Humane Borders honors the life of Jean Kreyche, one of those rare people who apparently come into the world to live out their entire life in service of other people. Jean was a teacher, a humanitarian, a wife, a mother and grandmother, a friend, and a life mentor to many. When you met Jean, you knew right away that she was a force to be reckoned with in the most positive sense – one got the notion that her energy was boundless. She impacted the lives of dozens and dozens of people from all over the United States and Central America, a fact that was made clear at her memorial service where so many shared their stories of love and gratitude.

Jean, we will hold your memory in our hearts, and you will not be forgotten.
Humane Borders is a “front line” organization in a struggle to diminish the deadly effects of U.S. border policy that funnels migrants to dangerous areas. Twenty years ago we might have said this is a short-term problem that just needs to be mitigated and then by publicizing what is happening the policy will improve. Unfortunately, the number of migrants and the number of deaths across the southern border, despite all our efforts, has not decreased. Politics and Covid 19 have made the efforts to create a more humane response to migrant needs worse, and there’s no end in sight.

The good news is we are joined with many groups with countless volunteers trying to do what the government has not done. For instance, when Border Patrol began to drop migrants back on the border in Sasabe, Arizona, a very small town with few resources, we were able to work with the United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR) to get emergency funds for food and water. Tucson and Green Valley Samaritans and Salavision volunteers got the food to thousands of migrants as they re-entered Sonoyta, Mexico.

Fortunately, the policy changed and “Title 42 migrants,” those migrants quickly deported because of Covid 19, are now for the most part dropped in cities with more resources. Ajo Samaritans have been supplying shelters for hundreds of asylum-seekers in Mexico with supplies bought with donations from Humane Borders, No More Deaths, many churches, and individuals.

We also continue to create awareness of migration issues through partnership with Justice For Our Neighbors, media interviews from around the world, and “Zoom” presentations from places like the University of California and Georgetown expertly presented by volunteers like Brad Jones, our media consultant. As members of the Southern Border Community Coalition and friends to groups like the Sierra Club, we sign on to documents calling for humane and just treatment of migrants and consider the environmental impact of migration policies. We also have long-term relationships with government land managers (federal, county, and city) to bring attention to evolving migrant issues in Pima County.

So, we are not alone, and we know the efforts we make with many, many people will result in what is essential: “The arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends toward justice” (Theodore Parker, 1853).

Please join us in any way you can.

Another way you can support the work that we do at Humane Borders is to purchase gifts like t-shirts and caps for donations. Visit Humane Borders at https://humaneborders.org/ and click on “Gifts for Donations”
In the summer of 2020, a few months into the breakout of the worldwide COVID-19 pandemic, Arizona Arts Live commissioned Tucson local artist Melo Dominguez to create a mural that would hold out promise for a 21st Century Renaissance in a society that would one day begin to heal from the ravages of COVID-19.

The Renaissance Era lasted from approximately 1400 to 1700 A.D., and represented a time of enlightenment that emerged following the widespread devastation wrought by the Black Plague of the mid 1300s. AZ Arts asked that Dominguez select an image from the Renaissance Era to make over in contemporary style, the idea being that no matter how dark the present-day era of COVID-19, as a community, Tucson and Southern Arizona (and indeed, the world at large) could look forward to brighter times ahead.

Dominguez chose Raphael's masterpiece School of Athens, a fresco that adorns one of the walls of the Apostolic Palace in the Vatican. According to scholars, Raphael's work is symbolic of the role of love in elevating a people towards the pursuit of higher knowledge. The motif of love wrapped up in knowledge was already hugely compelling for Dominguez in his vision as an artist, but this theme is preeminent in his mural Community Scholars. The idea is that Love and Knowledge are inextricable from one another in lifting up the local and global community.

So you may be asking yourself: What in the world does Melo Dominguez's work have to do with Humane Borders? Well, in the mural Operations Manager Joel Smith is featured front and center - alongside a Humane Borders 55-gallon water barrel emblazoned with an image of the Virgin Mary.

I asked the artist why he accorded Joel such a prominent place in this work. Dominguez, who has a close bond of kinship with Smith, explained to me that it is because Joel is representative of the giving of life. “Agua es vida” (Water is life), Dominguez said. “We’re made of water; we need water to live. And nowhere is this truer than for migrants crossing the desert, who run out of water and need more of it to survive. I put Joel front and center because the human crisis of migration needs to be brought front and center in the minds of the public.”

Dominguez also pointed out that Joel is a keeper of history and a bearer of knowledge, symbolized by his pen in hand and paper painted into the mural. As part of his work for Humane Borders, Joel Smith keeps track of the numbers of the gallons of water that we leave in the desert and how much of that water has been used by migrants crossing. Joel also scouts out sites along the border to place water stations, in strategic locations where migrants are crossing and where that water can be of the most use. Dominguez himself is pictured to Joel's left, and like Joel, is shown
with pen and paper at hand. The image of Dominguez is symbolic of the vital work that he takes on within the local and global community, not only as an artist, but in effect as a historian, visually documenting social movements within the community and shining a light on the most pressing issues that demand our attention.

**HUMANE BORDERS UTILIZES SOLAR LIGHTS ON CITY OF TUCSON WATER STATIONS**

**BY JOEL SMITH**

Last summer, in 2020, a woman died 600 yards northwest of Humane Borders’ Duvall North Water Station, on the far side of Brawley Wash. From the viewpoint of where her remains were recovered, the flag of our station could just barely be seen over the tops of mesquite trees that thrive along the wash. At night, from that location, she had no chance of knowing that the water station was there.

Dominguez went on to draw connections between the powerful work that Joel carries out in the desert, and the down-to-earth potential that all of us have at the grassroots level in our own neighborhoods and barrios for inspiring our youth. Said Dominguez, “Someone can happen into a kid’s life and make such an impact on that kid’s life, and that kid could go on to become president one day!” So Dominguez painted Joel at eye level, on the lower steps, illustrating his accessibility to people in the South Tucson barrio that he calls home.

Lastly, the artist also pointed out that Joel is accompanied by the Virgin Mary, a sanctified figure that is symbolic of giving birth to precious life. Said Dominguez, “The Virgin Mary / Virgen de Guadalupe represents life. We all have a mom who gave birth and life to us. Joel has his mom, and she gave us Joel.”

Humane Borders extends a big thank you, both to Melo Dominguez and to our intrepid Joel Smith, for the work that each of them do to make this world a better place.

If you’re in Tucson, and you’d like to visit the mural in person, you can view it on the south wall of Wheels and More located at 4801 S. 12th Avenue.

This young woman’s death has haunted me. Ever since I learned of her dying so close to our water, I’ve been experimenting with solar lights for our stations that are located on City of Tucson properties (and with the permission of C.O.T. officials). Our blue flags rise up thirty feet into the sky and signal to migrants the locations of our water stations in the light of day. At night, the solar lights can accomplish the same thing. My experiments with solar lights have involved a number of trials to see which ones have enough lumen to be seen from at least a quarter mile away, and which ones are the right weight so that they can be easily attached to our flag poles. The lights also have to be robust enough to survive the desert heat.
The volunteer desert search and rescue group *Aguilas del Desierto* (Eagles of the Desert) are based in San Diego, California. Group members work on behalf of families of missing migrants, people who have disappeared in the desert. Occasionally the group celebrates a live rescue, but sadly, the majority of the work we do turns out to be a search for the recovery of human remains and is done in order to give families closure. There are no government agencies that dedicate resources to perform this somber task, therefore citizen groups like the Aguilas are needed to fill that void. For many members of the organizations, the work is profoundly personal, as many of the Aguilas were once immigrants themselves.

During the first few years that the organization was founded, San Diego-based Aguilas found themselves making repeated trips to Ajo, Arizona due to the high numbers of people reported missing in the surrounding desert there. Aguilas worked their day jobs on Friday, and then drove several hours to be in Ajo that evening. Saturdays would find them hiking and searching out rough terrain all day, and by evening, sleeping in cars or on floors of host houses to recover from the exhaustion of that day’s search. On Sundays, volunteers would rise early and search for half a day before driving back home to San Diego. Because keeping such a grueling schedule is exceedingly difficult to maintain, the Aguilas eventually designated a portion of their donation funds to purchase land in Ajo.

In 2019, at a meeting of villagers on the Tohono O’odham Reservation, I sought permission on behalf of the Aguilas to search for a missing Nicaraguan migrant on O’odham private land. After much debate for and against, one of the elders, an older woman who had remained completely silent, finally spoke up. With tears in her eyes, she said “You cannot know what it is like to have a member of your family go missing until it has happened to you.” The council then voted in favor of the search.

Once the land was procured, a staging area slowly began to take the shape of a small campground. With the help of some Arizona supporters, a ramada was built, tent pads were installed, and an outdoor shower was constructed. An old mobile home was purchased and gutted to serve as an instant storage and bunk house. An Ajo resident donated her family’s old RV when she heard about an Aguilas family who would sleep in their car because they were terrified of rattlesnakes and scorpions.

Because the little campground is set off-grid in the desert, water must be trucked in. This is where Humane Borders comes in. HB stepped up to fill the bill, lending the Aguilas use of Truck 8 to get water to the Aguilas encampment. Truck No. 8 looks like an old Forest Service water tender with a 325-gallon water tank on a Ford F-350 flatbed, with a 10-cylinder engine and 4-wheel drive. Old No. 8 does the job and just keeps on going - provided we replace the tires every two years due to driving on really rough roads. Truck 8’s main job is to service two remote water stations that Humane Borders maintains off the infamous *Camino Diablo*, the one that author Luis Alberto Urrea writes about in *The Devil’s Highway*. We also service five stations in the Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument.

The Aguilas’ campground ramada has a primitive outdoor kitchen centered around a large water storage container, which is situated on a raised platform to allow for gravity feed. A few days before a search party comes to Ajo, Humane Borders volunteers prepare the ground for their arrival, filling a large container that allows plenty of water
for cooking and dishwashing. A 55-gallon blue water barrel, donated by Humane Borders, provides water for the outdoor shower. We joke about living in this hot desert, but for much of the year that heat allows for an all-natural off-grid hot shower at the end of a long day of walking and searching.

When the Aguilas get a request to carry out a search and rescue, we comb an area of the desert where the family thinks their missing relative was last located. Frequently the information we are given is vague, and the search is akin to looking for a needle in a haystack. I recall a typical search which we initiated at Charlie Bell Pass, the entrance to the non-motorized Cabeza Prieta Wilderness. A small team stayed with the vehicles at the pass, coordinating the search by radio as a group of Aguilas entered the valley below. Utilizing a line search we made our way to the base of Sheep’s Peak, a prominent landmark known to passing migrants as La Aguja or Needle Peak.

Handheld radios crackled to life when a thin bone was found next to a dry creek bed. The discovery turned out to be a fibula, a lower leg bone. This find prompted a more thorough search, where we started working upstream in the arroyo. Next, we found a tibia. Further uphill still, we located a set of femurs, the thigh bones. Everything pointed toward the likelihood of a heavy monsoon rain that had scattered the remains of someone who had passed away in or near the waterway. Sure enough, a trail of ribs and vertebrae led to a skull and jawbone located far upstream from where the first leg bone was found. The skull had a ten-millimeter hole in the forehead, which caused some concern. But my osteologist resource later concluded from the photos that the hole was made post-mortem, probably from being tumbled by the floodwaters.

When Aguilas find remains, we document the site with photographs, record GPS coordinates, and mark the scene with brightly colored surveyor's tape. Within a few days a report will be delivered to the appropriate law enforcement agency, who will then perform the actual recovery of the remains. That county's medical examiner will receive the remains and begin the work of identification and possible notification of next of kin. Sometimes a driver's license is discovered along with the remains, but such a find does not guarantee identification. DNA matching is coming along with each advancement in technology, but at the present time DNA is still an expensive logistical challenge. Acquiring a living family member's saliva DNA for a match is relatively straightforward, even if the family lives in Guatemala. But successfully pulling DNA from a set of bones is much more difficult and expensive. Overwhelming numbers of requests for help locating and reuniting families with the remains of missing loved ones also create backlogs that stretch available resources like funding. The Pima County Medical Examiner's office in Tucson, in network with The Colibrí Center for Human Rights, are at the forefront of the nation's leaders in carrying out this difficult work.

After marking off the areas and doing the documentation work, we began the long trek back. As we made our way through the desert, we saw a helicopter hovering in the distance. This sight in itself is not unusual in this area, and I instinctively avoid it when it happens. But the group changed direction and walked toward the chopper. I asked for an English translation of the all-Spanish radio chatter. I was informed that the Aguilas up on the pass could hear the chopper pilot on a loudspeaker, instructing someone to stay where they were, that help was on the way. We were asked by Aguilas' President Eli Ortiz to proceed to the area to see if we could be of assistance.

Upon arriving we found an injured migrant sitting on a rock. A few days before, he had become separated from his group, and had suffered a broken leg. He had limped and crawled his way through the desert to reach one of the blue rescue beacons. He pushed the button to save
his life, thereby alerting the Border Patrol helicopter. Imagine his surprise when twenty people in fluorescent green shirts suddenly appeared out of nowhere, handing him bottles of water, food, and protein bars.

The man was from Guatemala, where he had owned a small transportation business with one little bus. Street gangs had demanded money from him, and he had paid them to continue doing business. But then the extortionists had demanded higher payments, which he could not afford. They threatened to kill him and his family, and they actually shot him. While telling the story, he became overwhelmed by emotion, sobbing as he showed us the scar where a bullet went through his chin and out through the cheek. He had figured that taking his chances in crossing this deadly desert were better than staying where he was.

We stayed with him until two Border Patrol agents arrived by ATV, with a transport van to follow. The agents were very respectful and polite. They assured the injured man that he was going to be alright. This man was just an ordinary person like you and me; he was just trying to survive in this world.

As we climbed the hill to reach the pass, I stopped to look out over the valley. It was hard to decide which case was more tragic, what had happened to the dead man, or to the one who had survived.

The members of the Aguilas always express gratitude to Humane Borders for their gracious help, and in turn, Humane Borders is proud to support the work of Los Aguilas del Desierto, and all those who endeavor to bring comfort to the families of the disappeared. We would especially like to thank all of our donors who make this collaboration possible.
There is no more fitting epitaph than Lois Martin Walked Her Talk. Figuratively and literally. With a stick when necessary. Her one-of-a-kind muffins were emblematic. High on fiber. Low on sweet. There was nothing saccharine about Lois Martin. Nothing. After every desert water run, she would offer these freshly baked gems, like a sacrament, with the customary disclaimer that some ingredient was missing. Muffin moment was the high point of the day. And metaphorical. Lois Martin, tho’ slight in frame, held a high bar. She looked at the world with a gimlet eye and said “We can do better than this. A lot better.” She held fast to this standard. To her last breath.

Lois’ activism began in elementary school in her home state of Oregon. In third grade she and a classmate organized a fundraiser to purchase care packages for US. armed forces overseas during the Second World War. In 1963, she joined Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and thousands in the March on Washington. She saw the mountaintop and never turned back. Never stopped advocating for human rights. Never stopped decrying injustice where she saw it. Never stopped marching. Never lost the dream. Her very last act was to do the Humane Borders Coleman water run. She died with her boots on. A dreamer with her sleeves rolled up and shoulder to the plough. She had the tenacity, flash, durability, and grace of a hummingbird . . .

Lois would not appreciate all this memorializing. I can hear her scolding with pointed finger: “Get on with it, there’s no time to lose!” And so we do . . . Rest in power, Lois. Rest in peace. Your work is done. We will carry on, literally and figuratively.

Lois Martin !PRESENTE!

Lois Martin’s Celebration of Life

On January 17, 2021, an online memorial was held for Lois Martin, a longtime Humane Borders volunteer. Nearly a hundred people were in attendance from all over the country, with some folks attending from places as far away as India. The tributes featured below were culled from the transcripts of that event. But some things cannot be transcribed into text - like the deep abiding love for Lois that was so evident in the voices of those who shared their stories about her on that day.

Verne Duncan

I go back almost eighty years with Lois. We were in grade school, high school, went to college together. We’ve been friends forever! Our friendship started in the third grade, if you can imagine. Back then, Lois and Lois’s best friend Laura and I were a team putting together Red Cross baskets to send to troops overseas during World War II. Lois was a social worker, even back in those days! I have so many great memories of her. She was a fireball as a little kid, and always was, right up to the last week of her life . . .
David Massey

... Many of you remember the first time you met someone. I remember very well meeting Lois Martin. I was a grad student at Ohio University, and the year was 1970, fifty years ago, the fall after Kent State.

One day, a friend came by with Lois, and we were sitting around in the living room with a bunch of people discussing the movement. Again, this is the fall after Kent State and we're in Ohio, and the anti-war movement is it. It's all people are talking and thinking about, and most of the people in the group were guys and because they were guys, they were sitting around doing what I call bloviating. That is, they were talking big about the tactics that the movement should take and shouldn't take, and we should be doing this, and we shouldn't be doing that. And Lois was sitting next to me, and I could feel that she was a little uncomfortable. She sort of rolled her eyes, and then she asked me, “By the way, where is your bathroom”? And I said, “Oh it's upstairs on the left.” And she gets up off the couch, and she turns around to the group and she says, “I'm glad you're discussing the movement. I've got a movement of my own to make, so I'm going to leave you now.” And I thought to myself, “Oh wow, this is somebody.” [Laughs aloud.] I was wondering if she would ever forgive us for being bloviaters. But since I had a big black dog and she loved animals, she became a really good friend...

Alan Meyers

... It is hard for me and my wife to accept the fact that our dear friend and campanera has gone and we won't see her anymore. Lois, as you all know, was small in stature but was a giant in her resolve and her commitment and that's how she was when we started to know her and work with her so many, many years ago. We have been trying to remember when we first met Lois: It's as if she has always been a part of our life! But it was around the beginning of the Central American Solidarity movement, around the time of the storming of the palace in Managua in 1978. Some of you are familiar with the amazing story of how Lois became involved with that movement. But it was back then when she picked up a hitchhiker, a friend of ours named Jim Harney. Jim was just back from having spent a lot of time in Central America, and he asked her if she knew what was happening there, in El Salvador and Guatemala. She didn't, and so Jim told her. She would go on to co-found the Central America Solidarity Association in Boston. When she retired from teaching at Salem State University in 2003, she spent a long time thinking about what she would do next, and she decided on border work in Tucson because that was close to what she had done for all of those years working in Central American Solidarity. We were sad to see her go, but we stayed in touch throughout the years, right up to weeks before Lois's death...

Thomas Kreamer

... I would like to share with you how I met Lois and what she has meant to me. I met Lois 33 years ago, in 1987, when I left Germany as a conscientious objector and moved to Boston, where I began doing work at the Central America Solidarity Association that Lois had co-founded. I had grown up in a family full of strong women, with a politically involved feminist mother, and my relationship to my parents and my family was one of constant intellectual and political exchange. Amazingly, I found the same very rare connection with Lois.

In 2005, I began teaching at the University of Connecticut and around that time, Lois was looking for a cause to devote her retirement to, and eventually she settled on Tucson desert humanitarian aid organizations No More Deaths [and Humane Borders]. At the time I was very sad to see Lois leave, but I deeply admired her dedication. I got to visit her in 2014 to celebrate the 10th anniversary of No More Deaths, and during that time she took me on a water run in the desert. That image will always stay with me: About five feet tall and over 80, Lois outran anyone in the group...

Paula Miller

... Back in 2013, at the end of the year, Lois, John Heid, and I decided to take a New Year’s birding trip up to the Sandia...
Mountains in Albuquerque to see the rosy finches. As you may or may not know, Lois was an avid birder!

On our way there we stopped at the Bosque del Apache National Wildlife Refuge to take a break and to see the snow geese. One of the lasting memories and images that has stayed with me from that trip was not of the rosy finches at the top of the Sandia Mountains, but of Lois sitting silent and still watching a great blue heron that was gliding in one of the ponds. For a long time she just sat, watching the heron.

There was something so beautiful and spiritual about that image that it stayed with me. It’s one of my deepest memories of that trip, and so, as I was preparing for my remarks today, I was wondering, you know, if Lois could be a bird, what kind of bird would she be, and what came to my mind was the hummingbird. And so in honor of Lois the birder and Lois the educator, I want to share with you five life lessons on what we can learn from Lois and the hummingbird.¹ (taken from The Minefield Daily).

Lois Lesson Number One: Don’t let perceived limitations hold you back.

Some might see the hummingbird’s small stature as a limitation. However, their size allows them to hover like a helicopter, fly backwards, forwards, sideways, and even completely upside down if needed. They can also fly up to 30 miles per hour and dive as fast as 60 mph. So instead of fixating on a limitation, focus on capitalizing on your strengths.

Lois Lesson Number Two: Know when to stand your ground.

Despite its small size, the hummingbird can be extremely aggressive. Once called for, they are known to launch at larger birds when their territory is encroached upon. So, take inspiration from the hummingbirds and Lois’s courageous heart and stand up for your true beliefs when they are called into question.

Lois Lesson Number Three: Be energy efficient.

The hummingbird has an excellent memory and remembers the exact locations of all the flowers and feeders once visited. Also, when hummingbirds sleep, they enter torpor, a very deep state that helps them conserve energy. So just as Lois did, always make the most of your time, but when the day is done, relax and renew your energy to begin again tomorrow.

Lois Lesson Number Four: Stay flexible and in the flow of life.

Hummingbirds need to eat several times in an hour, but they don’t fixate on just one or two food sources; they are aware of thousands of possible flowers or theaters at any given time and can change their course in an instant. Just like Lois, stay intuitive and be ready to adapt and change your plans as needed.

Lois Lesson Number Five: Show your true colors.

The hummingbirds’ unique iridescent coloring sets it apart from other birds, and they’re able to adjust how brightly they shine. When light catches their feathers, the hummingbird shines and glimmers like no other. So, be like Lois, and when the time is right, let your true colors shine bright . . .

John Heid

. . . On December 17, 2021, Lois and I took a Humane Borders water run, what would be our last. That day, she was the picture of health, and she talked and talked and talked, and we talked about everything from Buddhism to birds. We watched an Anna’s Hummingbird alight and sit near us and we eyed it like she eyed the great blue heron at Bosque del Apache. We talked about recipes and she re-instructed me on how to make homemade yogurt and told me how she made muesli. And she helped hoist 55-gallon water barrels, empty, into the big truck. She was as lively as many 20- or 30-year olds I know. The last time I saw her, four weeks ago and a day, we were talking about when our next water run would be, and we made an exchange of books. She loaned me Hummingbird’s Daughter, and I gave her Thick Nhat Hanh’s The Sun My Heart which, as it turns out, she and Regan were reading in the last hours of her life. Lois died, with her heart wide open as the borders. Lois Martin, ¡PRESENTE! 

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IN THIS ISSUE
Letter from Chair Doug Ruopp
Local Artist Honors HB’s Joel Smith in Community Scholars
Humane Borders Utilizes Lights on C.O.T. Water Stations
Humane Borders Assists Aguilas Search & Rescue
Hummingbird’s Daughter Lois Martin