



High School Art Class Mural



Antigone at the Border



Vicki & Jesse Listening Room



Neoglyphix Indigenous Aerosol Artists



Working to preserve & enrich the environment, culture and economy of the Sonoran Desert

# 2021 Annual Report



Rural Policy Forum



International Day of Peace



Tasty Tuesday



Bobby Q Nacho Listening Room



Mimi's Brunch



Clay Studio Business Mixer



Pisinemo District & Regional Branding Tour



Santa in the Plaza



Quitobaquito Springs/A'al Vaipia

Fall 2021 Kickstart Ajo Recipients

## 2022 ISDA Area of Focus

The ISDA board and staff see 2022 as a key opportunity to focus on ISDA's large footprint work that spans the Sonoran Desert Biosphere Region. In addition to continuing efforts on environmental and cultural preservation topics, we plan to leverage the economic development and revitalization successes piloted in the Ajo community into the greater Sonoran Desert Biosphere Region using the UNESCO Man and the Biosphere framework as a guide. Early partners in this work include the Pisinemo District of the Tohono O'odham Nation, the town of Gila Bend, and Sonoyta in the Mexican state of Sonora.



Amada Torruella Fall 2021 Artist-in-Residence



Paola Valenzuela Spring 2021 Artist-in-Residence

## Follow Us on Social Media!

- @ISDAinternationalsonorandesertalliance
- @sonoranc
- @i\_am\_isda
- @sonorandesertinn
- @ajoplazaarizona
- @curleyschoolcommunityajo



Ways to Donate:  
[www.isdanet.org](http://www.isdanet.org)

Mail to PO Box 687  
Ajo, AZ 85321

Or come visit us at our main office!  
38 N Plaza St  
Ajo, AZ 85321



*The International Sonoran Desert Alliance views 2021 as a case study in the substantiated value of seeding resilience in Sonoran Desert communities through adaptation and co-creative thinking. Thanks to active collaborations with members and other stakeholders, we have developed effective strategies to respond to a rapidly evolving reality. Whether the challenge be related to public health, climate change, border infrastructure or the economic fragility of our communities, active engagement from our membership has empowered us to quickly adapt. Thank you for playing such a crucial role! - Aaron Cooper, Executive Director*

## Thank you to our 2021 Board of Directors

Lance Bell, President, Ajo Council for the Fine Arts & Art Under the Arches Gallery

Paul P. Vasquez, 1st Vice President, Retired Banker & Tucson Bonsai Society

Lorraine Eiler, 2nd Vice President, Hia C-ed O'odham Alliance & Tohono O'odham Legislative Council

Cathy Hutton, Secretary, Ajo Transportation Company & Ajo Elks Lodge

Robert Dooley, Treasurer, Ajo Unified School District & Rotary International

Eric Alegria, Board Member, Restaurateur & Former Personal Banker

Stanley Cruz, Board Member, Pisinemo District Chairman & Travelling Eagle, LLC

Toni Cubillas, Board Member, Banker (retired) & ISDA Cultural Crafts Group

Jim Gillet, Board Member (appointed), Ajo Council for the Fine Arts

Selina Jesus, Board Member, Native American Advancement Foundation

Annelise Keuper, Board Member, Artist & Entrepreneur

Jana Montana, Board Member (Appointed), Tohono O'odham Legislative Council

Marlakay Henry, Alternate Appointee, Tohono O'odham Legislative Council

Gene O'meara, Board Member, Pima County Sheriff's Auxiliary Volunteers

Bridget Rendon, Board Member, Ballet Folklorico de Ajo & Ajo Elks Lodge

Bernard Siqueros, Board Member, Tohono O'odham Cultural Center & Museum (retired)

## 2021 ISDA Area of Focus Update: Quitobaquito/A'al Vaipia Restoration Project

In June 2021, the International Sonoran Desert Alliance (ISDA) donated \$100,000 to the National Park Service for restoration efforts at A'al Vaipia (Quitobaquito Springs). Since that time, the staff at Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument have leveraged ISDA's donation into more than tripling the restoration funds available. We are excited to report that initial restoration efforts are scheduled to begin in April, 2022. This public-private partnership will effectively stabilize and prolong the lifecycle of a critically important habitat for endangered and vulnerable species while simultaneously protecting a site of deep cultural importance to Indigenous communities throughout the region.



**In January 2022, we bid farewell to a well-loved resident of our Ajo community. Toni was a member of the board of directors of the International Sonoran Desert Alliance for 10 years and the amazing organizer of the Cultural Crafts group for 12+ years. Our community lost an extraordinary person but we are all surely richer for having known Toni.**

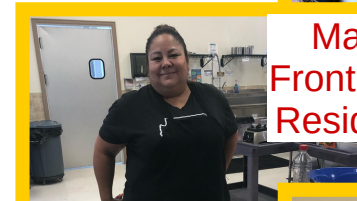
## Sonoran Desert Inn & Conference Center



The Sonoran Desert Inn is truly a magical place. But its magic doesn't come exclusively from the beautiful buildings or amazing gardens. It comes from the staff who, every day work to make this a special place for our guests to stay and discover Ajo and the Sonoran Desert. - J Brady, Director



**Maria Singleton**  
Front Office/Artist-in-Residency Manager



**Lucia Gutierrez**  
Operations Manager



**Lisa is one of SDCC's first hires! 7 years running!**

**SDCC Employee of the Month**  
**Lisa Garcia**

In May, SDCC welcomed the return of J Brady in his new position as director

Staff increased to 18 (not including staff dogs Coco, Peach, & Ore) with a new structure

Reactivated all standard business partners, including REI & Road Scholar

The Artist-in-Residency Program reactivated with a poetist in the Spring and a filmmaker in the Fall

Designers Gary Nabhan, Susan Black, & Allan Dunstan broke ground on the new courtyard garden

Instituted a rate increase with 0 negative responses from guests

Total night stays for 2021 nearly tied with 2020, an increase of 6% over 2019 & 19% over 2018



**2 50-Year Anniversaries**



**Red & White**

## Curley School Artisan Apartments



Completed 'Year 15' transition into direct ownership position

Transitioned from 3rd Party Management to Self Management and transitioned the existing site manager, Amanda Denning, into direct employment role

Continued repairs on 2 flood affected units with expected completion of repairs in Q1 2022

Improving lease-up and occupancy rate with new residents representing a diversity of artistic areas of practice

## Ajo Plaza & Business Support



**with Bobby Narcho**  
Print Tech

Ajo is recognized state-wide as an innovator. It has been a joy to serve the community in this new, much needed capacity. -Cristal Franco, Business Support Manager

Strong commercial occupancy  
2 new plaza businesses opened their doors; bike shop & print/frame/gift shop

Kickstart Ajo awarded \$55,000 in direct business support

October was the soft opening of the new Ajo Business Support Center

October also kicked off the monthly business & networking mixers

The Ajo Artisans e-commerce collective reconvened



# Program Impacts

## GED/Learning Center Program



Before COVID hit, the Learning Center had planned on working with students from the remote villages of the western Tohono O'odham Nation's Gu Vo District. After a year of stay-at-home orders and other COVID measures, in partnership with the Native American Advancement Foundation and Pima Community College, we started working with these students. PCC provided loaner laptops, hotspots, and the online class platform that we have used during the pandemic. At this time there are eight students currently enrolled from the villages of Gu Vo'o, Pia Oik, and Menager's (Ali Chuk). - Rodney Hopkins, Program Director



Selina Jesus  
NAAF Director

Under new management, the ISDA Woodworking Shop has been transformed from a somewhat neglected space to a better laid-out, organized, and cleaner shop for the community. Most importantly, we purchased two air filters, and received in donations two dust collectors, one of which is a large system that will be connected to most of the power tools in the shop. - Rodney Hopkins, Wood Shop Manager



Rob Duncan - Wood Shop Volunteer

237  
VITA Tax  
Returns at  
\$392.084

14,880 lbs  
Garbage Collected  
& 3 Community  
Cleanup Events



\$100,347  
in Utility  
Assistance



9  
Home  
Repair  
Projects



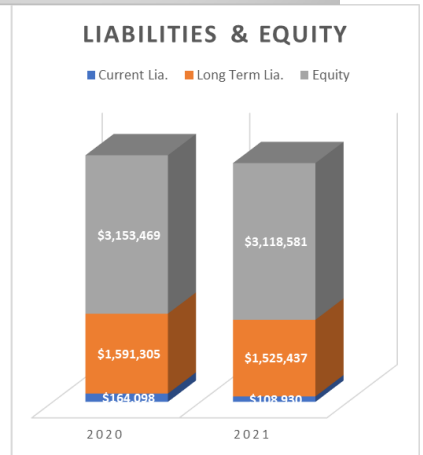
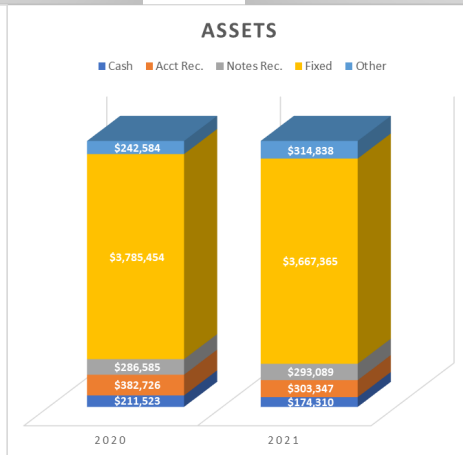
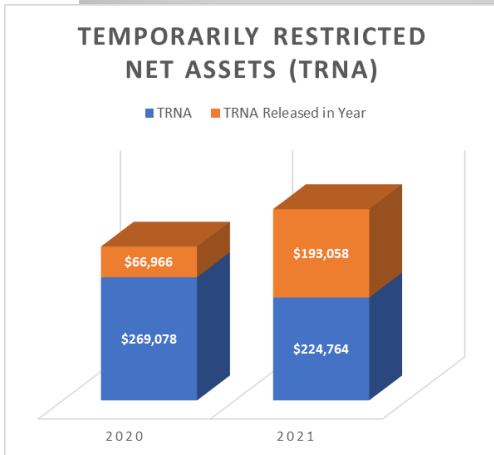
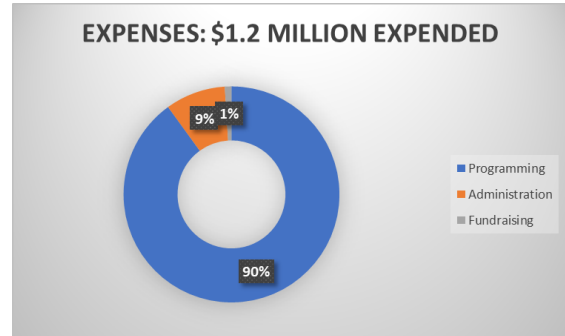
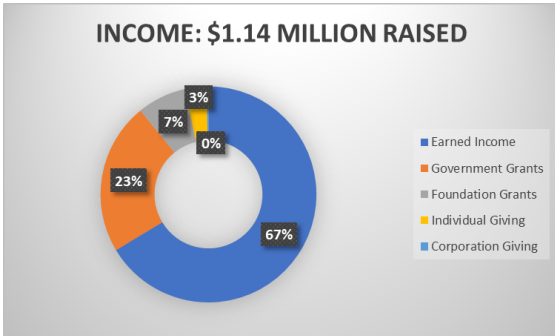
\$41,719  
in Home  
Rental  
Assistance



## Apprentice-to-Journeyman Program

Like many, we faced trials and experienced accomplishments over the past year. Many supplies have increased in price and are tougher to acquire. We also experienced multiple short stoppages for health and safety of all involved. Despite, this we have been able to complete home repairs and weatherization, but at a decreased rate for increased safety. -Joshuah Manual, Program Coordinator/Head Instructor  
2021 Apprentices: Frank Trejo, Lyle Cipriano, Darren Rendon, Roy Baker

# 2021 Financials



## Thank You to Our Volunteers!



While the organization has grown over the years providing programs, activities and events for the community, it is the behind the scenes operations that always amaze me. Staff, volunteers and community rallying behind ISDA with compassion, above and beyond responses, dedication and a helping hand with every task that comes along. Together we can and we are! -Vicki Tapp, Outreach Coordinator

Relationships - I've learned how important they can be. I've witnessed first-hand how ISDA builds communities and their relationships. Honoring everyone; engaging everyone; supporting everyone. I'm honored that I get to volunteer with ISDA. I feel part of something that builds a future of inclusiveness and hope for everyone it serves. What could be better than that? - Stephen Jarrett, ISDA volunteer since 2020

"Escape the Heat"



Team 3N Otis



Migrant Response



Team Peach Pop