



Editor: Mary Jo Martin

BENSON BEAUTIFICATION

WHAT'S HAPPENING

issue 1-18

March 2018

FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

Mary Jo Martin, Editor

This is the first newsletter for this year. A lot of things are happening and we are going to bring you up to date.

OFFICERS & BOARD MEMBERS

Our new slate of officers voted in at our Annual Meeting are:

Cindy Allen—President

Lisa Hill—Treasurer

Ron Desmarais—Vice President

Reagan Wilmarth—Secretary

Volunteer—Mary Jo Martin—

Grant Coordinator/Newsletter Editor

Advisory Board Members are:

Lyndon Denton—Apache Nitrogen Products

Ken Goranson—Benson Hospital

David Bryan—SSVEC

Michelle Johnson—City of Benson

So who are these people?

Cindy Allen comes to us via the USMC. She and her husband purchased the old Arnold Hotel and are renovating it. She also is Captain of the Pony Express and has been instrumental in reviving that group.

Ron Desmarais spent 22 years in the military and is now on the board of the Benson Hospital. He's doing a great job with our website —

www.BensonAZmurals.org.

Lisa Hill is our rock and inspiration. She has a wealth of experience in many fields, but it was Lisa who saw how the “City of Murals”

project in Lake Placid, Fla., revitalized Lake Placid and she knew it could do the same here. She did all the hard work needed to get us to where we are today.

Reagan Wilmarth comes to us from the Benson/San Pedro Valley Chamber of Commerce. She has years of experience with non-profits and it's a real blessing that we have her.

And then there's me.

Mary Jo Martin. I was the Cochise County Environmental Health Specialist (health inspector) for Benson and Tombstone for 21 years. I served on the boards of the Chamber, Benson Lions Club and Business and Professional Women's Assn., before joining BB.

OUR MURALS

Our latest Mural Guidebook now has 40 pages. Soon to be completed is the “**Cattle Drive**” at 4th St. and San Pedro. Doug Quarles, our muralist, only needs to add in the brands on the livestock. We had about 20 people asking to have their “brands” applied to the cattle and horses. The prices of these brands range from \$150—\$200, plus \$350 for a portrait of a horse and rider. This mural was our most costly mural to-date.

In addition to Doug's fee, there's the cost of the u/v protection, plus the cost of the plaque with the list of major donors. All that came to \$13,500. It took us three years to raise that amount. However, a \$5,000 grant from Union Pacific Foundation, \$2,400 from Walmart

employees' yard sale, brand sales, income from Butterfield Overland Stage Days and other donations, put us over the top! Thank you, Benson,

for your donations! If you wish to have your “brand” added to the “**Cattle Drive**”, contact Cindy Allen at 520-631-5507.

“**Desert Dwellers**” at Quiburí Mission Nursing Home was completed in August of 2017.

FUTURE PLANS

Our confirmed future murals are: “**Wild Horses**” which will be applied to the east wall of the Post Insurance building, and the “**Apache—Pioneer—Buffalo Soldiers**” on the west wall of the Midvale Telephone Exchange by the Upper Circle K. Doug has shown us a computer model of this mural as it would appear on the Midvale building and it is spectacular! How lucky we are to have this fine muralist plying his craft for us!

Open Mic Night—was held on Feb. 24th and we brought in \$282 toward the “**Wild Horses**”. We have already received \$300 grant from the Art Council of Tucson and Southern Arizona plus the owner of Post insurance is paying \$1000 for this mural. The mural costs \$2000. If you have any ideas for a subject for a mural or location for one, just email me at mj1950bisbee@gmail.com.

Why are we doing this?

I'm sure many of you read the two articles in the *News-Sun* in January of this year about our economic situation. We are suffering from at least two worrisome factors. First of all, we have a loss of population in Cochise County, mainly from the downsizing at Fort Huachuca. With fewer taxpayers, government budgets are stretched to the limit. This has resonated throughout every city in Cochise County. As the *News-Sun* puts it, our cities "*have been mired in financial quicksand, steadily declining and unable to climb back to prosperity.*" The second problem here in Benson is that we have a large aging population. Over time, this feeds into the same problem. As our population dwindles, fewer tax payers are left that can afford the increased taxes to maintain city services. State economists fear that could lead to a "*string of ghost towns.*"

Cochise County is still reeling from the effects of the recent recession. Over the past five years, the county has had a negative Gross Domestic Product. Economists call that a depression. Benson is no different. We are stagnated with a 7.1% unemployment rate. 24.8% of our citizens live below the poverty line. Worse yet, 38.6% of our children live in poverty! That's unacceptable! And that is why we are doing the mural project.

We envision a Benson with sidewalks and eclectic shops in our Historic District filled with tourists with our mural guidebooks in hand. With the addition of this increased business activity, other businesses will be attracted to our little town, leading to new jobs opening up for our working poor.

If we all work together, we can bring this vision about. But the officers of this organization cannot do it alone. We need your help. If you can donate an hour or two a week, or even for special events, please call Cindy at 520-631-5507, and tell her you are on board! If you have special talents like accounting, advertising, computers, graphics, event coordinating, etc., we need your help. Call Cindy and, believe me, you will be treated like gold!

EVENT UPDATE

Benson Beautification and the Pony Express will be partnering to sponsor a new community event called **Benson Pony Express Western Days**. Due to scheduling conflicts with other car shows, we will no longer participate in the Butterfield Overland Stage Days, but the rodeo and parade will still take place as scheduled. The Benson Pony Express Western Days will be held Saturday, September 22, 2018, and will feature entertainment, vendors and a car show.

MARK YOUR CALENDARS!