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**CITIZEN OF
 THE YEAR**



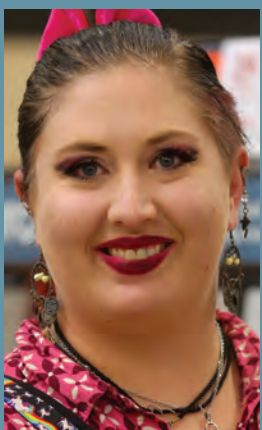
HERALD/REVIEW
TWENTY
 UNDER
40 2021



**YOUNG
 PROFESSIONAL
 OF THE YEAR**



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YEAR 2021

**15 OVER 50
 PROFESSIONAL
 OF THE YEAR**



HERALD/REVIEW
15
 OVER
50 2021



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40

2021

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Alycia McCloud

Andrew Paxton

Brittany Darus

Chad Graves

Christie Lehman

Cole Colvin

Donna Brown

Emily Robles

Esther Nunez

Hannah Sovar-Knox

Joe Wood

Josh Allred

Kalani Alvarez

Laura Franco

Nathan Darus

Sara Arsenault


Sarah Villalobos

Shane Early

Tracy Prudhomme



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TWENTY UNDER 40 CLASS OF 2021



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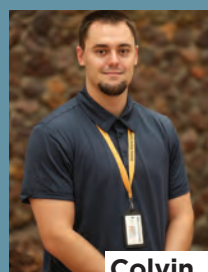
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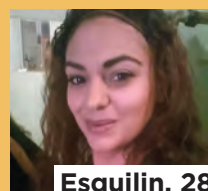
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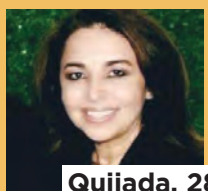
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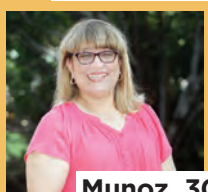
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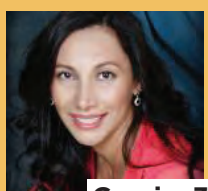
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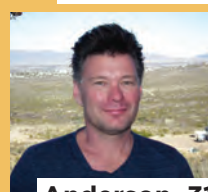
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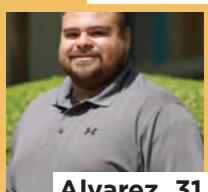
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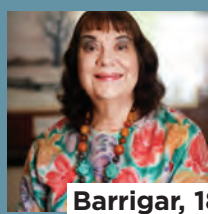


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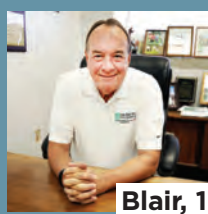
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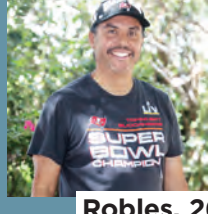
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Tracey
Prudhomme

A lifelong love of learning and helping others drives Tracy Prudhomme as the Operations Manager, Cyber Operations, Intelligence & Information Operations at the University of Arizona's College of Applied Sciences & Technology (CAST).

"She's my absolute best stellar person on my team," said Jason Denno, the Director of the Cyber, Intelligence, and Information Operations program at CAST. "Bottom line: I've never seen so much untapped potential in a human being. Everything I throw at her, she takes it and runs with it. This universe is lucky to have her."

Through her dedication and passion for the field, Prudhomme was selected as the Herald/Review Media's 20 under 40 young professional of the year.

Prudhomme said she's humbled knowing that she was considered, and credited her family and team at CAST for their support.

"It's rather humbling. I'm sure I know who the 'culprits' are!" said Prudhomme in an email. "The team... is great. They are outstanding and really are the ones worthy of the recognition. I can't be great without them. All that I do isn't possible without them, it isn't possible without the support of my

family either. I'm grateful, truly grateful!"

"Being a military spouse and having held numerous jobs throughout my life, I try to learn as much as I can about every field I have ever embarked on," said Prudhomme. "In this particular one, I have gotten to learn about academia processes, cyber, Intel, program management, just to name a few!"

Prudhomme took over the position at CAST in September of last year. Aligning with her love of learning, Prudhomme juggles multiple responsibilities both inside and outside the program. From managing the contracts for CAST's Virtual Learning Environment, serving on several hiring committees, managing student workers, to collaborating with the university's partners Cochise College and Fort Huachuca.

In his nomination submission, Denno credited Prudhomme for assisting in the growth of the Cyber Operations and Intelligence & Information Operations programs during the COVID-19 pandemic, highlighting how the Cyber Operations program grew over 75% and the Intelligence & Information Operations program grew by 300%.

Denno also highlighted Prudhomme's work on the

Cyber Scholarship Program (CySP) submission into the Department of Defense.

"Her innovative management of this program resulted in the University of Arizona achieving the highest student selection rate (61.5%) in the nation, which was three times higher than the average selection rate for universities across the US," said Denno in his submission letter.

Denno said that because of Prudhomme's efforts, 12 UofA students have received full-tuition scholarships, plus an additional \$1,250 for books, \$1,500 for computers, and a guaranteed government position with a security clearance.

"Tracy's efforts on this effort alone (have) fundamentally changed the lives of those students," said Denno.

Currently, Prudhomme has completed her Certified Associate Program Management (CAPM) degree through the Project Management Institute (PMI), and intends to do after her Project Management Professional (PMP) certification through PMI.

"(I) fell in love with Sierra Vista. I'm never leaving," said Prudhomme. "As with any of the jobs I've had in my life, I always tend to find a place that feels like home, and that's no different here."

Josh Allred



Josh Allred, a Willcox native, has been the Senior Graphic Designer for Willcox Theater and Arts (WTA) for two years and has been, “putting his extensive graphic design and drawing skills to great use benefiting WTA and bringing our creative content to a new level,” Gayle Berry said.

“Josh continues learning and developing new ideas, putting them to work in a creative manner. For Willcox Theater and Arts, he made an impact from day one and continues to spread his wings, creating two new entirely new elements for WTA: the ‘High Desert Palette,’ a monthly magazine of, and by, creatives in the Northern Cochise County area, and inaugurating a 10-week master class in observational drawing. Both of these efforts are commercially successful for WTA and outstanding examples of his talents and dedication.” Berry said.

Allred, the Editor-in-Chief and designer for “High Desert Palette,” graduated from Eastern Arizona College with a bachelor’s degree in Graphic Design in December 2020.

“It feels good to have my work recognized. I have only been working at Willcox Theater and Arts for two years and have come to really feel valued as a part of the team. Furthermore, and perhaps more significantly, I feel that the work I do is appreciated. Being nominated for 20 under 40 by my employer makes me feel recognized, and that feels pretty good,” Josh Allred said.

“With his direct influence on making Willcox a better place for all, Willcox is an active, creative corner in Cochise County and the state of Arizona, leading the way for creative work and activity at WTA and beyond.”

In addition to managing the social media presence of WTA and the Willcox Chamber of Commerce and Agriculture, as well as maintaining WTA’s website and designing WTA’s

print graphics, Allred also aids other local businesses and nonprofits in Willcox with their graphic designs. So far, he’s helped The Rex Allen Museum, Sulphur Springs Valley Historical Society, and the local wineries. Allred has also partnered with Bowie Unified School district to “develop course content and instruct biweekly arts classes for K-12 students.”

“Willcox Theater and Arts does a lot for the community. Their goal is really to provide entertainment and learning opportunities to the small community of Willcox, AZ in the form of community arts workshops, first run movies, and community festivals among many other things. It’s something you really don’t see in most small towns. As a graphic designer I am able to help make people aware of all of the awesome things going on,” Allred said.

“In regard to helping with the graphic design work of WTA’s community clients It feels nice to be trusted to create materials for local businesses. It’s also just nice to see various community members and businesses work together to better the Willcox Area at large,” said Allred.

“Josh is an outstanding young man who is enormously talented in his chosen profession. He is active in his church, and served a religious mission prior to attending Eastern Arizona College. He sets an example to his family and community by working hard and integrating his creativity to better his community and Willcox Theater and Arts,” Berry added.

“Moreover, he is a quietly passionate young man who tirelessly works to promote the successes of Willcox Theater and Arts and provide opportunities for other local creatives. WTA is extremely fortunate to have him as the leader of its Graphic Design Services where he makes a daily impact on us and those around him.”

Kalani Alvarez

23-year-old Kalani Alvarez of Douglas, Ariz., has been nominated for this year’s 20 under 40 for a plethora of volunteer opportunities he has had the opportunity to partake in since the young age of 11. Alvarez has been volunteering for over 13 years and has been contributing efforts to organizations such as Ronald McDonald House and Relay for Life from the time he was in middle school.

The Douglas High School Graduate’s earliest volunteer experiences was the House of Hope domestic crisis shelter where he worked a Thanksgiving fundraiser. Thereon after, he created a journey towards helping the community and developing leadership qualities.

Shirley Molina, who nominated Alvarez and encouraged him to start volunteering, describes him as one of the most helpful and the most motivated.

“Kalani is always there when anyone needs him and is a great role model to many of the youths in Douglas,” Molina said in the nomination forum.

Alvarez served on the Douglas High School student council from 2014 to 2017 and earned the Susan J. Molina recipient award for all of the volunteer hours he contributed. He also worked on organization efforts with both the Douglas

Hispanic Chamber of Commerce and Douglas Chamber of Commerce. Wounded Warrior Project and DMD Heart & Hooves are a few other organizations Alvarez has worked with in the area.

Alvarez describes one of the most powerful moments during his volunteering experiences being the Douglas Candlelight Walk and Vigil for Domestic Violence of 2017. After listening to speakers at the event, it became a source of inspiration for Alvarez.

“It made me realize that there’s a lot more going on than what we know. There’s always a source, whether you’re big or you’re tall, there’s always that one little source that could be your change for things like this. It encouraged me more to just keep pushing, to jump to other events and to give back,” Alvarez said.

Some of Alvarez’ genuine contributions fall under photography which have earned him the City of Douglas Certificate of Special Recognition after submitting a photo depicting what makes Douglas a great community.

With a bedroom wall full of volunteer awards from all the years, Alvarez plans on continuing his work and plans to help other communities in other states in the foreseeable future.



Sara Arsenault

The pandemic brought strange times... and over 40 extra boxes of toilet paper to Ace Hardware. The extras were part of Operations Manager Sara Arsenault's efforts to serve the community from her family's store in a way few others could.

"We were getting these huge pallets—just the amount of toilet paper was baffling. But it sold ... and people were appreciative of having it here when the other stores were just out," Arsenault said.

Sierra Vista's Ace Hardware did not carry nearly the same amount of toilet paper and cleaning supplies before the pandemic, but the supply shortages pushed Arsenault to shake things up.

Jennifer Sorenson, the Publisher at the Sierra Vista Herald, nominated Arsenault for the 20 under 40 list because Arsenault routinely reached out to her during the pandemic.

Sorenson said Arsenault would ask what the Herald needed, and whenever a shipment came in with useful supplies, she would call to let Sorenson know.

"My brother and I (were), you know, face to face and he's looking for certain things," Arsenault said. "And I'd peek my head around the monitor I'd go, you think two hundred's too much? You think three hundred's too much? ... I mean it was daily, sometimes

minute-by-minute refreshing, almost like a war room."

People with breathing machines needed distilled water, the police department needed gloves to handle its evidence and everyone wanted Clorox wipes, Arsenault said. It took communication to figure out exactly what people were missing and how much she needed to order.

Arsenault said she contacted their office supply store and ordered extra supplies, selling them instead of stocking the store. She was making calls to out-of-state Ace dealers, to friends in California who found masks and following every lead she heard.

"She's a very humble person and that's why I don't think that people see everything that she does," Sorenson said. "The whole family ... they don't do it to seek attention or anything like that, it's just their nature," Sorenson said.

It was a big change, but Arsenault said that the pandemic was eye-opening in some ways. For instance, there were places just hours away that she had never seen. Cabin-fever drew Arsenault and her family outside every weekend during the pandemic, she said. At one point, they set out to walk half a mile and ended up doing seven.

"Now I tease (my kids) because it's like, no you can walk some more, you did seven miles. This is nothing! So,

things we would have never done, had there not been a pandemic and us needing to just get out of the house," Arsenault said.

Arsenault even made a list of the things she learned during the pandemic. It ranged from things like making face masks to more complex endeavors like installing her own thermostat.

Arsenault said she also had to

balance her roles in life. She was a customer concerned about her family's health while also being a supplier, a mother while also being a manager. She said that it's impossible to be everything all the time.

"When I'm home I miss work and when I'm at work I miss home and it's easy to be just those two, but enjoying all of me... I'm just more aware of that now," Arsenault said.



Donna Brown

Arts-lover Donna Brown found purpose where she never expected it: at the Chamber of Commerce in the middle of a pandemic.

Brown took a position at the chamber after completing a work study there while she was in college. Brown now helps get businesses online using social media and more, and said that the creative autonomy in the process is a big draw for her.

"Since I started here, the importance of media has gone up quite a bit, not just because of the pandemic, but because it's been important," Brown said. "We need to start getting businesses and organizations online more and more active in that realm."

Online tools may have been important before the pandemic, but it created a situation that encouraged Brown to reach people in new ways. She started doing daily livestreams on Facebook to update the community on which businesses were open, any new government regulations and local COVID-19 info.

"I wanted to be able to help and I was really happy when I found a way that (I) could," Brown said. "I think it being online helped it reach a lot more people, and then I think having it daily gave them a sense of comfort."

While some official websites were taking weeks to update, Brown said the chamber's CEO, Melany Edwards-Barton, could call government departments and give Brown the most up-to-date information.

Now, Brown said the streams are just

Thursdays, allowing her to focus on other aspects of her job. As she said, Brown has seen social media becoming more and more important recently. Her job is not only getting businesses online, but convincing them to do it.

"Especially in a small town, I mean, when people are commenting they're like, 'oh that's my favorite business I just had the best coffee there last week' and you know, they get really excited and really involved," Brown said. "I think that when I show (businesses) that ... it's not just a computer, that there are people on the other end, I think that helps them a lot."

Brown said that one of the positive things to come out of the pandemic was the realization of online tools like social media. She said the chamber has thrown out some old processes, so though it struggled with finances and low staff throughout the pandemic, it's coming out stronger and more connected with the community.

Brown herself is looking forward to the future. When asked about her dreams, she smiled and said, "I have a lot."

Among them are publishing her own anthology of short stories and developing her career in graphic design. As it stands, Brown sometimes helps companies in the chamber with developing new logos or graphics for social media.

"Anything in the arts, that's what makes me happy and those are my goals," Brown said. "I just kind of look for those opportunities and when they show up, then I take them."



Cole Colvin

Originally a product of, and then soon returned to become a teacher for, the Sierra Vista Unified School District, Cole Colvin has made the Twenty under 40 nominations for this year. Having won twice and being nominated for the Golden Apple Award over the last few years, Colvin is serving the Sierra Vista community as the current interim assistant principal at Buena High School. He was formerly the principal of Village Meadow Elementary School during the last academic year at the age of 29.

“Working in education, you get to really be a role model for kids,” he said.

Colvin’s nominator pointed to the passion that he brings to the classroom to help students find success.

“He has a natural ability to make others feel supported and happy. Students love him and want him to come into the classroom to see what they are working on,” according to his nomination.

Colvin mentioned that getting nominated and having these awards

serves as an example and something students in the community can look forward to or can strive for.

“There are a lot of people along the way, from other adults, but mainly students, who have shaped who I am as a person. I’m never going to take credit for it. I think a lot of it has to do with the people I’ve interacted with.”

His nominator expects he will bring that same dedication to the high school level.

“The students at Buena High School are lucky to have him back and will benefit from his leadership, energy and the respect that he will provide,” they said.

Serving as the team coach for six years, Colvin helped the Buena High School’s girl’s varsity basketball team place top 4 in the state, while also winning the region title for two years in a row. Other accomplishments include producing the most valuable player and defense player in the conference. Meanwhile, Colvin earned the title of coach of the year for two consecutive years. He is currently on a hiatus from coaching while fulfilling his duties in his principal role for the district.



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Brittany & Nathan Darus



It's been stated pets are often an extended part of the family. Sometimes however, when families leave on vacation their pets are forced to remain behind.

Nathan and Brittany Darus, who just celebrated their fourth anniversary in Douglas, own a business called Aespyn and Friends Pet Sitting.

"We moved to Douglas for work," Brittany said. "Nate heard about an open music teacher position, and we were ready for a change, so we drove down and met with the schools, and then decided it was the right place for us. We moved to Douglas from Glendale."

Through their business the Darus' offer in-home pet sitting.

"Pets can come and stay at our house while their owners are out of town on vacation, or even if they are only going to be gone for one night," Nathan said. "We also can go to people's homes to check on their pets there if they have multiple pets. Our nightly rate is \$25. Brittany started working in doggy daycare in 2013, and continued working with dogs until we moved here in 2017 and we have wanted to start a pet sitting business ever since we arrived in Douglas and noticed there were no boarding facilities, daycares, or pet sitters in the Douglas area."

"Our business is available for any type of pet. Dogs, cats and other small animals (hamsters, rabbits, guinea pigs) are all welcome at our home. If you have animals like horses, chickens, and goats, we can come to you to take care of them. We are located in Douglas, but we can arrange to go and pick up your pet if you live outside the Douglas area."

Nathan and Brittany are also avid dog show competitors. They travel all over the western part of the U.S. competing in various competitions. They are in Prescott this weekend with one of their dogs competing in the Southwest Regionals dock diving competition hoping it leads to an invite to nationals.

"Our main dog that travels to compete is Aespyn," Brittany said. "She is a 7 year old Border Collie who has really opened our world up to dog sports. We have traveled as far north as San Francisco, California to compete in dock diving. We have also traveled to Denver, Colorado for her to compete in dock diving. We have made many trips to southern California for our dogs to compete in frisbee, we have also made trips to Utah for the dogs to compete in frisbee. We love to travel with our dogs and give them the opportunity to do what they love."

On Sept. 11 the Darus' are bringing a K-9 Frisbee Toss and Fetch competition to Douglas.

"This is going to be a great event," they said. "On September 11, people from all over the world will be competing. This year, just like last year, there will be regional locations around the world and Douglas is one of those locations. We are expecting at least 30 people and at least that many dogs, probably more, to make the trip to Douglas to compete. We have at least four of our own dogs that will be competing and representing the Douglas disc dog team (BADD AZ, Border Area Disc Dogs of Arizona). There will also be people and dogs representing teams from Phoenix, Tucson and Tempe, with the possibility of people from out of state making the trip to participate."

The competition will start by 9 a.m. and will continue until all dogs have had their three turns on the field. During this event, each dog will take the field three times. Each round/turn will last for 60 seconds. The goal in each round is for the dog to get as many points as possible. The field has five zones, each varying in points to allow the dog/human team to get their points.

Since first coming to Douglas Nathan has also been the local leader of the Red For Ed education movement. It was through that he met Ralph Robles who at the time was active with the Douglas Hispanic Chamber of Commerce.

"We both attended community events with the chamber and then participated with mixers run by the Douglas Business Network when it formed for the first time," Brittany said. "We joined to support local businesses in town and gain the involvement of any new businesses that join our community in the future. Buying from local businesses is key in growing our economy and keeping job growth in Douglas."

"Nathan is a great citizen and asset to the Douglas community," Ralph Robles of the DBN said. "(He) has always been committed to helping the DBN by volunteering at our events and supporting any projects we have. The Darus family fully supported the Shop Douglas campaigns we have held by purchasing everything from his home and cars. Right now Mr Darus is an ambassador to the Douglas Business Network and has taken a major role in the DBN operations, without his generous assistance we would have to put a major halt to various projects. I personally think Nathan is a phenomenal person and proud to have him in Douglas."

The Darus' state they are really happy with their decision to move to Douglas.

"We love the community and people we have met in Douglas," Nathan and Brittany said. "Everyone is very friendly and we have made some lifelong friends."

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Shane Early



A typical day for Shane Early begins before sunrise and ends long after sunset. From four to nine A.M., he may be training clients. From nine to three, it may be computer work, phone calls, or cleaning the gym. Then it's home to the kids, back to the gym, some more computer work and working with clients. Early lives by the mantra, "we get the same 24 hours in the day, it's how you use them."

Early is best known in Cochise County for his business, Shane Early Nutrition and Training. He works one-on-one to train clients, runs a local gym, and organizes his own physique show. "Sierra Vista and Cochise County are lucky to have Shane serving the health needs of this community," wrote Anne Coppola, his nominator for the 20 under 40 award. The community would agree—Early's business has glowing reviews, his gym was voted one of Sierra Vista's best, and his physique show has become the largest in the area.

Early's edge in fitness is in his approach. The field is often riddled with unhealthy habits and mentalities, tendencies that Shane tries to counter with his own practice. "I started going against the grain of how things were run," said Early. For instance, he saw competitors at many physique shows were being treated poorly. "Our show was born out of the necessity for people to have fun with it." He also combats the cookie-cutter approach to fitness, instead designing unique programs to meet the needs of each of his clients. "No one wants to feel like a number," he said.

Originally, Early considered becoming a Physician's Assistant or a Doctor but decided to focus on preventative treatment—he realized he

could be of more use to the community by keeping them out of the doctor's office. Early earned his bachelor's degree in nutrition and Dietetics at the University of Arizona while working full time, community five days a week from Sierra Vista, and raising a toddler. Soon after, he got a master's degree in nutrition and Human Performance. Though he was accepted into several PhD programs, Early decided he'd had enough school and dove into his business. It's been a roaring success since.

Early incorporates his family into everything he does. He has three children—the youngest recently turned six months old. "Everything I do, my family is included," he said. His kids watch the physique shows, are often at the gym, and even attend the occasional seminar. "Everything is very organic," he said. "That's a big part of what enables me to work so much."

Just as Early is family-focused, he is client-focused. Reviews for his business overwhelmingly contain statements such as client Hope Jameson's: "if you're looking for a coach that truly cares about his clients look no further." Early truly wants to see every one of his clients succeed and does everything he can to help. His investment pays off—every client that leaves for a big-name team ends up coming back to Shane Early Nutrition and Fitness. Some clients have even become Early's best friends.

At the root of Early's success is one never-ending motivation: "if people tell me I can't do something, it fuels me," said Shane. Every step of the way, he has been driven to stave off others' doubts and accomplish his goals. So far, the only limiting factor to what Shane Early can do is the number of hours in a day.

Laura Franco

A rising professional leader in the Cochise County area has been making remarkable strides in the community. Laura Franco, currently the Regional Manager for the University of Arizona (Douglas), has a history of contributions that have gained recognition and earned her a nomination for Cochise County's Twenty under 40.

Franco graduated from the University of Arizona with a Bachelor of Arts in Government and Public Service and received the Outstanding Graduate award in 2017. During her time in college, she became the President of the Gamma Beta Phi honor society. Her honors research included participating in a Holocaust Project. Franco was also one of the only two representatives to attend the Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities capitol forum in Washington, D.C. and the only person to attend the Dreamers en Movimiento forum in Los Angeles, California where she advocated for border and bi-national students in Cochise County.

Assistant Vice Provost of Distant Education at the University of Arizona, Sarah Wieland, said in the forum that Laura approaches everything she does with an air of confidence, professionalism, and a service-orientation.

"I've known Laura from her time as a student and student worker at the University of Arizona, through the beginning of her professional career in Douglas and in

probation services, and now to her Regional Manager position at the University of Arizona. One of Laura's strongest qualities is her persistence in achieving her goals. As a first-generation student from Douglas, Laura made pursuing her education a priority and now she is giving back to her community and local students by supporting students like her to attain advanced education and degrees," Wieland said.

Wieland also mentioned in the forum that Laura took on her position with the University during the COVID crisis and has helped pull the local team and activities out of the effects of the pandemic while bringing a renewed energy to the role.

"Even during the pandemic when networking and spending time with colleagues was challenging, Laura initiated Zoom and safe in-person opportunities for learning, professional development, and building relationships," she said.

Franco's dedication to the public service has included volunteer work for organizations such as Ministerios Amistad, Radio Manatial and Cochise County Network Breakfast. Her devotion for charitable contributions and her role in higher education has her currently writing grants to provide more funding for student opportunities in the county.

Franco's engagement with higher education has brought great strides in terms of student and regional development. Her service has provided support for



local students to reach educational and professional goals, including the Cochise Cats transfer pathway with Cochise College. She has been known to work with corrections by helping assist youth and adult populations in the county with mentoring, rehabilitation plans, ensuring there are proper detention conditions, etc.

Wieland said in the forum that Franco's drive to serve others means she puts her full effort and energy into everything she does and helps her think creatively about how to better the Cochise County community in meaningful ways.



Chad Graves

When he was only 16 years old, Chad Graves started what was to be his first of many successful business endeavors, CNR trucking and Cattle Company, Incorporated. Not too long after, he started A1-Porta-Pots, a porta potty company serving Cochise County. From there the sky was his limit; Graves soon found himself the owner of both a Dairy Queen and Texaco in Willcox, expanded his original company to include CNR Engineering and Construction Inc., is now the owner and director of Willcox's Dunlap Plaza, and recently purchased a plant on the city's Westside.

CNR describes itself as a flexible and multi-tasked business. Today, the corporation's services include excavating, unloading freight from rail cars, hard car unloading, building and repairing bridges for Union Pacific, and assisting with railroad emergencies. In 2005, they even helped create a movie set, transforming Mescal's main street for the movie "Miracle at Sage Creek."

When Graves purchased Dairy Queen and then Texaco, his wife, Cissi Graves, left her career to be more hands-on. Reviews from the Graves' Dairy Queen repeatedly mention how friendly and nice the owners were. At

Texaco, the Graves host a holiday raffle, awarding grand prizes like large-screen televisions to the winners.

Chad's development of the Dunlap Plaza has had a significant impact on the community. "He continues to invest in Wilcox through his business developments there," said the entrepreneur's nominator, Steve Reno. Since purchasing the plaza, he's added multiple businesses, including a restaurant, dance studio, and market. His latest venture has been reimagining the Dunlap bulk plant in West Wilcox. There, Reno said he plans to convert the property into offices and headquarters for the plaza.

Graves is also the father of three children, Ronnie, Larae, and Sidney. His children have been featured in Ranch Raised Kids, a photo project featuring children raised on ranches in the United States. His youngest child, Ronnie, was also the ACRA Under five Dummy Roping Champion in 2020.

At 39, Chad is just in time to be nominated for the 20 under 40 in Cochise Cochise County. In the words of Reno, "Chad Graves is a remarkable and inspirational community investor who has quietly reached remarkable influence in our community before the age of 40."

Christie Lehman

Christie Lehman is known for giving 100% to her customers. Born and raised in Sierra Vista, Lehman moved back home in May of 2020. She is recognized for her hard work and her ability to handle multiple commitments. "She works full-time and juggles the rest," said nominator Lauretta Towne.

Lehman is a Flooring Specialist at Sierra Vista's Home Depot. Dedicated to the home-improvement business, Lehman stuck with Home Depot all the way from Austin, Texas to Sierra Vista, even taking an initial pay-cut to remain an employee. She was quickly recognized for her skills and commitment at Home Depot, however, ascending ranks until she became the Specialist she is now. Lehman works one-on-one with the customers, finding ways to meet their flooring expectations.

"I love working and meeting different people," said Lehman. She said there are two types of relationships she forms with clients—some, she sees only occasionally. Others, she checks in with constantly, helping them with both their floors and their mental health. "I have one client where I haven't really been talking to her about her floor," she said. "There's so much going on in her personal life. I check in, see how she's doing."

At home, Lehman stays busy with a

different relationship: being a full-time mom to her two children, an eight-year-old and a three-year-old. Somehow, this 20 under 40 nominee also finds the time for a small side business. Lehman makes jams, jellies and syrups which she sells at farmers markets and fairs. "I started learning how to can with making my own butters," she said. "It spiraled into pickles then jams and jellies."

Lehman is also an active artist. She works with multiple mediums, teaching herself the crafts as she goes. Paint is her medium of the moment and Home Depot has been the beneficiary. The store asked her to paint a mural for their recognition wall, which she recently completed. She even painted several employee aprons in the process.

Lehman is happy to be back in Sierra Vista. "I missed my mountains," she said. After a big city like Austin, she has been loving the support that comes with a smaller community. "When something happens, everyone bands together to take care of someone," she said. "No one gets left behind." Her nomination for the 20 under 40 award floored Lehman. "When I was told I was nominated I was almost in tears," she said. "I am really humbled by this nomination. I appreciate everyone in this community."



Alycia McCloud



A few months ago, Alycia McCloud was not at her desk at the Herald Review. Instead, the 25 year old was at the National Bowling Stadium in downtown Reno, adjusting her stance and preparing her arm swing for the United States Bowling Conference Women's Opening Tournament. Fast forward a month or two and McCloud was performing burlesque in Bisbee to a Beach Boys track. In between, she was baking amazing treats, writing hilarious articles for Cochise County's Women's Magazine, and working full time as a Digital Media Specialist.

When McCloud started her career at Herald Review, she was 22 and had no experience in the industry. "The only type of sales experience I had had beforehand was waitressing," she said. She didn't let her green hat slow her down, however; McCloud dove right in. With videos, readings, and a lot of listening, McCloud quickly mastered the trade. "She jumped in and has been a leading expert in digital marketing at Wick Communications ever since," wrote her publisher, Jennifer Sorenson.

At the Herald Review, Alycia is known for going above and beyond for her clients and her team. "Her love for what she does every day shows in the results she drives for her customers," wrote Sorenson. Beyond digital media, McCloud is also an instrumental member of the publication's marketing and events team. Next time you're online, reading a Wick Communications publication, look out for her name – "for technical difficulties or questions,

feel free to reach out to Alycia McCloud."

This year, McCloud also developed and launched loveshoplocalaz.com, an online shopping platform connecting local businesses to customers. She describes it as a "hyper-local Amazon." Sorenson, who created the web service alongside McCloud, said the nominee put her "blood, sweat, and tears" into the endeavor. Love Local Shop Local is now one of McCloud's favorite things. "I love love love it," she said. "The best part of my job is helping local businesses."

The innovative e-commerce website is the perfect facilitator for Cochise County businesses and consumers. McCloud describes it as a great way to help small businesses to be open every day, especially when the owner still works a day job. "Helping businesses who maybe didn't think they could do ecommerce get started is one of the best feelings," said McCloud. "I feel like a fairy godmother."

McCloud doesn't stop at reimagining digital media and boosting the local economy, however. She still makes time for her aforementioned passions. Her light-hearted articles in W Magazine have titles ranging from "Five Places to Wear a Fanny Pack," to, "Five Ways to Kill a Plant." McCloud's baked goods are notorious in her office and family, and her burlesque performances both entertain and inspire. "I try to live my life to make myself happy," said McCloud. "That's what I strive to do- to be good and to do good."

Esther Nunez

Esther Nunez, a 38-year-old Douglas native, has been helping her community grow and expand in more ways than one. Working as a realtor at Long Realty, Nunez has deepened her connection to the Douglas area by helping families settle down and settle in.

Angelica Garcia, Nunez' nominator and boss, describes her as a "distinguished, top producing realtor," and it's easy to see why.

"Esther is successful because she always has her client's interests before her own. Her business has increased each year based on recommendations from prior clients," said Angelica Garcia. "In the last four and a half years she has contributed tremendously to the company's growth as well as her own."

Having lived in the Douglas area all her life, Nunez has created a bond with the area and its people, which she said motivates her to do what she does.

"I really try and help the families that I work with so they can have more than just a home. I want them to be able to grow with their home and community," Nunez said.

With a drive and passion for people, it doesn't take much to see why Nunez was voted the best realtor of Douglas two years in a row, 2019 and 2020, respectively. With just over six years of experience, and over 40 houses sold,

Nunez has cemented herself as one of the better realtors in Arizona. Among her long list of accomplishments lies the 2017 Rising Star award, the 2018, 2019, and 2020 Chairman's Club award.

Not only does Nunez help her community by supporting her clients in their needs and wants, but she also participates in fundraisers, drives, and donations to help out the local schools as well as the community as a whole. She works with the Arizona Association of Realtors, National Association of Realtors, as well as WeServ Association of Realtors which all help raise money to fight homelessness in their communities by creating and building non-profit affordable homes.

"Douglas is a great town to raise a family in and it offers so much to grow with. It really is an amazing area with a great community," Nunez said. "I want people to love this area as much as I do."

Based off of her five-star rating on Zillow, it is clear that the people of Douglas appreciate not only her work, but her dedication to her clients as well. One thing that stands out amongst all of her reviews is her dedication to helping her clients find their ideal homes.

"I help my clients to build their dreams," Nunez said. "It's special, knowing that I'm helping my community."





Andrew Paxton

Although Andrew Paxton had a desire to share the stories of a community as part of the fourth estate since he was young, it wasn't until a life-changing moment that he finally found himself on his true path.

While driving to a friend's house in Tucson in 2007, Andrew was shot and nearly killed in a random road rage incident. He credits the actions of two doctors who witnessed the attack for still being alive today.

Ever since then, he has made it his goal to make the most of the time he has, knowing firsthand that everything can change at any moment.

"Any day above ground, no matter how bad it may seem, beats the alternative," he says.

Before his near-death experience, Andrew was working a construction job, which he could no longer do — physically or mentally — after a long recovery from his injuries.

He eventually enrolled at Pima Community College and quickly found his niche in the journalism program. He quickly became a leader at the student newspaper, holding positions ranging from editor to circulation and sales manager to eventually helping lead the college's award-winning journalism program as an assistant advisor, getting his first taste of working with beginning reporters and photographers, which continues to be a passion of his to this day.

After transferring to the University of Arizona to continue his journalism education, Andrew again stepped into a

leadership position, immediately taking over as the president of the university's chapter of the Society of Professional Journalists.

In this role, Andrew helped raise several thousand dollars for the Jim W. Foley Legacy Foundation, which advocates for the freedom of all Americans held hostage abroad and promotes safety for journalists worldwide.

Following his time at the university, Andrew began working as an assistant editor at a community newspaper in Southern Arizona before coming to the Herald/Review in 2019. After a year as the city editor, he took over as managing editor in April 2020, during the height of the pandemic.

Andrew has approached the challenges associated with the virus and shutdowns head on, finding innovative ways to meet the needs of a growing audience while remaining aware of the needs of his staff.

Looking forward, Andrew is excited to continue working with the next generation of journalists via the newspaper's burgeoning internship program, while continuing to deliver high quality news, information, analysis and entertainment for the ever-expanding Herald/Review Media audience.

"I take the responsibility of keeping the community informed as part of a functioning democracy seriously, and will continue doing everything I can to bring the news that Cochise County wants and needs to better understand the world around us," he said.



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Emily Robles

Emily Robles opened her own store, Sew Easy Sewing, when she was only 25. This was right on track for the young entrepreneur – she also graduated high school at age 14, ran a babysitting business at 15, and began college at 16. Now, at 29 years old, Robles stays busy with her store, her daughter, and vast amounts of community service. She is known to give her all every day and do whatever she can to help others.

Robles always knew two things: she wanted to work for herself, and she wanted to live in Cochise County. She grew up in a military family and had moved 26 times when she finally had the opportunity to settle in Hereford. She started her store as a way of learning how to sew – in the three and a half years since, she has not only taught herself but inspired countless others.

One of the biggest hurdles for the entrepreneur was fear.

“I was very scared to open a store,” Robles said. “It’s like jumping off a diving board, you never know if you’re going to hurt yourself.” Despite the uncertainty, Robles pushed herself to overcome her fears and Sew Easy Sewing quickly became a community pillar.

Donating thousands of school supplies at Back to School fairs and organizing food drives are just two of the ways Emily Robles gives back to the community she loves. Sew Easy Sewing also serves as a drop off location for local charities—community members bring hand-made quilts, supplies and food that Robles delivers to organizations such as Peach’s Pantry. “I’m always trying to figure out a way to help out,” she said. This past year, she found ample opportunity.

When 2020 brought the pandemic, Emily stepped up to the challenge. During the early-pandemic mask shortages, she personally sewed and donated over 300 masks for the community, many for small children. Through her store’s repair services, Robles enabled the community to sew for themselves as well.

“If you have an emergency, or there’s a pandemic, you really need to know how to sew,” she said. “We got a lot of sewing machines in for repairs that had been sitting in garages for 30 years.”

Since the pandemic, an increasing number of people have come to Robles wanting to learn how to sew. “It’s a very valuable skill,” she said, “really important because we don’t teach kids these skills anymore.” Through her store, Robles has been offering classes to children and adults alike. In the entrepreneur’s words, “the stronger a community is, the better it is.”

In addition to her community outreach and running the store, Robles also homeschools her six-year-old daughter, Olive. Her demanding schedule means she doesn’t always get everything done that she wants to, but she never gives up. Even when, around six years ago, she was seriously injured by an SUV while riding her bike, Robles kept pushing herself to excel. Now, she even uses her chronic pain as a motivation.

“I know that I can’t work as much I could without being injured, so I push myself as hard as I can to make up for it,” she said.

Robles is someone who makes the most of every situation, even the most difficult ones. She said it’s amazing to be nominated once again as one of Cochise County’s 20 under 40.

“It’s an honor,” she said. “It’s great my hard work is appreciated and noticed.”

Hannah Sovar-Knox

Hannah Sovar-Knox saves lives for a living. At 22, she is already a certified paramedic, working full time for the city of Sierra Vista responding to 911 calls. When she’s not working in an ambulance downtown or in Fort Huachuca, Hannah is teaching others how to be heroes through CPR and Medic classes at Cochise College. She loves what she does and loves the community she does it for.

Sovar-Knox didn’t always know she wanted to be in the field of medicine. Since elementary school, she has excelled in academia—only a few B’s disrupt the straight A’s on her transcripts. When she was three years old, she started dance which transitioned into musical theatre then regular theatre. In high school, the young paramedic was even an international thespian.

In her last year at Buena High School, Sovar-Knox discovered Emergency Medical Services; a retired firefighter, Michael LaBrecque, began offering an EMS course that year. Sovar-Knox was immediately hooked. After graduating high school, the nominee went through an EMT program and paramedic school, graduating into a part-time position with the Whetstone Fire District.

Sovar-Knox loves the critical thinking skills that come with the job, the fast-moving field, and the sense of accomplishment. She is captivated by the mystery and intrigue of medicine—there is always something new to learn.

“The job attracts a certain type of person,” she said. “Not everyone is equipped to deal

with the types of things we see.”

As a paramedic, Sovar-Knox typically sees people on their bad, and sometimes their worst, days. Her crew’s camaraderie has been instrumental for good mental health.

“The biggest thing is the team dynamic that we have,” she said. “Everyone knows they can talk about what they see with each other.” And, of course, there’s the feeling of accomplishment. The young nominee said she enjoyed being able to help people when they need it most, even if it’s just an ear to talk to.

Since August of 2020, Sovar-Knox has been working full time as a Paramedic on the EMS Transport Division of Sierra Vista. Despite the new time and energy demands, she still volunteered regularly with Whetstone Fire Department for a year.

“It’s very strange to leave your first EMS home,” she said. “I’m very sad to leave, they’re good guys out there.”

Sovar Knox has also started teaching at Cochise College. She offers a CPR course and helps teach a medic course.

“I love teaching and I love getting to stay on top of knowledge by teaching it to other people,” she said. Here, her years of theatre have come in handy—the training has helped her teach with confidence.

The 20 Under 40 nomination took Sovar Knox by surprise. She wasn’t expecting the recognition but was humbled and flattered.

“Sierra Vista, Cochise County, they mean everything to me,” she said. “It’s the community that I serve, it’s the people I see. It’s very heartwarming.”



Sarah Villalobos

Sarah Villalobos, insurance agent for Farmers Insurance in Douglas, believes in providing quality customer service to her clients.

She opened her Farmers Insurance office in Douglas in 2019 after the previous Farmers Insurance office closed. Villalobos had been involved in another project when representatives for Farmers approached her about being an agent for them. It didn't take long for her to accept their offer.

"With my knowledge and experience among other things, I was selected to serve the wonderful people of Douglas and the surrounding communities," she said.

Sarah was born in Bisbee, raised in Douglas and graduated from Gilbert High School in Gilbert.

It was while she was in high school she began working part-time filling insurance documents for an insurance company in Mesa.

"After graduating from high school, I obtained my licenses in property and casualty and life and health," she said in a previous story. "I absolutely love what I do. I've tried doing other things but I missed it. I'm so happy that I am here and back to doing what I love."

Villalobos states she has always

loved math and numbers and in insurance they deal with a great deal of numbers and money.

"That combined with helping families protect their families, assets and being smart when it comes to insurance makes it all worthwhile," she said.

Villalobos' Douglas office has also been known to assist others in need, especially if they are in the Douglas community.

"Anything related to kids and education," she said. "I have done various donations to schools, classrooms and participated in many events that benefit kids. I worked for DUSD for two years and saw first hand the importance of supporting our local educators. My children also attend schools locally. Also, in the past I have donated to our local fire department, our emergency department, little league and even hosted a talent show for kids among various fundraisers and events! When you purchase insurance from my agency you are not only supporting a local business, you are supporting our local community."

She states that when a client has a loss like a house fire or death, she takes pride in knowing they are well prepared and protected.

"Getting thanked by my clients

after such a great loss reminds me how valuable our service really is," she said.

In 2019 Villalobos was recognized by Farmers Insurance as one of the Top 100 agents in Arizona, Utah, New Mexico and Nevada. She was also recognized for her life sales and overall insurance sales.

"My Blue Bank Award was recognition for my life insurance sales," she said. "We had to meet certain numbers to even qualify for the award."

Ralph Robles, who nominated Villalobos for this honor, states Sarah is very active in the community and supports anywhere she can.

Some of her Facebook reviews describe her as very helpful at critical times.

"Sarah will go the extra mile for you to accommodate your budget in these trying times," Luz Romero Hammarstrom said in her Facebook review. "Please consider her excellent service and her ever giving generosity to your community when seeking your Insurance needs."

"Very knowledgeable and professional," Brandt Platt stated in his post. "I experienced the highest level of customer service! Sarah really knows her stuff and was very helpful."



Villalobos states being recognized feels great and makes her want to continue to do more great things in my community.

"I am so thankful and blessed to be recognized," she said.

Villalobos and her husband Martin have been married 13 years. They have four beautiful children: Ricardo, Mireya, Joslynn, and Ariella.

She states she is very happy to be a part of the Farmers Insurance team and will continue to strive to provide the best customer service possible.

Abraham Villarreal



In just one year since moving back to Douglas, Abraham Villarreal has had a significant impact on the community. For the past 17 years he has worked at a university in New Mexico—now, he has transferred that experience to his alma mater, Cochise College, as Dean of Student Success.

In his position, Villarreal oversees numerous departments, including tutoring, testing, and library support services. His goal is to promote student success, providing services that enable students to stay in school. "The college plays a very important role to the students in this area," Villarreal said. "For many students in Cochise County, Cochise College may be their only option."

Villarreal has had to adapt and change rapidly this past year, finding ways to meet student needs in the throes of the pandemic. "The challenge was to make sure we could still fulfill our mission to keep students in class and give quality education," the dean said. But the challenge also brought new opportunities; Cochise College's increase in remote learning options has made it more accessible for some. "Community Colleges are really special because they teach people of all ages and demographics," said Villarreal. Every day, he works to ensure the needs of all students are met.

Outside of academia, Villarreal continues showing his dedication to his hometown. Once a month, Villarreal participates in Douglas' community clean up day and always looks forward to it. "It's helping to keep our town looking great," he said. This

20 under 40's is also the Vice President of the Douglas Historical Society and serves as a Trustee for Canyon Vista Medical Center. He also volunteers as a cook at Good Neighbor Alliance, helps run the college's food pantry, and on Saturdays can be found volunteering at the Williams House Museum.

"I think that we have an obligation to serve the community in which we live," said Villarreal. "People can do that in different ways." His latest endeavor has been Cochise in the Community, a local meetup at Blueberry Café. Villarreal started the meetup last February to bring community members together. "It's a great way to meet in town, talk about ideas, figure out ways we can work together," he said. Abraham represents Cochise College at the get-togethers, connecting with parents, students, and other organizations.

Though relatively new, the meetup has already been producing great results. In just one instance, representatives of a local apartment complex reached out, asking the college to give presentations to their tenants about education. In Villarreal's words, "we're figuring out ways we can help each other."

In just one year, Villarreal has become a pillar of the community. And at 39, he's just in time for the 20 under 40 nomination. "It's really good to be back in Douglas," he said, "and be part of a community that is filled with amazing people. There's so many people that do good things behind the scenes—those are the people that run cities and make things happen."

Joe Wood

Joe Wood is the executive director of Boulder Crest Foundation and Owner and CEO of Service Way of Life Industries. Between the two organizations, he has impacted countless lives, helping veterans and first responders to 'struggle well' and pursue their dreams.

"Every minute of every day I'm helping people become better," Wood said, who loves what he does. "I don't see what I do as work."

Wood always knew he wanted to have his own business. After serving in the army, where he'd risen to Sergeant First Class, he worked in the corporate industry for seven years. "It was soul sucking," he said. He also knew the community he wanted to work with – other veterans and first responders. When the idea for SWOL Industries came to him, he just tried it and started the company.

Now, as Wood's colleague Eric Fowler said, "Joe has almost single-handedly changed the lives of veteran entrepreneurs." At SWOL Industries, Wood uses his years of experience in the corporate world to help veterans and first responders start their own businesses or become executives of others.

"I feel like I've been blessed with a lot of really cool opportunities," said Wood, "I've learned a lot about running businesses and have this knowledge base I can share."

SWOL Industries' tagline, "Warriors Helping Warriors," says it all—Wood does not charge his clients a dime.

"Of course I'm losing money left and right but that's OK," Wood said. "I've been able to help a lot of people." To fund his efforts, Wood started Alpha Co. Apparel, a retail division of SWOL Industries. The model has been a success, enabling many Veterans in the community to pursue their business dreams.

Wood's work for the Veteran and First Responder community doesn't stop there, however. As Executive Director, he also helps the non-profit Boulder Crest in their mission to revolutionize PTSD treatment. "The foundation uses the proven science of Posttraumatic Growth to heal, train, and advocate for combat veterans, first responders, and their families who have experienced trauma," explains the nonprofit's website.

Wood applied for the position after seeing one of Boulder Crest's videos. The short film touched his heart, and working for Boulder Crest has changed his life.

"It's saved my life," said Wood, "and it's amazing to be able to do the same thing for everyone who comes through the program." After some horrible experiences as a contractor, witnessing business after business that didn't value other people, Wood has finally found a different model at the foundation.

Through both Boulder Crest Foundation and SWOL Industries, Wood is offering that same opportunity to others.

"I just try to remind people that they have a choice, they get to make decisions for their own lives," Wood said. His service has had an enormous impact. In the words of Wood's long-time friend, Larry Tucker, "the work he has done for the veterans in our local community is hands down incredible."



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Jack Blair

When they make the television commercial celebrating Sierra Vista, we're sure the producers will pick Jack Blair as the city's "most interesting man."

Like Jonathan Goldsmith, the debonair spokesman for a popular beverage, Jack Blair's personal history and his dedication to making his community a better place to live have distinguished him as Sierra Vista's version of "the most interesting man."

Whether it's his secret success as a two-time Jeopardy champion, his impressive skills convincing Wolfgang Puck to buy Blair's more expensive cuts of salmon, or his generous efforts to support local businesses, nonprofits and public projects, Jack Blair has exceeded the definition of a fascinating character. His resume is decorated with honors achieved during his military service, professional accomplishments achieved while working at an international consumer goods company, athletic awards earned as a competitive golfer, and honorary awards that have repeatedly celebrated his commitment to the community.

Blair came to Sierra Vista at the turn of the century, after "retiring" his skills as a business turnaround executive. During that seven-year stretch, 1993 to 2000, he focused on four different businesses in the food industry and engineered remarkable financial outcomes that turned each

company from money losers to highly profitable.

In 2000, he relocated to Sierra Vista to join his family.

"I thought I could teach or maybe become a police officer," Blair said.

Instead, he learned of an opening in the Member Services department at Sulphur Springs Valley Electric Cooperative (SSVEC). Blair was hired for the position and has worked as a senior staff member at the local member-owned cooperative for the past 20 years.

Shortly after settling into the community, he began volunteering his time and services to local nonprofit organizations.

As a member of the Sierra Vista Medical Regional Center Board of Directors, Blair was instrumental in helping the facility raise more than \$100,000 for the purchase of new medical equipment.

A few years later he headed a grassroots campaign to pass a revenue bond for the Sierra Vista Unified School District.

He has been a longtime member of the Fort Huachuca 50, an organization that seeks to serve needs of the local post by working as a liaison to city government and by lobbying for the fort at the state and federal levels.

In his professional capacity, Mr. Blair is directly responsible for allocating funds on behalf of SSVEC in support of community organizations. His active

engagement with Veterans, the Boys and Girls Club, the Cochise Education Foundation, and numerous other local groups has been instrumental in arranging for financial support from SSVEC.

During the height of the pandemic in 2020, Mr. Blair put out a call to food pantries and other social service agencies to prioritize their needs and assure support for the vital role these organizations were playing to assist those in need.

Mr. Blair is a member of the Senior Staff at SSVEC, which is among the largest business organizations in southeast Arizona. He is directly responsible for the public perception of SSVEC and assuring that members are engaged and aware of their role as part of the Cooperative. SSVEC has consistently achieved remarkable approval ratings from its members in independent surveys conducted each year.

Blair is also responsible for administering Operation Round-Up, which provides financial assistance to members who experience a personal, unexpected tragedy. In that role, he has directed funds to families who have experienced a fire, lost a child unexpectedly, or encountered other tragedies.

Measuring Jack Blair's qualifications as a candidate for the "15 over 50" distinction goes well beyond his resume. His sincere commitment to bettering the community, his professional experience and his kindness to others all qualify Jack Blair as Sierra Vista's "Most Interesting Man."



Sabra Albritton

Revitalization: The Mall at Sierra Vista is once again thriving with more local vendors thanks to Property Manager Associate Sabra Albritton.

“Albritton’s creativity and willingness to give 110% is the reason the mall is bustling once again,” said Albritton’s nominator, who requested to remain anonymous. “The mall is currently at 85% capacity and that is all due to (Albritton’s) desire to keep it alive and successful.”

Albritton said that she’s honored to be nominated for the Herald/Review’s 15 over 50 professional of the year award.

“I was like ‘that’s pretty cool! And who nominated me?’” said Albritton. “It’s pretty exciting. It’s an honor. We’ve got a great community, so to be included in that is pretty exciting.”

Albritton has worked at the Mall at Sierra Vista for 11 years, and noted the challenges that the COVID-19 pandemic presented towards maintaining business.

“In 2020, we lost 7 national tenants due to COVID (or) bankruptcy, and we found ourselves at 75% occupancy, which is not a good place to be,” said Albritton.

So, Albritton turned local.

“I talked to a lot of people in the community, and (we) kinda got local,” said Albritton. “It’s like a 180 from the beginning of the year. We got some great local tenants who are doing well.”

Now the mall is thriving with local businesses that provide a wide range of recreational activities, hang-out spots, and entertainment

hubs, like the Sierra Vista Community Theatre, the Gathering Place, Bombs Away and Orbital Games and Comics.

“Bringing the once desolate property back to life could not have been easy and Cochise County is lucky to have someone like Albritton at the helm to make that difference,” said Albritton’s nominator. “Albritton is always willing to have others use the Mall space and parking lot for community events, craft fairs, and the annual Festival of Trees. On any given Saturday, you may see a (Red Cross) blood mobile, car show, or evening motorcycle training in the open parking lot by Sears.”

In addition to managing the property and temporary leasing, Albritton is in charge of the marketing and webpage at the mall.

“I help a little bit with the accounting team, collecting rents and stuff like that,” said Albritton. “We have lost our operations manager and administrative assistant since September, so I’ve been the only one in the office. I was offered the position of general manager of the Mall at Sierra Vista. For the past 5 years, we’ve had an off site manager. They thought that it would be better to have an onsite manager.”

Outside of the mall, Albritton is also a member of the Sierra Vista Women’s Club and the Sierra Vista Area Chamber of Commerce board member.

Albritton said that her favorite aspect of her position is seeing the local businesses thrive.

“The smaller businesses, these smaller mom and pops, now they’re in the store and their sales are growing,” said Albritton. “Just watching smaller businesses grow and succeed.”

Bonnie Barrigar

Helping others who are going through similar life experiences as she is one of the main goals for Bonnie Barrigar.

“I have sympathy and empathy for people struggling with any type of cancer,” Bonnie said. “I want to help others who are going through similar ordeals.”

Barrigar knows first-hand what it is like to go through the struggles she wants to help others through. Since 2019, she is a stage IV breast cancer survivor.

“Going through chemotherapy was horrible but I am grateful I did because it got rid of the cancer,” she said.

Barrigar also understands what it takes to overcome other life events.

“I have great sympathy for people with disabilities,” she said. “Living with autism all my life, it takes willpower and having the right people in your life to overcome some of the effects. I’ve always appreciated people’s help and their understanding.”

Being proactive is what Barrigar has done to live the positive life she enjoys. She has learned that, as a writer and an artist, her talents are a pathway to healing. She enjoys all forms of writing, fiction and nonfiction. She has written numerous short stories and novellas. Some of her favorites include three of her historical fiction stories - “The Doll Maker”, “Gaiko”, and “Phnom Penh Concerto”; and a memoir “Dancing in the Dark: my struggle with cancer”. Her fictional writing often includes characters who are living with similar struggles as she

experiences with her hope being that those who read her works come out with added insight or a new perspective.

“I want my writing to be an inspiration to others going through the same trials and tribulations that I have seen,” she said.

An extension of her enjoyment of writing, Barrigar has started a business that she hopes will help all writers and artists who may or may not be struggling with life’s challenges - Pariah Press. In addition to publishing works of fiction and non-fiction, she is looking to add writer’s workshops and retreats to further motivate aspiring writers and artists who may need help finding their artistic expression.

“I want to reach out to other writers and artists to encourage them,” she said.

Barrigar, herself, finds inspiration not only in her writing but in her other artistic talents. She enjoys sewing, making dolls, and volunteering her time to support others. In addition to her literary and artistic pursuits, she finds time to work out with weights.

“I’m definitely not a champion weightlifter,” she said, “but I enjoy working out with weights, deadlifting and the bench press.”

As Barrigar continues to write and to work on her artistic endeavors and her business Pariah Press, she still recognizes that she is being called to help others going through life experiences similar to her own.

“I want to help writers and artists struggling with disabilities, whatever their struggles or disabilities may be,” Barrigar said. “Mine is autism but there are many others.”





Jason Denno

Making a difference in the lives of the students is what drives Cyber, Intelligence & Information Operations Program Director Jason Denno.

"I actually get to make a difference," said Denno, noting his favorite aspect of the position. "I'm literally creating the next several generations of cyber professionals. . .I'm watching my students' lives (change) in the program."

In his five years at the University of Arizona's College of Applied Sciences & Technology (CAST), Denno's accomplishments are emphasized through his nomination in the Herald/Review's 15 over 50 professional of the year award.

Denno said that he's humbled by the nomination.

"It's obviously humbling, but they really shouldn't have put me there," said Denno. "I have an amazing group. . .It's a team effort."

"Jason's commitment to education in Cochise County was critical to the establishment of (an) extraordinarily successful cyber programs for both the University of Arizona and Cochise Community College," said Dr. Gary Packard, the Dean of the University of Arizona's College of Applied Science & Technology in his nomination statement.

"He is active in advising small businesses and contractors in the region about the Intelligence and Cyber fields in the community as an unofficial advisor and supporter."

Denno created the Cyber Operations program at CAST in 2016 and the Intelligence & Information Operations two and a half years ago.

"In 2018, the National Security Agency (NSA) designated the University of Arizona's Cyber Operations program as a Center of Academic Excellence in Cyber Operations (CAE-CO),"

said Packard. "With this designation, UA joins an extremely exclusive group of only 22 Cyber programs in the nation with a CAE-CO designation. The NSA's CAE-CO designation demonstrates that the UA's Cyber program meets the most demanding academic and technical requirements."

Packard continued, "Jason's crowning jewel of the Cyber Operations Program is the one-of-a-kind Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) platform that offers a hands-on learning experience to the students. A city named Cyberapolis was created inside the VLE to enable students to apply the cyber operation skills they are taught in real time in a secure training environment."

Denno's expertise in the field expands over 25 years in designing, implementing and operating cyber and intelligence systems internationally.

Prior to becoming the program director at CAST, Denno was the Director of the Battle Command Battle Lab of Fort Huachuca, and served as a Infantry and Signal Intelligence officer in the US Army.

Denno said that he came to CAST to help create the next generation of cyber professionals after experiencing frustration in finding and hiring qualified and skilled cyber professionals.

"It would be better to come here and create the next 2-3-4 generations of cyber professionals," said Denno. "There was a massive hole in the field and I chose to do it."

"Jason is a veteran who's served his nation in multiple capacities both in uniform and as a civilian," said Packard. "There is no one in this county(,) and very few individuals in the country(,) who are doing more to ensure cyber security stays at the forefront of education."

Linda Denno

"No one has positively impacted higher education in Cochise County and Sierra Vista more than Linda Denno," said Dr. Gary Packard, Dean of the University of Arizona's College of Applied Sciences & Technology (CAST) in his nomination statement.

Today, Denno's efforts are pushed to the forefront with her nomination in the Herald/Review's 15 over 50 professional of the year award.

"I am humbled and honored!" said Denno in an email. "There are so many persons in Sierra Vista who have accomplished so much; I cannot understand how someone like me was chosen for this award with so many more worthy candidates."

Denno, who's been with the university for over 10 years, was noted by Packard as instrumental in the school's development of its degree programs and increased enrollment.

"Under her leadership, enrollment in the Bachelor's of Applied Science (BAS) degree programs has grown from 143 students in six programs to over 1,500 students in 15 programs projected for the Fall, 2020 semester," said Packard in his nomination statement. "Her commitment to academic excellence in the design and implementation of these programs is demonstrated by the fact that two of the college's BAS programs — Cyber Operations and Intelligence and Information Operations — have been designated as Nationals Centers of Academic Excellence."

"I have seen it grow and evolve from a small branch campus offering selected main campus programs like History and English to a thriving college offering unique career ready and future focused degrees in such exciting fields as Cyber Operations, Information Warfare, Law Enforcement Intelligence, and Organizational Leadership," said Denno in an email. "I participated in the creation and development of some of these new programs, and have worked closely

with the talented professionals responsible for our tremendous success across all of our amazing CAST programs."

As the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs, Faculty Affairs, and Research, Denno is responsible for overseeing faculty recruitment, program curricula, faculty development, student affairs, faculty retention and the college's research portfolio.

"Even though we have experienced tremendous growth in student enrollment (200% over the past three years), we are continuing to implement new and exciting degree and certificate programs, including seven new undergraduate certificate programs starting this fall," said Denno.

Denno continued, "I also know that we are making a difference in the lives of students, many of whom are older, returning students who are either advancing their careers or starting careers in exciting, new, and lucrative fields."

Denno comes from an extensive background in teaching courses in constitutional law, political philosophy, national security studies, American politics and institutions, and cyber law and ethics.

Denno has taught these courses across three universities: California State University, State University of New York (SUNY), and the University of California.

Before becoming the Associate Dean of the College of Applied Science and Technology in September, 2020, Denno was the interim Dean of CAST.

"I served as Interim Dean of the College, overseeing its transition from the former UA South and directing the development and implementation of nine unique Bachelor of Applied Science programs specifically designed to prepare students for immediate employment in high-paying career fields," said Denno. "As CAST welcomed a new permanent Dean (Dr. Gary Packard), I was honored to be asked to be part of his leadership team, share in his vision for



the future of the college, and continue to build on the great work we have been doing at CAST."

In addition to her work at CAST, Denno also serves as a Civilian Aide to the Secretary of the Army, where she amplifies and advocates for the voices of soldiers, their families, and advises the secretary on the community issues in Cochise County and the state.

"I am so blessed to work with the most amazing team!" said Denno. "There is just this incredible amount of talent, creativity and dedication among the CAST staff and faculty—it inspires me and makes me excited to come to work every day!"

Joe Konrad

Family, friends, community. These are the three most important areas in Joe Konrad's life. Husband, father, grandfather, Arizona G&T Cooperative machinist, and now the mayor of Benson, Konrad is able to do it all.

"Konrad is not only the head machinist for Arizona G&T Cooperative but he also serves as the mayor of Benson," Konrad's wife of forty-four years Vicky said. "He puts everyone (his family, friends, and community) first over his own needs."

Konrad and Vicky moved to Arizona from their home town of Bowling Green, Ohio in 1990. Working in Phoenix as a machinist, a trip east to Benson to visit family had them changing their plans to settle in the state capital with one in the smaller southeastern town.

"We fell in love with Benson when we visited," Konrad said. And the rest, as they say, is now history.

The couple soon moved to Benson in 1990. Konrad first worked at Modular Mining Systems in Tucson before he would take a job with AEPSCO as they began their life raising their three children (Mandy, Jesse, and Brittany). Konrad soon reached out into the community to get involved with not only school but community organizations. He served as the Benson High School's Booster Club president from 2004-06. It was his desire to help his community, however, that later had him running for city council. He was elected and served on the Benson city council from 2014-20, the last four as the vice mayor. He resigned his position in 2020 in order to run for mayor and in

January 2021 he was sworn in to the position.

"I ran for city council because I wanted to help Benson progress," Konrad said. "Our children were all grown and I knew that I had the time to put in to help. There are so many benefits with living in a small town. The sense of community here is incredible."

Konrad's strong sense of civic duty involves helping all Benson residents feel a part of their community no matter what their age. And he is avid in this belief, knowing that his six grandchildren (from ages one month to twenty-two years old) are also benefiting from Benson's positive growth.

When Konrad looks back on his life before he and his family moved to Benson, he often thinks of two men who were instrumental in helping him get to where he is now – his father Lawrence and his high school FFA advisor and agriculture/shop teacher Mike Shertzer.

"My dad was always my hero," Konrad said. "He had the patience of a saint; he was a very forgiving man. Everything was a teaching moment for him."

"I was in FFA all four years of high school," Joe said. "Mr. Shertzer, our advisor, was the first to get me interested in public speaking. From that point on I entered every competition and event I could. He definitely inspired me."

Now Konrad uses the lessons he was taught by his father and high school teacher/advisor as the mayor of Benson. He has learned the importance of patience, how to be forgiving, and to learn from every moment as he speaks for the community of Benson that he serves.



Roy Libdan

Roy Libdan dreams of Sierra Vista being the pickleball destination of the southwest. Libdan became a founding member and the president of the Sky Island Pickleball Club when it was formed in 2019, just a few months after he moved to Sierra Vista.

"When I first got here, there was a group of people that took pickleball seriously—they wanted to be competitive," Libdan said. "We hung out for, I don't know, a good three, four months, and then we decided 'hey, let's form a club.'"

Phil McCage, a founding member of the club and a friend of Libdan's, nominated him for the 15 over 50 list because of all he has done for the club. McCage said that Libdan's passion for the sport and his constant outreach has made him a great leader.

"Roy has been an inspiration to me," McCage said.

Pickleball is an uniquely accessible sport, Libdan said, as it is similar to tennis but played with a paddle on smaller courts. Age and skill level do not matter as much, so anyone can play.

That accessibility is especially helpful to people who are looking for a healthier lifestyle, Libdan said. His background is in health administration, and he said that gives him a great appreciation for the impact a sport like pickleball can have on people's quality of life.

"Unless people truly enjoy what they're doing, it's really tough for a lifestyle to change," Libdan said. "So you get somebody who's truly excited about a game like pickleball, all of a sudden they're not worrying about, you know, am I going to lose weight."

Some of the best players Libdan has seen have had surgeries like knee and hip replacements.

He added that some people have told him that playing pickleball saved their lives after losing 50-75 because of the sport.

Health is not the only draw, though.

"The big deal for me was the community," Libdan said. "I mean, you get people that are in their 60s (who) want to hang out, have fun. I mean, no drama, you know, kind of thing. And it's really a game where people are just open and welcome."

On a tennis court, people playing doubles are often very serious, and Libdan said they're likely to stick to their own group. But on a pickleball court, he said people will draw beginners into their games and show them the ropes, no questions asked.

Pickleball is not always easygoing, though. For those who want to take their skills to another level, Libdan said the club has advanced practices and an annual tournament. The High Desert Classic is making its second appearance on Sept. 29 at Sierra Vista's pickleball courts by the Oscar Yrun Community Center.

Libdan said that in its first year, the tournament drew around 125 people, many of whom were from out of town. This year, the tournament is sanctioned by USA Pickleball, which Libdan hopes will take it to another level and draw more people to it. Already, pickleballtournaments.com shows that 139 people are registered for the event.

Libdan hopes to work with schools to make pickleball accessible for young people, and to bring more interest to the sport in Sierra Vista's medical community. Making Sierra Vista the southwest's pickleball destination would require more courts, Libdan said, so he is already thinking about that.

Vicky Merritt

Vicky Merritt, a lifelong member of the Douglas community, believes that the secret to helping people is listening – not only listening but listening carefully.

As a financial advisor for Edward Jones Investments for fifteen years, this belief is definitely an important part of her life. Even before she became a financial advisor, Vicky lived by that belief in her role as an automotive electronics product development manager. For twenty years she ran the Douglas office for the Mexico City based electronics firm.

“I have always listened to people explain their problems, whether it was finding solutions to their electronics problems or in financial planning,” Vicky said, “and I have worked to help them find ways of solving them.”

Vicky graduated from Douglas High School in 1976. She remembers always being active, always working and being a part of the community. Working in a grocery store, men’s clothing store, and a restaurant were jobs she held in high school.

Following high school, she attended Cochise College where she earned her associates degree in business. As a financial planner for Edward Jones, she is a ChFC (charter financial planning consultant).

When Vicky isn’t working to help her clients with their financial needs, she is an active member of several Douglas community organizations.

She is on the board for DARC, an organization for special needs adults that serves Douglas, Elfrida, McNeal, and Bisbee. “One of our biggest fundraisers each year is the ‘Mother’s Day Cake Auction,’” Vicky said. “Every year we auction off between one hundred thirty and one hundred fifty cakes that are donated by community members. We weren’t able to have it for the last two years due to Covid but our community still sent in donations. We also have a carne asada fundraiser that is sponsored by the Border Mart owners that is also really popular in our community. Often we are able to get matching state and federal grants that allow us to support DARC.”

Vicky is on the board of the Municipal Housing Authority as the president. She serves on two Douglas School District advisory boards, one for DECA and also the Land Lab Committee. In addition to serving on community boards, she was the area 4H garden club director for area youth from ages five through twelve for seven years. She is a member of the Douglas Elks, helping them with community service projects that include that special olympics.

To say that Vicky is a busy person could be called an understatement. “If you want to get something done you ask a busy person,” she said. And it is more than her job and the numerous boards she serves on that keep her busy. She and her husband Alfred Novoa have been married for twenty-five years and their blended family of two daughters and two sons has since added fourteen grandchildren to their lives. Spending the occasional weekend with family definitely brings happiness to her and Alfred’s lives.

In their free time, Vicky and Alfred are working to restore a one-hundred-year-old Douglas house. She even finds time for her favorite hobby, jam and jelly making, her favorite being fig jam.

It is evident that Vicky is working to help all members of her community, listening to their needs whether it’s for their finances or as a member the numerous boards she serves on.

“To those who much is given – you need to give back,” she said. Vicky is definitely listening to and giving back to her community.



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Roy Libdan
Sabra Albritton
Vicky Merritt



Cheryl Moss



Cheryl Moss, a Willcox native, became a co-owner of Maid Rite Feeds in 2009 alongside her cousins, years after serving the company as an employee.

Maid Rite, which makes most of its feeds on site and employs about 20 people, was rebuilt in 2013 under Moss' leadership to include a kitchen and multiple offices. The store continuously innovates and looks for ways to better serve the community, oftentimes through events and fundraisers.

"Annually they host a customer appreciation day. The annual thank you event at the Maid Rite store always falls near Independence Day. She loves the Fourth of July and wanted to do something for their customers. She is happy to give back to the people who support them. They provide prizes, food, drinks, and activities for the entire community free of charge," Susan Pater said.

Moss is also the treasurer of the Willcox Chamber of Commerce and Agriculture, Vice-Chair of the City of Willcox Planning and Zoning Commission, a member of the Willcox Marketing and Tourism Commission, a member of the Willcox Branding Stakeholder Group, a member of the Quail Park Ad Hoc committee, and a crucial organizer for the annual West Fest Chuck Wagon Cookoff and Ranch Rodeo. She says her love for helping the community came from her upbringing.

"Growing up on a farm that raised hogs, I knew that I wanted to stay in a small town to raise my family. That opportunity came in

1984 when I was hired at Maid Rite Feeds. I never looked back." Moss said.

Every year around Christmastime, Moss and Maid Rite raise funds, gather toys, and provide food for community members who are in need. She then coordinates with LifeNet to get a helicopter to land on her property with Santa Clause so that children and families in need can select items they need for the holidays. Not only does Moss do this, but she has annually contributed \$2,500 to WASA (Willcox Against Substance Abuse) to provide recreational activities and educate students and the community on substance abuse problems and is an active participant in her community.

"Cheryl and her Maid Rite Co-owners consistently support the FFA youth by being a sponsor of the annual banquet, providing discounts to students with agriculture related projects, and assists where needed. They support youth livestock shows throughout Cochise County by purchasing animals from youth exhibitors," Pater said.

"I absolutely love the community that I was born & raised in. This community was here for me and my family when death took my son. I will forever pay this back. The Willcox community has something special that not every city has. That is passionate! People are passionate! I want to be that person who gives back and helps the next guy," Moss said. "Life in Willcox has been wonderful for me. I would not have wanted to be anywhere else."

Corneilia Munoz

Growing up, Corneilia Munoz had the message of helping people instilled in her at a young age, and it's a lesson she has taken to heart and spread far and wide.

"I was always taught to pay it forward," Munoz said. "Knowing I made a difference in the lives of others, makes me happy at the end of the day."

Munoz has been making a difference in people's lives through her volunteer efforts for more than 20 years, and has been recognized once again for her lifelong service to her community. Munoz was the Herald/Review's Citizen of the Year in 2020.

One of Munoz's nominator's said that "Cornelia's commitment to her community is beyond measure. She continues to go above and beyond to give back to various causes, yet remains humble."

Munoz, a Douglas native, also dedicated many years to serving the city's chamber of commerce, the local Hispanic chamber, merchant's association and the Cenpatico Community Coalition. She has also worked with other youth and advocacy groups, and currently serves on the board for the Pirtleville Fire District.

Her contributions to the Relay for Life, hosted each year by the American Cancer Society, include serving as an organizer for the only 24-hour event in Arizona to raise funds for research, advocacy, patient services and education.

In her work helping unemployed people find work, job seekers have said she was "born to give" and that she approaches each day as an opportunity to touch someone's life in a positive way, and she rises to the challenge.

"Cornelia continues to think outside the box to give back," said one nominator. "Her latest project is to thank heroes in the community who have been instrumental in the fight against COVID-19."

Another of her nominators agreed.

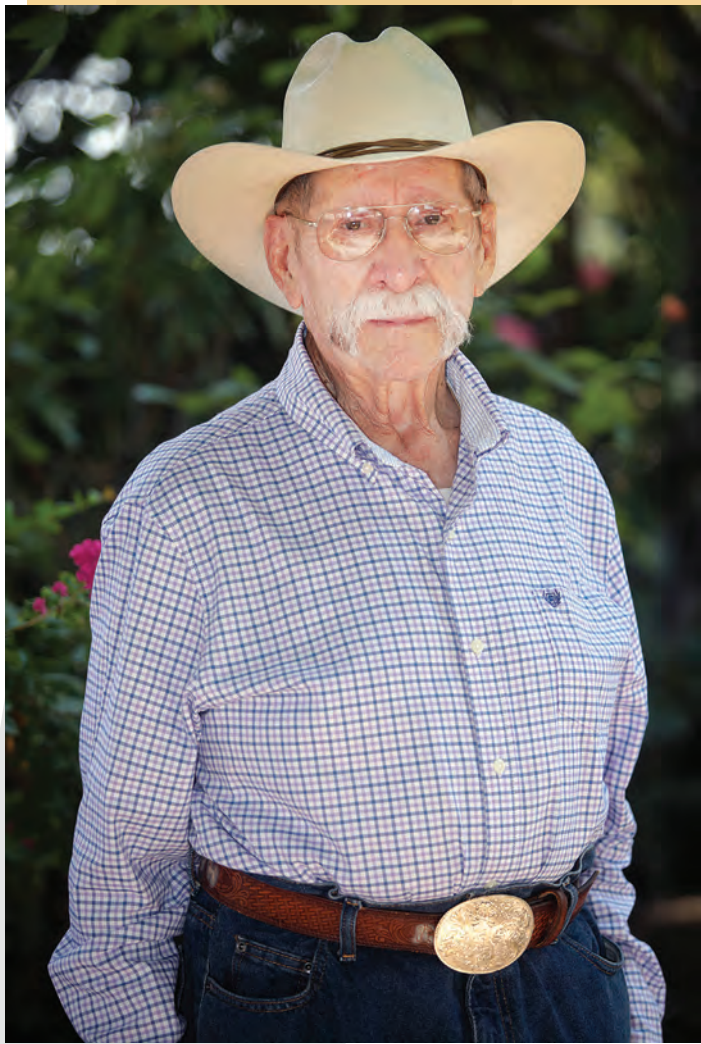
"If there was a Hall of Fame for community heroes, Corneilia would be a member. This woman gives and gives to her community, yet remains humble when recognized for her contributions."

Munoz also works to raise funds for children who need backpacks and other school supplies, and has worked with the Mexican Consulate.

She has received numerous awards and accolades for her work over the years, but through it all, she continues to find ways to help others.

"This woman is truly one-of-a-kind an asset to our county," summarized one nominator.





Roberto Munoz

Roberto Munoz of Pirtleville, believes in giving back to the community in which he lives.

For 31 years he has worked in the Arizona Game and Fish Department's Hunter Education Program as a certified firearms instructor.

He decided to take the firearms course while recovering from knee replacement which was done following his retirement from Phelps Dodge where he worked 32 years as a painter.

"Being a founding member of the Douglas Rifle and Pistol Club, and having served as vice president for a while, I was aware of the Hunter Safety Education course offered by our club," Munoz said. "At the age of 52, I took the course, which is normally offered to 10 – 13-year-old students. The Arizona Game and Fish Department advised club members that they were seeking people to become certified gun instructors. The course was taught at the Paul Lutheran Church in Douglas for one weekend. Six club members took the course; I am the only surviving instructor. Certified instructors travel throughout the United States to assist other instructors. Locally courses have been taught in Douglas, Elfrida, Sierra Vista and Willcox. I am the oldest certified Hunter Education Instructor in the State of Arizona."

Munoz was recently honored by the Arizona Game and Fish Department for his 30 plus years of service. He says he takes pride in knowing he is teaching people about the importance of gun safety.

"Many times, people feel they can just pick up a firearm, point and shoot without taking the time to think about their actions," he said. "We often hear court cases where the defense is 'I didn't know the gun was loaded.' Gun safety takes only a few minutes and can save hundreds of lives. Safety is first and foremost prior to touching any firearm."

Roberto is also a cancer survivor and is a regular participant in the American Cancer Society's Relay for Life.

"As a 34-year cancer survivor, I feel honored to be a participant in the Relay for Life," he said. "What we are trying to do is save lives by raising funds for new technologies to find a cure. Watching people come together from all walks of life to participate is a real joy. Long-lasting friendships have been formed from this event. I am proud of my daughter, Cornelia (Munoz), and adopted grandson, William (Tardibono), leading this event together with so much dedication and passion. For about six weeks each year, my home becomes Relay Central."

Munoz also finds time to volunteer at his church, Cornelia said in her nomination form.

The 15 over 50 honoree states he has several special memories.

"One memory that stands out is when the Douglas Rifle and Pistol Club sent a four-man delegation to participate in the Washington's Birthday Match at Black Canyon in Phoenix," he said. "One of the delegates, my good friend (the late) Leonard Maddux, placed second in the state out of 80 participants. This match was attended by teams from all over the Western States. Walking countless survivor laps with my late son-in-law, Chuck, grandson Patrick and Cornelia will always be special memories. My family enjoyed participating in the Douglas event for 24 years as well as Benson, Bisbee, Sierra Vista and the University of Arizona. This event is making a difference in saving lives. It is very touching to see so many people supporting each other in their battle."

Munoz credits his wife of 62 years Conception, their five children along with their spouses Ana Louisa (Joe) Salcido; Alvina (Chuck+) Hoyack; Veronica, Cornelia and Patricia Munoz; as well as two grandsons, Casey (Elisa) and Patrick Hoyack, for providing him support over the years allowing him to do what he's done over the years.

"They always encourage me to continue teaching," Roberto said "My biggest motivation is the students and knowing I am making a difference by teaching them the proper way to handle firearms as well as hunter safety. It is always nice to have grown men and women come up to me after all these years to say 'hi'. Many times, I do not remember them, but they tell me they remember me, what I taught them and my big straw hat."

"Dad has always taught us to give back to others no matter how big or small, an act of kindness goes a long way and stays with those you help," Cornelia said. "He always tells us, 'Your best friends are your parents and a dollar in your pocket'."

Grandson Patrick added, "My Tata wants everyone to learn about gun safety. Hunting is a popular activity, and he is passionate about teaching the youth and adults how to have safe hunting experiences. He wants them to learn to be successful and ethical hunters. I believe I am a better hunter because of what Tata taught me."

"I have learned to love the outdoors, thanks to him, and have come to respect mother nature while going hunting with him," Casey said. "We have made many memories as a family together."

Roberto states he is extremely humbled to be recognized and would like to extend a special thank you to the Douglas Rifle and Pistol Club and the Elks Club for providing us with the location to continue offering these courses on a yearly basis.

Maid Rite salutes our Willcox Honorees



Congrats to our own 15 over 50 nominee Cheryl Moss, co-owner/manager of Maid Rite Feeds



Congrats to 15 over 50 finalist Jeff Stoddard, Willcox Public Works Director



Congrats to 20 under 40 finalist Josh Allred, Willcox Theater Program

Congrats to 20 under 40 nominee Chad Graves, Owner A1 Towing and C&R Excavation



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Gary Packard



As Dean of the College of Applied Science and Technology (CAST) and the Senior University Administrator in Sierra Vista, Dr. Gary Packard wears a lot of hats.

“As a Dean, I am responsible for all aspects of guiding the college’s mission, vision, and success. This includes everything from financial health, curriculum assessment and development, hiring, research development, and recruitment,” said Packard in an email. “As the leader of the University of Arizona’s Sierra Vista Campus, I support the needs of other University partners on campus, campus maintenance and upkeep, and other issues related to running a branch campus.”

Through 37 years of service in the US Air Force, contributions to CAST and to the community, Packard was nominated for the Herald/Review’s 15 over 50 professional of the year award.

Packard said that he is surprised and humbled to be considered for the 15 over 50 professional of the year award.

“Having been a member of the community a short time, this was quite unexpected,” said Packard. “I am proud to be a citizen of Sierra Vista and I am enjoying my time with community leaders who are doing great things for the future of this community.”

“Dr. Packard is one of the kindest, calmest souls you can meet,” said Emily Vickers, the Marketing Specialist at CAST. “He is very genuine in his desire to see you grow, succeed, and have all the tools necessary for you need to do so.”

Vickers said that Packard, a retired Brigadier General of the US Air Force, was instrumental in overturning the “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” policy in the US Military that was enacted under President Bill Clinton in 1993.

“It’s the perfect example of how Dean Packard treats everyone: equally,” said Vickers in her nomination statement.

Packard has served as the Dean of CAST since September of last year, and has quickly been regarded as a beacon of the school.

“Most of this area has a large population that lives here, but aren’t necessarily here for (the) long term, whether it be military, contractors, or even snowbirds,” said Vickers. “Dr. Packard CHOSE to come to Sierra Vista and work for CAST. He knows that our community is flush with opportunities to help benefit the growth of the students who attend CAST and the long-term connection to those here in Southern Arizona. His commitment to making sure everyone who lives here has access to affordable education, and is ‘Future focused, Career Ready.’”

Even though Packard has only been the Dean of CAST for nearly 11 months, he’s been proactive in implementing new initiatives at the school, including developing new undergraduate programs, certificates, and Master’s programs, expanding the student population, and increasing research opportunities.

“We have a very exciting set of initiatives in our five year plan,” said Packard. “We are growing aggressively which will both triple the size of the college from the time I started and add important research capabilities to the area. . . We expect to reach 5,000 students (up from 1,800 when I started and up from less than 500 about 6 years ago). This will bring both increased visibility and increased jobs to the Sierra Vista campus.”

As stated within Packard’s Q and A on UA @ work, he feels that the position at CAST chose him, noting how his ambitions aligned with the schools’ focus on the future.

“We want our campus to be one that (is) welcoming and beneficial to our community,” said Packard in an email. “There are so many exciting things happening on our Sierra Vista campus.”

“Dr. Packard sees that the sums of the whole make the entire college grow,” said Vickers. “With his leadership and future focus, we can ensure that the students attending, graduating, and taking the skills we have into the workforce to excel. It also ensures that faculty and staff at the College of Applied Science and Technology are the best professional versions of themselves.”

Anthony Reed

There are many people and events that have shaped Anthony Reed’s life.

“I don’t want to look back and have any regrets,” Anthony said. And from the many people he has met and events he has experienced in his fifty-eight years of life, it is apparent that he is working hard to go by this motto.

Anthony grew up in Chicago, graduating from Lindblom Technical High School in 1980. One of the first people to make a strong impression on him was his homeroom teacher Mrs. Pauline Barnes. As a high school sophomore, Anthony took a job at a fast food restaurant working many hours and it began to take a toll on his education. Mrs. Barnes, learning of this, went to the restaurant and confronted the manager, telling him that Anthony was no longer going to work for them. When he arrived at work that night, his boss told him what happened and that he no longer had a job. When he saw Mrs. Barnes the next day he was not very happy when she told him that he would be taking the ACT test the following Saturday and that he would go to college – something Anthony was not prepared for. Questioning her about his future taking the ACT test and college, she simply said ‘don’t worry about it, get into college and we’ll work out the rest.’

Anthony did take the ACT test, did well, and after high school went on to earn a degree in English and journalism (journalism on the advice of one of his college professors) from Western Illinois University. He was working for the Chicago Sun Times newspaper when he learned he was going to be a father. Shortly after, he enlisted in the Army where he would serve from 1996-2007.

Anthony would serve the Army as a journalist, writing for ‘Stars and Stripes’ and the ‘Army Times’. He was stationed in many parts of the world including Germany, Italy, and Korea. He was deployed to serve

in the Gulf War and Desert Storm.

In early September 2001 Anthony spent time working at the Pentagon. On September 11 he was in New York on his way to the Twin Towers when the first plane hit; moments later watching as the second plane hit and being hit by shrapnel. He watched as the days’ events unfolded, using much of what he experienced in an article that would be published nationally and internationally, ‘Silent and Invisible’. This year he has been asked to share that article with the Arizona VA as the keynote speaker at a ceremony commemorating twenty years since the tragedy of 9/11.

After he retired from the military, Anthony was working in Dubai when he would cross paths with a London native there on holiday. As the serendipity of his life again made itself evident, Anthony and Stephanie would soon find themselves married and with a blended family of five daughters. Now their family has grown to add ten grandchildren who live in many parts of the world including London, Chicago, and Atlanta.

Since 2013, Anthony has been the executive director of the United Way of Sierra Vista and Cochise County. Some of the areas that the United Way has been helping in the community include: rental and utilities assistance, food assistance, mental health counseling, hotel vouchers, and helping with job-related skills.

“We want to help people get back on their feet,” Anthony said. “We do everything we can to help everyone in need.”

In addition to working for the United Way, Anthony has been in charge of the Fort Huachuca Transition Assistance Program since 2019. Prior to his positions with the United Way and Fort Huachuca, Anthony was a teacher at the Raul H. Castro Learning Center in Douglas and the principal at the Colin L. Powell Learning Center in Sierra Vista.



Anthony has also had many transitions in his life: from writing for the Chicago Sun Times to the military to teaching and now as the executive director of the Sierra Vista United Way; from student to teacher. He earned his master’s degree in secondary education leadership from the University of Arizona; he earned his doctorate in education from Grand Canyon University.

“Often I tell people to look in the mirror. I ask them who they see. I ask them who they want to be – in five years, ten years, fifteen years. Then I ask them how they are going to get there.” Anthony said.

“Everybody needs to be comfortable in the skin they’re in.”

Gabriel Robles

Gabriel Robles, owner of DJ Legacy and Douglas native, goes above and beyond in offering his services for his community. Having operated DJ Legacy for over 30 years, Robles has established a name for himself in the community that he serves.

Cornelia Munoz, Robles' nominator, describes him not only as a friend, but also as a kind and talented individual.

"Gabriel is always willing to serve his community by donating his time and services to various local charities," Munoz said. "Gabriel is a true asset to not only the Douglas community but Cochise County, and deserving of this recognition."

Munoz, a customer of DJ Legacy, says that Robles is always down to help out, even for longer events. For 22 years, Robles not only provided his services as a DJ for the annual American Cancer Society's Heritage Relay for Life, the only 24-hour event in the state, but served on the event leadership team as well.

"When I first approached him about donating time to a 24-hour event, I did not expect him to agree to the entire event. Gabriel smiled and replied 'Yes, I am in for as long as needed.' This spanned for 22 years until October 2019," Munoz said.

Robles hasn't just served his community, but his country too. Having enlisted in the

Navy Reserves in 2003, Robles served for six years until leaving in October of 2009.

"Growing up I had always wanted to join the Marine Corps, but my parents never let me. It wasn't until after 9/11 that I finally decided to enlist," Robles said. "I just wanted to help the people that inspired me."

Robles said that he loves helping others with his business, doing everything from charities and school functions, to quinceañeras, to help spread joy in his community. His love for helping others comes from his mother, who he said instilled a love for others in him at a young age.

"My mom always said that if you do one good deed a day, it's better than doing nothing," Robles said. "Making that small difference is all it takes to make it a good day."

While this past year has been rough on DJ Legacy, Robles is excited to get back to business as the pandemic clears up. Having seen a drop in business made Robles realize just how much he enjoyed his business, which he hopes he can continue into the future.

"I want the community to know that I'm still here, and I'm ready to do events. Any events that need music, call me! As long as it benefits something, I'm excited to help."



Jeff Stoddard

Jeff Stoddard, Director of Public Works and Development Services for the City of Willcox, is continually working to make his hometown a better place to live for everyone.

Jeff has lived in Willcox all of his life, leaving only to serve in the United States Air Force. Graduating from Willcox High School in 1978, he participated in track and field and was a defensive end and tackle on the Cowboys' football team when they finished second in the 1977 state 3A championship game.

After graduating, Jeff enlisted in the Air Force. He served for four years from Illinois to Montana to California. The majority of his military experience had him at Vandenberg Air Force Base in California where he worked on nuclear missiles.

Jeff has been working for the city of Willcox for over fifteen years. He started as a building inspector and after eight years was promoted to Director of Development Services. More recently he has also been serving as the city's co-director of Public Works; in July 2021 he took over as director. Jeff works to maintain, repair, or renovate streets, parks, and utilities while also overseeing the gas, sewer,

and water departments.

In addition to working for the city, Jeff has also been active in the community. He was the co-director of WASA (Willcox Against Substance Abuse) for twelve years; he still attends meetings and participates in their annual events. He has recently retired after serving for fifteen years as the assistant soccer coach for the Willcox High School. His volunteering with the city's little league as a board member and coached club soccer. He serviced as a Willcox full time volunteer fire fighter for twelve years; currently he is a part time volunteer fire fighter.

Jeff takes pride in serving the City of Willcox. "I'm hoping to continue working and making Willcox a better place for everyone to live," Jeff said. "I take pride in our city and our schools and I'll do whatever I can to help them. Thanks to my family and friends for all the support they give me; I wouldn't be where I am today without them."

Jeff and his wife Linda, who have been married for thirty years, have two sons Lee and Skylar. Linda has worked for the city of Willcox for twenty-three years as the utility administrative assistant.

Jan Groth has poured countless hours into making the city of Sierra Vista better with her passion for gardening. Having dedicated many years to teaching the Cochise County Master Gardener curriculum, helping bring horticultural knowledge, and just recently planting a “healing garden” in Canyon Vista Medical Center, it is easy to see why Ms. Groth has won our Citizen of the Year award.

Groth has lived in Sierra Vista since the summer of 1977, where she first discovered her love for gardening thanks to her next-door neighbor. It was from this simple start that she grew into who is she today: A respected, dedicated, kind, and caring person. Simply talking with her shows her passion for her craft, and her energy is infectious.

“I’ve always been engaged in the community. It helps make the world go ‘round!” Groth said. “I’ve been in the community more than 45 years, and I’ve always enjoyed being an engaged citizen. Every single project that I’ve worked on has been special.”

Having worked as UA South’s Master Gardener since 2012, Groth has been able to see firsthand the effect her work has had. Everything from the “Discovery Gardens,” Cochise County’s first demonstration botanical garden, to the newly installed healing gardens has been able to have a positive impact on the community. Working on those and various other projects hasn’t stopped her from planning her next big event, which she is very excited about.

“I wrote a grant with the Legacy Foundation to develop a mini park called ‘Replenish!’” Groth said. “I start working on it soon, and I can’t wait to see it!”

Nestled along the Path to Higher Learning, Replenish will feature water fountains, a free phone charging station, a rain garden, and a spot to rest for those who need it. Groth said she was inspired to put in the park by exercisers walking the trail throughout the day. With the construction process starting in late July, she plans to have the mini park ready by late fall.

Groth attributes her work and the success of her work to those that helped her accomplish it. She said that she’s never had to work on a project without volunteers as there are always people willing to come in and give their time to help her accomplish her goals.

“There’s not a more generous community out there.” Groth said. “I’ve never seen so many people willing to help.”



Jan Groth

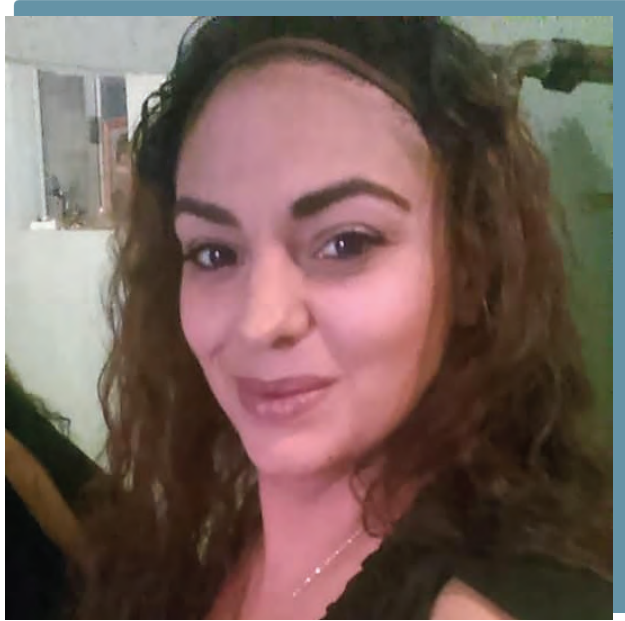
Clay Greathouse

Clay Greathouse has built a name for himself by helping people find the property of their dreams in Cochise County.

Working for Tombstone Real Estate, Greathouse has been helping people move into properties for years. His nominator, Shannon Kelley, said that he just hopes to help people find a home that they can enjoy life in.

“No matter how small the property and how small his commission, he just wants people to get in and have the freedom that they desire to be self-sustaining and happy in life.” Kelley said.

Active and supportive in online communities, Greathouse has helped the people of Cochise County find their dream homes and more.



Yazaida Esquilin

Working as the Winchester Heights Health Organization’s Madam President, Yazaida Esquilin has helped the residents of Winchester Heights.

Esquilin volunteers her time with food banks, Toys for Tots, and even local soccer leagues when she can. When she isn’t directly helping her community with charities and events, she is planning on what can be done next.

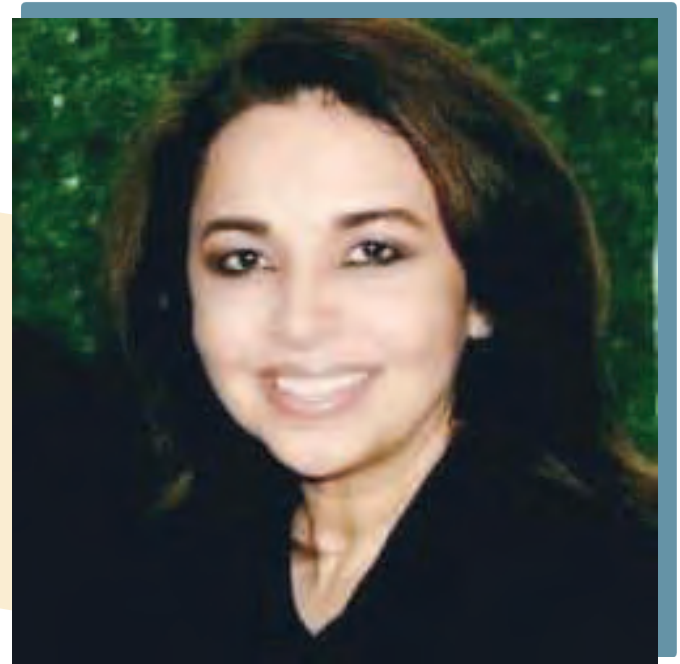
This year alone, Esquilin and the Winchester Heights Health Organization has helped with food drives, COVID testing, and COVID vaccinations.

Marissa Quijada

Marissa Quijada helps the Bisbee Community Y keep it’s doors open, and lights on.

Quijada works tirelessly to ensure that the people taking advantage of what the Y can offer are able to continue to do so. Working as the full time manager of the Allstate insurance office on Naco highway, she still manages to find time to help out those less fortunate than she is.

“You can find her every Saturday working tirelessly at the Y thrift store.” Said Rita Verri. “At times, I know she is exhausted but she manages a smile because she knows she is doing what she can to help others.



“To be a good citizen, it’s important to be able to put yourself in other people’s shoes and see the big picture. If everything you see is rooted in your own identity, that becomes difficult or impossible. — Eli Pariser



Melany Edwards-Barton

“Melanie Edwards-Barton took on the CEO position at the SV Area Chamber of Commerce, not knowing what the future would hold.” Said Wendee Grinde, Edwards-Barton’s nominator.

Edwards-Barton took the leadership position with stride, bringing confidence and energy to the role. Leading her team with the same energy she brought to the role, Edwards-Barton helped the Sierra Vista Chamber of Commerce tackle COVID head on. Helping out with the weekly Facebook Live events, Edwards-Barton has helped the people of Sierra Vista stay in touch with their government. Despite the rough past year, Edwards-Barton has kept smiling through it all.

“Whenever you encounter Ms. Edwards-Barton she has a smile on her face and is always pleasant or excited about something the Chamber is doing,” Grinde said. “She makes you feel welcomed.”

Adam Thrasher

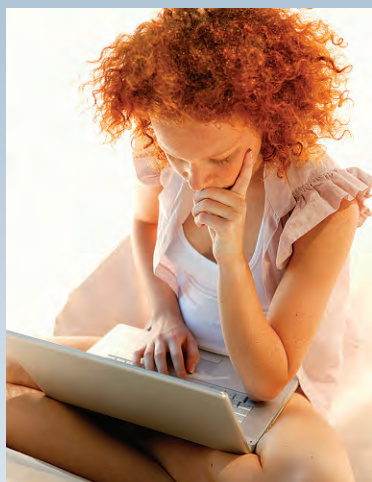
Serving Sierra Vista as an officer of the law for the last 18 years, Adam Thrasher is the Chief of Police.

Putting himself in danger every day, Thrasher has earned the respect of his community and colleagues. Hosting training sessions that can last hours on end, he is dedicated to his profession and hopes that others will be too. Ned Letto, Thrasher’s nominator, said that he’s an inspiring leader.

“Chief Thrasher makes every effort to see that the officers are dedicated to serve and protect with respect for all. I have attended his all day training sessions in which it was instilled in us to show respect for everyone we are in contact with regardless of what the person is said to have done.” Letto said.



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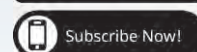
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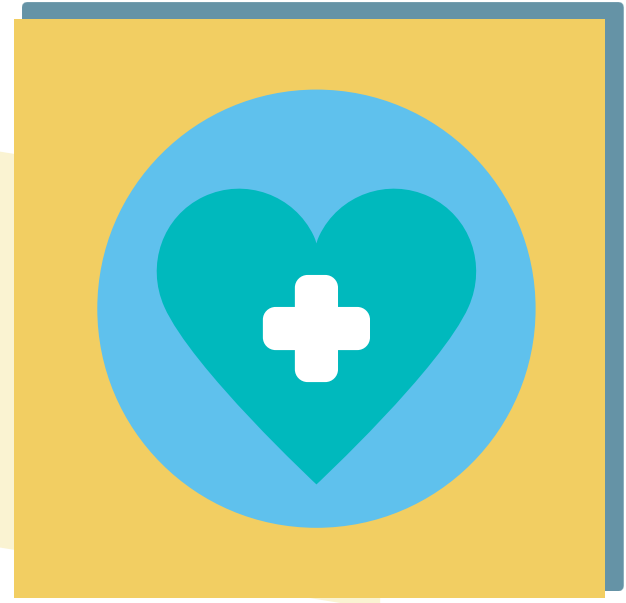
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Rosie Mendoza Chapa

Rosie Mendoza Chapa is an advocacy program coordinator with Chiricahua Community Health Centers and has traveled to remote areas to bring coronavirus testing and vaccinations to rural areas. She volunteers with several community organizations, including the American Cancer Society, Arizona Coalition to end Domestic and Sexual Violence and the binational Health Council.

“The passion and energy she puts into everything is like no other,” said her nominator. “She is a true asset to Cochise County, as her work takes her throughout the county.”



Cornelia Munoz

Cornelia Munoz dedicates her time to several organizations in and around the Douglas area, including the American Cancer Society and the Pirtleville Fire District Board. Munoz was the winner of the Herald/Review’s 2020 Citizen of the year honor, and was also recognized this year as a 15 over 50 recipient.

“I don’t help people or do the things I do for any kind of recognition,” she said. “I just want to be there for those who need it most. Those little acts of kindness can make a difference in the life of someone else.”

Kathy Kreuser

Kathy Kreuser manages Casa Del Sol, an 88 unit low income senior citizen housing community in Sierra Vista.

Kreuser assists her residents with the help that they may need, contacting outside sources to come in and help with things such as blood pressure, eye care, and even meals. She gets this help from organizations such as the Salvation Army and the Southeastern Arizona Governments Organization (SEAGO).

Kreuser devotes as much time to her seniors as she can, going as far as to contact the Salvation Army on her days off to ensure that everything is running smoothly.

“She goes above and beyond.” Said her nominator, Mary Walling.



If a man be gracious and courteous to strangers, it shows he is a citizen of the world.

— Francis Bacon

Kalani Alvarez

Kalani Alvarez' dedication to helping Douglas over the past 13 years is what made Shirley Molina nominate him for Citizen of the Year.

Molina says that Alvarez has been a massive help to the Douglas community for years, having donated and contributed his time to numerous events in and around the area. Having helped volunteer with the Douglas Chamber of Commerce, Relay for Life, Davison Hearts & Hooves, and many others, it's easy to see why Alvarez was nominated.

"Whenever there's an event Kalani is always the first one there and always ready to lend a helping hand. Every time somebody is in need of volunteers or help Kalani is always the one to answer." Molina said in Alvarez' nomination form.

Alvarez has been volunteering since he was 10 years old, spending his free time helping his community grow and evolve. Even in high school, Alvarez was donating his time. Serving on the Douglas High School student council from 2014 through 2017, he earned the Susan J. Molina recipient award for the time that he put into his community.

His volunteer work has helped out many in the Douglas area, and will continue to do so in the foreseeable future. Alvarez says he plans on continuing to volunteer and give back to his community.



Angelica Garcia

The owner of Long Realty Douglas, Angelica Garcia, makes our list of Citizen of the Year nominees.

Garcia, a successful businesswoman, has been helping the people of Douglas find their dream homes. Described as a person that makes a positive impact wherever she goes, it is easy to see why Garcia is as loved as she is.

"Angelica is an inspiration to those around her. She is a role model. Angelica goes above and beyond to help others." Said Esther Nunez, Angelica's nominator.

Putting the needs of others before her own, Garcia is known to spend hours explaining the differences between vital forms and documents to her clients to ensure that they feel comfortable.

"Angelica is a true leader, she puts others needs before hers." Said Nunez.



Gordon Anderson

Gordon Anderson is the longtime owner of the Larian Hotel in Tombstone and has been a driving force in marketing "The Town Too Tough to Die" by donating time and money to host events for the community.

"Gordon is Mr. Tombstone -- and over the past several years has paid for and housed many named stars to come to Tombstone to host events and autograph sessions," said his nominator.

For over 25 years Gordon has been an individual who can be counted on to step up and support the community any way he can. Many of the events that he helped bring to the town have now become Tombstone traditions, his nominator added.



When one neighbor helps another, we strengthen our communities.

— Jennifer Pahlka

Congratulations to all the nominees for Citizen of the Year 2021



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