THIS year has been another very busy and rewarding year for us at Desert Survivors. For me, this year is a milestone. As of October 1, 2015, I will have worked at Desert Survivors for thirty years. What an amazing thirty years it has been! I’ve seen and been part of so many wonderful events and changes that have seen Desert Survivors grow, improve, move forward, and become one of the very best places in the state of Arizona—whether it’s to work, receive services, or buy beautiful plants.

I had the pleasure of working with our founder, Dr. Joe Patterson, when I was hired, back in 1985, to work in the first children’s center (Desert Oasis Preschool), which closed in 1989. During those first few years, Dr. Patterson moved on, and Dr. Joe Lackowitz became our executive director. In 1989, I became the director of Children’s Services and, at the request of families, we opened our second preschool, Desert Survivors Children’s Center, in 1995. That same year, Dr. Lackowitz also moved on, and our current executive director, Richard Bechtold, came on board, bringing with him new insights, professional skills, and resources that have taken us beyond all expectations.

Program Services Update

Desert Survivors Children’s Center achieved national accreditation in 2003 through the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). We received a lot of recognition for providing a preschool that fully integrated typically developing children and children with developmental delays. It was heartening to see these young children learn tolerance and understanding in a well-run, warm and comfortable learning environment.

Unfortunately, for multiple reasons, mostly financial, in 2005 we closed the center to focus on Early Intervention in our families’ homes. That same year, Richard asked me to take on the job of Programs Director for Desert Survivors, overseeing both Children’s and Adult services. I was happy to assume the new challenge, and I believe that both Children’s and Adult Services have grown and improved in the last ten years, as have I. I cannot imagine ever working anywhere else. Desert Survivors is my second home, and everyone here is family. I can’t wait to see what we achieve in the next ten years.

Executive Director’s Report

The older I get, the more grateful I am for surviving a Sonoran Desert summer. At least this year we seem to have had more rain than last year. One of the things I love about living in the desert is that when it does rain, people go outside. In most other places in North America, people head inside when it rains. The Fall Sale is upon us, and I have a couple observations about this season’s plant offerings. First, we have a larger selection of plants in the fall, because we are in production mode all summer. Second, the plants are more mature, because the summer growing season is longer than the spring growing season. Both observations are positive incentive to check out the fall plant inventory at Desert Survivors.

I’m pleased to report that Desert Survivors is in good shape with regard to the nursery, our employment program, and our finances. We have an excellent management team that helps me keep all the oranges in the air at the same time. Operating Desert Survivors is a challenging “juggling” act, and we do it well, but we always need your help. One way you can help is through our annual Tax Credit Campaign. This tax credit drive gives members, customers, and any willing donors an opportunity to send some or all of State taxes directly to Desert Survivors. The tax credit provides a dollar-for-dollar deduction from the State taxes you owe for contributions to Desert Survivors. In other words, donating $200 to $400 dollars to Desert Survivors lowers the amount of taxes you owe the State by the amount of your gift. I find it comforting to see that some of my tax dollars go where I want them to go, instead of where the government in Phoenix sends them. Please feel free to call me directly at (500) 609-8333 for more information.

All of us at Desert Survivors are grateful that we spend our work days providing products and services that restore and refresh our community. Our sole purpose is to be in the service of our friends and neighbors, and that is all the reward we need. As always, we are counting on our loyal members to support Desert Survivors through their plant purchases. I particularly enjoy that customers can get beautiful and beneficial landscape plants, shrubs, and trees when they support our mission of service.

See you at the sale.

Richard M. Bechtold
Executive Director
Featured Plants Fall 2015

Antimima leptocephala
queen’s wreath vine; sanmiguelito; mala’asi
This popular Tucson landscape plant is in the knotweed, or buckwheat, family (Polygonaceae). It is a true hot weather species that thrives in our summer heat. However, it has become somewhat hard to find over the past year at retail nurseries. A fast-growing vine, these plants form large tubers in the ground with small satellite-like “potatoes” that radiate out from the main tuber (these “po-
tatoes” tend to sucker from the main root system, but don’t seem to spread more than a few feet from the main plant). Queen’s wreath is quite cold hardy in Tucson, but usually retreats back to the tuber in winter. Its attractive, heart-shaped foliage is complimented by showy sprays of bright pink flowers during the monsoon season. Bees make heavy use of these flowers as a nectar source, so be sure to place them accordingly in the yard, out of high traffic areas. Mature vines can travel up to 20 feet or so and will effec-tively cover chain link fences or walls that have some type of support for their tendrils. Indigenous people of the region have traditionally cooked and ate the large tubers and “potatoes.”

Mirabilis coventina
scarlet four o’clock, maravilla
Native to the Sky Islands of southeastern Arizona and northwestern Mexico, the scarlet four o’clock is a small forb that grows to approximately 2 feet tall and wide. It naturally occurs between 4000 and 6500 feet elevation, in can-
yons and on slopes. Its bright red flowers, an early morning nectar source for hummingbirds, form in the late spring and oft-ten again in summer. Scarlet four-o’clock, like other Mirabilis species, is a larval host plant for sphinx moth caterpillars. Like many species from the mountains, they prefer well-drained soils and do best with a few hours of afternoon shade. Their slender underground tubers make them rather hardy once established. This species is unusual in cultivation and hard to find at nurseries, but it performs very well in Tucson when given the right spot. Scarlet four o’clock makes a really nice companion plant, especially as partial sun understory.

Passiflora mexicana
Mexican passionflower, flor de la pasión
We have not sold Passiflora mexica-nas for several years and are pleased to finally include a small offering for our fall sale. There are three species of Passiflora native to Arizona, and Mexican passionflower is the most locally native. It is found in canyons nearby in the Santa Catarina and Rincon Mountains, as well as throughout southeastern Arizona, occurring between 2500 and 5000 feet elevation. It seems to tolerate colder temperatures better than the other two species, which are native in Santa Cruz County and barely into Pima County. Its attractive grayish-green leaves are shaped like two-labeled “bat wings,” and showy, fragrant purple flowers on an inch or more in diameter grace its foliage in July and August. Passionflower plants are the primary larval host for the voraci-ous Gulf Fritillary butterfly (Agraulis vanillae), while the flowers are pol-linated primarily by bumble bees. It is interesting to note that the back of the leaves have small dots that resemble caterpillar eggs, presumably a strategy evolved to discourage butterflies from laying eggs on this highly desirable host plant. Mexican passionflower is a long-lived perennial that typically dies back to the ground in winter. While most species of Passiflora have edible fruits, this one does not.

Cnidoscolus angustidens
mala mujer
An iconic perennial in the spurge fam-
ily (Euphorbiaceae), mala mujer is a showy, big-leaved plant that grows on rocky slopes in the mountains between 2500 and 5000 feet, native in southern Arizona and northwest Mexico. Plants emerge from a thickened taproot back to the ground in winter. While a long-lived perennial that typically dies back to the ground in winter. While most species of Passiflora have edible fruits, this one does not.

Program Services: continued from back page
In the last few months, Adult Services has added an additional five client workers. It is great to have young people joining us from high school to learn what it means to be employed and earn money. Thirty years ago, almost every cli-
cient worker lived in group homes or other residential facilities. Now, about 64% of our client work force lives with family or in independent-living situations. In part due to this realization, we decided it was time to start a parent/guardian advisory council. We held our first meeting in June and will be meeting again in September. It is so important to involve families and get their input into the services we pro-
vide, as well as to update our families on current service trends. We really appreci-
eate everyone’s participation.

We would like to thank the Stonewall Foundation for their continued support, without which three individuals would not have jobs to come to everyday. Thank you so much Stonewall Family, mere words cannot express our appreciation.

As always, I will be at the cash regis-
ter both Saturdays of our member and public sales. Please stop by and say “hi” to the employee with the most tenure at Desert Survivors Inc. Thank you for your continued support of our amazing company. I look forward to seeing you at the sale.

Karen Wilson
Director of Program Services