

Desert Survivors

NURTURING PLANTS AND PEOPLE SINCE 1981

MARCH 2005



Executive Director's Report

I have just completed my tenth year as Executive Director of Desert Survivors, and this milestone of a decade impels me to pause. Desert Survivors has been around for 24 years as a human service agency. Dr. Patterson was the director from 1981 to 1987. Dr. Lackowicz was the director from 1987 to 1995, and I have been the director from 1995 to the present. Since the beginning, Desert Survivors has always been a remarkable agency.

I feel that it is important to recognize that Desert Survivors today is the product of our current employees, current Board, current sponsors, current customers, current families and current membership. Desert Survivors is also the result of the work of hundreds of people over the last 24 years, and easily hundreds of people just during my ten years of tenure. So much has happened and so many have participated in its growth that it would be hard for me to guess how many adults with disabilities have worked here, how many children and families we have served, how many plants we have sold, how many employees gave their best work here, and how many community leaders have served on the Board of Directors.

For me, the best part of this window of reflection is in recognizing how many individuals in the community have made Desert Survivors what it is! It is inspiring to think about how many people are and have been members of Desert Survivors. Then, how many businesses and individuals donated funds to sponsor fundraising events? How many people have ridden on our motorcycle runs? (This Spring will be the 10th run!) How many people have golfed for us in the Shooters Steakhouse Golf Tournament? How many people have bought raffle tickets? How many organizations have donated funds to Desert Survivors? The answer is hundreds of people helping us hundreds of times.

Desert Survivors belongs to Tucson. It was born and raised here to serve our community. Tucson owns Desert Survivors, and I am the fortunate steward of a great company!

Rich Bechtold
Executive Director

SPRING PLANT SALE

Member Day
(Members Shop Early!)
Saturday,
March 12th, 8-5

Members' sale continues
from Member Day thru
March 20 during regular
nursery hours. (Tu-Sat, 8-5)
791-9309



General
Public Sale
Saturday &
Sunday
March 19 & 20
Sat. 8-5; Sun. 10-5

The mission of Desert Survivors is to provide:

- MEANINGFUL AND DIGNIFIED
WORK OPPORTUNITIES FOR ADULTS
WITH DISABILITIES.
- EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT
PROGRAMS TO HELP BOTH ABLE
AND DELAYED CHILDREN, ALONG
WITH THEIR FAMILIES, DEVELOP
THEIR FULL POTENTIAL.
- EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR
OUR COMMUNITY TO PROMOTE
THE APPRECIATION AND PROTEC-
TION OF THE FRAGILE ECOLOGY
OF THE SONORAN DESERT.

THANK YOU ...

THE CONTINUING SUCCESS OF DESERT SURVIVORS' SERVICE PROGRAMS—FOR CITIZENS WITH DISABILITIES, CHILDREN AND THEIR FAMILIES—AND THE SUCCESS OF OUR BUSINESS ENTERPRISES COMMITTED TO THE SONORAN DESERT ARE DEPENDENT UPON OUR COMMUNITY OF CARING AND INVOLVED INDIVIDUALS AND BUSINESSES.

AN EXTRA SPECIAL THANKS TO THE FOLLOWING...

Sponsors:

Jim Click ♦ Tohono O'odham Gaming Authority, Althea Juan ♦ County Fair White Elephant, Bill McNarie ♦ Michael King ♦ GBP Risk Solutions, Larry Beach ♦ Bank of Tucson, Mike Hanley ♦ Elizabeth Zukoski ♦ Jan Trumbo ♦ Dr. Carol Wolfe ♦ Patrick & Katherine Fagan ♦ Vernon & Diane Kliever

Event Sponsors:

Starwater, Kim Combs ♦ Re/max HomeStores - Bisbee, Margo Wollenberg ♦ Crystal Palace, Miss Kimmie ♦ Tombstone Hawg Corral, Casey McBride ♦ Harley-Davidson of Tucson, Bill Nash ♦ Charles & Ellen Kelly ♦ Stephen & Ruth Russell ♦ Peter & Arlene Farrow ♦ Ann Hedlund & Kit Schweitzer

In-kind Donations:

IBM, Kathy Carlisle: books for the children's center ♦ Agnese N. Haury: 80 plants for our desert plant nursery ♦ The Script Doctor: a Power Macintosh and software for the plant nursery pay booth ♦ Territorial Signs, Tom & Bill Fields: new signs for the Children's Center

Membership:

A big hardy thanks goes out to all our members. Last October, when I began my position here as the Public Relations Coordinator, I started off by going through our membership data. At that time I began to realize that our membership information needed some updating. It is my goal to get back in touch with our members.

I began a membership renewal campaign with the information that I had on file, and I must admit that some of your names and addresses were spelled wrong. Sorry about that, but until I heard from you, I couldn't make the corrections. I want you to know, I heard you loud and clear.

At the beginning of this membership renewal campaign, we had 180 current members, now we are 416 strong and growing daily. Hip Hip Hurray, and Hats off to YOU!

Volunteers, Motorcycle Run participants and all those who shop at Desert Survivors Plant Nursery during the "plant sales" and throughout the year, we thank you.

Tonette De Rocher
Public Relations Coordinator

Adult Services Update

Winter is the time for adult services to bump up those little seedlings to one-gallon pots. Those of you who have done some up-potting yourselves may have found that this kind of work can be tedious and a bit daunting. Can you imagine the work facing you when you are looking at hundreds of these baby plants waiting to be stepped up to the next level? How awesome. But our adult service team gets it done and enjoys doing it.

This past year some of our adults took their first steps out into the work force in other vocational programs. Of course, we are happy for them in their new adventures, always wishing them the best in their pursuit of satisfying and purposeful work. However, after a time they came back to work with us at Desert Survivors. They came back with integrity and pride in hand, not because they couldn't make it work out for them or because the other vocational programs didn't provide a good service, but because they realized that their hearts belong to Desert Survivors.

Horticultural therapy works! We can hardly go wrong with a daytime work-training program for disabled adults that provides positive and productive employment in a natural setting, as well as role-model employees who provide positive support, teaching, and skill-building. With horticultural therapy at its best, a quality product is what you get. See you at the Plant Sale!

Sonia Alvarez
Director of Adult Services

agave © Wendy Hodgson

at Desert Survivors Starr Pass pay booth,
flowers and reflections



One of My Favorite Plants

West of Tucson, Arizona is a string of mountains that all seem to run together as they head south towards Mexico. The Coyotes, the Quinlans, and the Baboquivaris, and I'm not sure where one ends and another begins. I do know that the Coyotes are at the northern end and according to the map are pretty small, but I had big adventures in the hills and canyons that make up that little range. It's a region that's been occupied for thousands of years and everywhere you walked and looked were the signs of that occupation. Pottery shards, petroglyphs, cave paintings, rock foundations, old adobe walls, old and new fences, and if you left the mesquite-covered flats and clambered about the rocky slopes or got into a canyon with high walls, you found a botanical wonderland.

All I have to do is close my eyes and I see slopes covered in *Coursetia* and Saguaros facing a slope with Mexican Blue Oak and Rosewood, and sometimes all those species meeting in the middle. Oaks with Saguaros! It was all so exciting for me. I had been working in a wholesale nursery for a few years, but plants in the wild were my joy, and I collected and learned so much in that little range.

It wasn't long before our family started camping out there on a regular basis. We had a favorite camping spot by a huge rock with a dozen holes carved



into it by indigenous people grinding mesquite beans into flour more than a thousand years ago. Our two little girls liked to take friends there and even celebrate birthdays there. "Let's go to grinding hole rock!" became our shout of freedom and the cue to load our truck and head for the Coyote Mountains.

On those rocky slopes, and many times by a dry arroyo or the side of a dirt road, I found and learned one of my favorite plants. Clusters of lavender colored flowers on many leafy stalks sometimes 12 inches from the ground and looking like a mound of color. It was Gooding verbena, the scientific

Verbena art, left ©Margaret Pope. A full color illustration is included in the AZ Native Plant Society's Sonoran Desert Wildflowers poster, and on individual note cards.

name being *Verbena goodingii*, and that actually has changed (see the side bar), but not my love of this glorious plant. Like any good plant geek, the first thing I did when I found Gooding verbena was to stick my face into that mound of flowers and breathe in. It was and still is one of the sweetest smells of the desert, and though Gooding verbena can be found blooming year round, late winter and early spring are its seasons; and for me it is the smell of a desert spring.

The name *Verbena* is the ancient Latin name and the specific epithet *goodingii* is in honor of Leslie Gooding, a botanist who explored the Southwest, and the very area I was in love with, in the 1930s and 40s. In Arizona this verbena is found below 5000' on dry slopes and open areas. In the book *Arizona Flora* it says, "This is the commonest and most widely distributed species of the showy-flowered verbenas." I won't argue with that, as over the years I've seen it all over southern Arizona and I always put my face close to the flowers so I can smell that sweet essence of the desert. And sometimes I'm sure I hear my daughters shouting, "Let's go to grinding hole rock!"

Peter Gierlach
Nursery Director

Verbena schneebena, my name is Glandularia.

Verbena goodingii is now *Glandularia goodingii*. *Glandularia* used to be considered a synonym, but now it is the other way around, so you may see it written like this: *Glandularia goodingii* (syn., *Verbena goodingii*). *Glandularia* has an Incredible fragrance, and its flowers attract butterflies.

planting

This is a wild Southwestern native, so when you plant it think about where it's found in the wild—in full sun on dry rocky slopes, mesas or along dry arroyos. So, in your yard full sun is the best.

This verbena can re-seed in your yard and that is a good thing, because it's not a long-lived plant—living three or four years at the most. It is cold-hardy to the teens.

watering

When it's blooming in the spring you can give it some extra water for great bloom, but for the rest of the year, even the summer, cut back on the water. This plant does not like its feet wet.



News from the Santa Cruz



Over the last six months I've been involved in so many things, and now is a good time to sit down tell you about the County nursery and the West Branch project. It is a marvelous coincidence, I think, that all of our projects are found on the banks of the Santa Cruz.

The Pima County Native Plant Nursery has just taken off, thanks to a couple County departments taking the opportunity to have native plants grown for their projects. One project is for plants in the Santa Cruz River floodplain. On this project I worked with Carla Danforth, Chief Hydrologist with Pima County Flood Control District on an existing plant list that I knew would fill our nursery located right next the Roger Road wastewater treatment plant. Then Paul Wichmann, Senior Landscape Architect with the Arizona Department of Transportation, approached us about growing plants for a project at River



Desert Survivors staff, Nora Bechtold and Eric Sacco, amidst the rows of potted plants at the Sweetwater nursery. A team of workers in the background.

Road and Alvernon Way. So we find ourselves in the delightful dilemma of having to expand our growing area, and we are going to be very busy for the next couple years growing native plant material at the Sweetwater Native Plant Nursery (my new name for the nursery; I love the irony of the name).

We still have a year to go on a grant to grow plants found along the West Branch of the Santa Cruz. As I said in our last newsletter, we were latecomers to the West Branch, but we have been so lucky to work in this isolated old channel of the Santa Cruz near Mission Road, learning new plants and growing them as well. I have had two opportunities to wander with botanist Kathryn Mauz, not only along the West Branch, but also along the main channel, to collect *Tessaria sericea* (Arrow Weed). I can't do the history and the plants of the West Branch justice in these few words. If you can find a copy of *Desert Plants*, Volume 18, Number 1, from June of 2002, grab it. Kathryn Mauz fills the whole issue with Plants of the Santa Cruz Valley of Tucson. It's a great read for us plant geeks, written by a wonderful botanist.

For a couple years I had been talking with my friend Dr. Margaret Livingston,

of the University of Arizona School of Landscape Architecture, about having some students look at how Desert Survivors Nursery at Starr Pass and the Santa Cruz river fits into Rio Nuevo and the existing river park, taking into account the history of the area or anything that they found important, including our work with native plants and people with disabilities. A group of second-year students (landscape architecture is a graduate program) took that on, and the results were inspiring. Our hope now is to take those student projects to Rio Nuevo and city officials and show them how this little nursery fits right into the scheme of things. We plan to be nurturing plants and people on the banks of the Santa Cruz for a long time.

Peter Gierlach
Nursery Director



CALENDAR OF EVENTS



SPRING PLANT SALE
March 19 & 20, 2005
Members Day, March 12
See cover page for details.

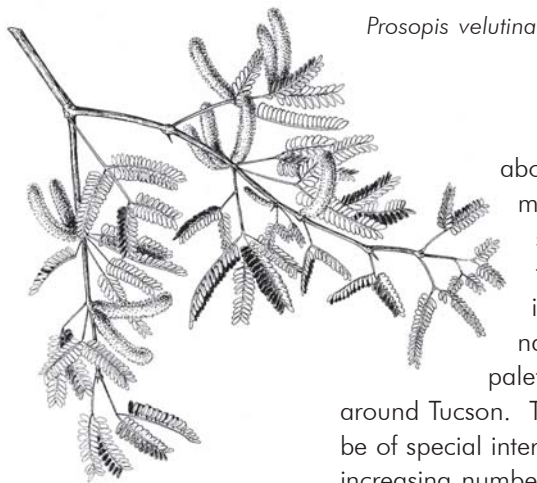
CHARITY MOTORCYCLE RALLY
April 2, 2005
Details & forms at desertsurvivors.org
in March. Or call 245-4915

\$1 MILLION —
TUCSON FOR TUCSON RAFFLE
Drawing April 7, 2005
Grand Prize: 2005 Hyundai Tucson SUV
from Jim Click Automotive; \$25/ticket.
Details & forms at desertsurvivors.org

Plant Nursery Update

Last summer, our retail and propagation team—Lynette, Janine, Chuck, Jim and Amy—started hundreds of Velvet Mesquites, *Prosopis velutina*, from seed. Peter and the team had collected seed on our independent wanderings around southern Arizona, far away from cities and the possibility that they were cross-pollinated with South American mesquites found throughout the urban landscape. (Don't worry, we'll still grow the Chilean Mesquite *Prosopis chilensis*, as well as the native Screwbean Mesquite, *Prosopis pubescens*, and Honey Mesquite, *Prosopis glandulosa*.)

How we grow mesquites is indicative of the way Desert Survivors works. The propagation/retail team gladly labeled every mesquite and put the Ajo collections in a different corner of the nursery than the San Pedro trees, in an attempt to keep them distinct. All these young trees soon became the charges of the disabled adult crews. Sonia's teams from the adult services program vary in skill level, and we are learning



Prosopis velutina

together how to best help each other. We depend upon Sonia's workers to help up-pot, irrigate, weed, and eventually bring the trees up to the front for sale. And they depend upon us to keep them productively engaged. Assigning work to the crews feels like visiting with a wonderfully diverse group of friends and co-workers. This summer we will be enjoying the native diversity of Velvet Mesquites while we look across the almost but not perfectly straight rows of trees we grew together.

Besides our special crop of mesquites, we are excited

about offering many new selections from the incredible native plant palette in and around Tucson. These will be of special interest to the increasing number of homeowners and neighborhoods looking for Tucson Basin native plants for revegetation.

To love the desert is to appreciate the total effect of many small, sometimes scruffy, gray-green gems. But many of the plants we are adding to our list have darling flowers, amazingly fragrant leaves, edible or medicinal parts, or attract hummingbirds and butterflies.

For example, this spring, we hope to offer one-gallon *Trixis californica*, whose cheerful yellow flowers grow on two-foot tall evergreen

plants throughout the year. Like most Tucson native plants, you can count on *Trixis* to be cold hardy in Tucson and very low water use.

Another Tucson native we'll have this spring is found as close as the West Branch of the Rio Santa Cruz, *Ambrosia cordifolia* or Sonoran Bursage. Its attractive, dusty-gray evergreen foliage smells wonderful.

We are growing or attempting to grow so many native plants that we can't tell you about all of them in this issue—plants like *Suaeda torreyana*, *Haplophyton crooksii*, *Crossosoma bigelovii*, *Lycium andersonii*, *Lycium berlandieri*, and a striking Santa Catalina Mountains strain of *Zauschneria californica*. Call or stop by, because we would love to tell you about them!

Jim Verrier & Amy Schwemm
Managers, Plant Nursery



The Starr Pass plant propagation and retail team, left to right: Chuck Rahing, Amy Schwemm, Janine McCabe, Jim Verrier, and Lynette Denise, in one of the greenhouses where flowering plants for the spring sale are getting a head start.





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Tucson, AZ 85713

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Children's Services

The year 2005 marks my twentieth anniversary with Desert Survivors, and I'm still as passionate about what we do in our community as I was when I first came on board in 1985. It was one of those things that you could put down to fate, destiny or just "meant-to-be." My son, who was three years old at the time, was referred to Desert Survivors for early-intervention services. He was diagnosed with Autism. I was so impressed with the program that I talked to the director about the possibility of a position. With my background in nursing and a three-year specialty in caring for the multiply-handicapped, children and adults (which I received back in the United Kingdom), the director offered me a job almost on the spot. I have had the pleasure of working for every executive director the company has had. Each one has brought important new insights and skills to the program, taking it further and making it better.

I have certainly witnessed a lot of changes over the last twenty years, some good, some not so good, and some absolutely wonderful. I remember when our nursery used to be this tiny little place on Grant Road and when we had an office over on Third Avenue near downtown. Children's Services were based at the University of Arizona psychology lab. Wow, that was a long time ago. Since then, the Adult Services program has been well established at Starr Pass. The Children's Services program is at its fifth



in the playground at the Children's Center

location, but we've been at this one the longest—ten years now.

Desert Survivors provides great services to both children and adults. It is more than just a job to me; it is family.

My son now works at the nursery, and my daughter—inspired by the work we do at our Children's Services program, and by her brother—is a student at Northern Arizona University, hoping to be a physical therapist. My husband is my recruited volunteer who never complains about all the "fix it" jobs I give him at our center and office, or the early morning registrations for golf tournaments and bike runs.

I continue to strive to provide the best possible services to families, and I continue to dream of what more we can do and how to continually improve our whole company. We need the help of our dedicated members and friends more than ever, so PLEASE buy a raffle ticket, register for the golf tournaments or bike runs, and do become a member of our family—Desert Survivors, Inc.

Karen Wilson
Director of Children's Services

VISIT OUR WEBSITE:
desertsurvivors.org

MEMBERSHIP: \$50/yr

- newsletter semiannually
- 10% off plant purchases all year
- members' day sale entry

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