

# TUCSON GIVING

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## Awards breakfast will honor top volunteers

By Loni Nannini

SPECIAL TO THE ARIZONA DAILY STAR

If your vision for 2020 includes volunteerism, the Southern Arizona Volunteer Management Association offers the perfect opportunity to kick-start your New Year's resolution.

The organization is hosting the 2020 SAVMA Awards and Workshop at 8 a.m. Thursday, Jan. 16, at the Tucson Convention Center, 260 S. Church Ave.

Celebrations about the impact of volunteers — along with inspiration and motivation for those who work with volunteers and those considering donating time and talent — are front and center at the event, said event chair Jessica Dennes.

"Without volunteers, there are so many services within our community that wouldn't get done, whether it is sorting food donations at the Community Food Bank, walking dogs that have been surrendered to Pima Animal Control Center or collecting diapers for moms in need at the Diaper Bank of Southern Arizona. It is really all-encompassing when you think about everything that volunteers do for this region," said Dennes, who is also a board member for the association, which provides educational programs, leadership, information and resources to support the volunteer community in Southern Arizona.

Dennes emphasized that the association seeks to bring visibility to the role that volunteer administrators and coordinators fill in many organizations while also promoting awareness about the value of volunteerism.

"The latest statistics from 2018 show that the estimated value of each volunteer hour was \$25.43. Volunteers are really an incredible asset to our community," Dennes said.

The volunteer association also works to promote awareness about the availability of diverse opportunities and the ability to customize roles to fit the needs of individual volunteers, from those who want to donate a few hours on a one-time basis to those



MIKE CHRISTY / ARIZONA DAILY STAR 2019

Last February, staff members and volunteers with Habitat for Humanity helped build nine homes near North Stone Avenue and East Prince Road.

looking for regular weekly or monthly commitments.

"There is a way for anyone and everyone to give back ... so many nonprofits have great missions but not always the number of people on staff they need to get the work done," she said. "SAVMA provides a direct connection to different resources and information to help get needs filled in the community."

The group's awards recognize those who went above and beyond to fill needs last year, including Program Volunteer of the Year Steve Johnson, a volunteer with the Court Appointed Special Advocates' Support Council of Pima County; Corporate Volunteerism Award Winner Southwest Gas Corp.; Non-profit Volunteerism Award Winner Interfaith Community Services; Youth Volunteer Group of the Year Zoo Crew of the Reid Park Zoo; Board Member of the Year

### IF YOU GO

- **What:** Southern Arizona Volunteer Management Association Awards and Workshop
  - **When:** 8 to 11 a.m. Thursday, Jan. 16.
  - **Where:** Tucson Convention Center ballroom, 260 S. Church Ave.
  - **Cost:** \$45 per person; \$40 per person for SAVMA members.
- Festivities include an awards breakfast honoring 2020 volunteer winners. The keynote speaker will be Dana Litwin, president of the

Scott Summerford of Interfaith Community Services; and Volunteer Administrator of the Year Gina Hansen of Habitat for Humanity.

The recognition is humbling for Johnson, 65, who has been a volunteer with CASA for six years.

He initially learned about CASA while volunteering at

Association of Leaders in Volunteer Engagement. After the breakfast, Litwin will lead a professional development workshop for volunteer managers and others who work directly with volunteers.

Registration for the workshop, "Hold 'Em or Fold 'Em: How to Inspire, Fire or Move Challenging Volunteers," is \$25 per person.

For tickets to the awards breakfast, registration for the workshop or for more information, visit SAVMA.org

a children's shelter.

"As a volunteer, there was no way to know what happened to the kids after they left the shelter. ... I never knew if they had a happy ending or not, and that led me to the CASA program," he said.

CASA Support Council of Pima County trains vol-

unteers to act as advocates for children who have been removed from their homes and placed in foster care or kinship placement by the Department of Child Safety due to family crises such as domestic violence, substance abuse, mental illness, abuse and neglect.

The advocates are intended to act as the "eyes and ears of judges" and represent the interests of the children when involved in Juvenile Court proceedings.

The opportunity was tailor-made for Johnson, who spent the first 11 years of his life in the foster-care system in Boston.

"I went through 14 different foster homes in 11 years. This is my way to pay it forward," he said.

"At that time, CASA was not around and I think it would have been really helpful to have someone as an advocate. I think it is a great idea to have someone who isn't in the system to

help if the kids need to talk to someone or if they have needs that they can't really express."

Johnson said volunteering as an advocate generally requires a time commitment of five to 20 hours monthly, and that he has a tendency to get very involved.

He said the time and emotion he invests is more than worth it and encourages anyone who might have a possible interest to investigate CASA Support Council.

"These are all good kids. I haven't had a bad case yet. I am surprised at the resiliency of the children who go through this kind of trauma in their lives. I really just want to help them be productive and maybe become part of a forever family. I know that all I wanted as a child was a forever family," Johnson said.

Contact freelance writer Loni Nannini at ninch2@comcast.net

### BEN'S BELLS



CHELSEA FORER / BEN'S BELLS

From left, Barbara Casanova, Ben Vernon, Cori Dolan, Julie Vernon, Joan Gilbert, Becky Cavazos, Peggy Herron, Thea Cañizo and Marie Abbs.

ARIZONA DAILY STAR

- **What:** Ben's Bells promotes kindness and community involvement. Each week a person who makes Tucson better is "belled."
- **Last week's recipient:** Ben and Julie Vernon.
- **Nominated by:** Joan Gilbert.
- **Why:** For their continuous support of local nonprofit organizations. The Vernons, owners of Crooked Tooth Brewery, engage in partnerships with nonprofit organizations for fundraising and information sharing, highlighting how Tucson citizens can become involved in local nonprofit organizations. Gilbert wrote in her nomination letter, "Our nonprofit organization, Partners for Equitable Science Instruction, has appreciated the willingness of Ben and Julie to support our efforts to raise funds for teachers and their students in science education," Gilbert wrote. Crooked Tooth has hosted the organization for nights of fun science activities and fundraising.

With their help we organized a family-friendly night with science trivia games, children's science activities, silent auctions of science-related themes, and more, Gilbert said. They offer these fundraising opportunities to other community organizations as well. Crooked Tooth shares its earnings on these special nights, promoting good work across our city. "This commitment by Ben and Julie is amazing and much-needed. Shared proceeds enhance both the work of organizations and the ongoing success of the brewery. This is community-building at its finest — win-win opportunities in creative and engaging approaches between businesses and nonprofits," Gilbert wrote.

• **For more information and to nominate someone:** Go to [bensbells.org/BellingForm](http://bensbells.org/BellingForm) to submit a name. Go to [bensbells.org](http://bensbells.org) or call 622-1379 for more information.

## Arizona Hearing Specialists holding diaper drive for clinic

ARIZONA DAILY STAR

Arizona Hearing Specialists is hosting a diaper drive for St. Andrew's Children's Clinic. The business is asking for donations of new and sealed packages of infant, child and adult diapers through March 21.

All diaper donations are tax deductible and can be dropped off at any of three AHS locations:

- Northwest Tucson —

7574 N. La Cholla Blvd. • Ventana and Foothills area — 6969 E. Sunrise Dr., No. 200.

• Green Valley — 512 E. Whitehouse Canyon Road., No. 196.

St. Andrew's Children's Clinic is a nonprofit, non-denominational health-care clinic in Nogales, Arizona. Its mission is to provide free, specialized medical care to children

living in Mexico who do not have access to care or treatment.

For information about St. Andrew's Children's Clinic, please visit [www.standrewsclinic.org](http://www.standrewsclinic.org)

The AHS audiologists and staff volunteer their time and services monthly, which includes servicing donated hearing aids and fitting them for children in need.



HUY NGUYEN / BLOOMBERG NEWS

Arizona Hearing Specialists is asking for donations of diapers through March 21.