

Current VolunteersCastolon

Joan & Ray Kane -Camphosts (4th)
 Bob Douat—Visitor Center (4th)
 Toka & Steve Smith—Visitor Center (2nd)
 Tina & Steve Ehrman—Backcountry (4th)
 Skip Jiru—Camphost (new) arriving 12/15/09

Chisos Basin

Ed Davis—Camphost (5th)
 Marty & Howard Benham—Camphosts (4th)
 Mary & Roy Urban—Visitor Center (2nd)

Persimmon Gap

Teresa & Gary Cowan—Visitor Center (2nd)
 Mark Kirtley—Visitor Center (14th)

Panther Junction

Elaine & John Jonker—River Rangers (3rd)
 Gretchen Kaija (SCA)
 Ashley Thomas (SCA)

Robert Bowie—Maintenance (1st)
 Patricia Wheelless—Backcountry (new)
 Shanna Ramsey—ScRM

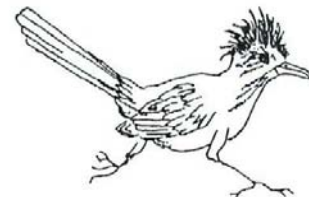
Rio Grande Village

Royann & Royce Brockett—Camphosts (11th)
 Linda & John Lightbourn—Camphosts (2nd)
 Glenda & Robert Overfelt—Visitor Center (4th)
 Jan & Jim Allen—Visitor Center—(2nd)
 Linda & Kenn Sutton—Backcountry (3rd)

Part-time

Jim Bishop—BBNHA
 Heidi Erpeldinger-Welch -Backcountry
 David Ewing—RGV Backcountry
 Steve Harper- Resource Management
 Steve Wick- Resource Management
 Reine Wonite- Interpretation

On being the “new guy” (or girl) at Christmas



By Jane Brown

So how does it feel to be at a new park, surrounded by miles of emptiness with perhaps a few acquaintances but no old friends and Christmas is coming? I suspect that there are many people here at Big Bend who are asking themselves this question right now. But what about all the old friends who have left Big Bend this past year? They may be finding themselves in a similar predicament in another part of the country. They are the “new guy” there. We all know that change is inevitable and learning to cope with change is a valuable life skill, but sometimes you just miss your old friends!

Here is my idea. Let's make a special effort to remember our old friends by taking a group photo the evening of the Casa Grande Auction with everyone waving and carrying on. I will turn that photo into Christmas cards that we can all sign during the Holiday Social and take the responsibility of sending these cards to all the park employees who have left since last Christmas with a heading like “Someone is missing from this picture....you!” Put on your thinking caps and let me know who you think would really like to get one of these Christmas cards. Maybe we can brighten up our old friends' holidays and cheer ourselves up at the same time.

And don't forget to include any “new guys” here at Big Bend in your holiday plans as most of us spend the season far from family and old friends.

Hiking Club News

The Grapevine Hills hike was a big success with 12 people in attendance. Kudos to Marty Benham, our very own bionic woman, for making the hike with her two new knees!



December 18th Friday The volunteer hike originally scheduled for December 4 is moving to Friday, Dec. 18th and will take place at Strawhouse Canyon followed by a lunch get-together at Daniels Ranch Picnic Area. Meet at the rear parking lot of PJ Headquarters at 8:15 am to catch a ride with me. We will meet at the Strawhouse Canyon Trailhead (also Marufa Vega Trailhead) at 9:00 am. Even if you can't make the hike (if you are working at the RGV visitor center, for example) please do join us for lunch at the picnic area at noon. Bring a sandwich and I will bring some potato salad and baked beans....Natasha will bring some potato chips. Yes, I did send out an email with the date of Dec. 17th, but I am closing on a new house in Terlingua that day and need to move this event yet again to Friday the 18th. My apologies!

January 20 Wednesday Steve and Tina Ehrman are planning something for us in the West District.

We will be reimbursing for mileage for getting to and from these hikes at 14 cents a mile. I will send out emails to remind everyone of the dates and it would be great if you could email me back if you are coming.

Super Supervisor of the Month— Rob Dean

Rob Dean is a familiar face around Panther Junction headquarters and was the supervisor of the Rio Grande Village Visitor Center for many years. When Mary Kay Manning left for Big Thicket in June of this year, he relocated to Chisos Basin Visitor Center where Mary and Roy Urban are assisting him this fall.

Like many of us, Rob first came to the Big Bend area as a visitor. After receiving his doctorate from Texas A&M in Evolutionary Biology, he returned to Terlingua to work on a museum, the Terlingua Zoological Foundation, but the funding was not secure.

Around 1990, he and his wife, Angie took over the property now known as the Starlight Theatre and converted that space into a restaurant and bar. The property had sat roofless for many years (hence the name Starlite) and was the original venue for productions by the Last Minute Low Budget theatre group, in which they participated. They ran the Starlight from around 1990-2000, during which time Angie was named the most influential person in south Brewster County by a local magazine.

In addition to his doctorate, Rob holds three other degrees; a business degree which he received prior to his tour with the Army in Vietnam as a helicopter pilot, a second undergraduate degree in Wildlife and Fishery Sciences and a masters degree in Ecology. In his own words Rob says, "Big Bend is my passion and working for the park service is the best job ever. I am fortunate to have a partner that shares that passion and we enjoy spending time together around the park." I think that the park service and the volunteer program is fortunate to have such a dedicated employee, who is so generously shares his knowledge of the Big Bend with visitors, new employees and volunteers alike.



Where have you been since your last volunteer experience in Big Bend.....

Tina and Steve Ehrman:

After leaving Big Bend last spring we went on our annual “visit all the relatives” mega-trip before returning home in time for the spring thaw and the start of our volunteer work with the Santa Fe National Forest. We spent a good chunk of our spring/summer/fall doing trail work in the Pecos Wilderness, clearing trails and installing signs. Our big news on the home front is we finally drilled a well... no more hauling in drinking water and worrying about the amount of water in the cistern! And once the snow started again we packed up and headed back to Castolon with anticipation of another incredible winter enjoying all that Big Bend has to offer.

Ed Davis is back at the Chisos Basin campground and he said that he spent most of his summer once again cleaning up his forest in Missouri due to yet another winter storm that took out a bunch of trees. This is the second year in a row that he has been in the “woodsman mode” all summer and he is getting tired of it.

Mary Urban writes:

“When we left Big Bend last April we headed straight home to Wisconsin and our little farm as we had two weddings to prepare for. Both our son and daughter chose to get married within four weeks of each other so we had a busy one. Who would have thought there was so much planning, fittings, showers and rehearsals just for a one day event?

We then spent the rest of the summer and early fall harvesting and freezing our garden produce. Roy helped our son remodel his basement and did all the electrical wiring for him and then we headed to Idaho where he played handyman for our daughter. In between this, he also found time to refinish a family heirloom piece for me.”

Linda and John Lightbourn:

“We spent the past spring and fall volunteering as campground hosts at the Lake Elmo Park Reserve which is located in the Twin Cities Metro Area in Minnesota. It’s within 7 miles of our daughter & grandsons’ home and within 20 miles of the rest of our families. It’s a beautiful park in the middle of the city and we’ve been volunteering there for 5 years. In June, we took our 8 year old grandson, Tyler, with us for a couple of weeks. We went to the Black Hills of South Dakota where we stayed at Custer State Park and visited all the major tourist attractions like Mt. Rushmore, Crazy Horse, Minuteman Missile NHS, Corn Palace, Wall Drug, etc. We had done this same trip 10 years earlier with our now 19 year old grandson. We then went to the Theodore Roosevelt National Park which is one of our favorite parks. Tyler loved it too, especially the buffalo! After we brought him home, we headed to Calgary, Alberta for the Calgary Stampede. John is a “wannabe” cowboy and he always wanted to go to the Stampede. It really is a major production and we were both impressed but I don’t think we’ll do it again. After the Stampede we spent the rest of the summer hiking and biking in Banff, Jasper, Yoho, and Waterton National Parks in the Canadian Rockies.



Volunteerism - a Uniquely American Ideal

by Jane Brown

The idea of volunteering is so pervasive in America we barely recognize it for what it is. From making cookies for the PTA bake sale to working full-time for Habitat for Humanity, we are a nation of “cooperators for the betterment of mankind” (sounds better than do-gooders). Our constitution makes a nod to volunteering when it opens with “We the People of the United States”. Abraham Lincoln makes mention of it in the Gettysburg address when he says that a government “by the people” shall not perish. So when French film makers Aline Deforge and Emmanuel Presselin contacted me in September about coming to Big Bend National Park to interview and film volunteers in action, my first thought was, “Why would the French be interested in this subject?”. Aline responded by saying that volunteering really is a foreign concept to the French people. They expect the government to do much of what is needed for the public good. She added that this habit of volunteering is a side of Americans that is rarely portrayed in the media. Part of their goal in producing this film is to influence the French perception of Americans in a positive fashion and reverse the notion that Americans are only interested in making money and acquiring material possessions.

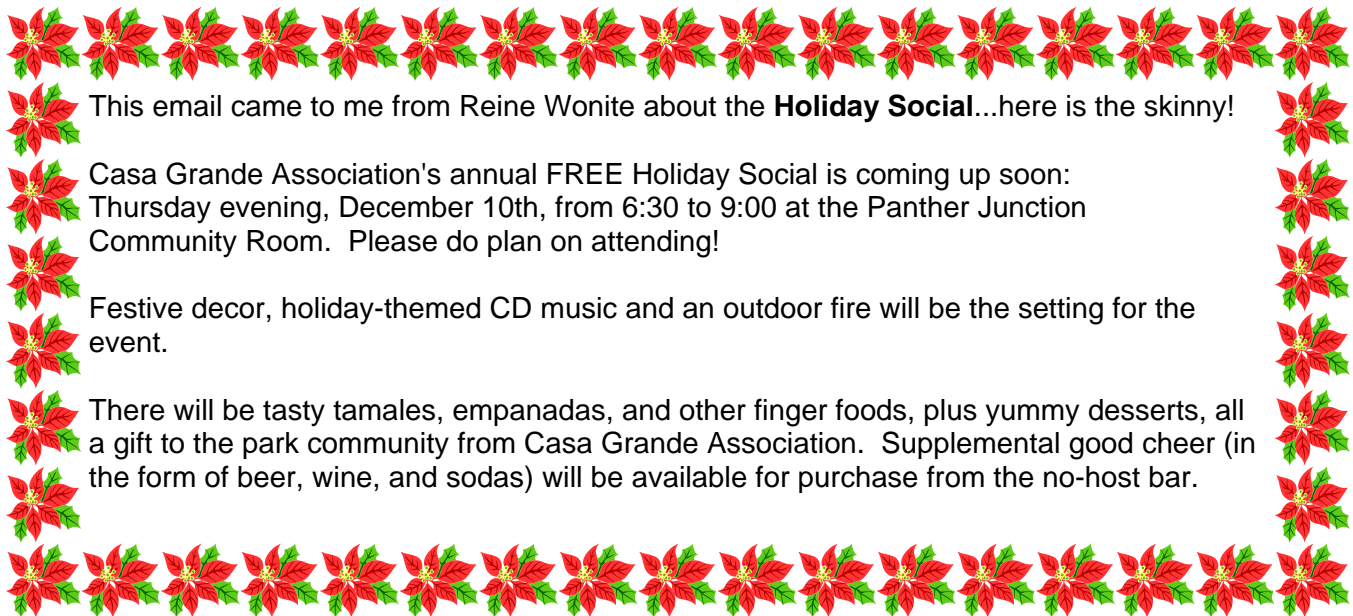
Presselin/Deforge create travelogue-documentaries about topics of current interest then travel around France presenting their film followed by a question and answer session. Aline has been interested in the idea of volunteerism in America since college. She was inspired by an English teacher from America who had been a Peace Corp volunteer. The couple has been travelling, interviewing and filming in the United States for six months. They have shadowed Habitat for Humanity teams in Iowa, New Mexico and Illinois and followed volunteering musicians dedicated to bringing music into elderly people’s homes in California. The couple has documented the work of Americorps volunteers in a homeless shelter in Colorado and stopped by Galveston, Texas to interview Methodist volunteers cleaning up after Hurricane Ike. Aline and Emmanuel usually spend one to four weeks at each location, participating in the work being performed and getting to know the volunteers.



Aline & Emmanuel visit with volunteers Steve & Toka Smith

The idea of a full-time RV lifestyle combined with volunteering is a uniquely American concept. The cadre of “full-timers” (retirees that live in their recreational vehicles all the time) who volunteer in the national parks is impressive, with volunteers contributing 42,000 hours of time at Big Bend National Park in fiscal year 2009. What could be more American than roaming around the country, offering a helping hand where needed? Aline and Emmanuel spent a week at Big Bend interviewing seven volunteers, gaining understanding of the “volunteer lifestyle”, visiting each area of the park and filming the work that is being done here by our dedicated volunteers.

We look forward to viewing the finished product and wish them success in their endeavors to broaden the outlook of their countrymen. As Mark Twain once said “Travel is fatal to prejudice, bigotry, and narrow-mindedness.” Our thanks to Aline and Emmanuel for choosing Big Bend National Park to be a part of their effort and to our wonderful volunteers who volunteered yet again to be interviewed and open their lives to this fascinating pair of international ambassadors.



This email came to me from Reine Wonite about the **Holiday Social**...here is the skinny!

Casa Grande Association's annual FREE Holiday Social is coming up soon: Thursday evening, December 10th, from 6:30 to 9:00 at the Panther Junction Community Room. Please do plan on attending!

Festive decor, holiday-themed CD music and an outdoor fire will be the setting for the event.

There will be tasty tamales, empanadas, and other finger foods, plus yummy desserts, all a gift to the park community from Casa Grande Association. Supplemental good cheer (in the form of beer, wine, and sodas) will be available for purchase from the no-host bar.

Recipes Wanted:

I enjoy cooking and I love eating good food, so in my book there is nothing like a volunteer potluck for fun and good eats. All this gave me an idea. I would love to have everyone's recipes and I bet others would as well.

Let's produce a cookbook! The number of recipes and submissions we get will determine what scale we produce. At the large end of the scale, if we could get recipes, volunteer stories, pictures, and other fun Big Bend or national park volunteering items, we might be able to sell this cookbook in the bookstore. A small amount of fundraising would be nice because presently we are not allowed to buy food with National Park Service monies and finding other sources limits what we can do. (BBNHA provides food for the Awards Dinner.)

Here is what you can do to help! We face so many culinary arts challenges living in the Big Bend with limited supplies and RV living so let's keep the cookbook in that spirit! Contribute a few of your favorite potluck recipes. You can also submit a volunteer history about yourselves, a very short funny or interesting story about volunteering, fun Big Bend facts, good photos you have taken at Big Bend or even volunteer group photos. Please send everything to me or Jane "Volunteer Assistant Extraordinaire" (preferably in email or digital format) so we can begin putting the book together. Thanks! *Natasha Moore*

Some of you might find this article and the associated comments very interesting. As a North Carolinian and wife of a UNC alumni, I certainly found it very good reading. The title of the article is "Why volunteer labor is too expensive for American Universities". Type the following link into your web browser and you will be there:

<http://www.historiann.com/2009/09/23/why-volunteer-labor-is-too-expensive-for-american-universities/>

Volunteer Opportunities from the Jonkers

Two river opportunities exist for VIPs and SCAs that count as extra volunteer hours and/or as a special project day.

- First, the RIO Rangers count on volunteers to help with their river shuttles which is a great way to see the park.
- Second, the RIO VIPs will attempt to get VIPs & SCAs on one of their river patrols when a mutual date can be agreed upon and if the required canoe skill levels are present. The RIO VIPs will email the VIPs and SCAs with more details. You can find the Jonkers in person at the River Cache (Maintenance Bldg. 477-1137) unless they are shuttling or canoeing.

Events in the Area



December 3rd (Thursday): Casa Grande Auction in Community Room
Schedule: Items will be on display ready for viewing at 6:00 PM, bidding begins at 6:30 PM; FREE beverages available, including beer and wine, all donated by Casa Grande Association.

December 7 (Monday) Rescheduled Community Potluck 6:30 pm in PJ Community Room

December 10 (Thursday) HOLIDAY SOCIAL, 6:30-9:00 pm in the Panther Junction Community Room. See page 5 for more information.

December 14 (Monday) SANTA VISIT: in Community Room; kids assemble at 5:30 PM, Santa arrives 5:45 PM

December 15 (Tuesday) Christmas on the Border, Barton-Warnock Center, Lajitas 6:30-9 pm

December 16 (Wednesday)—Children's Christmas Program—San Vicente School 6:00 pm

December 18 (Friday)—Strawhouse Canyon Hike followed by a picnic lunch at Daniels Ranch Picnic Area. Details on page 2. Notice that this date has changed from previous email.

Looking ahead to January!

January 6 -VIP Awards Ceremony in the Panther Junction Community Room. Social Hour starting at 6:00 pm, dinner at 6:30 pm.

Park-wide Chili Cookoff: Wednesday, January 13th in Panther Junction Community Room

Hiking for Smokey

Do you like to hike in your free time at Big Bend?

Here is a new opportunity to have fun, get some exercise, and make yourself even more useful than you already are! Plus you

can earn a very cool T-shirt! After your hike, you would need to write up a short report describing what you did. I can provide you with an example of a Fire Prevention Report upon request

If you are interested in getting involved in the "Hiking for Smokey" program, email or see me at the Volunteer Office.

. FYI, Smokey is 65 years old this year!



Jane says:

I am once again hoping to get some photos from all of you documenting your time here at Big Bend or any other interesting photos of your past year. The Awards Dinner is coming up on January 6th and I will be putting together a powerpoint show again. So send me those photos (the larger the digital image, the better for showing up on the big screen)!

