

Spring 2026

NEWS FROM THE VA'AKI

Official Newsletter of the S'edav Va'aki Museum Volunteers

From the Desk of the Volunteer Program Specialist

BY Amereece Sterba

Happy Spring, everyone! We have had a wonderful start to the new year, filled with school groups, adult groups, visits from our neighboring museums, and a drone with LiDAR. I have been visiting other organizations to explore how their volunteer programs operate, as well as researching other methods for volunteer engagement and retention practices. I wanted to compare our engagement and retention with other organizations to gather ideas for improving our program. One major thing I learned is that SVM is one of the few places to offer Monthly Volunteer Meetings, and we have the only Teen Volunteer program focused on developing professional skills. So far this year, we have hosted 37 school groups, 5 adult groups, Ancient Technology Day, and 4 outreaches, and none of these would have been possible without your help. Our Indian Market Planning Committee is seeking additional members. If you would like to help plan this year's Indian Market, please let me know.

We have a number of exciting events scheduled in the near future. April 18th is our **Harmony Fundraising Event**. April 23rd will be our annual Volunteer Appreciation Dinner. The Cater Phoenix will be the caterer for this event, and they have a lovely menu picked out for us. May's Volunteer Lunch will have a short lecture on Collections, followed by a tour of Collections. We hope to see everyone at these events.

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FROM THE DESK OF THE DIRECTOR

BY NICOLE ARMSTRONG-BEST

Hello everyone:

It is hard to believe that Spring is nearly over! We have hosted many school groups, several adult groups, and just completed our spring event, Ancient Technology Day. Thank you to all of those who volunteered in support of the event. Also, our gardening crew out did themselves - the garden crops look amazing! Store volunteers have also done a wonderful job with updating the look of the store and incorporating many new products. I am continually amazed and grateful for the amount and quality of the work that you all do every day. Thank you!

Planning for our gala event, **Harmony: Balancing Past and Present – An Indigenous Sonoran Desert Experience**, is well underway. If you would like to volunteer for the event, scheduled for April 18, a sign-up is open now. If not, I encourage you to buy a ticket and support this fundraiser. Tell your friends and family! Tickets and further information can be found at <https://svmfoundation.org/Harmony>. It will be an amazing, unique evening.

April is also Volunteer Recognition Month. We so appreciate everything that you do for us. We hope you will join us for the Volunteer Recognition Dinner on April 23rd.

Finally, we will be open this summer – yeah! We continue to work on our new main gallery exhibition and will be installing a new exhibit in our changing galleries. Never a dull moment at our Museum, even when the temperatures exceed 100 degrees.



Resource Corner

Collaborative Archaeology Edited by Chris Loendorf

Use code AZFLR for 30%off

<https://uapress.arizona.edu/book/collaborative-archaeology>

From Huhugam to Hohokam: Heritage and Archaeology in the American Southwest. by J. Brett Hill 2019. Can be found in the Museum's Library

Landscape of the Spirits: Hohokam Rock Art at South Mountain Park. by Todd Bostwick and Peter Krocek University of Arizona Press, Tucson. <https://uapress.arizona.edu/book/landscape-of-the-spirits>





Spring Volunteer Lunch Highlights

So far this year, we have had several wonderful volunteer lunch lectures. In January, Chris Schwartz spoke on the Archaeological History of our site. Chris graciously gave the lecture on both a Friday and a Saturday, allowing more of our volunteers to attend. I hope to offer more Saturday lectures in the future.



Last December, I asked if our Garden Volunteers would be willing to come and speak with us about the work they do in our wonderful garden. In February, the Garden team delivered an impressive lecture that taught me a great deal about our garden and its history here at SVM. It was inspiring to witness the hard work they put into maintaining the garden and preparing for their presentation. The garden tasting tour was wonderful. Marc-Pierre also delivered a presentation on our Teen Volunteer program and its achievements over the past year.



In March, Laura delivered a lecture on the various crafts and activities offered by SVM to visiting groups. The volunteers in attendance had the opportunity to try out some of the crafts themselves. Additionally, Brian led a group of volunteers and staff on a petroglyph hike at South Mountain to Johnson's Camp. It was a wonderful morning where we all learned about the rich cultural resources in our area and the importance of preserving them.



Staffing Updates

We are excited to welcome Daniel Rodriguez to our team on March 30th. He is our new Trades Helper, and will have responsibilities for general outside clean up (front walkway, benches, signs, outside trash, etc.) as well as indoor minor maintenance needs. I know Ken and Caitlin will be happy to have some additional help for exhibit installation and fixing small things around the property. Ken has done an amazing job keeping everything going while we have been short of this position for over a year. Thank you for all you do Ken!



Birthday Shout Outs!

Some of our Volunteers have recently had a Birthday. We would like to wish the following Volunteers a Happy Birthday!

Laurene Montero
Jorge Pierson
Deborah Berner
Frank Grinere
Shirley Lowman
Steven Rascona

Please note: We do not include anyone in this list who has not given permission to post about their Birthday.



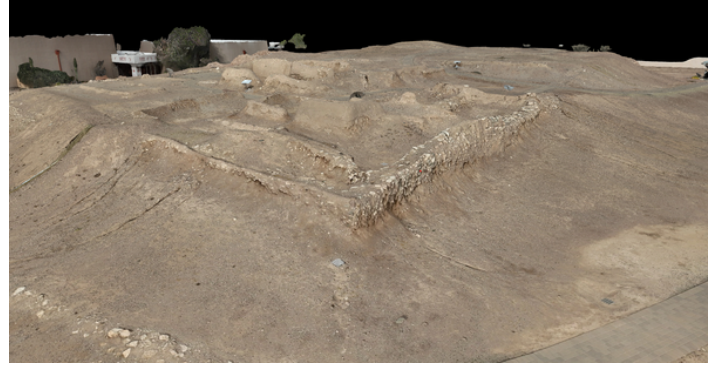
Photos from Ancient Technology Day





S'edav Va'aki Museum Research Group! by Chris Schwartz

Welcome to Q1 of 2026, from the newly minted S'edav Va'aki Museum Research Group! We brought on our first Arizona State University Undergraduate Research Apprentice, Jordan Haas, who has been assisting with our many archaeological projects. On the Phoenix Mapping Archaeology Project (PMAP) front, we've completed feature digitization (or are very close) for Pueblo Salado and Dutch Canal Ruins, as well as the La Lomita site complex. Doug Mitchell and Laurene Montero continue to lead artifact analysis as part of the La Lomita Community Study and they have been assisted recently by Mike Stubing (in addition to me and Jordan). Stop by on Fridays in the late morning/early afternoon if you want to say hi!



As part of the Va'aki (mound) stabilization, we invited Tony Wende, an aviation professor at ASU's Polytechnic Campus, to conduct 3d and photogrammetric scans of the mound in February. These scans were entirely drone based and will be used as part of the stabilization effort to create digital models of the mound and to monitor erosion of sensitive parts of the mound surface. There will be much more to come on stabilization as we embark on some minor excavations on the mound in Q2.





Round Robin Tours for the Three Rivers Site Steward Conference!

by **Lindsey Vogel-Teeter**

On February 28th, the Arizona Site Steward Program Foundation hosted the Three Rivers Site Stewards at SVM.

Our staff gave the group “Round Robin” presentations about archaeology in the City and graffiti removal at cultural sites. Then with the help of two of our Collections volunteers, we gave more than 50 site stewards a behind-the-scenes tour of Collections. Our staff and volunteers tried a new kind of tour with demonstrations cleaning baskets, rehousing bottles, and caring for pollen samples.



Cultural Resources Ranger Brian speaks to the Three Rivers Site Stewards about graffiti removal.

Thank You

Volunteers Make SVM Great!

By Amereece

This month is Volunteer Appreciation Month, and I want to take a moment to thank you all for the hard work you do at SVM. We truly could not accomplish so much without your support. The staff at SVM appreciates all the time you dedicate to making this place special.

The Volunteer Appreciation Dinner is on April 23rd, from 6:00 PM to 7:30 PM. We hope to see everyone there! If you haven't already, please RSVP by April 10th.



**VOLUNTEERS
NEEDED**

IMPORTANT VOLUNTEER DATES

April

April 18-
Harmony Balancing Past
and Present Event

April 23rd -
Volunteer Appreciation
Dinner

May

May 8th -
Volunteer Lunch /
Collections

May 18th -
International Museum
Day

