

FROM THE PRESIDENTS'S DESK

I'll start this out the same as last year's Winter Edition. "Greetings Friends! I hope this edition of the Canyon Chatter finds you in good health." Many of us may have had our first or even second vaccination. For those in waiting, there is an apparent light at the end of the proverbial tunnel. Hang in there just a little longer. We'll be there with you in spirit and continuing to practice CDC guidelines like avoiding large groups, wearing masks and social distancing.

If you have kept current on Canyon Chatter reading let me update you on some of the topics previously discussed:

Volunteers: Thank you. You haven't gone away and we are so appreciative. While I cannot promise when we will be able to celebrate and honor you, we won't forget what you do for us.

Annual Meeting: The spikes in Covid incidences late Fall into early 2021 meant that GVR for all practical purposes remain closed for visitors. The Board considered other venues and a virtual annual meeting. There were limitations that became too difficult to work around. Instead, we are presenting our first ever on-line Annual Report. Sorry to say it does not come with the coffee, orange juice, goodies, a lecture and camaraderie as it would be if live. However, I think you will be very impressed with what Board member Christine Olsenius and husband Richard have put together for you. I thank them for their time and talent in producing an informative re-cap of 2020.

VIS and Monday Clean Up: In October we filed a safety plan that was approved by Jim Copeland, Nogales District Ranger to open up again. No sooner did we receive the okay then up went the infection numbers. We agreed that because of the time of day and so little contact with the

public that the Monday Clean Up could resume. It was and is still too risky for us to open the Visitor Information Station (VIS).

Board Meetings: Friends in Deed, our usual meeting place remains closed for that purpose. We continue to gather at the Proctor Ramada in a socially distant layout. Many of my colleagues would agree that being in the Canyon provides very special inspiration. Let me express my gratitude to the Board. I'm so fortunate to have such a talented and dedicated team. What a year! Could not have done it without you.

Grants: Christine Olsenius and Joy Lenz were very successful in obtaining grants for key projects last year. Much more on that in the Annual Report. They are constantly looking for funding opportunities that assist us in carrying out our mission.

Music in the Canyon: We had a terrific line up of entertainers that performed last Fall at the Historic Canoa Ranch, a safe alternate site to the Proctor Ramada. We do have plans for a 5 concert series this Spring again at HCR. Stay tuned for a special eblast for details.

Brochures: The Welcome, Hiking and Bird Guide brochures are in print. Kudos to Joe and Cheryl Wolowsky and crew for keeping the boxes filled and counting cars.

New Business: The reduction in activity in the Canyon has provided us the opportunity to step back and look at our organization as we begin our 34th year. A Committee was formed to review what we look like and how we want to be viewed in the present. A lot of time was spent decoding the mystery of Mission and Vision statements. Believe me. It is much more complicated than it sounds. The Committee has made some recommendations including some amendments to the By-Laws that will be presented to you, the membership via e-balloting in the near future.

Our notoriety in the Green Valley News caught the attention of the Tucson and Albuquerque offices of the USFS. I was asked to do a Zoom presentation to the CNF Partnership Forum on the diversity of activities we Friends do in Madera Canyon and how well we have adapted to continuing our work in Covid world. The Forum is comprised of about 40 environmental causes in Southern Arizona. To be the first to be asked to speak was quite an honor. We form an important partnership that has a lot to do with the relationship we have with John Titre, the Recreation Ranger the Nogales District. John often finds support for our joint ventures by recruiting others like the GVR Hiking Club, Eagle Scouts and even airmen from Davis-Monthan AFB. We are all in this together. I was contacted by Dorilis Camacho Torres the Issues Management and Content Specialist to do an interview that will become part of a video highlighting recreation and visitor experiences in the CNF. Madera Canyon was selected not only as a premier destination but also because of the Friends and how we work together with the FS in providing sustainable recreation.

Enjoy the articles on the Revised By-Laws, the Protection Initiative Update, all about the Southwestern Coral Bean, the 2020 Volunteer of the Year, new Board members and some special partners that put the finishing touches on the Amphitheater upgrades. Take time to read the Annual Report. It is all about us!

Thank you for your continued support. Stay healthy and best to you in 2021.

Rusty Lombardo, President

Revised FOMC By-Laws to Come Before the Membership

By Bob Pitcher, Chair Mission, Vision, By-Laws

The unusual conditions prevailing in 2020 prompted the FOMC Board on several occasions to consult the corporate By-Laws under which the organization conducts its business – in particular with regard to meetings and elections. These ad hoc references to the By-Laws indicated the need for a more thorough review of their content and format. This review, in turn, has led to a proposed revision of the By-Laws, with respect to their language and organization, and, to a much lesser extent, their substance.

The proposal to amend the By-Laws is now before the Board for approval – an approval that is itself required by the By-Laws. If the amendments are agreed to by the Board, they will next come before the membership of the Friends for your approval – and a three-quarters approval is required for any such changes. You can look for that to happen later this winter or in the springtime.

Broadly speaking, the amendments proposed include changes (1) to the *language* in which the By-Laws are drafted, to make this clearer and in places more specific, (2) to the *organization* of the By-Laws, to ensure that the various topics they cover are grouped appropriately, and (3) to the *substance* of the By-Laws, either for clarity or where the experience of the organization has indicated the need for change.

Protection in the Canyon – An Update

By Bob Pitcher, FOMC Board

In the Fall edition of *Canyon Chatter* (see here: https://friendsofmaderacanyon.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/CanyonChatter_FALL2020.pdf) we let our membership know of an initiative by the Friends to prohibit all collecting of wildlife and plant life in the Madera Canyon Recreation Area. Some wildlife (including many plants) are already legally protected, of course – those that are endangered or rare, and nearly all birds. Game animals are also protected in the MCRA, since no hunting is allowed there.

In contrast, however, collectors, both commercial and private, have considerable freedom to take numerous smaller mammals, reptiles, amphibians, and insects, as well as many plants. And it is more than likely that some rare and endangered plants are also taken by less experienced or discriminating collectors. In an area as fragile as the Canyon, essentially open collecting cannot help but have a deleterious effect on the ecosystems involved. This is especially the case in a drought season like the present.

Over the summer, as we related in the last issue, the Friends prepared a formal request to the Forest Service, backed up by thorough research of both the laws and regulations under which the Service operates, and of the biological basis for our request. In September, we submitted the request to the Service's Nogales District Office. [You may read the request on the Friends website here:](#)

The Forest Service has acknowledged receipt of the request, and we understand it is under review by the District Biologist. We do not believe that any changes to the Service's regulations will be necessary

to implement the ban on collection, but the move will mark a new departure for the Service, and some further time will no doubt be required for it to reach the appropriate decision. In the meantime, the Friends is gathering letters of support for the move from similar organizations with an interest in the health of the ecosystems of Southeast Arizona.

We'll continue to keep you posted on this.

Madera Canyon Species Spotlight:

Southwestern Coral Bean

By Doug Moore, Education Director

Along the road near White House Picnic Area, coral bean bushes grow up between boulders and within soil-filled fissures in the granite bedrock. Merely a group of “dead-looking”, leafless thorny stalks through much of the year, in summer and fall these multi-stemmed shrubs become conspicuous with their large bright-green leaves shaped like those of cottonwood or aspen. Among the leaves hang long dark brown bean pods, which split open in the sun when dry to disgorge rock-hard scarlet beans upon the ground.

Southwestern Coral Bean, *Erythrina flabelliformis*, is a member of a worldwide group of sub-tropical to tropical trees and shrubs in the Pea family. Its species range extends north from Mexico just into the United States to the Sky Islands of southeastern Arizona and southwestern New Mexico. An ancient group of plants, other species of coral bean are found in Africa, Asia, Australia, and even Hawaii. Southwestern Coral Bean is one of the special group of Madrean plants and animals that links our local Sky Islands with the Sierra Madre and Mexico to the south.

In Madera Canyon, Southwestern Coral Bean grows in a narrow band between the heat/aridity of the upper Sonoran Desert below and the cold/frost of the oak-juniper woodlands above. Further south in Mexico where frosts do not occur, the species grows into small trees up to 15 ft. tall. Here in Madera Canyon and the Sky Islands coral bean stems regularly freeze back to the height of the surrounding rocks in winter—usually no more than two or three feet high! The rocks heat up in the warm Arizona sun during the day, then radiate this stored heat back

into the atmosphere at night, protecting the nestled tuberous root and most stems from freezing. It is a delicate balance that allows Southwest Coral Bean to survive in marginal habitat at the northern limits of its range.

In late May and June, coral beans send up stems producing spectacular “fireworks-like” flower clusters before any leaves appear. Completely unlike the typical blooms of most peas and beans, each flower on a cluster has evolved into a long, narrow tube of brilliant orange-red. Hummingbirds are attracted to these showy bright flowers and pollinate them as they fly from plant to plant probing for nectar. Conspicuous bean pods result from pollinated flowers and persist on the stalks long after their beans drop. The shiny red beans are very attractive, but poisonous to eat. Large heart-shaped leaves appear in profusion after flowering, eventually turning bright yellow with the change of the seasons and providing a splash of early fall color on canyon hillsides.

In Madera Canyon coral bean can also be found among the streamside boulders from below the waterfall at Proctor Rd. up to Madera Picnic Area and on sunny, exposed rock faces along Nature Trail between Wrightson Parking Area and Amphitheater. With practice it becomes easy to spot even the leaf-less stems sprouting from boulders. Southwestern Coral Bean flowers and bean pod are featured prominently with a Blue-throated Hummingbird in front of Mt. Wrightson on the Friends of Madera Canyon logo.



2020 Volunteer of the Year

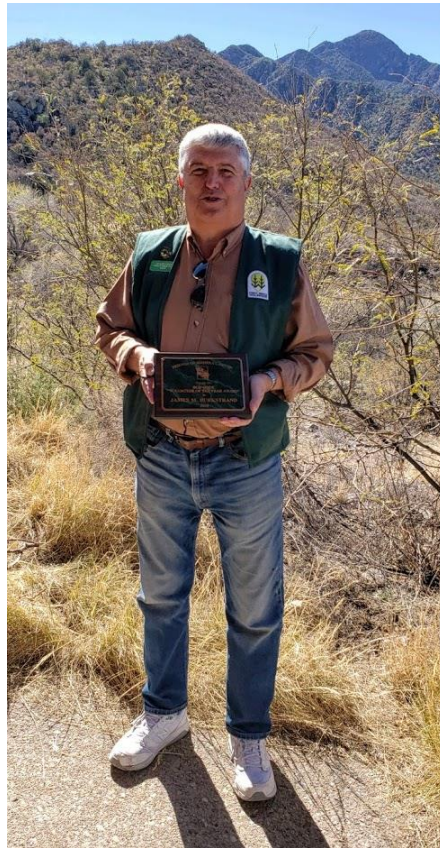
Every year at this time, we choose a volunteer whose work in the past year particularly stands out. It can be a difficult task, as there are always a number of deserving individuals. In 2020 there was a standout, not only for the amount of time and work volunteered, but also for the resulting excellent educational material he produced.

Congratulations 2020 Volunteer of the Year Docent Jim Burkstrand

Jim started as a docent in 2014. He has a background in science, engineering and management, along with excellent photography skills and a voracious curiosity. A quick study, he rapidly progressed to lead grade nature walks and has become a superb outdoor educator. Jim's "kids" are always in for a memorable experience as he coaches them to become observant naturalists, exploring the wonders of the canyon.

Due to Covid, our school walks came to a screeching halt last

March. ED Director, Doug Moore and the Board, started exploring alternative ways to stay connected with our schools, investigating the possibilities for virtual learning via the internet last April. At almost the same time, Jim contacted Doug about his new interest in making video: Was Doug interested in doing nature education videos about Madera Canyon?



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school walks came to March. ED Director,

You bet!! From that fortuitous coincidence, the FoMC Virtual Learning Project was formed.

Since then, on his own dime and time, Jim has been acquiring and learning professional video software, then making videos! From scripts/storyboards that Doug and Jim write, Jim has posted six YouTube videos (with more soon on the way)- a beautiful Madera Canyon overview set to music, a short about the White House and a Proctor Trail virtual fieldtrip series. It is quite an impressive body of work- particularly when you factor in the Covid pandemic! You can view the Virtual Learning Project videos and other education content on the friendsofmaderacanyon.org website under "Education".

We are so grateful for your excellent work, Jim!

Meet your new Board members

The Board of Directors approved the addition of Penny France, member at large and Pat Holmes, Treasurer to serve out existing terms of positions vacated during 2020.

Penny France: Since learning of Friends of Madera Canyon from an information table at a Wednesday morning Farmer's Market, I have been a volunteer docent for Doug Moore's Fourth Grade Field Trips on the Proctor Trail; a volunteer with Steve Preuss's Canyon Clean-Up crew; attended summer Bug Nights, Spring Concerts, annual meetings, volunteer breakfasts, and many speaker events.

In my work life, I was a senior human resource manager at the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire; served for 6 years on the Board for the L E Phillips Memorial Public Library in Eau Claire WI; was President of Friends of the L E Phillips Memorial Public Library (the largest Friends library group in Wisconsin at the time); President of the Historic Randall Park Neighborhood Association (I wrote the grants which supported that organization for several years). I wrote newsletters for these

organizations, raised funds—including initiating and chairing a major Library Foundation fund raising effort; and performed many other duties. I initiated a city-wide (and still on-going) Books for Babies program which provides each newborn baby with a hard cover book. Further, I was a volunteer reading tutor for Literacy Volunteers for ten years.

Pat Holmes: Almost my entire adult working career has been associated with accounting. I retired about three years ago and moved to Arizona.

My specific experience includes but is not limited to the following: While consecutively employed with two CPA firms for more than thirty five years I was responsible for preparing and completing financial statements for company's public, private and non-profit as well as large and small in size. My duties also included completing federal, state and local tax returns for cooperation's, individuals, partnerships and non-profits. During this time I also became experienced in the use of several tax and accounting software programs including QuickBooks. Aside from my experience with accounting firms I have also spent some time self-employed providing bookkeeping services to several small businesses.

Prior to our move to Arizona, for twenty years, I served as treasurer on the board of directors of our homeowners association. I was responsible for financial statements, budgets and daily bookkeeping. I was able to utilize some of my familiar tools including QuickBooks, Excel and MS Word to complete my duties.

Some of my favorite pastimes include an occasional good book, a relaxing movie, short walks through the neighborhood, and my mostly well-behaved cat Henrietta.

With a Little Help from our Friends

Did you happen to catch the Sunday, February 21st edition of the Green Valley News? You may recall last Fall the Friends, USFS, GVR Hiking Club and Eagle Scouts partnered to replace the aging wooden benches with heavy duty synthetic material and to do a general clean up of the area. Fast forward to a new projection screen constructed at the Amphitheater. With collaboration from John Titre, Troop 508 under the leadership of David Alvarez and Eagle candidate Mario Sandoval, they installed and painted the projector screen. Don Marion and Marvin Bradsher (USFS) built the sign and hinged doors. Friends Bruce and Penny France combined their talents to produce two beautiful plaques, one the USFS emblem and the other the FoMC logo symbolizing our partnership. A dedication ceremony was held on Friday, February 19th. Read all about it https://www.gvnews.com/news/madera-canyon-s-amphitheater-gets-some-love/article_f0d48924-730e-11eb-9c6a-97626a0e9ad6.html





Hope you enjoyed this Winter 2021 of the Canyon Chatter. Have comments, questions, want to get more involved? Drop us a line at info@friendsofmaderacanyon.org

Please remember us on AZ Gives Day – April 6th