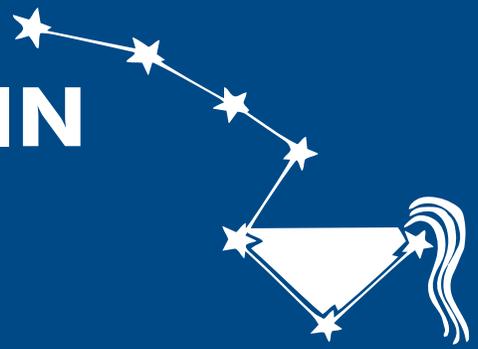


THE DESERT FOUNTAIN

HUMANE BORDERS

May 2020



HUMANE BORDERS, INC.
P.O. Box 27024, Tucson, Arizona 85726
info@humaneborders.org

ARIZONA OPENGIS FOR DECEASED MIGRANTS
humaneborders.org/migrant-death-mapping/

www.humaneborders.org

HUMANE BORDERS' RESPONSE TO COVID 19

by Rebecca Fowler

In the first weeks of March, when it became apparent that COVID-19 was a pandemic that would have severe consequences for people in the U.S. – just as it was having on those living in so many other countries across the globe, suddenly our everyday mode of operations was thrown off kilter. (No doubt, the reader can relate.) Humane Borders contacted a number of people who were scheduled to volunteer with us in March, April, May (and now June) to let them know that we couldn't welcome them. A good number of these folks had gone so far to cement their plans to volunteer with us in March having already purchased airfare to Tucson. Shortly after we put restrictive measures into place, stay-at-home policies were put into effect in cities and states across the nation, and the fact remains that social distancing and self-quarantine are the only things we can do to flatten the curve and staunch the spread of coronavirus. At the time of this writing, the total number of deaths in the U.S. approaches 100,000.

At Humane Borders, we have had to severely limit the number of volunteers taking out water runs to a skeleton crew of veteran drivers. No more than two persons can take out a trip, and both volunteers (those who are not married or partners-in-life couples) have to wear masks and roll down windows when going out on runs. At the same time, we fastidiously sanitize everything going and coming that we could possibly touch, and all volunteers wear masks and gloves when changing out equipment and refilling water barrels.

Meanwhile, owing to the COVID-19 pandemic, the U.S./Mexico border was closed to all but essential workers. Beginning in early March, Sonoran authorities were taking the pandemic seriously – arguably more seriously than those who are in charge of managing the

crisis here in the United States. Police and military officials took to the streets with megaphones, ordering people to wear masks. Different restrictive measures were put into place to prevent the coronavirus contagion. Children would not be allowed into stores. Families arriving to buy essential goods would have to wait outside – excepting one family member who would do the shopping for the whole. People were barred from gathering in large groups, and the rule for people living together in a small space was that the number be less than ten. A 9 pm curfew is still in effect, and at the stroke of 9 o'clock, the local fire station blows a whistle and military personnel patrol the streets. Those who are still out and about are cited with tickets.

Although we have no way of confirming the facts, we have been told that the first cases of coronavirus that appeared in Sonoyta were brought there from American college kids on spring break to Puerto Peñasco, locally known as Rocky Point. After spring break, Peñasco – where everyone goes when they need to go to the hospital - closed its doors to all outsiders. Said Ajo Samaritan Tracy Taft, “If you live in Sonoyta and you need to get to the hospital, you need to get to Peñasco. But there's a roadblock that prevents you from driving into town. If you call, an ambulance will come and get you, but your family cannot go with you.”

Meanwhile, migrant shelter managers had been informed of the less-than-ten-people policy. Everyone assumed that the number of migrants staying at the shelters would drop to almost no one. Although humanitarian aid falls under “essential” travel, Ajo SAMS & HB workers made the important decision not to visit the shelters since we understood that doing so would put migrants and other people living in Sonoyta at risk. And so it was decided that as an alternative to buying groceries, Humane Borders would support Ajo Samaritans by helping to provide migrants bus tickets



Mike Monroe tests water for particulate content.



Lesley Monroe refills water barrel at Bishop Carcaño Station.

to other destinations in Mexico (Unfortunately, buying tickets to other countries was cost-prohibitive).

But as it turned out, hardly anyone wanted to leave. Mexican authorities, perhaps faced with the dilemma of what could happen if so many people tried to leave Sonoyta at once, chose to look the other way. And so Humane Borders, in network with Ajo SAMS and No More Deaths, continues to provide a monthly stipend for food at the shelters. What has changed is that groceries are now purchased through the help of a Sonoyta liaison, who provides shelter managers a weekly budget of 165 pesos or \$7.00 per person. Casa del Migrantes residents have access to water via a water filtration system provided by Humane Borders. Migrants are also being sheltered at two other houses. One of them was provided by a local pastor for the purpose of sheltering migrant families and has running water and electrical power. The number of people between the two shelters has ranged between 100 to 120, but the numbers are rising, and currently there are 124, down from the peak occupancy of 200 this last December. As of today, May 27, 2020, there are no known coronavirus cases at the shelters.

Back in Tucson, we were compelled to postpone great events that had been in the making of plans we'd been undertaking for months. On Sunday, June 7, 2020, we were to hold a very special gathering and celebration to commemorate the twentieth anniversary of the first day that Humane Borders put water in the desert.



Rebecca Fowler refills Figueroa Station.



Dan Abbott drives from Phoenix to service water stations in Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument.

The Humane Borders Twentieth Anniversary Reunion and 9th Annual Blessing of the Fleet, which has since been postponed to this fall, was to reunite and bring together Humane Borders workers and dedicated members of the Tucson border movement to share a special evening of remembrance, inspiration, and renewed commitment to the humanitarian aid that we provide along the border.

Back in 2000, when we built the first of our water stations in the Arizona Sonoran Desert to stop migrant deaths, no one of us could have imagined that our efforts would still be necessary twenty years later. But in 2020, we're still at it. The crisis on our southern border appears only to be getting worse what with the construction of a thirty-foot wall and the numerous injustices migrants confront due to our government's immigration deterrence policies that funnel people into some of the most desolate, inhospitable territory known to humankind. Deaths in the desert continue despite our best efforts. Still, Humane Borders is proud to be part of a movement of many groups who are working to make a difference on both sides of the border. And so in 2020, Humane Borders will carry on, and we will continue doing what we can to create a just and humane environment in the borderlands.

Humane Borders Calls for Donations

In 2000, Humane Borders was born in Tucson, formed in answer to the question of how concerned community members and people of faith should respond with compassion to the crisis of increasing numbers of migrant deaths in the Arizona Sonoran Desert. As I write above, none of the good people who started Humane Borders in 2000 could have predicted that twenty years later, migrants would still be dying in the desert and that our humanitarian interventions would be just as urgently needed. Everyone thought that surely, once enough people knew what was happening in the desert, that so many people were dying from exposure and lack of water, that there would be such a cry out against the travesty of it all that the government would implement humane immigration reform that would find a much better way.

But since January of 1999, more than 3,000 people have died in the Arizona Sonoran Desert. The reality is that the death count is much higher. It is estimated that for every set of human remains that are recovered, three to ten more people are never found. Many hundreds

of families, grieving mothers, fathers, sisters, brothers, husbands, wives, daughters and sons, will never know what happened to their missing loved one, nor will they ever be united with their remains. Just over the last five days, Humane Borders received two different calls for help from people desperate to make contact with family members who had gone missing in the desert days ago, and we got one communication from a person wanting to know who she might contact to find her brother's remains. He went missing in 2012.

And so Humane Borders is as committed as ever to ending migrant deaths in the desert – even in the time of COVID-19. We are in this struggle for the long run, and will continue putting out water in the desert and acting in partnership with other humanitarian aid groups to provide food, water, and medical aid to migrants in shelters in Mexico. We will continue putting water in the desert until compassionate immigration

reform makes the work that we do obsolete.

We hope that you are in this struggle with us for however long it takes to end migrant desert deaths. Will you commit to supporting the urgent work that we do by becoming a monthly contributor? Monthly recurring gifts provide us with the kind of steady, reliable support that is necessary to continue the urgent work that we do to save lives. To become a monthly or one-time donor, visit our website at the link below, or send your donation to

Humane Borders, Inc.
P.O. Box 27024
Tucson, AZ 85726

Thank you so very much.
<https://humaneborders.org/support-us/>

REFLECTIONS AND GRATITUDE by Dinah Bear

At the end of 2019, I was very pleased to support Doug Ruopp to become the new chair of Humane Borders (see story, p. 5). I know that Doug has the institutional knowledge and experience and personal and administrative skills to guide Humane Borders work at this challenging time.

In reflecting on my tenure, I feel enormously grateful for the opportunity and for all the support over those five years. My time as chair was blessed first and foremost by a collaborative and adaptable Board of Directors, the steadfast, loyal support of Joel Smith as Operations Manager, Rebecca Fowler's amazing and timely work as our Administrative Manager, and, most of all, our wonderful, dedicated volunteers. I know it's dangerous to list names because I will inevitably miss people, but I can't resist naming some of the people who have volunteered time and time again over the years to get up when it's cold and dark in the winter and hot and dry in the summer to check our water stations: John and Diane Hoelter, Stephen Saltonstall, Mike and Lesley Monroe, Phil Hunger, Guillermo Jones, Frank Sagona, Sister Elizabeth, Lois Martin, Andy Judge, Neil Novack, Gene McCormick, Tracey Ristow, Candy Grajeda, Erik Kolsrud, Jorge Soto, Dan Abbott, Norm Baker, Judy O'Neil, Brad Jones, Mike and Jean Kreyche. Of course, there have many more volunteers along with dozens of groups of students and faith communities around the country. Much gratitude to all of you!!!

Our work has been supported from the beginning by Pima County. That's remarkable. Despite Humane Borders' constant adherence to all applicable rules and regulations in doing our work, the very nature of what we do disturbs some people. Pima County has steadfastly funded Humane Borders for about 20 years and that support has been important to us in many ways.

Additionally, we have had a wonderful partner in the Pima County Office of the Medical Examiner. Without that support, our multi-decadal efforts to mapping deaths in the desert, now on the web as the OpenGIS Initiative for Deceased Arizona Migrants (OGIS), would be much less comprehensive and credible. Leaders in that office, including Dr. Bruce Parks, Dr. Bruce Anderson and Dr. Gregory Hess have made a significant difference for migrant families by approaching their work with compassion and high professional standards of care. Mike Kreyche has greatly improved the utility of the OGIS website with monthly updates and additional information. Thank you, Mike!

We have also enjoyed a long and positive relationship with the City of Tucson and several private landowners in southern Arizona. Some of these relationships will soon be going into their third decade. Again, thanks!

Our contract with Pima County requires us to provide water in arid, remote areas of the jurisdiction. The County has more land on the border than any other county in the United States and much of it is public land. We would have difficulty meeting those requirements without the steady cooperation of federal land managers. Again, we know that our work is not universally popular and that the land managers, like the County Supervisors, have experienced their share of criticism. As a long-time federal employee myself (now retired), I want to acknowledge and thank those managers for their support.

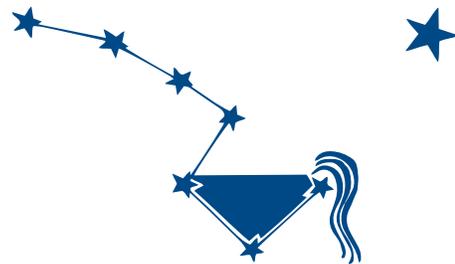
And, of course, there are our faithful donors without whom much of our work would not be possible. We have been blessed by some very generous and unsolicited gifts as well as touched by small but meaningful contributions and loving notes and prayers from people all around the country and even overseas.

Beginning in 2014, southern Arizona experienced a high influx of families from Guatemala and Honduras and, to a lesser extent, El Salvador. Humane Borders pitched in with many other groups and individuals in Tucson to help with cooking, cleaning and assisting migrants who had been given humanitarian parole documents by federal authorities during their brief stays here in Tucson before they journeyed to another part of the country. Volunteers who helped with this effort were rewarded with a greater understanding of the pressures that drive people to flee their own country and seek some measure of safety and security in the United States.

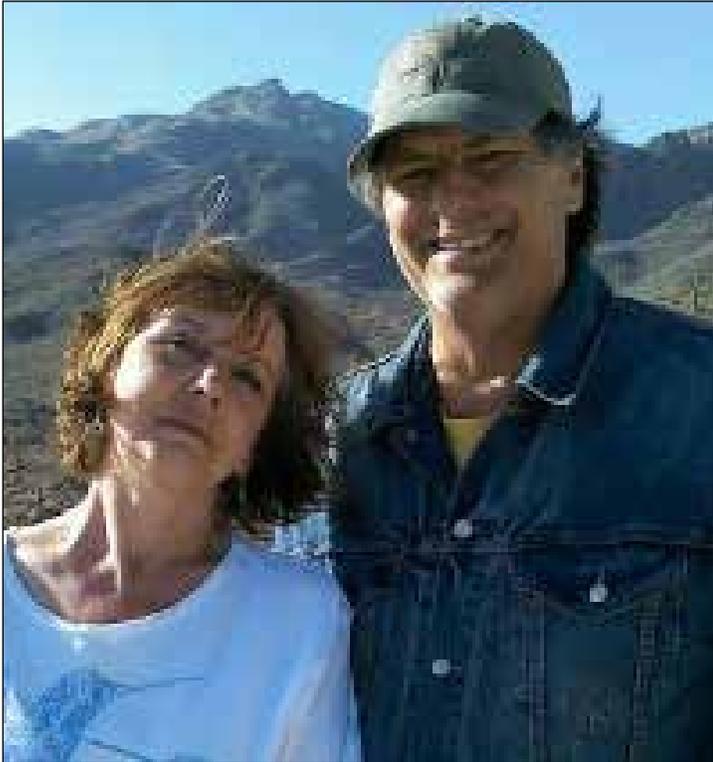
Besides servicing our water stations and maintaining and upgrading the OGIS website, over the past couple of years, the nature of Humane Borders work in Sonora, Mexico has evolved. Many migrants have travelled far only to find that their entry into the United States

has been blocked by administration policies. These people are frequently in a situation where returning to their home countries is extremely dangerous – that's why they left in the first place. As they wait in shelters along the border with hope and prayers for an appointment with U.S. officials that may not come for months or even years, they are left with few or no resources. Humane Borders has developed creative partnerships with other humanitarian groups in Arizona and in northern Sonora to help provide food, medical care and, of course, water. Even during this challenging time of Covid-19, we are finding ways to get some resources to people badly in need of them.

Humane Borders was founded on the premise that basic faith and morality required people of conscience to try to prevent deaths in the desert. At the time, many thought this would be a short-term task. Sadly, that was wrong. As long as the need remains, Humane Borders will be here working to save lives. Thank you all so much for your support.



MESSAGE FROM CHAIR DOUG RUOPP



Doug and Sara Ruopp

I'm honored and humbled to be the new chair of Humane Borders. Since being a part of the effort back in 2001, I've been inspired by the people who work so hard to end the deaths of migrants in the desert. I see my role as one of reinforcement and support for the work being done on behalf of our organization by Operations Manager Joel Smith, Administrative Manager Rebecca Fowler, our amazing volunteers, and by our talented and active board – as well as by sister organizations like the Ajo Samaritans. Since I was away from daily interaction with Humane Borders for nearly eight years, I'm now getting to know all of our volunteers, and they are just as committed and interesting as ever. Humane Borders is so fortunate. As a way of reintroducing myself to you, I want to share this story from my past experiences of hundreds of runs to our water stations.

Our most northerly run is up in the Ironwood National Monument. Our permit there at the time required us to go there three times a week to check the barrels, so I got to know the route with all the flora and fauna (including a big horn sheep) quite well. I even predicted where we'd see a desert tortoise for two of our summer interns from Indiana. We saw signs of migrant activity often on these runs. Water bottles, backpacks, and even a few broken down cars were left behind.

Anyway, I was on a run in Ironwood with a doctor and his old friend who happened to be hard of hearing. The doctor's friend pointed to some backpacks beside the road up ahead and we stopped. He wanted to gather what information he could from looking at the backpacks. In order for him to hear us, we were talking pretty loudly. All of a sudden, a migrant came from over a little hill near us. He asked us kindly, in Spanish of course, if we could be a little quieter because he and his two companions were trying to sleep. We asked if they were okay physically, gave him food and water, and quietly left.

We don't see migrants, and certainly not groups, nearly as often these days, although every run I've been on we've found signs of migrants passing through. Even with all the changes on the border, death is still "part of the equation" in the desert, so we know our work is as vital as ever. It's a human story, though, and not really about mathematics. We know migrants are members of families who need jobs and safety, and food and water, and as we were reminded, sleep without interruption. My hope going forward is to be as in touch with this truth as possible, and to do what I can to support our staff and volunteers.

BOARD MEMBER PROFILES



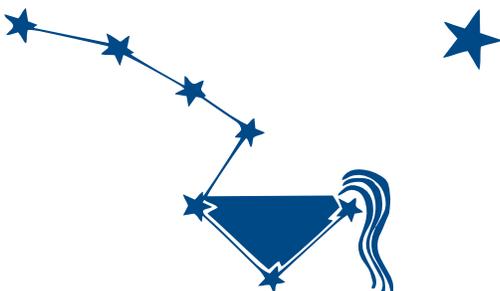
Doug Ruopp

Humane Borders Chair
Douglas Ruopp began volunteering with the founders of Humane Borders 20 years ago, from the start of the organization. Early on he helped organize volunteers and maintained vehicles

for trips to the desert for both Humane Borders and the Samaritans. A bilingual teacher for Tucson schools, Doug pursued a graduate degree in multicultural education at the University of Arizona. But all of his summers were reserved for volunteering desert aid, and he took many water runs to Organ Pipe National Monument to service HB water stations. In 2008 Doug took two years off from teaching and accepted the job of Operations Manager at Humane Borders, where he was involved in nearly every facet of office and field activities in 2008 and 2009.

Doug's interest in multicultural issues comes especially from his dad, who was an administrator at the Peace Corps and the International Peace Academy. Back in high school, Doug spent one summer in California to help complete permanent housing for a small community of United Farm Workers. He was the contact person for a family from Guatemala during the Sanctuary years, and he served on the board of A Better Chance for many years in Massachusetts. In Tucson, he and his wife Sara have been on the board of the Martin Luther King, Jr. Breakfast Committee for twenty years.

Their son, Ryan, is a high school history and English teacher in Massachusetts, and their daughter, Helena, is an artist living here in Tucson. Doug and Sara both retired after 40 years teaching elementary students. Doug went on to be a volunteer engagement specialist with the Food Bank of Southern Arizona for two years, but the call of providing humanitarian assistance in the desert brought him back "home" in 2019.



Lynn Moriarty

Lynn began volunteering with Humane Borders in 2016 at the invitation of board member Dan Abbott's son Aaron, who happens to be Lynn's next-door neighbor. She is a native of Connecticut and a registered nurse who landed in Arizona in 1990 after two years serving in the Peace Corps in Guatemala. Living in Central America,

learning Spanish, and living in a border state have greatly impacted the trajectory of her career. During the 90s, Lynn worked as the outreach coordinator for a community and migrant health center, training community health workers in rural Maricopa County. For the last 25 years, she has been working in Title 1 schools in the Phoenix area with a majority of Spanish-speaking families.

Currently Lynn works as the Health and Social Services Coordinator for Alhambra Elementary School District where her aim is to eliminate barriers to education for Alhambra families who have trouble accessing the system. Her work includes assisting with care planning and case management for students with complex needs, helping families navigate the health and social services systems, and connecting uninsured students and families with needed services. She also manages a free immunization clinic located at the district's Valencia Newcomer School, where all students are new to the U.S. and are non-English speaking.

Because Lynn has worked with so many people who have crossed the border, many of whom have made desert crossings, she is gratified to be a member of our organization. Volunteering with Humane Borders gives her the opportunity to have a hand in protecting people who make the difficult decision to cross over today. Lynn feels that volunteering in the desert compels her to witness the harsh realities of the current border situation and to remember the risks that people take daily in their attempts to get across. When the border reopens, her hope is to collaborate with immigrant advocacy volunteers out of Ajo in coordinating medical services that HB helps pay for and which include health education.

REMEMBERING RICHARD ELIAS

by Dinah Bear



Humane Borders and Pima County lost a lifelong friend on March 28th, 2020 when Richard Elias, Chairman of Pima County’s Board of

Supervisors, passed away suddenly and unexpectedly at the age of sixty-one. He had served on the Board of Supervisors for eighteen years.

For over two centuries, the Elias family has played an important role in the history and development of Pima County. In fact, an Elias ancestor helped to guard the original Presidio starting in September, 1776. Richard Elias was quite proud of his family’s heritage and of the seven

generations who lived in what is now Pima County. But more importantly, he deeply loved this desert place and he cared about all people and other living beings here. And he supported Humane Borders from the beginning.

During one of my last meetings with Supervisor Elias, we discussed the possibility of creating a memorial to acknowledge the hundreds of migrant deaths that have occurred in Pima County over the last two decades. Neither of us were aware of any other county government on the U.S. Mexico border that provides the kind of resources that Pima County does to save migrant lives. Certainly, Richard Elias’ support of Humane Borders and other humanitarian efforts was a key factor in the continuation of that aid.

You can access a short video of Richard’s thoughts about his role in Pima County and of the County’s support of Humane Borders at the link provided below. Richard Elias will be missed and remembered for generations to come. His memory is a blessing for all who care about migrants and all living beings.

<https://vimeopro.com/user604378/human-borders/video/190293085>

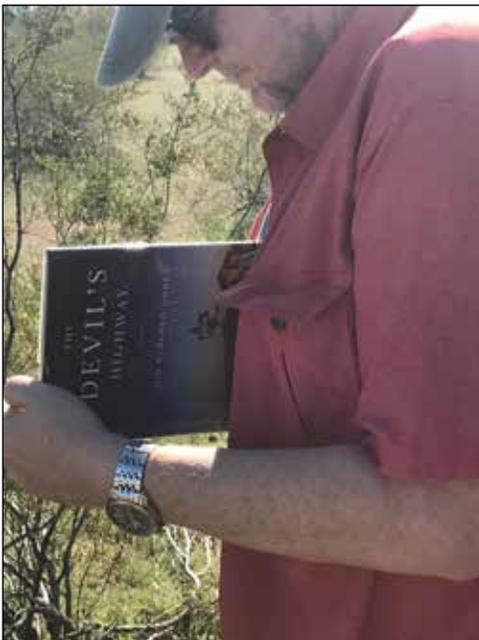
LUIS AND CINDY URREA WATER STATION AT AGUA DULCES

by Doug Ruopp

They were walking now for water, not salvation. Just a drink. They whispered it to each other as they staggered into parched pools of their own shadows, forever spilling downhill before them:

“Just one drink brothers. Water. Cold water!”

— Luis Alberto Urrea - *The Devil’s Highway* (2004)



Luis Alberto-Urrea signs Rebecca’s copy of the *The Devil’s Highway*
(Photo Credit: Rebecca Fowler)

No book has had a bigger impact on promoting an understanding of the stark reality of what can happen to people who try to cross the Arizona Sonoran Desert than Luis Alberto Urrea’s *The Devil’s Highway*. The book describes in heartrending detail the May 2001 events leading up to the desolate deaths of fourteen migrants in the beautiful but unforgiving Cabeza Prieta National Wildlife Refuge wilderness, just west of Ajo, Arizona. Early this year, Humane Borders determined to name one of our water stations – one that is located directly on the Devil’s Highway – after the author of this work.

And so on Valentine’s Day of this year, we had the incredible honor of hosting Luis Alberto Urrea and his wife Cindy, who played a vital role in researching *The Devil’s Highway* and in the book’s overall success. Upon receiving the invitation, the Urreas were excited to visit their namesake water station and to partake in the naming ceremony.

Even though Luis and Cindy knew it would be a long day in the water trucks traveling from Tucson to Ajo to the Devil’s Highway and back to Tucson again, both enthusiastically agreed to meet dark and early at the Humane Borders truck yard. The night before, Luis had done a fundraiser for No More Deaths that went very late, but the next morning, before our departure, he was happy to chat up volunteers who had

arrived to take out a water run out that day and who were eager to meet him. Luis and Cindy expressed to everyone there that this was a special day for them, making the event even more meaningful to those of us involved.

After a two- and a half hour drive to Ajo, we arrived at the Cabeza Prieta National Wildlife Refuge office to receive our access permits and to meet with a contingent of Ajo Samaritans who would take the lead driving down Bates Well Road leading into the Devil's Highway. It's a long bumpy road, but in February after a good year of rain, the desert was lush all around with green and yellow, providing us with long views of the Agua Dulce and Growler mountains. On February 14, we reveled in the beauty of the wilderness and of the temperate climate even though we knew the deadly heat was just months away.

Upon arriving at the water station, before beginning the naming ceremony, we took the time to straighten the flagpole, and we checked the station for usage and tested the water for quality. Then, all of us assembled listened intently as Luis recounted some of the details of the research on the area that he and Cindy had conducted in preparation for the book. When he was done talking, all of us spent a few moments silently absorbing both the beauty and the desolation of the site. And then, a passage

was read from *The Devil's Highway*, and these were some of the words from the book that were spoken that day:

... They were deep in the Cabeza Prieta National Wildlife Refuge area. There are several watering spots in the refuge, if Mendez had known where to look. Seven chances to survive. Much would be made of these missed opportunities after the long walk was over . . .

As these words were uttered, all of us were profoundly aware that our work to save lives in this vast desert is just as urgent today as it was twenty years ago. All of the work that Humane Borders had done in this area to flag water spots for wildlife and to add new water stations for migrant travelers was essential and was worth so much more than the effort we put into it.

Back in Ajo, Ajo Samaritans, Humane Borders volunteers, and concerned members of the border community gathered at the home of gracious host Maria Singleton to enjoy homemade treats and good conversation with the Urreas. Some hours later, we arrived back in Tucson in time for supper, all of us feeling inspired and warmed by Luis and Cindy's kind words.

Two Humane Borders t-shirts with the names of all our stations



Ajo SAMS & Humane Borders Welcome Luis & Cindy Urrea

(Photo Credit: Paul Ingram)

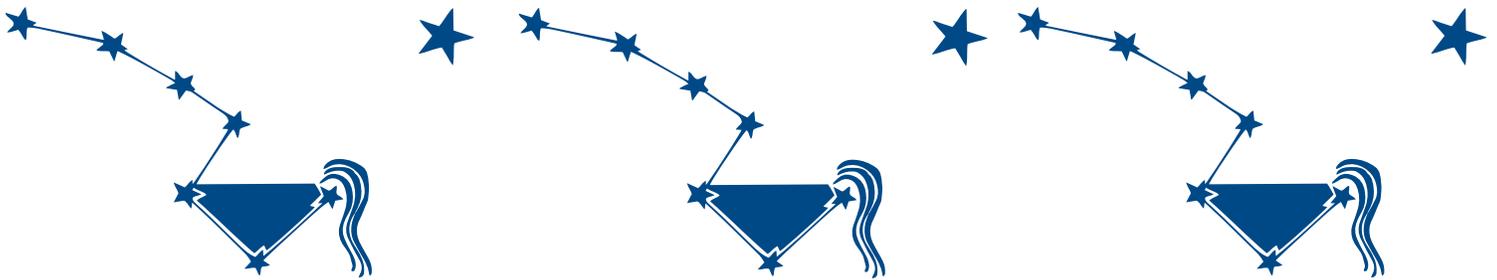
on the back – including one named Luis and Cindy Urrea Station at Agua Dulces – would soon be on their way to the Urreas as a small token of our appreciation to them, and in gratitude for the reminder of the urgent need for the kind of work that we do at Humane Borders.

Read *Tucson Sentinel* writer Paul Ingram’s take on the event on our website. You can access Paul’s article, “Sweet Water” – Humane Borders Station Named for Famed Author Louis Alberta-Urrea’ at humaneborders.org by clicking on “News/Events.” Or visit this link: <https://humaneborders.org/category/english/>



Luis and Cindy Urrea

(Photo Credit: Paul Ingram)



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”



ALL THE WAY TO THE BORDER TRASH PICK UP

by Christy Voelkel



Christy Voelkel

On Saturday, January 29th, I joined a contingent of folks from Humane Borders on the 4th annual “All the Way to the Border” Trash Pick Up. I found myself doing a bunch of my favorite things in one fell swoop: Wandering around a winter desert lined with blue and purple ridges edged with shots of sunlight, listening to thoughtful souls tell

their own stories and backsides

of stories. Like the one about how there used to be a toll road running behind the western range of Tucson with its own highway robber. And as we told stories, we picked up multifarious brands of trash off of the floor of the Arizona Sonoran Desert, depositing all of it into great big sturdy blue bags, twelve of them in all.

We were a mishmash group of folk. The All the Way to the Border cleanup is sponsored by Rancho Sierra Vista de Sasabe with help from the Alter Valley Conservation Alliance, Arizona Department of Transportation, Trico Electric Cooperative and Pima County/Tucson Recycling and Waste Services. Our Humane Borders contingent was joined by Border Patrol agents, Sierra Club activists, police cadets, curious tourists, and a group of middle school students. It is very, very easy and simple to focus on “borders” – on the arbitrary dividing lines that cordon us off into distinct warring factions with angry pointing fingers. But the building of ever-higher walls only serves to keep us more divided than ever before. The idea of “Humane Borders” is much more than that of providing water to those whose life tragedies have compelled them to cross over into this prickly, even vicious, terrain seeking safety and hope for a future. Desert humanitarian aid is the intentional articulation that these borders are made up of humans, each of them with a story, each with a journey, and each deserving of human connection.

So even though Humane Borders is “totally committed to saving desperate people from a horrible death by dehydration and exposure and to creating a just and humane environment in the borderlands,” volunteers are also committed to practicing patience, gentleness, and humility. And so we gathered, a truckload of Humane Borders volunteers in HB Truck #10, with our big, extra-heavy-duty blue bags and trash-pincher sticks and work gloves in different sizes. It was a day full of reaching into prickier bushes for old

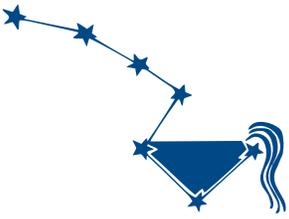
Styrofoam cups and clambering over and under floppy barbed wire fences to collect wind-blown McDonald’s wrappers and an old shredded tire or two. And then there were the empty tuna fish cans. And the abandoned fuzzy slippers that fit over walking shoes that don’t leave footprints in the sandy washes. And the empty black water jugs favored by migrants because they don’t reflect light, don’t mirror the high beam spotlights shot down from helicopters or from aloft high rocky embankments and green and white Customs Border Protection trucks.

We started out at 9:00 a.m. in the morning and finished mid-afternoon having covered both sides of two miles of highway off Hwy 286, tackling one mile that Humane Borders has adopted and maintained since 2017. And all the while, the vast beauty of the Desert reached outward towards the jagged horizon of the sacred-to-the- Tohono O’ Oldham Baboquivari mountains, and upward, exploding in the bright blueness of Sonoran winter skies.

It is a wondrous thing to tidy up this gift of desolate desert nature that has been sliced through with an arbitrary dividing line separating “Us” from “Them.” It was gratifying to those of us present that day to do our bit part cleaning up a small stretch of extraordinary desert space while sharing stories that reminded us of the mystery and wonder of life and that helped us to remember our collective humanity. Humane Borders hopes that those “other” stories, the ones of people crossing that are so frequently rendered silent, might eventually be heard.



Pablo Peregrina and Rebecca Fowler clean up Humane Borders Adopted Mile off of Hwy 286, 22 miles north of the U.S./Mexico border



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Edited by Rebecca Fowler

FRONTIERAS COMPASIVAS
HUMANE BORDERS

