



FLAGSTAFF UNIFIED  
School District

# NEWSLETTER

September 2022

## Moon Tree dedication ceremony held at Killip Elementary School

August 17, 2022

Killip Elementary School is a proud recipient of a Moon Tree which was planted and dedicated on August 17, 2022. Rosemary Roosa, the daughter of Astronaut Stuart Roosa and head of the Moon Tree Foundation, attended the dedication ceremony.

Stuart Roosa helped start the Moon Tree Project and he took 500 species of seeds with him up into space to orbit the moon. The tree planted at Killip is a decedent of the trees grown from the seeds taken into space.

Kevin Schindler with Lowell Observatory explained Flagstaff is intimately tied to the Apollo Moon missions of the 1960s and '70s which culminated with 12 Americans walking on the moon and another 12 orbiting it.

"Each one of the astronauts traveled to northern Arizona before these missions for training, honing their geology field collecting skills at the Grand Canyon, Meteor Crater,



Sunset Crater, and even man-made crater fields near Doney Park," he said. "The USGS and Lowell Observatory also mapped the moon in preparation for the missions."

"Another connection is tied to one mission, in particular, Apollo 14, and its command module pilot Stuart Roosa. Earlier in life, Roosa served a stint as a smokejumper for the U.S. Forest Service. After he was named as a crew member of Apollo 14, he

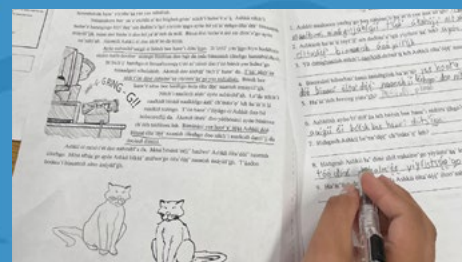
reconnected with the Forest Service and they developed a plan to take seeds from trees to the moon to see how they would react to the conditions there," said Schindler. "Roosa ended up taking a bunch of seeds from five different

**Continued on page 2 /  
Moon Tree**



*Photos, left: Rosemary Roosa poses with students and colleagues during the dedication of the Moon Tree at Killip Elementary School on August 17, 2022. Picture, back row, left to right: Kevin Schindler, Lowell Historian; Rosemary Roosa, president of the Moon Tree Foundation and daughter of astronaut Stuart Roosa; and Francisco Gonzalez, Moon Tree Board Member. Front row is 5th Grade students from Killip Elementary School, Alexandra, Cade, and Cruz, and Sheryl Wells, STEM Coordinator at Killip Elementary School. Photo, right: The Moon Tree.*

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## A message from our SUPERINTENDENT

During the month of October, parents and teachers have opportunities to discuss students' progress in school during Parent-Teacher Conferences. Please watch for information from your student's school about the conferences that are scheduled on October 10-12, 2022, at all elementary, middle, and high schools. This is a time for teachers to discuss expectations and academic standards, and review students' attendance, grades, and test scores. Parents are encouraged to bring a list of questions they would

like to ask during the conference and be ready to share their students' interests, needs, and the ways they would like to be involved in their learning. I hope these suggestions for productive conferences strengthen the partnership between FUSD staff and our families, which is necessary for our students' success at school. The changing colors of leaves and cool mornings are a sign that Fall is officially here. I hope staff, students, and families enjoy the Fall Break on October 13-14, 2022.



Rosemary Roosa

### ...Moon Tree / From Page 1

species. One of them, Douglas Fir, grows in northern Arizona, and in fact, some of the moon-bound seeds may have come from the San Francisco Peaks. At the request of USGS head Gene Shoemaker, who had close ties with NASA, educator Jim David collected some Douglas Fir seeds from the San Francisco Peaks, and it's unclear whether or not these particular seeds made it to the moon."

"What is clear is Flagstaff directly benefited from this effort. Roosa had

the seeds with him when he orbited the moon. Upon return, the seeds were germinated and the resulting trees, nicknamed 'Moon Trees' were sent to various places around the country, including Flagstaff," he added. "Flagstaff's Moon Tree was planted near what was then Flagstaff Middle School where Killip held classes this past year."

Rosemary stated in an email, "Our motto is 'Planting the seeds of inspiration.'" 🌲

## ADMINISTRATION

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Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum & Instruction

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Photos, left: A student learning the Navajo (Diné) language learns about feelings while playing a card matching game. Right: Students learning the Navajo language and culture play the Navajo Stick Game. (Submitted photos)

## Diné language learners immersed 50/50 at Puente de Hózhó

### 50% in Navajo, 50% in English

September 20, 2022

The 4th and 5th Grade Diné/English dual language program at Puente de Hózhó Elementary School is a self-contained classroom learning environment this year.

Mrs. Victoria Tomas, a 4th and 5th Grade teacher at Puente de Hózhó (PdH), explained students are immersed in the Diné language 50/50 on a daily basis at this grade level.

"[This] means 50 percent in Navajo (Diné) and 50 percent in English language instruction," she said.

Tomas also explained that contextualized lessons that highlight the International Baccalaureate (IB) Primary Year Programme's six themes are integrated into all subject areas throughout the school year.

"Cultural concepts woven within each of the six themes are generated by the teacher, as well as the co-teachers of the 4th and 5th Grade

teams at PdH in prospective language areas," said Tomas. "[The] Spanish language is also part of this theme development, [which] is taught in the target language in the Spanish/English language classrooms."

Tomas said this unique approach of applying all three languages and bridging IB concepts has been very rewarding. Over the past three years, there has been a lot of effort in building theme concepts by dedicated teachers of all three languages.

"Diné language is the focus in [our] daily instruction... with students developing vocabulary using Montessori-built materials in Diné... oral language development with reading and writing, which is practiced each week in all subject areas where appropriate," she said. "Cultural games and topics are [also] learned with respect to seasonal Diné activities throughout the year [as

well]."

Tomas explained the importance of sustaining our Diné language is imperative for our future generations.

There are some useful resources families can access for learning and practicing the Diné language. The website, [www.gomyson.com](http://www.gomyson.com), is a good resource for Diné language development, practice, games, and cultural vocabulary. The Duolingo app, which is accessed through mobile devices, is another good resource for Navajo language phrases and vocabulary.

Puente de Hózhó is a trilingual language school and has two dual-language programs comprised of a Navajo (Diné) Immersion Language Program and a Spanish-English Bilingual Program. The school serves students from kindergarten to 5th Grade, and they also have a 6-12th Grade International Baccalaureate Continuum to complement the language program. 🌲

## ELECTION

### Important Dates

**October 11, 2022**  
Last day to register to vote

**October 12, 2022**  
Early voting begins, and  
ballots mailed

**October 28, 2022**  
Last day to request a ballot  
to be mailed

**November 4, 2022**  
Last day to vote early in  
person

**November 8, 2022**  
Election Day

## FALL BREAK

### No School

**October 13-14, 2022**







## Flagstaff Mountain Biking Club starts the season with a win

September 12, 2022

The Flagstaff Mountain Biking Club won the North Conference Division in the first race of their season during a competition held on September 10, 2022, at Fort Tuthill in Flagstaff.

The winners included: Mackenzie Spillman, 1st Place in Varsity Girls; McKenna Maloney, 2nd Place in Varsity Girls; Keegan Field, 1st Place in Varsity Boys; Cooper Spillman, 3rd Place in JV1 Girls; James Bailey, 1st Place in JV1 Boys; Ben Dudine, 4th Place in JV1 Boys; Isaac Cole, 5th Place in JV1 Boys; Georgia Naleski, 1st Place in JV2 Girls; Kaitlyn Whitehead, 3rd Place in JV2 Girls; and Lily Sabol, 2nd Place in Freshman Girls.

Maurie Thompson, an assistant coach for the club explained they have 44 student-athletes on their roster — 31 males and 13 females. A

majority of the participating students are 8th Grade and high school students of Flagstaff Unified School District.

"We compete in five races throughout our season, with the final race being our state championship race at Fort Huachuca," she said. "Last year, our team claimed the Arizona State Championship."

For now, the team continues to practice and is looking forward to the rest of their season. Upcoming races are scheduled for September 25, 2022, at Snowflake, Arizona; October 8, 2022, at Pioneer Park in Prescott, Arizona; October 23, 2022, at McDowell Mountain Park in Fountain Hills, Arizona; and November 6, 2022, at Fort Huachuca in Sierra Vista, Arizona which is the state championship race. 🌲



*Photos, top left: Members of the Flagstaff Mountain Biking Club prepare to start their race on September 10, 2022, at Fort Tuthill in Flagstaff. L-R, Oliver Minshew, Zyggi Bristol, Zachary Bustamante, and Andrés Schlachter. Top right: Biking Club members pose for a photo after the race. Back row, L-R standing on the podium: Everett Sherry, Logan Othon, Mackenzie Spillman, Addison Carpenter, Cooper Spillman, McKenna Maloney, Georgia Naleski, Ben Dudine, James Bailey, and Isaac Cole. L-R standing on ground: Lily Sabol, Seth Ward, Oliver Minshew, Hannah Field, Owen Gavin-Keith, Julian Shuur, Zyggi Bristol, Tanner Othon, Zachary Bustamante, and Leah Thompson. Bottom photo: Riders compete. (Submitted photos)*





*Photos, left: Mark Culbertson, principal of Puente de Hózhó Elementary School, cuts the ribbon or banner to officially open the bike park while Superintendent Michael Penca and Governing Board President Carol Haden hold the banner, while students eagerly wait to ride the trails. Right: Abraham Feria Castruita, a 6th Grader at Mount Elden Middle School rides the new trails.*

## A new trail, bike park opens at Puente de Hózhó

September 21, 2022

Puente de Hózhó Elementary School has a new trail and bike park thanks to a partnership between Flagstaff Youth Riders (FLYRS), Flagline Trails, and the Flagstaff Unified School District. A grand opening event was held on September 13, 2022.

According to Tyler Nelson, executive director of FLYRS, the park consists of an almost one-mile-long loop trail with alternate skill lines, two flow trails, a pump track, a skills area, and the main hub area.

The project began in 2021, and Nelson explained that FLYRS raised nearly \$120,000 from philanthropic organizations, local businesses, and Flagstaff community members to make the park a reality.

"Flagline Trails, a local company,

completed the design and construction along with [student] volunteers from Puente de Hózhó (PdH), FLYRS participants, and coaches," said Nelson. "This park will provide a valuable community resource that will fulfill the critical needs to get Flagstaff youth outside, physically active, engaging with the environment, and challenging themselves through various mountain biking programs."

Nelson also said the trail and bike park help to fulfill FLYRS' mission to expand access to mountain biking.

"The [park] provides direct access to a highly diverse student population at [Puente de Hózhó and Mount Elden Middle School], as well as the broader community living in the nearby Sunnyside and Lower Greenlaw neighborhoods. There will

be open access to the public outside of school hours," he said. "The [park] will meet an important need in the Flagstaff community while contributing to the diversification of mountain biking."

"The park is one of a kind in that it offers a true forested trail with progressive features for building skills in an urban neighborhood," said Nelson. "Although many Flagstaff neighborhoods have cement skate parks that you often use for biking, the PdH park provides a dirt and rock option for mountain biking. For those ready to progress, the park is within a quarter of a mile to the Coconino National Forest's MEDL trail system, which offers hundreds of miles of world-class mountain bike trails on public lands."

"Here's a fun fact, the Puente park

is one of only a few bike parks on school property in the country, with the other two being in Arizona, and they pale in comparison to what we've done at Puente," he added.

Nelson explained that the FLYRS program has been operating after-school programs at PdH since 2019. It is free to kids and includes all equipment, such as bikes, helmets, water bottles, athletic shirts, and snacks. The program plans to expand the free after-school program at other FUSD sites, including Marshall Elementary, Summit High School, and eventually Leupp Elementary School.

To learn more about the FLYRS program, access their website [www.flyrsaz.com](http://www.flyrsaz.com). 🌲



## Celebrating Hispanic Heritage Month

September 22, 2022

The Flagstaff Unified School District is celebrating Hispanic Heritage Month from September 15 to October 15, 2022. The month was designated by presidential proclamation as a time to celebrate the rich heritage of Hispanic Americans and to recognize the contributions they have made to our country.

Cindy Noble, director of Bilingual Education at Flagstaff Unified School District (FUSD), presented to the governing board on September 13, 2022, and she explained we recognize the history, heritage, and accomplishments of Hispanic and Latino Americans of the past and present.

Noble explained the definitions of Hispanic, Latino, Latina, and Latinx.

"Hispanic refers to a person who is from or a descendant of someone who is from a Spanish-speaking country. Latino, Latina, or Latinx refers to a person who is from or a descendant of someone who is from a country in Latin America," said Noble. "This population is approximately 60 million people in our country or 18% of the population who identify as Hispanic."

Noble also explained FUSD has 949 students who identify Spanish as the language spoken in their homes, and 478 of those students are identified as English learners.

"English language services are provided across the district at all of our schools," she said.

Noble said some of the ways FUSD supports its Hispanic population across the school district are through programs like Puente de Hózhó Magnet School, the PdH Language Academy at Sinagua Middle School, basic and advanced Spanish and Navajo courses at secondary sites—including the new Heritage Speaker Course at Coconino High School, the AAPPL testing at Puente de Hózhó

and Sinagua Middle School, the Seal of Biliiteracy testing, and through family outreach events.

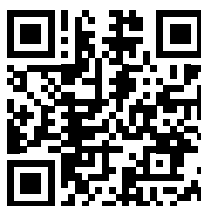
FUSD also supports and administers programs and activities such as the International Baccalaureate Program for Global Citizenship; collaborative relationships with Coconino Community College through CAVIAT and CTE program; Northern Arizona Interfaith Council (NAIC) outreach programs at Sinagua Middle School, Flagstaff High School, Coconino High School, and Puente de Hózhó; post-secondary counseling and guidance, and district-wide language committees.

Noble also explained the month is celebrated in many ways with events such as parades, art exhibitions, concerts, and traditional Hispanic food fairs. The Ballet Folklórico de Colores, a group comprised of Preschool to 12th Grade students from FUSD will have several performances to celebrate the beauty found in the Hispanic culture.

For more information, [www.hispanicheritagemonth.gov](http://www.hispanicheritagemonth.gov).

*Photos, top: Izabella Estrella, a sophomore at Coconino High School, performs with other dancers with the Ballet Folklórico de Colores on September 23, 2022, before the football game at Coconino High School in Flagstaff, Arizona. Bottom: Savina Iniguez, an 8th Grader at Sinagua Middle School, dances with Sergio Padilla, choreographer, on September 23, 2022, at Coconino High School.*

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Barbara Ann Heerkens



Alicia Trillo Ruiz



Reyna Rodriguez



Patti Pastor



Ashley Esparza

## FUSD Staff Highlights

September 15, 2022

**Barbara Ann Heerkens** is the new Assistant Director of Food Services at Flagstaff Unified School District. She is a registered dietitian and she holds a master's degree in public health and nutrition.

As a registered dietitian, she works independently with clients to promote health through mindful eating. Her research interests include promoting mental health in children, nutrition and health education, and food system and sustainability policy.

Before attending graduate school, she graduated with two undergraduate degrees in education and biology in 2018 from Northern Arizona University. She taught biology, anatomy, and physiology in high school and middle school for three years. During that time, she also worked as a naturalist and a specialized program director for the Wolf Ridge Environmental Learning Center where she developed specialized place-based camps for their summer programs. She is in her third year working with the MNA camps where she strives to facilitate a camper-centered and inquiry-based learning environment. This year, she created three camps geared toward promoting preventative health and intuitive eating in campers along with an appreciation for healthy bodies and healthy ecosystems.

**Alicia Trillo Ruiz** is now working in the FUSD Human Resources Department as a Human Resources Specialist. She was previously the school district receptionist.

"My year here with FUSD has been a true joy because it has allowed me to gain employee relations throughout the district and be able to grow professionally into what I'm passionate about," she said. "I strive to be able to give everyone a positive onboarding experience that will leave everyone feeling excited and confident about their new position within the district. I am proud to be a part of Human Resources!"

Alicia and her husband have three dogs and they enjoy the outdoors with them. In their spare time, they enjoy spending time with their family and friends, being physically active, and watching movies.

**Reyna Rodriguez** is the new Assessment Systems Specialist at Flagstaff Unified School District. Reyna is not new to FUSD, she is in her eighth year with the school district.

Reyna is an alumna of Coconino High School, and she started her career with FUSD working at Puente de Hózhó Elementary School and then moved to the FUSD Human Resources Department. Currently, she has taken on a new role in the school district's Research,

Assessment, and Data Department where she is excited to learn and grow her skills.

Outside of work, she enjoys spending time with her husband and three children.

**Patti Pastor** is the new Career Exploration Coordinator and Instructor at Flagstaff Unified School District. She was previously the advanced Culinary Arts teacher at Flagstaff High School.

Patti started her teaching career in 2006 when she joined Flagstaff High School and she said she fell in love with education after that point. She remained in that post for 17 years until she accepted this new position with the school district. She is thrilled to be able to support more areas of FUSD in this new role and to work with community stakeholders and educators throughout the state who support work-based learning and career exploration.

Prior to teaching, Patti explained she and her husband, Dave, sold their successful restaurant in 2004, which they operated for 25 years.

"It was bittersweet but after being hit by a drunk driver and sustaining a TBI and [being] unable to work for over a year and a half, [I] explored for a bit trying to find [my] next meaningful challenge," she said.

Her next challenge was in education. Patti also serves as a member-at-large for the Association for Career and Technical Education of Arizona where she advocates

for Career and Technical Education throughout the state. She received both her bachelor's and master's degrees from Northern Arizona University.

She is married and has two grown daughters and one grandchild. She enjoys hiking, biking, gardening, and traveling.

**Ashley Esparza** is the new Technology & Innovation Specialist at Flagstaff Unified School District.

Ashley grew up in Flagstaff and attended schools within Flagstaff Unified School District (FUSD). She earned her bachelor's degree in elementary education, then taught math and science at Sinagua Middle School where she obtained a Middle Grades Math endorsement.

Most recently, she taught 5th grade at Kinsey Elementary School where she and her team collaborated with various community partners to provide place-based learning experiences and she was able to serve as a Technology Peer Coach. She obtained her master's degree in Learning and Technology, and she was part of the Technology Leadership Team for FUSD.

In her free time, she serves as an advisory board member for Girls on the Run of Northern Arizona and she enjoys outdoor recreation. 🌲



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