



# Saguaro Rib

[www.friendsofsaguaro.org](http://www.friendsofsaguaro.org)

## Helping Saguaro National Park Reconnect Native Youth to their Ancestral Homelands



Human habitation in the Tucson Basin dates back approximately 12,500 years to the Pleistocene

Age. The first people were likely descended from those who migrated across a land bridge from Siberia to Alaska. Bands of hunters were roaming the desert grasslands of southern Arizona by about 10,000 BC. Archeologists have concluded that sites found in the Tucson Basin, along the Santa Cruz River, likely represent the oldest,

continuously inhabited area in the United States.



About 2,300 years ago, a group we now call the Hohokam had settled southern Arizona, including the Santa Cruz valley. By 700 AD, they had a well-developed agricultural economy including extensive irrigation systems. Archeological finds in the Rincon Mountain

District of Saguaro National Park show the Hohokam villages existed there for about 600 years, along Rincon Creek and its tributary washes. The Hohokam culture vanished in the 15th century.



Contemporary native peoples that would constitute the ethnographic history of the park include Akimel O'odham, Apache, Hopi, Maricopa, Yaqui, Tohono O'odham, Yavapai, and Zuni. The 2.85-million-acre Tohono O'odham Nation, west of Tucson, is near the Tucson Mountain District of Saguaro National Park. The Nation includes





the famous Mission San Xavier del Bac, founded in 1700. The mission building was completed in 1797 and is a National Historic Landmark.

Friends has funded the development and implementation of the park's programs and projects to

reconnect contemporary native peoples to their ancestral homelands.

This includes community outreach and engagement, creation of the Native Peoples Speaker Series, cultural demonstrations, place-based field trips and hikes for tribal schools, Tribal Educator Workshops, support for traditional saguaro fruit and cholla bud harvesting, and recruitment of tribal youth for the NextGen Program. Support of these programs will continue in the future in addition to support for the redevelopment of the Tucson Mountain District Visitor Center. This



redevelopment will focus on first-person native history, stories, archeology, and traditional saguaro fruit harvesting.

Friends support of these efforts has directly lead to visits from the Secretary of Interior, Deb Haaland; Director of National Park Service, Chuck Sams; the hiring of Saguaro National Park's first permanent tribal employee, Raeshaun Ramon, a former NextGen and member of the Tohono O'odham Nation, and Saguaro National Park being selected by the U.S. Poet Laureate, Ada Limón, to receive a poetry art installation, written by Ofelia Zepeda, a member of Tohono O'odham Nation. These meaningful relationships and incredible success would not have been possible without your support. Thank you!



## Park Report

Our partnership and collaborative work with Friends is truly amazing. We are proud to be recognized as a national leader in program development and best practices for national parks and Friends groups.

Thank you to the U.S. Poet Laureate, Aida Limón for selecting Saguaro National Park as one of seven national park sites to be part of her signature project "You are Here: Poetry in Parks." The project transformed a picnic table at the Mica View Picnic Area into a work of art featuring a poem written by local Tohono O'odham poet Ofelia Zepeda titled "Cloud Song." The unveiling event took place on December 3rd and was funded by Friends. We encourage you to visit the park and see the art installation.



On behalf of the National Park Service and Saguaro National Park, we are grateful for your generous support of our official philanthropic partner Friends of Saguaro. They are transparent, accountable, and careful stewards of your gifts. Thank you for your commitment to help preserve, protect, and enhance the fragile environment and unique cultural heritage of the Sonoran Desert at Saguaro National Park.



## Executive Director's Report



For the fifteenth consecutive year, Friends as been awarded with the prestigious "Top-Rated" award by Great Nonprofits, the leading provider of user reviews about nonprofit organizations. Fewer than 1% of nonprofits nationwide can achieve the "Top-Rated" distinction. The top-rated environmental nonprofit award for 2024 was based on the large number of positive stakeholders reviews that Friends received. The reviews were written by donors, volunteers, advocates, park staff, and the public. I encourage you read them on our website and submit your own review.

The ability of Friends to help the Park and further our mission depends on you – our donors, volunteers, and advocates – and we are grateful for your support. Without your efforts, the park wouldn't exist as we know it today. If you have any questions or feedback, please feel free to contact me directly at (520) 733-8610 or fosnp@friendsofsaguaro.org.

- Fred Stula, MPA



Fred with U.S. Poet Laureate Aida Limón

## Grant from the National Park Foundation

Friends received a grant from the National Park Foundation for \$99,664 to support our inclusive storytelling efforts at Saguaro National Park. This grant will further engage tribal participation through an internship that will provide tribal storytellers with training, support, and resources to document, preserve, and share new and more inclusive perspectives. This project will create interpretive products that will work to correct damaging narratives, and further Saguaro National Park's commitment to native perspectives, and establish new pathways for tribal storytellers to build careers in National Park Service interpretation.



# Support the Park with Saguaro and Wildlife Adoptions!

One of the ways you can help **FOSNP** support the Park is by “adopting” a saguaro, or one of a variety of animal species found in this ecosystem. You can make these adoptions yourself, or present them as gifts for family and friends. We'll put the person's name on an adoption certificate (that includes a picture of the saguaro, or animal species that's being adopted), and send them a letter explaining why the protection of the species at Saguaro National Park is important for biodiversity.



All adoption proceeds are placed in restricted accounts whose revenues are used exclusively to support wildlife and habitat research at the park. Utilizing our Adopt a Saguaro revenues, we've provided the Park with more than \$95,000 in the past several years to assist with the decennial saguaro census, support the PIT tag identification project, and protect native habitat by removing invasive buffelgrass. Utilizing our wildlife adoption revenues, we've provided the park with more than \$85,000 in recent years to support Gila monster research, desert tortoise monitoring, bat surveys, and mountain lion and bobcat research.

**Please visit our website to make an adoption**

## Remembering Charles “Chuck” Conrad

Chuck was one of the three founding members of Friends in 1997, along with Mort Tuller and Dorothy “Dottie” Davis. He was a Major in the US Army for twenty-five years serving in the Korean and Vietnam conflicts, earning numerous decorations. After retiring, he and his wife Louise, volunteered at Saguaro National Park leading hikes, interpretive programs, and greeting visitors at the Tucson Mountain District for twenty-seven years. Chuck was instrumental in creating the Friends endowment and generously included it in his estate plans. His love, support, and commitment to Saguaro National Park led to the creation of Friends and he will be missed.



## 26th Annual Dinner & Auction

The 26th Annual Dinner & Auction to benefit Saguaro National Park was successful! We raised \$71,500 to support our mission to help protect wildlife and habitat, preserve cultural resources, promote environmental education, improve recreational trails, enhance visitor experiences, and build environmental stewardship at Saguaro National Park. 230 friends attended as we recognized and celebrated the following



individuals and organizations that helped fulfill our mission in the past year: Donors Chuck Conrad and the Southern Arizona Roadrunners, Corporate Partners Tucson Electric Power and Tanque Verde Ranch and the Cote Family, Community Partners Western National Parks Association and the Coalition for Sonoran Desert Protection, Volunteers Lisa Harris, and our Hiking Club

Leaders. Attendees saw the park's mobile visitor center and met two of the park's mules, Bodie and Big Boy. Remarks were made by Graeme Hughes, Board President for Friends, Fred Stula, Executive Director for Friends, and Scott Stonum, Superintendent at Saguaro National Park. The Mariachi Rayos del Sol from Tucson High School and Rich Rodriguez performed, and Christine Sullivan served as the auctioneer. The 26th Annual Friends of Saguaro Dinner & Auction was our second most successful event, thanks to the generous support and commitment from our Board Members, donors, volunteers, and corporate and community partners. A special thanks goes to our event sponsor Tucson Electric Power and gift donors.



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# Our Donors April 1, 2024 – September 30, 2024

Our thanks and appreciation to all our donors during the two last quarters; we apologize for any errors or omissions.

## Donations of \$5,000 or More

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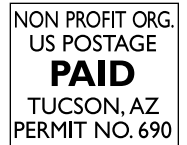
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## How You Can Help SNP

1. **Visit Saguaro National Park for a fun, educational program, or hike. View the full program list at [www.friendsofsaguaro.org](http://www.friendsofsaguaro.org)**
2. **Donate to Friends to support programs and projects at SNP [www.friendsofsaguaro.org](http://www.friendsofsaguaro.org)**
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