

TRAIL TALES

SPRING - SUMMER 2026



A farewell from our Hikemaster. Steve Toeniskoetter



My year as Hikemaster is quickly coming to a close, but what a year it's been. Our leaders have created 36 new hikes, 27 of which have been run. We've had 51 first time hikers this year. These numbers speak volumes about the popularity and strength of this club.

It's been a lot of work that I could not have done on my own. Kay Pasley, our previous Hikemaster, liked to stress that it takes a village, and I saw firsthand how true that is. There are a lot of members of that village that I want to thank.

My hike selection committee, for consistently recommending interesting and challenging hikes. **Our leaders and assistant leaders**, for not only their awesome leadership but also their flexibility and willingness to help out when needed. **Our members**, who create new hikes, for constantly giving us new places to go and things to see. **Our orientation team**, for prepping those enthusiastic new hikers. **Our club members**, for being so welcoming to new hikers. **My assistant, Barb Fleshman**, for being such a great partner but also for the too many times she needed to step in for me. And, **our past Hikemasters**, for their advice as I navigated the year.

As Barb and her assistant, Rich Calderazzo take over, I look forward to many more years of hiking with the club.

Thank you all!

Incoming Hikemaster, Barb Fleshman and Assistant, Rich Calderazzo

This past year as the club's Assistant Hikemaster has flown by!

I enjoyed this role and all that it entailed; from making sure first-aid kits were fully stocked and ready to go each Thursday morning to providing spur-of-the-moment support to our Hikemaster. Steve has been a great partner, mentor, and trainer for the job I will start May 1.

I am excited that **Rich Calderazzo** will be my partner in his new role as Assistant Hikemaster. Together we will make sure that our club continues to offer a great variety of hikes and to promote our motto of "Safe and Enjoyable Hiking."

I am grateful to have a fantastic hike selection committee already working on our spring/summer hike lineup, to have our dedicated leaders ready to lead each month, and to have the generous support of our previous Hikemasters.

Bring it on! Let's hike!



A record of an Amazing Mileage Awards day!

On February 26th. a special and very significant Thursday hike took place.

George Chute was leading the club's **Star Pass** hike with 20 hikers and received his **7000 mile award patch** from Jim Chisholm, a past hikemaster. This was not only a special and rare award, but as many will realize for a leader, that 7000 miles represents **only documented club hike miles!**

Whats missing? Keep in mind, for every hike a leader leads, he or she scouts it in advance, so double that mileage! Plus, there are many other (*hidden*) miles from assisting others scout **THEIR** hikes plus, hundreds of miles from developing **NEW** hikes to really appreciate the significant miles and efforts that patch honors.

Oh, and if you dig a little deeper, you will also realize George's patch means he completed a total of **1000 Club Hikes**. WOW!

George has a lot of other records associated with those 1000 hikes.

He's led 330 hikes, (*a Club Record!*) **58 were A's, 124 were B's and 148 were C hikes!**

Not surprisingly, his very favorite sweep was his wife Kathy, who swept for him on 235 of those 330 hike leads. As an added bonus, his mileage accomplishment was honored not only by the



current Hikemaster but by four previous hikemasters. Check out that photo.

To add to this special event, especially for our Hike Master, Steve Toeniskoetter, George had the pleasure of presenting Steve with his **1500 mile** hiking award! It's another rare event when two Hikemasters get to honor each other under such special circumstances. I have the feeling both George and Steve will never forget the date or the occasion when they received their respective mileage awards!

CONGRATULATIONS ALL!





Judith LeClair Selected for a 2026 Pima County, Certified Master Naturalist position

Following a competitive application & interview process, Judith was fortunate to be selected to become a Pima County Certified Master Naturalist, 2026 Cohort. These programs are designed for adult learners who wish to provide community service through citizen science, environmental education, and land stewardship.

Judith will be following a 60-hour training program that runs from January - May consisting of lectures, readings / research, online seminars, & field labs covering natural history, ecosystems, flora, fauna, and the cultural history of Arizona. The course is heavily focused on leadership skills, equity and inclusion in the outdoors.

In addition to multiple required assignments and several team projects; an individual capstone project must be designed & successfully completed for final certification.

Once certified, Judith will work with the community including science, natural and cultural resource initiatives to meet her 20 -60 hours of required volunteer work. To remain active, an annual re-certification requires not only those 20-60 hours of volunteer efforts but the completion of an additional 8-20 hours of advanced training in specific skills or topics, (*i.e. Geology, Hydrology botany,zoology and or ecology*) each calendar year.

A significant contribution of time and effort providing measurable value to Pima County and to the community. All things we know Judith will excel at.

For more information on the program including costs, enrollment opportunities and extra specialized training requirements, take a look at the Pima County's Master Naturalist website, <https://pimamasternaturalists.org>

Mileage Award Patches from April 2025

50 miles--24, 250 miles--6, 500 miles--9

1000 { Ken Krahulek, Gillian & Mark Batterman, Diane Wilson, Tom Bosma, Bill Bode, Eric Kohnn Jane Toeniskoetter, and Bob Senning

1500 - Steve Toeniskoetter, Kathy Davidson, Keith Blair, Zael & Elisabeth Lutz and Mary Pulkrabek

2000 - Steve White, Barbara Jepkema, Pat Nelson, Tony Garreffa and Gary Icenogle

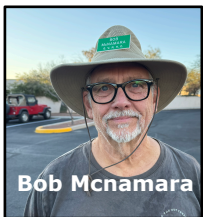
2500 - Duane Dotson, David Kean, Bill White and Sue Kazmier

3000 - **Jim Chervenka and Judith LeClair**

3500 - **Lorrie Koons**

7000 ! - **George Chute**

POT LUCK DINNERS and IMPRESSIVE PRESENTATIONS



The clubs Pot Luck presentations continue to impress with our hiking club members adventures in the US and around the world. If you couldn't attend the Feb 15th. presentation by Bob Mcnamara on Death Valley, you missed an excellent first person perspective on Death Valley and it's wonders.

Bob has developed an intimate relationship with Death Valley as he has visited it annually for 50 years and has volunteered for 10 years (*three to four months at a time*) as a back country ranger. Go [Here](#) to learn more amazing facts about Death Valley which Bob shared with us during his excellent presentation.

Don't miss our upcoming Spring Pot luck, March 29, featuring another members presentation; "Cirque du Mont Blanc 2024/25"

The presentation will be provided by an impressive group of club hikers, who refer to themselves as the "*Tour du Mont Blanc (TMB) Hikers*" You'll have to join us for the Spring Potluck to find out who those hikers are and learn all about their travel experiences detailing the planning and the execution of an amazing hike in the French and Italian Alps.



Josie Trobec, Event Coordinator

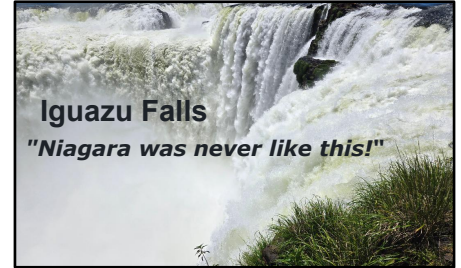
A hiking adventure in Argentina!



Sue Palfrey and Patsy Sills explored Argentina this past December. They visited five areas of this country with wildly varying habitats and weather conditions. What an adventure!

Staying in the small unique Patagonian town of El Chalten at the foot of the Andes was a highlight. For three days they hiked trails, many of which led directly from the town, enjoying spectacular scenery, wildflowers, and wildlife.

Three more days in the windy desert steppe area of Patagonia in the town of El Calafate included a journey for an up-close look at the famous Perito Moreno Glacier.



They flew to the town of Ushuaia at the extreme southern tip of South America for a cool and damp exploration of the Beagle Channel and Tierra del Fuego National Park. Then a flight to see Iguazú Falls for a day enjoying tropical weather, jungle vegetation, animals, birds and amazing butterflies.

Of course, there was time to explore several miles of walkways for viewing the extensive spectacular waterfall system in the area at this high-water time of year. The city of Buenos Aires with its perfect weather, beautiful parks, and historic buildings, was another very pleasant surprise. So the question now, is what other amazing adventures are Sue and Patsy planning for the rest of 2026 and into 2027?



Sue Palfrey - President's Report

I am wrapping up my 3-year board term as president. Part of the president's responsibility is agenda setting and keeping the ball rolling - an easy task as each board and committee member is truly on top of their responsibilities.

Some board accomplishments this year are: The transition to t-shirt sales via a private vendor is happening this spring. This removes the club as the middleman and provides the opportunity for items with the Club logo to be purchased on an ongoing basis. Many thanks to Nancy White for her work on this!

Black Pug software continues to add features enabling the board to input information and access the reports they need seamlessly. For example, awards, membership, and orientation chairs can now do all their work on the app to communicate numbers directly to the hike records committee. Judy Manley and Steve Toeneskoetter developed and provided this amazing app to the club.

GPS mapping courses were provided this year by Dan Paxton (Gaia App) and Joe Frazier (map and compass). In addition, information on Garmin and Garmin's software, "Basecamp" was provided by Jim Chisholm and Keith Blair. All the details and course info are now posted on our Member Services web page.

With the help of Anita Woodward, a committee chair for the position of "archivist", was defined to replace Tom Johnson's role as both librarian and historian. Kristi Lund has graciously agreed to take on that position!

Finally, the board decided to implement a very short survey to solicit ideas for improvement and how the club is doing. The survey results were shared at the annual meeting and the Club is perceived as doing a great job for it's membership. A few suggestions on minor changes were also submitted and are being evaluated by the board.

A FAREWELL NOTE FROM FRANK SURPLESS

As many of you know, Frank Surpless and his wife Margaret, are moving to San Diego, CA. for retirement and to be closer to family. I'm very proud to be one of many who cherish his friendship as do so many in the club and others in the community.

As a personal friend, my editorial accomplice for Trail Tales the past ten years, a previous Hikemaster, developer of 35 club hikes, and a revered hike leader for his interesting and informative hikes, he will be deeply missed by everyone.

Frank's farewell: *"This is a tough one! Hard to leave an activity which has so changed the lives of a multitude of participants: it covers a large variety of themes and activities ranging from the Western Movement to an intimate knowledge of Southeastern Arizona, getting to know and make close friends of Club members, taking wonder at the sheer magnitude of natural attractions, unloosing the creativity of hike creators to devise attractive and diverse trails and hikes, and so on.*

I've saved mention of the physical benefits of our scouts, hikes, and various meanderings for the last. For me, the Green Valley Hiking Club saved my life.... period! Finally, I'd like to thank so many for your felicitations regarding Margaret's and my departure: we will miss so many of you and the joys each of you have brought to us and the Club. So long... and many thanks".



Half-Marathons and Hiking: The Perfect Combination? (an account by Rhonda Wills)



Until I left my corporate desk job in 2009, my normal activity consisted of walking on a treadmill 30 minutes, five days a week, and maybe a thirty minute walk a week on my lunch hour. Pretty minimal; but I had a desire one day to do more. I had no idea that “more” would one day mean half-marathons.

Then: It started slowly. I joined a local gym which offered free classes with membership. Within a year or so I was taking a class of some sort every day and enjoyed chatting with other members. One lady in particular, who is ten years older than I, encouraged me to join her and participate in an upcoming “spring triathlon” for women only.

This event included a ½ mile swim, a 12-mile bike ride, and a 5 K run. After giving it some thought, I decided to go for it; and that is when I found participating in events to be fun and motivational. I eventually decided to follow a training program to work up to a 10k (6.2 miles)—and then a half-marathon (13.1 miles). I was not a fast runner by any means, but found that I enjoyed the events regard-less, and was satisfied with just being able to cross the finish line.

After completing a few half-marathons, I realized that I wanted to do one without taking weeks in order to get ready. What I needed to do was consistently train and consistently participate in events. I joined a running group, studied their posted event schedule, and signed up for an event somewhere each month. My husband, Jim, was, fortunately for me, supportive of this craziness and soon found himself getting up at 4:00 a.m. (or even earlier) to get me to the event venue. At these events I kept running into people who were having fun doing events in all 50 states (!) Jim and I went for it; and I planned it out and figured that if I did five new States every year, I could finish fifty by the time I hit 70. Unfortunately, the pandemic had other ideas, and my fifty states goal was stalled for several years.



Now: Fast forward to today; I now just walk and no longer run. However, I’ve continued to do at least one half-marathon every month for the last 132 months. I’ve completed events in 36 states, and if all goes well as planned, I should have seven more states under my belt by the end of 2026.

My favorite activity in Green Valley, without a doubt, is hiking. Training to walk half-marathons has changed the way I am able to experience hiking in the best possible way. Building the stamina to cover long distances on foot has given me a level of endurance and confidence I never had before. While once might have felt a challenging or tiring outing, now feels comfortable and energizing. Instead of worrying about how far or how steep a trail might be, I can focus on the scenery, the conversation, and the simple joy of being outside. The miles I’ve logged during half-marathon training have strengthened not only my legs, but also my mindset. I’ve learned patience, pacing, and how to keep going when things get tough skills that translate perfectly to the trail. Long hikes no longer feel intimidating. they feel like an adventure. I can handle longer routes and higher elevations without hesitation, knowing that I’m prepared and capable.

Most of all, it has deepened my enjoyment of nature. Whether I’m walking desert paths surrounded by saguaros, or exploring new landscapes while traveling, I have the freedom to go farther and see more. Hiking for me has become less about endurance and more about a richer experience.

I feel so fortunate to be part of this incredible group. When I see my fellow hikers receive and display their mileage patches, I applaud their dedication and accomplishment. Patches and medals have a lot in common... There is always anticipation as you work toward earning that next one.

In Memoriam: for our friends and fellow hikers...

Dan Schroeder, Past Hikemaster, hike leader, contributing developer of the Whipple Observatory telescope and mirror.

Keith Sandahl, Hiker, Coast Guard veteran.

Peter Burgard, Assistant hike leader, avid sailor and camper.