

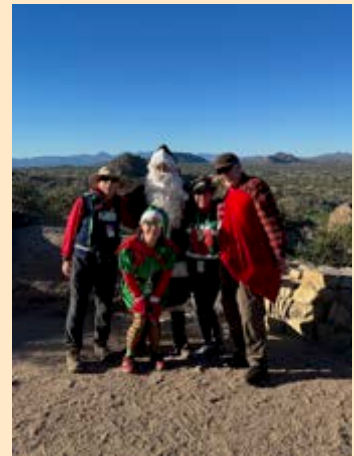
Friends of Pinnacle Peak Park

Spring 2026 Volume #45

Jingle Hike to Santa



More than 350 visitors put on their most festive holiday outfits and hiked up to visit with jolly old Saint Nick to share their holiday wish list! Visitors received a special holiday goodie bag including a commemorative Jingle Hike patch, creativity was in full display at the craft table where kids made personalized ornaments, and face painters added to the holiday cheer. Holiday beverages and snacks were a treat.



Explore More Day – Visitors enjoyed learning about the Sonoran Desert's flora, fauna, reptiles, geology and even experienced a live bat exhibit. The various edible items found in the desert for animals as well as humans were showcased. Children had the opportunity to explore the park, create a desert-themed craft and become a Junior Ranger.



EEK! at the Peak – This spooktacular family event, held the Saturday before Halloween, attracted hundreds of visitors. Active learning from various nature stations, special Halloween crafts and costume contests. A ghoulishly good time was had by all!

Holiday beverages and snacks were a treat.



Milkweed: A Small Plant with a Big Job

By Molly Heekin

Milkweed may not tower over the Pinnacle Peak Park trail like a saguaro or ocotillo, but few desert plants play a more important ecological role.

Arizona milkweed (*Asclepias angustifolia*) is best known as the host plant for monarch butterflies during the fall migration. Monarchs lay their eggs only on milkweed, and the caterpillars rely entirely on its leaves for food. Compounds in the plant make the caterpillars, and later the butterflies, unpalatable to predators, offering protection throughout their life cycle.

Found nowhere else in the United States, milkweed grows from a deep taproot and reaches about two feet tall, often with several slender stems rising from a single base. It gets its name from the milky sap released when stems or leaves are broken. Milkweed can be easy to overlook, with its narrow leaves, and small white and pale pink flowers that bloom late spring through summer. Like many desert plants, milkweed can take advantage of moisture when it arrives, and off-season rain may extend its growing season or trigger additional blooms.

Arizona milkweed is rare, found primarily at higher elevations in southern Arizona. It is increasingly valued for conservation, as habitat loss has sharply reduced monarch populations.

21 milkweed plants, donated by the Desert Botanical Garden, were recently planted around the Ramada, parking lot, and trail.



Volunteer Profile: Sean Hufford

By Domenica Corbo

Sean Hufford was born and raised in Clarion, PA before losing a 2-1 vote to his parents and being moved to Arizona as a teenager in the mid 1980s. Sean graduated from Paradise Valley High School and earned his Bachelor's Degree from the University of Arizona. Sean spent his career in a variety of executive roles with Spirit Realty Capital ("Spirit"), a formerly publicly traded REIT.

Sean has been an active member of the Pinnacle Peak Park since the park opened in 2002. An avid hiker, Sean has hiked Pinnacle Peak more than 2,000 times. He enjoys all parts of the trail, but particularly enjoys the descent between High Point and the valley in the Spring, when it is covered with blooming wildflowers. His most memorable experience at PPP is spotting and observing a mountain lion crossing the golf course (from a safe and elevated distance on the trail, of course!). His advice to PPP visitors is to embrace the experience and fully immerse yourself in the Sonoran Desert. Be respectful of the environment, and leave nothing behind, other than the occasional footprint.



Sean is a proud husband to his wife Victoria, and they will be celebrating their 25th wedding anniversary this May. Sean is also a proud father to daughters, Reece, Cayleigh & Ciara. He enjoys international and domestic travel, hiking, hockey, football and Belgian beer.

Katie's Corner

By Katie Anders

We are amidst our busy season here at Pinnacle Peak from October-April. We hit the ground running this fall and introduced two new pilot programs, Eek! At the Peak! And Explore-More Day! Both programs were geared towards children and their families with lots of help from Recreation Leaders Susan, Dawn, John, E, and Gary and a handful of volunteers. Together they created booths and experiences about the Sonoran Desert while also celebrating holidays like Halloween with a costume contest. We had over 1,000 people in attendance for both of these events. In December we had our 20th Annual Jingle Hike to Santa, where more than 200 people hiked their way to Grandview for a photo opportunity with Santa himself!



In the spring we are looking forward to new story boards on the trail and a mixed celebration for Earth Day and Pinnacle Peak's 24th birthday with a month-long event called "Don't Trash the Trail". Together we will find fun ways to eliminate trash on the mountain and educate visitors why wild desert animals cannot eat our food scraps. We are looking forward to summer to plan and create new, exciting opportunities at Pinnacle Peak in the fall. Stay tuned!

There's always something happening in Katie's Corner!

Events and Activities:

Spring, Fall & Winter

Astronomy Evenings

Sunset/ Full Moon Hike

Wildlife Discovery

Late Fall

Jingle Hike

EEK! At the Peak

Explore More Days

Spring

Don't Trash the Trail (New)

For Dates and Times and to register go to:

www.scottsdaleaz.gov/parks/find-a-park/pinnacle-peak-park

Pinnaclepeakpark.org

*Visit our new and improved
website!*



Our new bench at PK44

Photo Credit: Jim Sciacero



Friends of Pinnacle Peak Park

PMB 288

8711 E. Pinnacle Peak Rd.

Scottsdale, AZ 85255

pinnaclepeakpark.org

info@foppp.org

Volunteer Opportunity

Do you want to be a steward and help protect our beautiful Sonoran Desert? Do you want to share your knowledge of our special environment? If yes, then Pinnacle Peak Park has a variety of volunteer opportunities available to you, including trail roving, trail sweeping, trail maintenance and visitor center attendant. Find more information and a volunteer application at City of Scottsdale- Pinnacle Peak Park Volunteers (scottsdaleaz.gov).

Board Members

Lisa Levey, President

Molly Heekin, Vice President

Tom Eye, Treasurer

Sheila Wright, Secretary

Domenica Corbo

Paul Diefenderfer

Sean Hufford

Robin Prosser

Eric Repec

Editor/ Designer: Robin Prosser