Greetings in this new year. Many of us live with different ways of marking “new years.” We have different calendars for diverse religious faiths, calendars that mark time in fiscal years, and school calendar years. At Humane Borders, it might be said that spring is the beginning of our new year, as marked by our annual Blessing of the Fleet event (See story “Humane Borders 7th Annual Blessing of the Fleet”). Even as we enjoy the astonishing beauty of the desert in spring, we know that the hot days of summer are almost upon us and is the most important time for us to be out in the field.

As a nonprofit charitable institution, we were blessed last year with a tremendous amount of support, both in terms of volunteers and donations. We appreciate this so very much! Many people were especially motivated by what they read in the news about the inhumane treatment of migrants and asylum seekers. A good number of Humane Borders volunteers also volunteer their time working with and on behalf of people released by immigration authorities into the Tucson community. This work began back in 2014 with the increase in numbers of people from the Central American countries of Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador coming to the United States to seek asylum, most frequently to escape the horrendous gang violence occurring in those countries. As a community, Tucson has turned out in force to make sure that people are not turned out on the streets but are treated humanely and with respect.

Thanks to a generous donor in Tennessee and magnanimous donors in Tucson, we now have two new trucks - a new water service truck replacing a 2006 truck that had finally and completely broken down, and a pickup truck for use by our operations manager. As many of you know, these vehicles were badly needed, and so we at Humane Borders are very thankful to welcome “Truck 9” and “Truck 10” into our fleet. For a dip into nostalgia, do read Stephen Saltonstall’s “paean” to our retired Truck 5, otherwise known as “Sad.”

I’m sure I speak for all of us when I say we'd trade all the increased support in a minute if we could wave a magic wand and change the circumstances that make our work necessary. Sadly, those circumstances seem to get worse by the week and certainly more confusing. It’s hard to keep track of all the policy changes that get proposed or promulgated and then overturned as violations of law by the courts. You may be wondering if these events have had any direct effects on the work that we do at Humane Borders. To date, we have not experienced direct impacts. We continue to receive support from the landowners and managers on which our stations are located, and we have received all of our federal permits. There have been concerns raised about the efficiency and effects of our stations in the west desert areas of southern Arizona in Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument and Cabeza Prieta National Wildlife Refuge, both in terms of the stations themselves and as compared to Border Patrol rescue beacons located in these areas. Questions include the level of usage and the placement of the stations south of an especially dangerous wilderness area. We are committed to taking a hard and honest look at these questions over the summer and will keep you informed.

As has always been the case, we continue to see significant fluctuations in water usage along various routes. Sometimes stations go unused for weeks or months, only to see high usage just at the point where people start to conclude that the station is not in a good location. It’s always been hard to predict usage and it is even harder now. Where we are unequivocally providing more water is on the south side of the border. We have been leaving water in Sasabe, Sonora for many years, but Humane Borders is additionally furnishing water at two shelters in Sonoyta, Sonora as well as assisting with the provision of groceries at one of them (see story, “Helping at Migrant Shelters in Mexico”).

Finally, we are delighted to welcome Anne Lowe and Mike Monroe to our Board of Directors, as well as our new part-time staff person, Rebecca Fowler, whose experience and interest in humanitarian assistance goes far beyond the administrative responsibilities that she has assumed.

Thank you for taking this journey with us and for your continued support.
the cooking. There are separate dorm rooms for women and men, as well as a good cooking area and yard area. The second shelter, called Casa de Los Migrantes, is much larger and was housing roughly 90 migrants in tents and cinder block buildings. Our observations there included everything from the need for better management of trash, to a puppy who needed some medical attention (which we obtained that afternoon at a local veterinarian clinic at no cost to Humane Borders).

One of the most revealing experiences was a conversation we had with a migrant we’ll call Roberto, who told us that he planned to cross the border in a few days outside of an official border crossing. When we explained the dangers of crossing, it became clear that he had no idea how far he would have to walk or how much water he would have to carry. In fact, the area that Roberto was undertaking to cross is the single most dangerous region of the Arizona border. The area is so hostile to human life that hundreds of pioneers died in the area in the 19th century as they tried to make their way to the California gold rush. Starkly beautiful, the area provides scant shade from soaring temperatures that reach as high as 120 during summer months between May and October. If a migrant tries to walk north in a straight line and is able to continue north of the area where we have water stations, he or she will still have to traverse the Cabeza Prieta National Wildlife Refuge wilderness area where water stations are not permitted, and would then have to continue onto the desolate expanse of the Barry M. Goldwater live bombing range, a combined area of some eighty-six miles in total.

Since at least 2002, Humane Borders has distributed warning posters in Mexico to educate people on the hazards of crossing and to try to discourage them from making the journey. Following our conversation, we revised our warning poster to provide more detail about how long it takes to walk to Phoenix from that Lukeville/Sonoyta (18 days) and how much water would have to be carried to survive (54 gallons). Those posters are going to both shelters and we hope this information will be taken into serious consideration as migrants make critical decisions about what to do and where to go.
¡NO VAYA UD!
¡NO HAY SUFICIENTE AGUA!
¡NO VALE LA PENA!

Costará un mínimo de 18 días para caminar a Phoenix. Necesitará un mínimo de tres galones de agua por día por persona.

Información para migrantes
Pasar la frontera ilegal es peligroso y puede terminar en la muerte.
- Juego de cartas con la que se lleva el agua.
- Juego de cartas con la que se lleva el agua.
- Juego de cartas con la que se lleva el agua.
- Juego de cartas con la que se lleva el agua.

LUKEVILLE
(SONOYTA)

Números de teléfono para emergencias:
Patrolia Fronteriza EE.UU.: 1-877-872-7435
Policía: 911
Consulado Mexicano en Nogales: 1-520-287-2521
Grupo Beta Nogales: 52-631-312-6160
Grupo Beta Agua Prieta: 52-653-039-6603
Grupo Beta de Sáhabe: 52-637-374-6076
Grupo Beta Sonoyta: 52-651-512-1520

Preparado Mayo 2019 con datos actualizados al 31 de diciembre 2018.
In 2012, Humane Borders Chair Dinah Bear hit upon the idea. Dinah remembered the different times she and her husband Roger had borne witness to ceremonial blessings of fleets of ships, of clergymen bestowing their blessings upon sea vessels from the water’s edge. Thinking of the bedraggled but beloved trucks that made up the Humane Borders truck “fleet,” Dinah wondered, “Why not trucks?”

Every year, all over the world, people flock to Blessing-of-the-Fleet events. These nautical rituals emerge out of centuries-old traditions that are carried out not only to ensure a ship’s bountiful harvest on the sea, but also to protect sailors against nature’s dangerous elements and to ensure their safe passage home.

The tradition holds powerful symbolism for Humane Border’s mission of preventing migrant deaths. As a last resort, migrants cross into the U.S. to escape gang violence in Central America, or to reunite with their families already here, many of whom are U.S. citizens. Others have long since run out of economic opportunities in their own countries and will risk everything crossing over for an opportunity to access the “American Dream.” And, despite the efforts of Humane Borders and other humanitarian aid organizations, there are those who will die doing it. Because the desert, like the sea, will exact the highest price for an opportunity to access that bounty, and no one can walk that far without running out of water. Still, others will survive the journey with the water that Humane Borders places in strategic places along the border.

On March 31st, at Humane Border’s Seventh Annual Blessing of the Fleet, diverse Tucson religious leaders gathered at the House of Neighborly Service in South Tucson. One after another, three reverends, a Franciscan monk, a Buddhist monk, a rabbi, and a rector took turns bestowing their blessings on the trucks that our volunteers drive servicing water stations spread out over 48 different locations throughout the Arizona/Sonoran Desert. Humane Borders’ efforts are especially crucial going into the summer months, when temperatures rise and crossings become even more dangerous. The harsh realities of an unforgiving desert were front and foremost in the minds of the different leaders and those of us assembled for the blessing event.

Reverend John Hoelter opened the ceremony with his wish and desert blessing that “bodies be made safe,” and that “life [be] replenished.” Soon after, Rector Stephen Keplinger took his turn, blessing the trucks in a saging ceremony, and offering up prayers to protect those who were crossing and who “were willing to sacrifice everything to protect their families and bring a sense of dignity to their lives.” Reverend Keplinger also took a moment to remind those of us in attendance that “we are and always will be a country of immigrants.” When it was his time to offer his blessing, Reverend Mateo Chavez had an additional historical reminder for the crowd, prompting us to remember that migration runs as a continuous thread throughout human history, and that the men, women, and children who cross the border are only doing what people have been doing from time immemorial: moving from place to place in search of greater opportunities for survival and better living conditions.

Franciscan monk Brother David Buer shared with those assembled his recollections upon moving to Tucson in 2005, and of learning of the work that desert humanitarian aid organizations Tucson Samaritans (2002) and No More Deaths (2004) were doing in the desert. Fondly known by those of us at Humane Borders and throughout the border community as “Brother David,” he said that it was only later that he learned about the seminal role that Humane Borders plays in the history of Tucson desert humanitarian aid. Brother David recognized that “Humane Borders actually began putting out water in the desert in 2000,” that it “was the pioneer” in that it was the first organization to respond to the crisis in a “concrete way,” and that “the Humane Borders ministry is at the foundation of the other groups who are actively assisting the migrants, because water gives life.”

Soon after Brother David, Rabbi Hazzan Avraham (Avi) Alpert offered up a prayer and a blessing that “the entire fleet [be allowed to] continue the holy work of preserving lives.” Quoting from the Torah, Rabbi Alpert stressed that “saving one life is equivalent to saving the entire world,” and these words were especially inspiring to those of us seated and listening.

One of the last to speak, Ajahn Sarayut Arnanta addressed the crowd with a half dozen or more blessed Buddha Thai amulets draped over one hand. Every year, the abbot blesses the Humane Border trucks with these divine Buddha pendants that are hung from the trucks’ rear-view mirrors. Buddha Thai amulets are the approximate equivalents of rosaries or crucifixes, and as such, are traditionally used as a form of protection, for example, to bless the occupants of a vehicle and to guard against accidents. But Ajahn Arnanta had us know that these Buddhas should not be interpreted as blessings, but rather as reminders to those of us who take trips out in the desert and to those of us in attendance that we are already blessed in the first place.

The ceremony concluded with an invitation to “touch a truck” and with attendees offering up their own prayers and blessings.

“I would be remiss to omit the historical role that Tucson-based Derechos Humanos played in the development of desert humanitarian aid. In 2000, Isabelle Garcia, Lupe Castillo, and other members of the organization appealed to Tucson faith leaders to call the public’s attention to the crisis of mounting numbers of migrant deaths on our border.”
WELCOME ANNE LOWE, MIKE MONROE, & REBECCA FOWLER

ANNE LOWE – BOARD OF DIRECTORS
Please join us in welcoming Anne Lowe to the Humane Borders Board of Directors! Anne Lowe has lived in Southern Arizona for more than fourteen years, where she moved from Wisconsin. In 2015, she retired from the Jewish Federation of Southern Arizona where she served both as the Outreach Director for all of Tucson and the Northwest Division Director. Her main tasks were development and programming for the Jewish community. Her job was to help new Jewish residents in Tucson find synagogues or other Jewish connections, and to get the Jews of Northwest Tucson get connected. The development part of her job was to raise funds for Jewish endeavors in Tucson, such as support for the Jewish Community Center, Jewish Family and Children’s Services, Handmaker Assisted Living, and the Jewish History Museum.

In 2014, as part of the work that she performed at the Jewish Federation, she took an all-day bus tour of Arizona’s southern border with Humane Borders board member Bob Feinman as guide. Anne was very moved by what she witnessed and learned relative to the events unfolding on our border, so much that she felt compelled to take action to become directly involved. She remembered what her religion teaches her: “To save one life is to save the entire world.” At day’s end, Anne told Bob that she wanted to volunteer time with Humane Borders so that she could be of service to her fellow human beings. She is grateful to our organization for giving her so many “mitzvah opportunities” to do good deeds for others in need.

Currently, Anne is the president of Congregation Bet Shalom, and she served as chair of the 2018 Tucson International Jewish Film Festival. She is also the lead contact for Sponsoring a Kurdish Syrian Refugee Family for her synagogue. This year, Anne celebrated her five-year anniversary volunteering with Humane Borders, and she routinely goes out on trips to help maintain water stations at different sites throughout the Arizona/ Sonoran Desert. In addition to these passions of Anne’s, she is also an artist, a writer, and a teacher. This past month, she published her second book, A Touch of Torah. She is married and has three grown children and eight grandchildren.

MIKE MONROE – BOARD OF DIRECTORS
We also welcome Mike Monroe to the board. Mike is a father of three and a grandfather of 12. He retired to Tucson after thirty-six years of working as a police officer in Pasco, Washington on thirty-one years in Pasco City of Pasco, and five years at the Pasco, WA airport. He and his wife, Lesley, came to Tucson to get away from the cold, grey winters of the Pacific Northwest. Looking back over the stretch of time that he spent in law enforcement, Mike remembers that there was a while when he would deliver water to transients passing through the Pasco railyard. Because the surrounding businesses did not want them around, they turned off their outside spigots hoping that denying the homeless access to water would force them to move on.

Pasco, Washington is an agricultural community that is dependent on migrant farm labor and is more than 50% Hispanic. Mike recognizes that these men and women are like everyone else in that they are looking to fulfill the American dream of making a better life for themselves and most especially for their children. Mike can sympathize in a big way with what these folks are going through because his mother was an immigrant. Born in Scotland, her grandparents were tenant farmers and laborers in Ireland who escaped the “Great Hunger” by migrating to Scotland. Once in Scotland, they found work as coalminers and steel mill laborers, and Mike’s grandparents lived through the grinding poverty of company housing and were denied employment opportunity in Scotland because they were Irish Catholic. They eventually immigrated to America to make a better life for their children.

Mike came to Tucson looking for a volunteer opportunity so that he could continue to be productive while making a difference in the lives of others. When he discovered Humane Borders, he knew that held come home. He had found an organization that is truly making a difference providing life-saving water to people struggling to escape poverty and persecution, and who want nothing more than what the rest of us want: a better life for our children. Mike says that Humane Borders has given him a chance to pay forward some of the blessings he has received during his lifetime. Looking back, Mike sees how his family history and life experience conspired to bring him to Humane Borders. His past experience of delivering water to the railyard, his work with Pasco migrants, and his mother’s immigrant history worked together to connect him to the work we do at Humane Borders!

REBECCA FOWLER – ADMINISTRATIVE MANAGER
Please welcome Rebecca Fowler as administrative manager of Human Borders. Since the summer of 2017, Rebecca has been deeply involved in our organization, often leading water runs out into the desert. However, she has been active in the Tucson border community since the spring of 2010. That was the year that she finally became aware of the human crisis happening right here in her own backyard and of the terrible reality that so many people die for lack of water crossing the Arizona Sonoran Desert.

Rebecca moved to Washington State in 2011 to pursue graduate studies. But the tragedy occurring on the Arizona Border continued to weigh heavily on her mind and became the focal point of the work she was carrying out at WSU. During her six-year stint in Pullman, every summer and Christmas vacation she returned to Tucson to volunteer with desert humanitarian aid, and to research the causes and conditions of the human crisis unfolding on the border. Her dissertation, “The Sanctuary Movement Never Ended: An Examination of Humane Borders, Tucson Samaritans, and No More Deaths Counter-Conducts,” focuses on the work of Tucson desert aid organizations against the historical background of the 1980’s Tucson Sanctuary Movement. In 2016, she completed her Ph.D. in American Studies in the Department of Critical Culture, Gender, and Race Studies.

Rebecca balances the important work that she does for our organization with teaching online courses in Diversity for a non-profit university. Within this context, she seizes opportunities to raise student awareness about the causes and conditions that trigger migrant diasporas globally as well as to educate them about the trench work being carried out by desert humanitarians along the U.S./Mexico border. Rebecca is also a writer and has published on the issue. In 2017, “The Role of Arizona Desert Humanitarians in Compassionate Migration” appears as the penultimate chapter in Compassionate Migration: A Regional Policy Vision for the Americas edited by William F. Arrocha and Steven W. Bender (Palgrave MacMillan). Another piece of work, “U.S. Biopolitical Geographies of Migrant Containment” appears in a 2016 issue of the borderlands e-journal, volume 15, number one, and can be accessed online.
Maybe you have memories of old cars you have driven and known as friends, cars near the end of their lives, faithful helpers who tried to keep going and going until it was time for the loneliness of the scrapheap, with only a junkyard dog for company before death by crusher. I often think of the 1953 Studebaker that took me, at age 16, on my driver's test. It didn't complain when, the night after I got my license, I floored it to see how fast it would go (barely 85 m.p.h.). And that Raymond Loewy styling! But my best car of all was a 1963 Plymouth station wagon with push button drive, the buttons jutting out on a brightly chromed arm to the left of the steering wheel. One day when I was driving it down a hill toward a major intersection and the brakes failed, I reflexively pushed the button for reverse and, mirabile dictu, the wagon stopped, and it did so with gradual grace, without the slightest grinding noise or damage to the transmission.

I'm here to tell you that Humane Borders Truck 5 belongs in this pantheon. She was a 2006 Chevy 3500, the heaviest-duty pickup that GM made, and she endured 130,000 very tough miles on desert back roads. The shocks were shot, and she bounced over the bumps and washed, squeaking and squealing in pain. I would sometimes apologize to her for that, out loud. The interior lights didn't work, requiring me as driver to fill out institutional paperwork before the 6:00 A.M. starting time by holding a small metal flashlight trembling between my teeth, aimed erratically at a clipboard on my lap. The panel lights would dim or go off at will. And when we were outside the on a run, filling a water barrel or replacing a flag, Truck 5 might suddenly lock her own doors, sometimes locking us out.

The morning that happened to me, we were lucky to have a middle-aged self-described former juvie delinquent on board who knew how to break in, using some rusty wire we found in the tool box. Truck 5 and I had some good karmic times together. Using a heavy strap with a hook on the end, we'd help other drivers in newer but lesser vehicles who' d gotten stuck in the mud. Once it was a Border Patrol truck, and the startled Officers offered us donuts as a reward, which we, as humanitarian workers on humanitarian diets, politely declined. And then there were some sketchy, sullen, heavily-armed guys in a brand new Dodge truck who'd sunk themselves all the way down to the hubs. They might have been the vigilantes who'd vandalized our water stations the week before, but they were friends, or at least friendly, by the time we pulled them out an hour later.

Deep monsoon puddles were no match for Truck 5. I'd shift her into four-wheel drive high range (thereby going light on the torque so the wheels wouldn't spin), and blast through, even around the long, deep-water bend near our Ross Mine station, with mud splattering all over the body and up across the windshield, and with horrible detritus leavings on the tubular running boards. Once the front of the driver's side running tube came unhinged and dug itself into the road, stopping us. Not a big deal for Erik, a young volunteer who was able, laid out prone, to remove some frozen bolts with a wrench and some WD-40 spray lubricant.

Toward the end, we faced bigger problems, Truck 5 and I. Recently as I turned south from the Arivaca Road onto AZ Route 286, headed toward the border, the power steering failed. When that happens with a big truck, made even bigger by 2,100 pounds of water on its back, wrestling that thing off the pavement and onto the shoulder is a job for Charles Smith, our Operations Manager, who drove down and picked me up. The grand finale occurred on the Groupos Beta yard in Sasabe, Sonora, when reverse gear and neutral went out permanently. We limped back to South Tucson, and Truck 5 remains there, waiting for automobile graveyard release. But we had a couple of hundred water runs together, Sal and I. I almost forgot to say that, yes, Truck 5 had a name. Perhaps you can recall from childhood an old folk song about the Erie Canal that was a favorite of Pete Seeger. Remember? It goes like this: "I have a mule and her name is Sal / fifteen miles on the Erie Canal. " She's a good old pal / fifteen miles on the Erie Canal." Truck 5 had a name, and her name was Sal, and I used to sing that childhood song to her as we drove together.

Now we have a brand new 2019 Chevy truck, and it's a wonderful machine on which everything works. But she doesn't have soul, not yet, anyway, soul like Sal.
HOW WHISPERING COYOTE WATER STATION GOT ITS NAME

Rebecca Fowler

It happened in December of 2017.

The day started out routinely enough. The three of us departed from Humane Borders headquarters at 6:00 a.m. with Frank, Saguaro at the helm of Truck 5. Sharon Ray and I were in attendance, serving as volunteers on the Coleman / City of Tucson water run. In mid-December we were coming up on Winter Solstice, and at that time of the morning, the sky was still black, the air quite cold. Setting out that day, we were aware of a problem with Truck 5 that would necessitate our keeping the truck running to guard against the possibility that it wouldn’t restart.

By the time we got to Yrena Station, the first of the eight stations that we would service that day, the sky had begun to lighten, but the air was still frigid. When Frank rolled down the window of Truck Five before climbing out of the truck, Sharon and I looked at him like he was crazy for letting the warmth of the interior escape. But Frank explained to Sharon and me what veteran driver Stephen Saltonstall already knew from painful experience, to wit, that “When drivers and passengers were outside the truck [innocently] filling a water barrel or replacing a flag, Truck 5 might suddenly lock her own doors, locking us out of the vehicle” (See “Paean to Truck Five” this issue).

From Yrena Station, we made progress into the morning and early afternoon, servicing each water station routinely enough. The day started out losing the gate behind us, we made tracks in the direction of the singing coyote.

Closing the gate behind us, we made tracks in the direction of Poplar Grove, and that’s when we saw it. A coyote of light colors and good size, she was a beauty. As we drove past her, I was struck by her, because normally when we come upon coyotes in the desert, they’ll turn and run in the opposite direction. This one held her ground, staring after us even after we had driven by. I craned my head to maintain eye contact with her until we disappeared from sight, and then I said aloud to Frank and Sharon, “It’s almost as if she’s trying to tell us something.”

Fast forward to our fateful arrival at No Name station. We got out of the truck to service the last station of the day. While Frank and Sharon were busy working the station, I went to retrieve something from the truck. And that’s when I discovered that we were locked out, windows rolled up tight. I broke the news to Frank and Sharon, and we stood around for a few moments, shaking our heads and kicking ourselves for not remembering to roll down the window. Then we started thinking about our options.

Mines and Frank’s cell phones were fully charged and locked fast inside the vehicle. Sharon had hers, and it had a strong signal, but it was nearly out of juice. Also, we were concerned for Sharon because her medication was locked inside Truck 5, and she had put off taking it that morning. We considered taking a rock and breaking a window, but even if we had decided that was the thing to do, there were no large rocks anywhere to be found, and the tire jack was inside the truck. And truthfully, we didn’t want to break a window unless we absolutely had to. Using Sharon’s phone and praying that it had enough battery to see him through this one phone call, Frank called Triple A, and was treated to calming music while he waited for an actual person to answer the call. Suddenly, I heard the sound of a tractor rev up, and I took off running in the direction of the noise. After all, Sharon’s phone could suddenly go dead in Frank’s hand, and we shouldn’t let this opportunity get away.

I caught up with the farmer, and he was reasonably annoyed at the interruption to his work and this strange woman yelling at him from across his fence and property line. Nevertheless, he got off his tractor, listened to my story, and handed me his phone, allowing me to call information so that I could get Triple A’s number. I made the call, handed the farmer back his phone, thanked him profusely, and ran the distance back to where Frank and Sharon were waiting. As it happened, Frank was able to get through to AAA and so we were doubly assured that help was on the way. Frank walked up to the road to wait for help to arrive while Sharon and I remained with the truck.

After a while, I left Sharon and walked up the road to check on Frank. We both noted that the hawk was still at home, surveying his kingdom from the tops of the majestic poplar tree. I had forgotten all about the dog. But as we stood there waiting, the dog noticed us and was rapidly approaching. Because I’m someone who’s survived two different dog attacks as a child, it’s hard to contain my fear when I don’t know a dog and it appears menacing. But now the dog was headed our way, and my fear was rising. Suddenly, Frank said, “Listen! Coyote!” The moment was suspended in time as the three of us stood stock still listening, me and Frank from our positions, the dog from a good hundred or more yards away. And then the coyote let out a long, mournful wail. The dog turned tail and ran after it, allowing me a safe exit back to the truck. Later, the dog returned from chasing the coyote, bounded up to Frank, and together man and dog stood facing north, watching as the Triple A truck rumbled near.

And that, my friends, is how Whispering Coyote Water Station got its name.
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