired professor from Arizona State University’s School of Geographical Sciences and Urban Planning, was a co-author of the book Monuments, which documents the 690-mile span of obelisks from the west bank of the Rio Grande River to Border Field State Park in San Diego, Calif. Arreola specializes in the study of the Mexican-American borderlands and Hispanic/Latino populations in the United States. He said back then, “the border was a place in statement, but not really in physical form.”

According to Arreola, a second survey took place in the 1880s in an agreement between the U.S. and Mexico that led to more permanent monuments being established. These were known as “Iron Teeth” because they were fashioned from metal. From the original 52, 258 were added, then another 18 later on to fill in gaps or clarify ambiguous stretches of the border. These latter 18 were designated with letters, such as 2A, 2B and 84A, to avoid renumbering the whole series.

“There is no set distance between the monuments,” said Parra, disputing the urban myth that they were

positioned one mile apart. In general, monuments were placed within eyesight of one another. Monument 111, for example, is situated where the Santa Cruz River makes one of two passes across the Mexico-U.S. Border. Monument 112 can be seen on a hill in the Coronado National Forest west of Lochiel. Each monument bears inscriptions. One side notes “Boundary of the United States,” and the other “Boundary of the United Mexican States.” Also, “it says you’re not supposed to disturb or move the boundary monuments, punishable by law by both countries,” Parra said.

In 2020 federal contractors discharged controlled explosives on Monument Hill within Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument, but reportedly no monuments were destroyed. (The International Boundary and Water Commission, the binational agency responsible for keeping the U.S.-Mexico monuments intact, did not respond to inquiries for confirmation.)

Damage has been done, however, to areas sacred to the Tohono O’odham Nation within Organ Pipe. The destruction was part of a Congressional hearing held Feb. 26, 2020. In the end, cultural and environmental laws were waived to allow construction of the wall.

But here we arrive at an interesting historical fact not often discussed. Much of Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument is, in reality, not part of the U.S. It belongs to Mexico.

The “Arizona angle” is outlined by Parra in his article Monumental Border Mistakes: Boundary Monument 127 and the Arizona-Sonora Line. Monument 127 is in the Pajarito Mountains west of Nogales. It is where the international boundary makes a sharp turn northwest toward the Colorado River.

Oopsy. There’s about 270 square miles here that actually belongs to Mexico. Let’s explore that with Parra.

The U.S. and Mexico border commissions began mapping the U.S.-Mexico border on Dec. 4, 1854. The U.S. commission was led by Major William Emory. José Salazar y Larregui headed the Mexico Commission.

It seems that when the time came to map the border in the Pajarito Mountains, the Mexico Commission arrived late due to the political turmoil in Mexico following the revelation Lopez de Santa Anna sold more national territory to the United States, Parra noted. Emory’s team had already surveyed the area and pressured the Mexican Commission against conducting their own survey to avoid further deals. Consequently the U.S. Commission



Looking eastward toward the Santa Cruz River from the vicinity of Monument 111. | Photo by Carrie White

placed the angle at 31 19’56.40” north: “4.41 miles too far west of the correct coordinates mandated by the Gadsden Purchase Treaty.” This gave the U.S. that additional 270 square miles.

Parra said the mistake wasn’t discovered until 40 years later. Since then, “light” efforts have been made to correct the error, the latest being in the 2000s when Patricio Martinez Garcia, a representative to the Mexican National Congress from the state Chihuahua, raised the issue. “A lot of people — even in Mexico — didn’t take it too seriously,” Parra said.

In the end the U.S. got a smokin’ deal, including copper, gold and silver found west of Nogales, according to Parra’s research.

The rest, as they say, is history.

Back to St. John, who cites scholar Peter Andreas, in her book. Andreas, author of Border Games: Policing the U.S.-Mexico Divide, is the John Hay Professor of International Studies at Brown University’s Watson Institute for International and Public Affairs. He describes U.S. border enforcement as a “politically successful policy failure.” He contends it fails to deter unauthorized migration or drug smuggling — merely redirecting those activities to more dangerous terrain. At the same time, it is politically successful because it projects a “powerful image” of state control, reassuring the public that action is being taken.

In a response to an inquiry as to prevalence of drug traffic through the San Rafael Valley, John B. Mennell, Customs and Border Patrol Public Affairs Specialist out of Tucson, said agency does

not release statistics below the “sector level.” The San Rafael Valley is located within the Tucson Sector, which spans 262 miles of the Arizona border.

“Think of it as a vulnerability ... traffic always shifts based on enforcement posture ... including barriers,” Mennell wrote in response to a PRT inquiry. “As one area is closed down, smugglers will shift to areas which are more accessible.”

For her part, St. John believes building a fence and putting more money into the border patrol is “a political winner” but not good policy. “It does not address any of the issues we have.”

Arreola has his own take. “It’s an overreaction, obviously, of not knowing how to deal with an impossible situation.”

Another book on the topic was written by Michael Dear, Why Walls Won’t Work: Repairing the US-Mexico Divide. “It is a wonderful assessment of this whole situation and how walls have never really kept people out the way they were intended,” Arreola said. Hadrian’s Wall, the Great Wall of China, the Berlin Wall were all band-aids. Eventually, they come down.

Or they remain as tourist attractions, not the original intent.

Asked about the next phase of this trajectory, St John was reluctant to look into a crystal ball, using the word “unpredictable” to describe the current scenario.

“One thing I do think is important given the history of tensions between the United States and Mexico is that often these tensions come from dif-

ferent parts of the countries,” St. John said — people living in places that have never experienced what is really happening. “But because it’s the nation, they think they should have some say in what is happening in this place.

She believes most people living along the border like living there. Many have friends and family in both countries. The commerce that occurs between the two countries is important. Take agriculture. In 2025, the U.S. imported \$43.8 billion in agricultural products from Mexico, with 70.7% made up of fruits, vegetables, beverages and distilled spirits, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Economic Research Service.

“No matter how big a wall you build, the things that are happening right on the other side of that wall are going to affect you. And you need to continue to be engaged and support people there,” St. John said.

East of Lochiel, Border Monument 111 marshals on. Fall has come to the San Rafael Valley, a beautiful season. Common sunflowers are in abundance. The aroma of wet vegetation perfumes the air following summer rains. Cicadas sing their swan song, knowing winter will be their demise

This will be the first year 111 does not receive visits from jaguars, black bears, ocelots and pronghorn.

The circle has been broken, migration halted. But 111 continues to watch. Because things can change. They always do.

KARP (cont. from p. 10)

come is way too high a level of income. Let’s get the number down to middle class levels. Of course, all voucher spending should be audited, and any educational organization that receives voucher funds should be required to file business plans and curriculum. I am not attacking home schooling, but we have all sorts of requirements for other programs that use tax dollars, how come no oversight for vouchers?

What changes, if any, do you support to Arizona’s early voting-by-mail system, which is currently used by a large majority of voters?

Early voting and vote-by-mail have been used for over 20 years in Arizona with no significant fraud or difficulties by 80% of voters. I want to go back to the Permanent Early Voting List (PEVL) rather than the Active Early Voting List (AEVL). I also want more locations for in-person early voting. (Cochise County only has only 1). Early voting should go through the last weekend before the election.

What specific legislative actions do you support to protect Arizona’s groundwater supply, especially in rural areas?

We need to start with actual data and science to ascertain where we

are on water resources. We know that parts of Cochise County are already in crisis. We need to give ADWR the power to monitor industrial wells and all new well permits. Current law forbids monitoring. Private well owners should be encouraged to provide data to the ADWR. The state should fund monitoring equipment for private wells. State law needs to be updated to put penalties for over pumping in AMAs. The state should consider limiting the number of wells on large industrial agriculture tracts. I am opposed to any new mining operations in Santa Cruz, Pima and Cochise Counties.

Do you believe bipartisan governance is possible in the current polarized climate? If not, how can meaningful legislation be passed in the current environment?

Reforms like real term limits and ranked-choice voting could help encourage compromise in our state legislature by getting less partisan elected officials. I’m a believer that there are too many performative bills offered each session to make legislators look like they are doing something. I think less is more and we can spend time solving problems instead of getting media coverage. A good idea is to get to know the people with whom you work. I will listen to everyone.

SWALLOW (cont. from p. 10)

What specific legislative actions do you support to protect Arizona’s groundwater supply, especially in rural areas?

Complete water conservation to ensure long lasting water supply for Arizona. Arizona water for Arizonans. No outside interest. No selling water out of state.

Do you believe bipartisan governance is possible in the current polar-

ized climate? If not, how can meaningful legislation be passed in the current environment?

Bipartisan governance is possible, and I am more than willing to break with the Democratic caucus if it means voting for what is best for my constituents. I, like all working-class people in my district, am focused on delivering an affordable Arizona that will benefit everyday people first instead of corporations.

CARPENTER (cont. from p. 12)

Cheerleading is another of Carpenter’s passions, so she has an additional job on the side. “I was a cheerleader in high school and a gymnast before that, so I have been wanting to coach cheerleading since forever really,” she said. “So in the afternoons, I coach cheerleading through Desert Sky Gymnastics and Cheer in Nogales.”

Carpenter acknowledges she is still learning the ropes as a first-year teacher. She works closely with her mentor Journee Hayes, the high school’s language arts teacher.

Hayes said, “I also do all the evaluation for the university. Rainey is right on track. We need to talk about benchmarks next. We go over discipline, the behavior log, and the procedure for Monday mornings, what we do for homecoming week, things like that.”

Hayes is big believr in the mentor program. “We have our (professional development) days at the beginning, but we just can’t cover everything,” she said. “There are so many little things that we miss, so when a mentor is assigned, new teachers know that there is someone they can go to and talk to. The school has done this for a couple years, and I think it’s helped.”

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- Oscar, Health, Safety & Security Advisor



Learn more

SPIRIT (cont. from p. 5)

affected local businesses. He said businesses reported an increase in revenue during the event, but the results also gave organizers something to work on. Heidi says her goal is to make sure more local businesses have a chance to benefit from the weekend and influx of cyclists.

The Aults said their goal isn't turning Spirit World into a massive cycling festival, but to keep their focus on making it feel personal.

Plans are in the works to expand reach to younger riders, with possibly introducing an event specifically for high schoolers. For now, younger riders can participate in the 30-mile course.

Heidi said the idea for Spirit World began long before the first race in 2019: "I always had this dream of starting our own event, on our own terms, and have it feel like a ma-and-pa style race without a whole lot of crazy venues set up with all these bike industry people, but more have it feel like a wedding," she said.

The couple had already fallen in love with the area while riding dirt roads around Patagonia. "We did a 70-mile loop one day, and I was like, wow, this is the spot," Heidi said. "This is the best loop I've ever done on my bike. We should see what it looks like to bring this event to life."

The Aults spent about five years getting to know the area, its roads and community before finally launching the event. The first year had just 150 riders. Now, it is capped at 700 riders across its four routes.

The name Spirit World came from Heidi's experience working as a mountain bike guide in Moab, Utah. She would take groups out on trails and by the middle of the long ride, she noticed her clients would get fairway looks in their eyes — exhausted and absorbed in the experience, as if "in the spirit world." Zander suggested that the phrase also seemed to fit here.

"It's so quiet, so kind of incredibly eerie, but not in a bad way, just kind of like, you know, you're by yourself," he said. "There's so much landscape, huge vistas. There aren't many places left in the United States where you can go and ride and not see other people, many cars, or the impact of daily life for a long time, and this is one of those places that remains."

The Spirit World 100 is intentionally different from traditional cycling races. Winning isn't the main objective, people are.

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4H/FFA Champions

Members of the Sonoita Mustang and Rio Rico Rattlesnakes 4-H clubs and the Rio Rico and Tombstone High School FFA programs competed in the 2025 Santa Cruz County Fair Livestock Show. Seventy-seven animals were sold at the Youth Livestock Auction, totaling \$359,894.75, with \$15,142.25 going toward youth scholarships.

Reserve Grand Champions

- **Yair Ahumada**, Rio Rico FFA, Market Goat
- **Cash Allen**, Mustang 4-H, Market Steer
- **Paxton Clark**, Mustang 4-H, Market Turkey
- **Maevis Gudenkauf**, Mustang 4-H, Laying Trios
- **Arabella Matthews**, Mustang 4-H, Market Hog
- **Seven McMaster**, Mustang 4-H, Market Lamb
- **Alexander Ohlde**, Mustang 4-H, Market Dorper Lamb

Grand Champions

- **Andrea Arias**, Rio Rico FFA, Market Beef
- **Bree Beyer**, Mustang 4-H, Market Hog
- **Miranda Cass**, Mustang 4-H, Market Lamb
- **Cole Keith**, Mustang 4-H, Market Turkey
- **Alexander Ohlde**, Mustang 4-H, Market Dorper Lamb
- **Rori Prentice**, Mustang 4-H, Market Goat
- **Coy Raley**, Mustang 4-H, Laying Trio
- **Yair Ahumada**, Rio Rico FFA, Market Goat
- **McKenna Cass**, Mustang 4-H, Market Lamb
- **Arabella Matthews**, Mustang 4-H, Hog
- **Miguel Perez**, Rattlesnakes 4-H, Market Beef

3rd Overall Champions

- **Arabella Matthews**, Mustang 4-H, Market Dorper Lamb, Senior Lamb Showman, Rabbit Showman
- **Cash Allen**, Mustang 4-H, Market Steer
- **Melanie Carranza**, Rio Rico FFA, Market Goat
- **Morgan King**, Mustang 4-H, Market Lamb
- **Arena Mathews**, Mustangs 4-H, Market Hog
- **Cienna Beyer**, Mustang 4-H, Senior Hog Showman
- **Ian Corona**, Rattlesnakes 4-H, Senior Beef Showman
- **Tomas Sanchez**, Rattlesnakes 4-H, Senior Chicken Showman

- **Miranda Cass**, Mustang 4-H, Junior Rabbit Showman
- **Maelle Collins**, Mustang 4-H, Junior Cattle Showman
- **Maevis Gudenkauf**, Mustang 4-H, Junior Goat Showman
- **Brooke Gummo**, Mustang 4-H, Junior Turkey Showman
- **Sterling Kyrklund**, Mustang 4-H, Junior Lamb Showman
- **Hatley Mathews**, Mustang 4-H, Junior Hog Showman
- **Alexander Ohlde**, Mustang 4-H, Junior Chicken Showman
- **Arely Favela**, Rio Rico FFA, Breeding Rabbit

Reserve Champions

- **Ellissa Bird**, Mustang 4-H, Senior Rabbit Showman, Breeding Rabbit
- **McKenna Cass**, Mustang 4-H, Senior Lamb Showman, Breeding Ewe
- **Seven McMaster**, Mustang 4-H, Junior Goat Showman, Breeding Turkey
- **Yair Ahumada**, Rio Rico FFA, Senior Goat Showman
- **Cash Allen**, Mustang 4-H, Senior Beef Showman
- **Brynlee Mathews**, Mustang 4-H, Senior Hog Showman
- **Arabella Matthews**, Mustang 4-H, Senior Turkey Showman
- **Karim Canez**, Rio Rico FFA, Junior Hog Showman
- **Brooke Gummo**, Mustang 4-H, Junior Chicken Showman
- **Cole Keith**, Mustang 4-H, Junior Turkey Showman
- **Brantley Orono**, Mustang 4-H, Junior Pigeon Showman
- **Nicole Perez Navarro**, Rio Rico FFA, Junior Beef Showman
- **Charlotte Gummo**, Mustang 4-H, Poultry Breeding Trio
- **Claire King**, Tombstone FFA, Breeding Heifer
- **Rydia Fennell**, Mustang 4-H, Breeding Chicken

Champions

- **Ellissa Bird**, Mustang 4-H, Senior Lamb Showman, Senior Turkey Showman, Senior Chicken Showman
- **Arabella Matthews**, Senior Hog Showman, Poultry

Breeding Trio, Breeding Rabbit

- **McKenna Cass**, Mustang 4-H, Senior Rabbit Showman, Breeding Ewe
- **Rori Prentice**, Mustang 4-H, Senior Goat Showman, Breeding Doe
- **Lowen Taylor**, Mustang 4-H, Junior Hog Showman, Breeding Gilt
- **Andrea Arias**, Rio Rico FFA, Senior Beef Showman
- **Eduardo Bermudez**, Rattlesnakes 4-H, Junior Goat Showman
- **Miranda Cass**, Mustang 4-H, Junior Lamb Showman
- **Liam Collins**, Mustang 4-H, Junior Pigeon Showman
- **Charlotte Gudenkauf**, Mustang 4-H, Junior Rabbit Showman
- **Seven McMaster**, Junior Turkey Showman
- **Miguel Perez**, Rattlesnakes 4-H, Junior Cattle Showman
- **Brooke Gummo**, Mustang 4-H, Breeding Chicken
- **Morgan King**, Mustang 4-H, Breeding Heifer

Supreme Champions

- **Ellissa Bird**, Mustang 4-H, Non-Market Round Robin Senior Showman
- **Miranda Cass**, Mustang 4-H, Market Round Robin Junior Showman
- **Charlotte Gudenkauf**, Mustang 4-H, Non-Market Round Robin Junior Showman
- **Rori Prentice**, Mustang 4-H, Market Round Robin Senior Showman



Right: Paxton Clark shows off his Reserve Grand Champion turkey.

Below: Warren McNeil takes a break with the help of his blue-ribbon hog, Hammy. | Photos by Dave Lumia



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Spooners put their stamp on Patagonia Lumber Co.

By Lynn Davison

Wendy and Keith Spooner bought the Patagonia Lumber Company (PLC) in July 2024. Their vision then and now is to “have a space for people to have fun, hear music and be themselves.” How they do that is what makes it special.

There is a focus on buying local goods, attracting a diverse group of locals and residents from surrounding areas and making the space comfortable and inviting for musicians as well as customers. They are committed to hiring local employees and provide training, mentoring and ongoing support. The PLC hosts local nonprofits for friend-raisers and fundraisers, offering not only the space but help with planning, ticket sales, setup, cleanup and sometimes food, all at no or minimal cost. People also use the space for birthday parties, family events, or other special occasions. Dogs are welcomed too.

The Spooners had been living in Phoenix since 1997 and in 2019 were ready to get out of the big city. They began their search for a small Arizona town, in a natural setting, where they could see the stars at night, where they could contribute to and be nourished

This October the Patagonia Lumber Company celebrates five years of music, friendship, community, and memories. Join them Oct. 22-25 for their anniversary’s four days of music, food and celebrations honoring the people who make this community so special — regulars, musicians, employees, founders, local businesses and friends.

by a vibrant community, and where they could envision their future. Patagonia was that town, and both Spooners knew it at their first visit. They moved just before Covid broke out in late 2019. Keith, a graphic designer for 25 years, left the Phoenix art community and her workshop, while Wendy was able to keep working online as an Executive Director of Data & Analytics in the Life Science industry. Keith focused on sculpture, custom metal work, graphic design, permit plans and architectural drawings. They bought land locally and considered how to begin fulfilling their vision there, but then the PLC came into focus. It seemed like an opportunity they could not pass up.



Maintaining a comfortable local vibe is the focus for Patagonia Lumber Company owners Wendy (left) and Keith Spooner. | Photo by Dave Lumia

The Lumber Company is a wine and beer bar, with a large outdoor space that can hold people sitting in chairs, couches, at a counter or at tables, plus room for a band to play and for people to dance. Wendy primarily manages the business, and Keith handles a myriad of tasks to keep operations moving. There is a rotating list of local beers on tap, beers in bottles and cans including nonalcoholic options, and local wines.

The PLC is always open Friday through Sunday but adds Wednesday and Thursday from Fall through late Spring. There is live music most nights, ranging from solo and duo acts to large-scale bands.

Last Spring, every Thursday night featured local Mike Hogan, who plays an eclectic and soulful guitar, with no cover charge. Fridays and Saturdays usually rock a bit more with bands from local surrounds like Patagonia, Nogales, Rio Rico and Tucson. There is usually a minimal cover charge to help offset the cost to bring in the bands. There is often a food truck on site, and for special events or finding a food truck is challenging, Wendy, also known as Spoon’s Kitchen, cooks.

PLC customers are an increasingly diverse group: long-time locals, younger folks, families, snowbirds and tourists coming to Patagonia for a variety of outdoor adventures. Some are there to dance, some to follow local bands. Some looking to socialize with friends, others to meet new people.

“We’re grateful people get to experience our community and the talented performers, and we truly appreciate their business,” Wendy said. “We also love being a completely unique venue for bands and their fans. What’s most special is when we see familiar local faces in the crowd or watch local amateur singers bravely perform or watch kids jumping around the dance floor. It’s very connecting, warm, and accepting.”

While the Spooners are very happy to have the PLC and to grow it as a community space in Patagonia, there

are definitely challenges. Managing a live outside music venue within the town means balancing the ability to book popular bands that can play loudly with protecting the local residents from excessive noise, which is defined by the town’s Noise Ordinance. To do so, the PLC schedules bands to start earlier and end earlier, well before the 10 PM limit of the Noise Ordinance. This works most of the time, for most, but not all, local residents or musicians. “We continue to work on this,” Wendy said.

A second challenge is that small-town taverns rarely make much profit, especially one designed to be a community resource. The PLC covers its costs but requires its owners to have day jobs. Wendy and Keith knew that going in but “hope folks recognize they need to sell enough beverages and other products to allow them to do everything else,” Wendy said. “It’s hard when people come for a couple of hours and don’t buy anything. We are working hard to keep things affordable and appealing. And we continue to prioritize getting better at customer service.”

The Spooners are idea people who have some pretty big plans going forward with the PLC. Wendy would like to have a kitchen up and running this year with the capacity to make good food available for customers at the bar and takeout for locals. That would also mean more jobs for locals. Keith is interested in more art displayed in the space and more good music. Both talk about ways to expand the uses of the space, for example dance troupes, performance art, poetry reading, speakers on a variety of interests to the community, workshops around healing and wellness, open mic opportunities, or . . .

In the end, it’s really all about making a space for connections of people, ideas, and fun. Come see for yourself and check out their website for food trucks and a list of bands scheduled to play in October/November and beyond.

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Dare to Dream: The Extraordinary Life of Peter Robbins

By Kat Crockett

On a sunny August day, family and friends traveled over washboard dirt roads to Little Outfit Ranch in San Rafael Valley to honor the remarkable life of Peter Miller Robbins, who died peacefully in July.

Born in Ohio in 1944 to Barbara Miller and Lawrence “Larry” Robbins, Pete eventually followed his parents to the valley, where they had retired and purchased the ranch in the early 1960s, but his adventures before getting there were noteworthy.

Pete was a remarkable entrepreneur who achieved what most people would never imagine attempting. He built a luxury train and a submarine, became one of the few Americans to dive in a Russian submersible to view the wreckage of the Bismarck, he constructed a community radio tower in the Valley and supplied radios to remote ranches, and he worked with Fort Huachuca officials to host military training at the ranch. Pete turned bold ideas into reality.

In September 2006, Pete told the PBS series NOVA Online editor Susan Lewis that as a child, he devoured the Tom Swift adventure novels, whose hero had airplanes, rockets, submarines, and other marvelous inventions. “When I grow up I kind of want to be a Tom Swift,” he said, “and I guess I got as close to that as I could.”

"Pete was a unique person – inventor, creator, storyteller and entrepreneur. His most defining characteristic was a good friend; he would do anything for you. Every day he woke with joy."

- Zay Hartigan,
Little Outfit Ranch manager
and PVFD chief

After struggling at several schools, 15-year-old Pete was sent by his father, Larry Robbins, to Tabor Academy in Massachusetts, a Naval Honor School known for its marine science programs. There, he became fascinated by the ocean and dreamed of owning a submarine, an ambition he deferred for decades while earning a living. He later continued his education in Colorado and worked as a research assistant to renowned University of Colorado physics professor Frank Oppenheimer and spent time in a mine in Leadville, Colo., where he invented and obtained

a patent for a scanner that could detect copper in a pile of junk. Then he moved to New York City for a few years before settling back in Massachusetts.

Nearly penniless in 1975, Pete bought a rusty railroad car for \$3,500, financing almost half the cost. After living in the train car named Chili Verde in downtown Boston for several years, he moved it to Tucson, where the Sierra Madre Express was born. Over the next 25 years, he built the train one car at a time, often saying he would starve, earn a little money, starve again, and then add a little more to the train.

Pete married Nogales native Julietta Flores in 1981. They raised their daughter, Alicia, in Tucson and spent weekends at the family’s beloved ranch in the San Rafael Valley. After Pete’s father, Larry (a champion Herford cattle breeder), died in his 90s, Pete would ultimately move to the ranch and take over its operations, but not until a bit later in life.

Pete spent nearly a decade restoring the rail cars prior to the inaugural journey of the Sierra Madre Express in 1987 and said “we had mortgaged everything we owned, including the house and the car to get some money for the first trips.” The Sierra Madre Express traversed an awe-inspiring journey from Nogales, Arizona, deep into the Copper Canyon in Mexico. Copper Canyon is a series of six canyons in Chihuahua, Mexico, and is four times larger than the Grand Canyon. It is known for its stunning landscapes, rich history and the indigenous Tarahumara people who inhabit the area.

Pete told NOVA that the train became a smaller version of the Orient Express, featuring vintage World War II-era Pullman cars, private bedrooms, indoor and outdoor lounges, traditional dining and kitchen cars and Plaza Lama, a restored 1950s Santa Fe Super Chief Vista Dome car. Carrying 50 to 75 passengers, the train made 30 weeklong trips each year through Copper Canyon, including a six-hour stretch through 87 tunnels and across 39 bridges.

Pete’s friend Lisa Sharp remembered when he was preparing for the train’s maiden voyage. He told her he had become friends with Julia Child at a coffee shop when he lived in Boston. Pete called Child before the train tours began and invited her to Arizona to chef aboard the train, and she agreed. “Pete had no inhibitions whatsoever!” Lisa recalled.

At Pete’s Celebration of Life, John Booth recalled filming “Great American Railway Journeys: The Copper Canyon,” which featured the Sierra Madre Express. Booth, a PBS videographer and editor, said that while traveling with Pete on the train, they crossed the route’s longest— 1,000 feet — and highest — 355 feet above the water —



Pete Robbins (right) and his father, Larry, at the Little Outfit Ranch. | Photo Courtesy of the Robbins family

bridge. After crossing, Booth told Pete he would like to film the crossing from the front of the train. “Sure!” said Pete before directing the engineer to back up across the bridge, mount the cameras on the train’s nose and cross again to capture the shot.

Julietta’s brother, Marco Flores, described Pete as a charismatic genius with strong moral character and a gift for entertaining stories. Marco’s wife, Carmen, worked as a tour guide on Pete’s train while Marco ran a business in Sonora; the families remained close and gathered often. Pete occasionally relied on Marco to coordinate train business with Sonoran officials. When Pete pursued a new venture in 2004, Marco took over the business and managed its final four years of operation.

Sadly, escalating regional violence and instability — driven largely by drug cartels competing for control of trafficking routes — made conditions unsafe for tourists and rail operations, forcing the Sierra Madre Express to cease service in 2009.

In his interview with NOVA, Pete said that the train opened a whole new world for him. “I think the fun in life is pushing the barrier and looking for new ideas and new things to do,” he said. And that’s just what Pete did next — he engineered a submarine.

Pete was inspired by his first dive on a submarine in the late 1980s in the Grand Caymans. He went down in a Perry Boat built for underwater exploration and holding one or two people. Not too long afterwards, he was invited to participate with the Russians in a dive to see the Bismarck at a depth of 16,400 feet in a 14-hour round trip. By the time they resurfaced, Pete had no doubts that he wanted his own sub-

“Peter was a brilliant engineer and could fix anything and was full of fabulous ideas. He really had a brilliant mind.”

- Lisa Sharp,
former neighbor

marine for institutional research and sea-tourism, hoping to inspire others to take better care of the oceans. He also wanted to explore shipwrecks off the coast of England.

In 2000, Pete commissioned Marlin Submarines of Plymouth, England to build a groundbreaking acrylic submarine. The 6-seater sub could reach depths of 1,000 feet and offered transparent acrylic panes for greater visibility than the portholes of traditional subs. He named the sub after his daughter, “Alicia.” Designer Paul Moorehouse said, “It was a long hard road for a very small team, but we built and launched the sub early 2004.” The sea trials were successfully completed and approved for safety and regulatory compliance. Pete then shipped “Alicia” to Oakland, Calif., to complete a qualifying 300-meter dive with a deep ocean research firm; however, the parties were unable to reach a deal, and ultimately the sub was transported back to Tucson, then the Little Outfit and disassembled. Although the venture eventually became financially unsustainable, Pete summed up the experience in his own words: “My recommendation to

See ROBBINS, p. 21

HAAS (cont. from p. 13)

you how to teach it. Even though Jesse Beebe (the principal) was very helpful, I found myself on YouTube a lot.” Things are different for her at Patagonia Elementary. She explained: “I would say one thing better is it is a bigger school. There's a much larger support network. The culture is not the same. They assigned me a mentor right away, Audrey Doles.

“Everybody's really got your back here, and they want to help each other out. If you have a question or need help, everyone is so nice.” That is not to say starting her new job has been easy. “Most challenging part I would say it's just like being a first-year anything,” she said. “It’s drinking water from a firehouse — learning all the new curriculum, learning all the kids,

learning how everything works, getting printer access. Everything is new!” she said. The campus get high marks from Haas. “I love the school,” she said. “The campus is beautiful every day. I intentionally use the furthest printer just so I can walk by and see the mountains ... The culture is wonderful. Kids are kids. It's the environment. the people, the campus. It’s all the little stuff. I have food allergies, like everywhere I've ever worked. I never partook in food. But here... like the staff has gone above and beyond to make sure I was included and my allergies are addressed. That inclusiveness translates to the kids, how inclusive (the staff) is with everyone.” Haas described her class as “Energetic!” She laughed, “First grade is so energetic, especially beginning the school year. It isn’t as much about the

curriculum, but when they come out of kindergarten, they really haven't been in a structured class. I have to get them ready for second grade, so a lot of it is about like how do you take a test. I'm trying to show them the skills of how (to) succeed in the classroom, to succeed with graded assignments and testing.” When she gets settled into her position, Haas hopes to expand into helping the school outside the classroom. She said, “I've got a lot of training with emergency response. I told (assistant principal) Michael Young I'd help him with an incident command.” And then there is her first love, theater. “I don't know how it can work out because high school is on a totally different schedule, but I’ll help anywhere the school needs help in the theater,” she said. Kindness and community are at the

core of her philosophy and a major focus for these beginning weeks. “For the first six weeks, I was mostly just showing them in the class how to practice spelling words or things like that or really reminding them to stay on task,” she said. “I explain why we talk a lot about community and helping each other. At this age it's all about me, me, me... It's totally natural. (We’re) practicing being kind, sharing and learning to work with partners. I believe that is so important.” Haas is currently teaching under an Arizona Department of Education Emergency Teaching Elementary K-8 Certificate. This certificate allows individuals to enter into a full-time elementary (K-8) teaching contract while working toward standard certification. She has several years to meet the qualifications for full certification.

MUNOZCANO (cont. from p. 13)

Everywhere they go, they look around and say, ‘Oh, look, a sight word. Another sight word! There's our letters!’” She admits she was worried about working with the beginning learners. “I was nervous because kinder is really starting from scratch, and you're teaching them everything,” she said. “But it’s good. and thankfully I do have supportive, nice parents here. They've been helping their kids, so we've been helping each other out.” Munozcano likes to get to work early and get everything in perfect order. She lives in Nogales, so with road construction now, she gets started as early as possible. he She praises the elementary school’s adopted programs and philosophies, such as Beyond Textbook

(BT). which is designed to go beyond traditional textbooks by focusing on standards, assessments and student growth. She explained, “I like BT because it does give us the pacing guide that we need, and what we need to teach. It is especially nice for kinder because they have the letters and the sounds.” Munozcano’s path to finally becoming a certified teacher with a master’s degree has been a long one. “I started off at Pima in Nogales, and Pima shut down, so then I finished my associate degree through Cochise College,” she explained. “I went on to the University of Arizona to get my bachelor’s. Finally, I went to Grand Canyon University to get my Masters of Education in curriculum and instruction.” After spending many years at Sacred

Heart Catholic, Munozcano decided to take time off to complete her education. She said, “I needed to finish my college, because I was having a hard time doing school and working full-time.” Munozcano’s first years as a certified teacher were at Lincoln Elementary, also in Nogales, from 2019 to 2022, where she had 28-30 students in her class. “Having so many students was tough, and then Covid hit,” she said. “We went online without being trained or anything, but I learned.” She went back to Sacred Heart in 2022, teaching fourth grade, and then second. “They also asked me to work on the administration team,” she said. “I loved being part of the admin team, but I was still teaching. It was a little bit stressful doing all of that.” Munozcano grew up as part of a

large family in Tucson, but she prefers living in Santa Cruz County. “I have six brothers and sisters,” she said. “I have 17 nieces and nephews, three of them are my goddaughters. I am the only one here in Nogales, but I told them I just love the community so much. The people are wonderful wherever you go. I mean everywhere in Santa Cruz County people are so nice.” Munozcano especially likes the Patagonia school. “I am surprised by all the kindness, the camaraderie that I've been seeing,” she said. “I love my coworkers. I get excited to come here. It puts a smile on my face to come to work. That's what I was telling my friends. I'm really happy here; I actually look forward to coming into work.”

ROBBINS (cont. from p. 20)

anybody who wants to build a submarine is don’t build one.” Pete returned to the ranch and turned his attention to local projects. Beginning in 2006, his admiration for the military led him to work with officials at Fort Huachuca on a program that created and filmed tactical training exercises for unmanned aerial vehicles focused on surveillance and combat operations. He acquired three tracked vehicles, two armored personnel carriers, a self-propelled howitzer and a number of wheeled vehicles. Pete’s longtime friend and neighbor, Matilda Essig, recalled a reconnaissance drill in which she and others led pack horses at sunset while posing as drug smugglers. The aerial vehicles flew overhead to distinguish friend from foe and identify threats. One of Pete’s friends also developed a propane mixture that

allowed the tanks to simulate live fire. “They were all crazy but fun adventures, and only on Peter Robbins’ Little Outfit would such a thing ever, ever take place,” Essig said. In 2014, Pete briefly hosted military personnel diagnosed with PTSD, involving them in projects around the ranch. The program ended within a year when it became clear that a mental health specialist was needed to ensure safety. Pete also took on the lack of communication in the rural valley by erecting a radio tower and outfitting all the ranches with handheld radios, connecting to border patrol and military resources. When his neighbor Lisa Sharp got bucked off a horse and shattered her ankle, she was fortunate to have Pete’s radio with her. She contacted the one person who operated calls to let them know she was stranded and injured in pasture 19, and her horse was gone. Dispatch sent a helicopter to get her, and Pete met her at the hospital. During Alicia’s first year of medical

school in New York City, she and several classmates spent spring break volunteering for a week at a community health center in Nogales. She invited the group to the ranch for a casual barbecue but called her father first with firm instructions: “Dad, a lot of these friends have never even seen a gun in real life, let alone a tank. I don’t want to scare them away by pushing them onto tanks and shooting guns. No talk about tanks, no guns. Just burgers, nice conversation and maybe a beer.” Pete agreed. Yet when the van carrying 15 wide-eyed medical students arrived, he announced, “Welcome, Mount Sinai School of Medicine. Beers are on the porch, burgers are coming, and whoever wants to shoot a gun or ride a tank — come with me.” Without hesitation, most of the group got up and followed him. At Pete’s Celebration of Life last August, Alicia shared the three most important lessons she learned from her father: be imaginative, as Pete dreamed

without limits; be nonjudgmental, as he saw the best in others and held no grudges; and always rise again, moving forward despite loss or setbacks. Alicia said no obstacle had ever broken her father’s spirit — until dementia marked his final years. Her family remains deeply grateful to the relatives, friends, and neighbors who cared for him during that time, especially Alejandra Garcia and Francis Flores. On Alicia’s second-to-last visit, Pete pulled her into a hug, his eyes filling with tears, and said, “Sometimes you don’t know what you have until it’s gone.” As the third-generation steward of Little Outfit Ranch, Alicia and ranch manager Zay Hartigan are restoring the property as a rustic-luxury retreat. They hope to welcome families and others seeking a slower pace beneath open skies and the chance to create lasting memories, as generations before them have done. They plan to open in the near future.

Huachuca District Ranger: Olof J. Olson



By Alison Bunting

Olof Jefferson Olson (1896-1998) became the third district ranger for the Huachuca Forest Reserve, succeeding Robert Thompson (See Glimpses, Aug./Sept 2026). Olson's first assignment in the Forest Service was in 1919 at the Rosemont Station in the Santa Rita Mountains. He served in the Santa Rita, Tumacácori and Rincon districts before moving to the Huachuca district/Canelo Station. He was joined at Canelo by his wife, Blanche (1893-1970) and daughter, Ruth (1917-2003).

Several Forest Service initiatives demanded much of Olson's attention in 1930. In May, crews began work on a three-mile addition of the Crest Trail on Miller Peak. [Arizona Daily Star, 5/20/1930] Construction of 12 miles of telephone lines, stretching from Parker Canyon to Miller Peak, began in August. "One hundred poles will be erected, and the remainder of the line will be hung on trees." [Arizona Daily Star, 8/28/1930] The Forest Service was also working with ranchers to install fencing

between grazing allotments. This project required considerable negotiation to obtain agreements on the location of the fence lines in addition to supervising crews cutting fence posts and ordering/delivering wire.

Olson's diary entry on May 7, 1931, records that while camping: "I was awakened out of a sound sleep and realized after several seconds that a skunk had me by the nose. I caught him by the throat and choked him to death..." He returned to Canelo and called the doctor at Fort Huachuca, who told him to treat the wound with iodine and come to the post in the morning. There Olson learned that he would need to undergo "the Pasteur treatment," consisting of twelve daily injections. He continued working while traveling daily to Fort Huachuca for treatment.

In 1932 work began on the construction of a new residence at the station. Luis Tapia was hired to make the adobe bricks, and Juan Telles did the excavating. The house was completed by May 1933. A new office building was constructed in 1933. In June 1933, the Sunnyside Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) camp opened west of the Sunnyside community on a section of Jim Hathaway's ranch. [Nogales International, 2/17/1934] The Canelo rangers worked closely with the CCC men as they completed many projects on the Forest until the camp closed in October 1935.

Most district rangers encounter personal complaints, and Olson was no exception. In 1934 rancher W. W. Rodgers began circulating "a petition to have me transferred or removed from office altogether." [O.J. Olson FS



Olof J. Olson, seated on top of Mount Baldy lookout. | Photo courtesy of Coronado National Forest

Diary, 2/19/1934] On Oct. 18, 1934, Olson was arrested by U.S. Customs officers for having allegedly smuggled liquor in his Forest Service truck. One of the arresting officers was rancher Jim Hathaway, who was no fan of Olson. Olson's version of the events was that he was helping a man whose vehicle was disabled — the man managed to escape arrest after hitting Hathaway on the right temple. [Arizona Daily Star, 10/20/1934]

Olson's diary entries from October 1934-March 1935 document many meetings at Coronado National Forest headquarters about his "case," including efforts to locate the escapee.

Norman E. Johnson, who worked with Olson, recounted in his oral history: "I think that eventually, through the efforts of the Regional Office, it was determined that this whole thing was a frame-up. Of course, this is all a matter of record and can be verified. Olson was furloughed and removed from the Canelo Ranger Station during the period of the hearing." [E.A. Tucker, The Early Days: A Sourcebook of Southwestern Region History, Book 3, 1992:18]

After Canelo, Olson worked for the Forest Service on the Gila National Forest in New Mexico until his retirement in 1954. He died in 1998, age 101, in El Paso, Texas.



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SHERIFF'S BLOTTER

Sept. 22: Caller reported that his rental car, a silver Toyota Camry, was stolen while he was stopped and about 5 to 10 feet away from the vehicle on the side of Upper Elgin Road.

Sept. 20: Caller reported being in

an accident at Flux Canyon Road and Highway 82, said she did not require medical attention, but sounded disoriented.

Sept. 19: Caller from Lower Elgin Road reported that Amazon packages that had been delivered to her gate were missing before she could retrieve them.

Sept. 19: Deputy reported suspected DUI on Naugle Avenue in Patagonia.

Sept. 18: Caller from Patagonia reported that three kids were banging on the door of her home on Harshaw Avenue.

Sept. 14: Caller from Sonoita reported her daughter's fiancé smashed her phone and attempted to throw her out of the house.

Sept. 12: Deputy reported possible DUI on Highway 82 near Circle Ranch.

Aug. 15: Caller from Patagonia

reported her husband had violated Protective Order with a Facebook direct message.

Aug. 9: Caller from Patagonia reported that his Toyota Tacoma was crashed into near Roadrunner Lane and Pennsylvania Avenue, and the other driver fled the scene.

Aug. 8: Caller from Patagonia reported that he had an argument with neighbors of a property he is buying and believed that the neighbor soiled in a shed in the back yard of the property.

Aug. 6: Caller from Elgin advised that she was involved in a road-rage incident. Caller said she was passing a vehicle in passing lane, but other driver wouldn't let her pass. Caller said male subject charged his vehicle at her several times.

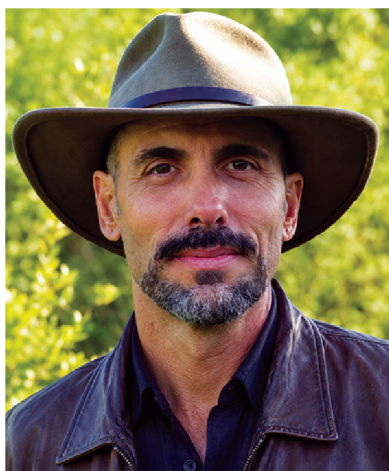
Aug. 6: Caller from Patagonia reported family fight in which her father hit her brother.

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Monsoon rarities



NATURE JOURNEYS



By Vincent Pinto

Many if not most parts of the Sky Islands region witnessed an above-average monsoon season this past summer. This surfeit of rain seemed to roll the red carpet out for wide range of species, flourishing in various local habitats. Among the usual cast lurked a handful of rarities that normally avoid human detection. Their elusiveness may be owing to sheer low numbers and/or reclusive behavior. Remote habitat is yet another avenue to avoid fascinated naturalists. When finally discovered by those of us who love nature, the resultant visual, emotional, and even auditory, olfactory and tactile rewards can be immense.

Our journey begins with a fish that the vast majority of people living in southeast Arizona have yet to cast eyes upon. Within the entire U.S., the Sonora chub resides only within the narrow confines of Sycamore Creek within the Pajarita Wilderness. Getting to the decidedly distant Sycamore Can-

yon that houses these small fish — up to about 4 inches in length — requires a heart-in-throat drive over cliff-hanging dirt roads. Once hiking along the creek, however, you are sure to spot these borderland rarities bustling about as they search for plant and invertebrate tidbits, all-the-while trying to elude predators. They thrive in their fragile home in part due to the total dearth of nonnative bullfrogs and crayfish, which have yet to breach their liquid sanctum.

Some species are so vanishingly rare in our area that many years may go by with nary a sighting. Such is the case with the eared quetzal. This relative of yet another rarity, the elegant trogon, normally stays within the Sierra Madre Mountains of northwest Mexico. Every now and then, however, an intrepid individual makes its way to our mountain forests. This year, from July 27 through August 12, a lone quetzal was repeatedly spotted in South Fork Canyon in the Chiricahuas. So elusive was the 14-inch bird that it was not assigned a definitive gender. Mostly what birders could see were flashes of red, which both male and female quetzals have on their bellies.

Heavy rains naturally translated into amphibian nirvana in a range of Sky Island habitats. Here at Raven's Nest Nature Sanctuary a decidedly difficult-to-find species literally showed up at our doorstep. During a July downpour I opened the front door and spotted a tiny form hopping on the flagstone. I had never seen the species anywhere, let alone at the preserve, yet I instantly recognized it from field guides — a Great Plains narrow-mouthed toad. Its name is quite a bit bigger than the creature itself, which registers at a mere 1.6 inches in maximum length. Before I could snap a photo off it bounded into our ample native habitat surrounding the house — no doubt in search of ants and termites, its dietary staples.

Daytime at Raven's Nest proved even more productive for summer rarities. Sticking with the diminutive, a stunner of a butterfly graced the preserve for several days. The aptly named elf is not our smallest butterfly species, though it is rather tiny and is only a rare stray from the Mexican state of Sonora. Visually speaking, its lack of size is easily compensated for by its bold orange



This vining milkweed with deep maroon blooms is so rare that botanists are still working out its scientific name, so for now it goes by its common name of vulture's star. | Photo by Vincent Pinto

upper-wing markings on a dark brown background. Unlike the reticent quetzal or the reluctant toad, our elf obligingly sat on various perches, slowly fluttering its wings as we admired this intrepid lepidopteran.

Most mammals are, by nature, rare for us to see — even if they are not actually numerically rare. Such is the case with the southern grasshopper mouse that I heard yet never saw as I prowled the preserve by night. This small but sturdy rodent is mainly crepuscular and nocturnal, making a sighting highly improbable for all but the most dedicated naturalists. While stalking along one of our many nature trails, I thought that I was having short bouts of tinnitus or ringing in the ears. I soon realized that I was hearing the high-pitched "howl" of a grasshopper mouse! Looking like your run-of-the-mill mouse, albeit slightly more robust, this species is anything but "normal" for a small rodent. It is mostly carnivorous, including eating other mice, lizards and venomous scorpions, its howling helps to maintain rather large territories for a mouse — the mouse that roared.

Back home, I was writing one late August day in my den when a brusque movement arrested my attention near the wildlife ponds just outside. Gila monster! Calling Claudia over, we quickly ventured outside for a few zoomed-in photos and videos as we admired the only venomous lizard in the U.S. It was a juvenile about 12 inches long, confirming local reproduction for the species and the third individual at the preserve. This was my 11th Gila monster sighting, which is about 11 more than most folks. It's no wonder North America's largest lizard species is so difficult to detect. They are active above ground only a few weeks per year. Our

young monster ambled away amidst the many rock walls of our native landscaping and habitat restoration project.

We end our rarity journey with among the most elusive of all native plant species in Arizona. While exploring a small canyon at Raven's Nest — one I had passed through countless times before — a vine growing up a small velvet mesquite tree caught my eye. It proved to be in the dogbane family, a type of vining milkweed that I had never seen before. Taking to the books, I finally uncovered that this was a species that has only a handful of localities in Arizona — all in Santa Cruz County and most nearby our preserve. It was a feather in my cap as an ethnobotanist. It is so rare that botanists are still working out the scientific name. For now it is simply known as *Polystemma*, the genus, or vulture's star as a common name. Its fuzzy, opposite leaves beautifully framed the rather odd flowers. Deep maroon, the blooms may attract carrion-loving insects as pollinators — its color and perhaps its aroma mimicking rotting flesh.

So here was the rarest of them all in a sense — right under my very nose. The moral of the story? Follow the monsoon — over 13 inches and counting at Raven's Nest — and keep all of your senses keened when in nature, for you truly never know who or what might show up.

Vincent Pinto and his wife, Claudia, run Ravens-Way Wild Journeys LLC, 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: www.ravensnatureschool.org



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PROP. 417 (cont. from p. 1)

The county projects that if expenditures continue to increase by 6 percent while the spending limit goes up by 3.5 percent, it will have \$68.8 million in expenses by 2041, but a spending limit of \$49.26 million — creating a spending gap of more than \$19.5 million.

Proposition 417 proposes a permanent \$1.5 million adjustment to the 1980 base limit. When the population and inflation factors are applied to the adjusted limit, the revised spending limit would be \$52 million, starting next fiscal year.

The timing of the ballot measure relates to the anticipated influx of new revenues from the Hermosa mining project in the Patagonia Mountains. Additional property and sales tax revenues will be coming in, but the county would be unable to spend them.

"It's just going to sit in the bank, and we're not going to be able to spend it in required initiatives that the community needs," Chavez told a meeting of constituents at the Elgin Club in August.

District 3 Supervisor John Fanning said analysts are predicting about \$6-8 million in additional revenue once the mine is up and running, which is projected for late 2027.

"It's going to be coming in, whether it's \$6 million, whether it's \$8 million,

whether it's \$2 million, and then you have all of the companies that are associated with the mine that are going to be here in Santa Cruz County," Fanning said.

"So it's not that we want more money. We're going to have the money. It's just a matter of being able to spend those funds. Without the expenditure limit increase, we cannot spend the funds."

At the meeting in Elgin, Chavez repeatedly emphasized that the proposition comes with no out-of-pocket costs for taxpayers and county residents. If revenues don't increase, spending limits will remain in place. "And then annual budgets will continue to require Board (of Supervisors) approval, and there will be public input."

The proposition does not specify spending priorities if the limit is raised, but county literature suggests several potential priorities for optimizing public services:

- Public safety services, equipment and emergency preparedness
- Road improvements, transportation planning and flood mitigation
- Community services, including animal care and control facilities, parks and recreation and library services
- Environmental projects, including water quality and groundwater studies and preservation and restoration initiatives

- Tourism initiatives, including heritage areas

- Affordable housing studies and planning

- Educational services and workforce development programs

The lack of specificity was among the concerns raised by residents at public meetings.

"It's not that we want more money. We're going to have the money. It's just a matter of being able to spend those funds."

- John Fanning

"We need clear details on where the additional spending authority would go and what safeguards would be in place," said Jay Thompson of Rio Rico. "It must come with detailed planning, specific priorities and greater transparency on how these funds will be used."

Fanning acknowledges those concerns but says it's too early to be specific.

"Those eight items are not things the Supervisors and necessarily coming up with," he said. "It's from the constituents."

"I would love to see some type of (citizen) oversight committee that can kind of filter what's coming in, because we're certainly not going to be able to take care of all of the concerns. So we have to have some type of vetting process."

Attendees at the Elgin meeting voiced a recurring concern that even if spending is increased, they rarely see any tangible benefits on the eastern side of the county.

"I think most people in Elgin and Sonoita agree that if we need a deputy, they're an hour and a half away," Elgin resident Sue Downing said. "We don't have a restroom for tourists here. We don't have a garbage can. We don't get potholes fixed. You're asking us to approve this, and we look at the list and we get none of it."

Perhaps the greatest headwind facing the proposition faces is one of trust. The embezzlement of nearly \$39 million by former county treasurer Elizabeth Gutfahr is a cloud that is not going away any time soon.

"The formula makes no sense to me if someone can just walk off with \$40 million of what was allocated," said one attendee of the Elgin public meeting.

Similar sentiments were expressed at a meeting in Nogales: "I don't believe the Supervisors of Santa Cruz County have atoned for the sins of the treasurer."

In reality, the Gutfahr embezzlement has no connection to the proposition and the request for additional spending capacity, but perceptions sometimes become reality.

"You know, the issue with the treasurer has always comes up, and my answer to that is we can't go back and change what happened, but we can put measures in place to make sure that never happens again, and we have," Fanning said.

"I mean, as long as I'm alive, it's going to be around."

And you know what? It's fair. In a small county like this, when you lose that much money ... I want to continue to move forward, continue to hopefully gain people's trust."

Bruce Bracker of Tubac preceded Fanning as supervisor for District 3 and agreed that the focus should not be on the embezzlement — "that's a total misperception" — but the proposition itself. And from his perspective, it's a misguided overreach.

"It's excessive," Bracker said. "They don't need to go for \$20 million this cycle. This is a hard no for me."

Bracker suggested that the county would have been better off projecting expenditures for the next four to six years, asking for an additional \$6 million instead of \$20 million, and then coming back with another smaller increase in a few years if warranted.

Instead of banking the additional incoming revenues, he proposes a massive cut in property tax rates. While such a proposal wouldn't allow for enhanced county services, it would be welcome relief for many.

"Santa Cruz County has the third highest tax rate in the state," Bracker said. "Well, other counties that have mines, their tax rate isn't anywhere near ours. So how come we're not looking at a 25 or 33 percent reduction in our property tax rate? That would be meaningful for a lot of people in this community."

Bracker acknowledged a tax cut could be a short-term hit on county services — "If it's a no vote, we would concentrate on mandated services," county manager Jesus Valdez said — but it might lead to a more palatable spending increase in a couple years' time.

"They asked us for \$20 million instead of asking us for \$6 million," he said. "That's on them."

Chavez pointed out that the other three counties with spending limit increases on the November ballot are all asking for a larger increase than Santa Cruz.

"This is a conservative ask compared to the other counties," he said. "This is a number that's going to take us through the next 15 to 20 years."

Added Fanning: "The fact that 11 out of the 15 counties have either gone through this or will be going through this, and 84 out of 91 towns and cities in the state of Arizona have gone through with the home rule, to me, that signifies that something's broken. And the fact that we're going through this, this is the way to fix what's broken."



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COMMUNITY CALENDAR



Saturday, Oct. 3

- Patagonia Community Garden Work Day, 7-9 a.m.
- Civic Engagement voting forum: Arizona’s ballot propositions, Tin Shed Theater, 2 p.m.

Tuesday, Oct. 6

- Patagonia vs. Loudes Catholic volleyball, 5 p.m.

Wednesday, Oct. 7

- Regular Meeting of the Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisors, 9:30 a.m.

Saturday-Sunday, Oct. 10-11

- Patagonia Fall Festival, Patagonia Town Park

Tuesday, Oct. 13

- Sonoita Elementary School District Governing Board Meeting, 5 p.m.

Wednesday, Oct. 14

- Patagonia Union High School and Patagonia Elementary School Districts Joint Governing Board Meeting, 4 p.m.
- Regular Meeting of the Patagonia Town Council, 6 p.m.

Thursday, Oct. 15

- Empathy Project film, The Library that Dolly Built, Tin Shed Theater, 6 p.m.

Saturday, Oct. 17

- Native Seed Collection Workshop, Borderlands Nursery & Seed, 9 a.m.-3 p.m.
- Patagonia Community Garden Annual Pie Auction, 3-7 p.m.

Sunday, Oct. 18

- Ranch Family Fun Day, Canelo Cowboy Church, 8 a.m.

Monday, Oct. 19

- Patagonia vs. St. David volleyball, 5 p.m.

Tuesday, Oct. 20

- Patagonia vs. Valley Union volleyball, 6 p.m.

Wednesday, Oct. 21

- Regular Meeting of the Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisors, 5:30 p.m.

Thursday, Oct. 22

- Patagonia vs. Superior volleyball, 5 p.m.

Friday, Oct. 23-Saturday, Oct. 24

- Live Theater: Copper, a Heidi’s Monkeys Halloween Horror, Tin Shed Theater, 7 p.m.

Saturday, Oct. 24

- Author Talk, Gary Paul Nabhan, Water in the Desert, Noon-2 p.m., Patagonia Public Library
- Patagonia vs. Ray volleyball, 3 p.m.
- Haunted Orchard, 362 Lower Elgin Road, 4:30-9 p.m.

Saturday, Oct. 24-Sunday, Oct. 25

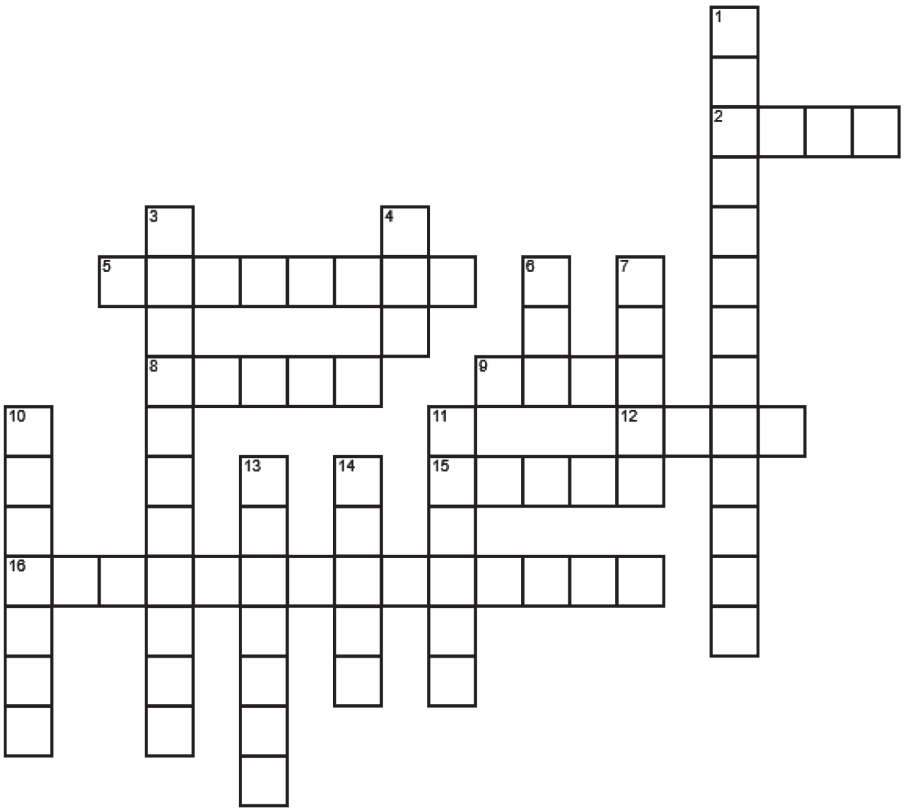
- Mata Ortiz Pottery Design Demonstrations, Global Arts gallery, 10 a.m.-4 p.m.

See more on page 27

CROSSWORD

Our Pronghorn Friends

One species that exemplifies the wildlife found here is the pronghorn. While not an “antelope”, the Arizona Antelope Foundation is dedicated to increasing populations and you can help. Visit www.antelope.org to learn how.



Numbers are spelled out and there are no breaks between words.

ACROSS

- 2. When scared, the white hair on the pronghorn’s WHAT stands up?
- 5. In inches, HOW HIGH off the ground should a fence be to enable pronghorn to crawl under?
- 8. The fastest mammal in North America, pronghorn can run HOW MANY miles-per-hour?
- 9. Pronghorns can detect movement up to HOW MANY miles away?
- 12. In addition to “herd”, a group of pronghorns is called a WHAT?
- 15. WHAT do male pronghorns “drop” every year?
- 16. Pronghorns are the only surviving members of WHAT family?

DOWN

- 1. Roughly HOW MANY pronghorn live in Santa Cruz County?
- 3. Prior to the arrival of Europeans, pronghorns were particularly abundant west of WHAT river?
- 4. On average, HOW MANY years do pronghorn live?
- 6. HOW MANY fawns does a female pronghorn usually have each year?
- 7. WHAT is a pronghorn’s favorite food?
- 10. One of two species the pronghorn is most closely related to.
- 11. Pronghorn fawns can walk within HOW MANY minutes of birth?
- 13. THIS Western state has the largest population of pronghorns.
- 14. One of two species the pronghorn is most closely related to.

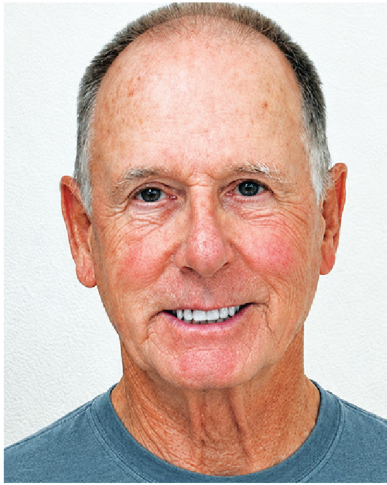
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Josephine Canyon Trail #133



TAKE A HIKE



By Wayne Tomasi

The origin for the name Josephine Canyon is unclear because several Josephines lived in the area, and any of them could have been the inspiration for the name. The Canyon is possibly named after the same woman as Josephine Saddle, Josephine Creek and Josephine Peak. At one time, there were two canyons in the Santa Rita Mountains named Josephine. The other Josephine Canyon is now called Little Casa Blanca Canyon. Some historians believe Josephine Canyon is named after Sarah Josephine Elizabeth (Josie) Pennington, the daughter of Elias and Julia Pennington, who were settlers in the area in the late 1800s.

Driving to the Josephine Canyon Trailhead is as exciting as the hike up the canyon. To reach the trailhead from

Patagonia, turn north off of Naugle Avenue onto 4th Avenue (next to the Wagon Wheel Bar). 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 a cattle-guard and enters the Coronado National Forest. Continue for 2.5 miles, where Salero Road changes to Bull Springs Road and FR-4082 (Josephine Canyon Road) branches to the right and begins its serendipitous journey to the trailhead.

The first 0.6 miles of FR-4082 is in relatively good condition. However, beyond the Compadre Mine the road is in serious disrepair and only suitable for an appropriate off-road vehicle. Parking somewhere along FR-4082 and continuing on foot may be a good idea. In 0.7 miles, the road veers to the left, crosses Josephine Creek and heads up a steep, rocky hill. In approximately another mile, there is an intersection of FR-4082 and FR-4860. FR-4082 turns 180 degrees to the left and starts a perilous journey up Tia Juana Ridge. To reach the Josephine Canyon Trailhead, bear right onto FR-4860 and continue northeast approximately 0.6 miles to another fork in the road. FR-4860 turns left and goes up a steep, rocky slope, where it abruptly ends. The Josephine Canyon Trail begins at the end of the right track.

The Josephine Canyon Trail is slightly more than two miles long and ends on Josephine Saddle, where it junctions with the Old Baldy, Super, Agua Caliente, and Temporal Gulch Trails. From Josephine Saddle, a number of interesting possibilities are available involving shuttling vehicles or swapping keys.

Many people believe Josephine Canyon is the most beautiful area in the Santa Rita Mountains, and I agree. Josephine Creek is embowered by enormous cottonwood and sycamore trees, as well as a wide variety of foliage typical of a riparian environment. The creek is perennial, although during dry



Josephine Canyon Trail is slightly more than two miles long and ends on Josephine Saddle. | Photos by Wayne Tomasi

seasons the stream flows mostly underground and only surfaces intermittently. The valley is relatively untrammelled and receives little visitation, probably because of the difficulty accessing the trailhead. An easier but longer way to visit Josephine Canyon is from the top down, hiking from Josephine Saddle downhill to the lower trailhead and returning the same way. Approximately 1.5 miles of the Josephine Canyon Trail is in the Mount Wrightson Wilderness Area.

The lower section of the trail crosses Josephine Creek several times and, during wet times, passes numerous small pools of standing water. About 100 yards past the first wet creek crossing, the trail passes between two stone buildings surrounded by large alligator juniper trees. The smaller cabin on the west side of the trail sits on a small island in the middle of the drainage. The second somewhat larger cabin is on a terrace above the right side of the trail. Some of the rock walls in the corners of the larger cabin stand five feet high or more. Several wood posts are interspersed within the stone walls, and a couple appear to have been living when the building was constructed. The front wall of the cabin is completely gone, although many of the rocks are lying nearby in a crumbled heap. Most of the walls outlining the smaller structure are badly deteriorated and lower than those in the larger cabin. Several large juniper trees grow within the perimeter of the smaller cabin, indicating how long it has been since it was inhabited. The location of the cabins is labeled on Schrader's 1914 map as Long Camp and the Camp Bird Prospects. In 1908, a man named M. Long originally located several Camp Bird mining claims in the area. However, for many years the

same location was referred to as CCC Camp, probably after Charles C. Chapman and not the Civilian Conservation Corp. Chapman owned a ranch in the area and worked on six CCC mining claims.

For the next quarter mile or so, the trail is difficult to follow, so be on the lookout for where the path veers to the left up a ridge away from the drainage. Once on higher ground, the route drops into a pristine side canyon, climbs over a ridge and then drops into the bed of the main arm of Josephine Canyon, where Arizona Golden Columbine grows profusely during the summer months. This area is a bird-lover's paradise because in late spring and early summer several bird species, including the elegant trogon, migrate here from Mexico. The trail crosses the creek several times and becomes increasingly more difficult to follow. Fortunately, cairns in the drainage are seemingly placed exactly where they are needed. When in doubt, stay close to the creek-bed but continue looking for where the trail leaves the drainage a second time.

Approximately 1.6 miles from the trailhead, the trail turns sharply to the right and climbs a steep hill away from the creek. The trail continues up a steep but well-defined path, reversing direction for a short distance. You may have doubts about still being on the trail because the path turns due south for a short distance, heading away from Josephine Saddle. Eventually, the trail swings back to the north and steepens somewhat. Fortunately, several long switchbacks ease the grade, although they may be overgrown with brush and small trees. The trail finally contours around a hillside below Jack Mountain and traverses left, up the west side of the main drainage to Josephine Saddle.

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CONTACT: CÉSAR PEÑA

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COMMUNITY CALENDAR



Sunday, Oct. 25

- Live Theater: Copper, a Heidi's Monkeys Halloween Horror, Tin Shed Theater, 2:30 p.m.

Wednesday, Oct. 28

- Regular Meeting of the Patagonia Town Council, 6 p.m.

Saturday, Oct. 31

- Hallowine at Hops and Vines, 11 a.m.-5 p.m.

Sunday, Nov. 1

- Juanito Pascual, Flamenco Guitar, Benderly-Kendall Opera House, 3 p.m.

Tuesday, Nov. 3

- General Election, 6 a.m.-7 p.m.
- Sonoita Elementary School District Governing Board Meeting, 5 p.m.

Wednesday, Nov. 4

- Regular Meeting of the Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisors, 9:30 a.m.

Saturday, Nov. 7

- Cowboy Festival, Empire Ranch, 10 a.m.-4 p.m.
- Author Talk, Mary Elizabeth Reynolds, The Quake That Drained the Desert, 10:30-11:30 a.m., Patagonia Public Library

Sunday, Nov. 8

- Butter Quartet, Benderly-Kendall Opera House, 3 p.m.

Submit your community or nonprofit announcements to editor@prtnews.org.

The Tin Shed Theater

Patagonia Creative Arts Assn.

OCTOBER SCHEDULE

Oct. 3, 2 p.m.
CIVIC ENGAGEMENT BEYOND VOTING FORUM, ARIZONA'S 2026 BALLOT PROPOSITIONS. Learn what impacts the ballot propositions can have.

Oct. 15, 6 p.m.
EMPATHY PROJECT EVENT: FILM, THE LIBRARY THAT DOLLY BUILT.
Food, crafts and fundraiser for The Imagination Library, sponsored by VFTB, PCAA and PYEC.

Oct. 23-24, 7 p.m., Oct 25, 2:30 p.m.
LIVE THEATER, "COPPER," A HEIDI'S MONKEYS HALLOWEEN HORROR.

Dates and Times Subject to Change
If you would be interested in sponsoring upcoming events, contact Cassina Farley at 520-394-9369. Visit www.patagoniacreativearts.org or 394-9369 for more information.

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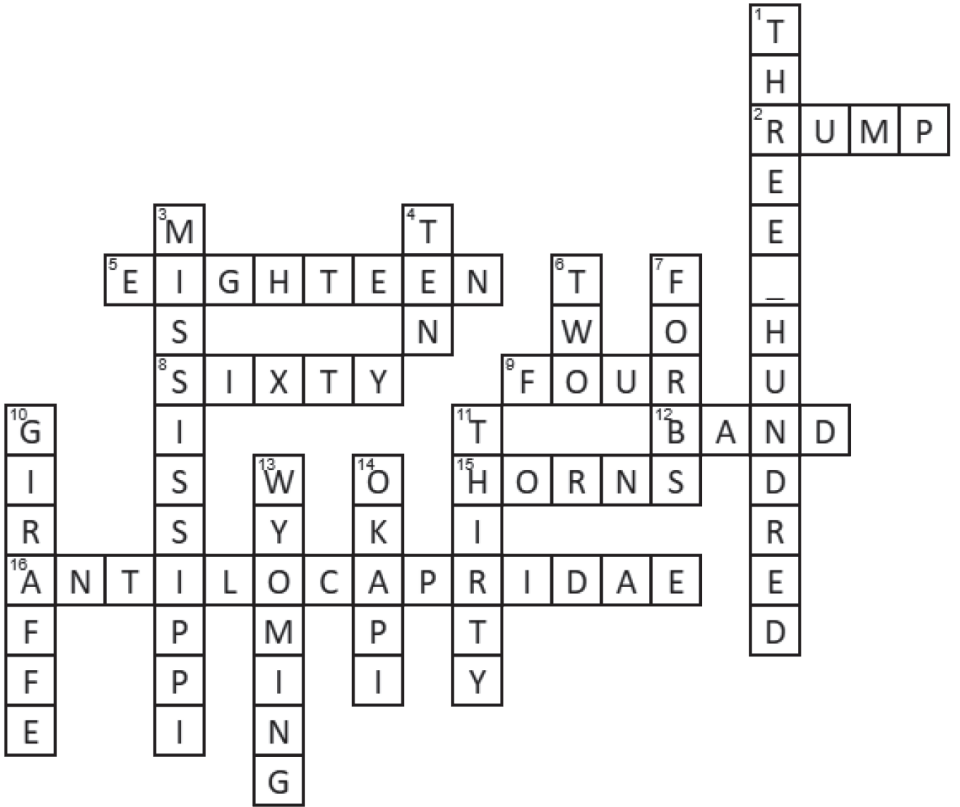
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TOP OF THE MOUNTAIN RETREAT

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MLS # 22532047 262 CIRCULO MONTANA

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