



UNIVERSITY SOUTH  
FOUNDATION

**CULTIVATE POTENTIAL  
SHAPE THE FUTURE**

ANNUAL REPORT 2024

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PROVIDING ACCESS TO  
HIGHER EDUCATION  
IN SOUTHERN ARIZONA

# PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

As we reflect on the past year, I am filled with immense pride and gratitude for all that we have accomplished. Together, we demonstrated an unwavering commitment to our mission.

## 2024 MILESTONE

I am thrilled to share the incredible milestone we achieved this year. Thanks to your generosity and dedication, we awarded an impressive \$112,500 in scholarships to 24 deserving students across Cochise County. These funds have created life-changing opportunities for traditional, non-traditional, and first-generation students alike, empowering them to pursue their dreams and build bright futures.

## INSTITUTION EXPANSION

We expanded our scholarship eligibility to include any accredited university or certificate program for students residing in Cochise County. Historically, we have only funded students to the University of Arizona, and while we continue to deeply value our partnership with the University and the College of Applied Science and Technology in Sierra Vista, we recognized the importance of providing our students with more options for higher education. This change ensures that our scholarship recipients can choose the path that best suits their goals, all while remaining connected to our community.

## NEW SCHOLARSHIPS

This year, we proudly introduced two new scholarships: the Judy A. Gignac Memorial Scholarship and the Rick Mueller Memorial Scholarship. These awards not only honor the legacies and extraordinary contributions of Judy and Rick, but also inspire future generations to see the profound impact individuals can have on their communities.

## CONNECTING A LEGACY

In partnership with the University of Arizona and the Arizona Board of Regents, we spearheaded a significant and meaningful project: the dedication of the Judy A. Gignac Education Center at the University of Arizona College of Applied Science & Technology. This dedication celebrates Judy's enduring legacy and her unparalleled contributions to higher education in Cochise County and Southern Arizona.

## LEADERSHIP CHANGES

This year also marked significant transitions in our leadership. We bid farewell to four valued board members - Clint Imholte, Elizabeth Wrozek, Jim Reese, and Michelle McCollum - whose dedication and contributions have left a lasting impact on our organization. At the same time, we were honored to welcome three new board members: Mary Hyder, Dianna Cameron, and Aimee Randazzo.

Their fresh perspectives and shared passion for our mission and community will undoubtedly strengthen our organization as we move forward.

## **FUNDRAISING TRIUMPHS**

Lastly, we hosted our most successful fundraising events to date: the 8th Annual Golfing Fore Scholarships Tournament and the 22nd Annual Dine Under the Stars. These events brought our community together in celebration of education and our shared commitment to empowering students.

## **LOOKING AHEAD**

None of these achievements would have been possible without the tireless efforts of our volunteer Board of Directors and the steadfast support of our donors and partners. Together, we are making a tangible difference in the lives of students and shaping a brighter future for our community, one step at a time. Thank you for believing in our mission and for standing with us. The road ahead is filled with promise, and I look forward to all that we will accomplish together in the coming year.



President



# \$112,500 TO 24 COCHISE COUNTY STUDENTS



## 2024 RECIPIENT SPOTLIGHT



Jenna

BACKINGER

***"THIS SCHOLARSHIP HAS HELPED ME TREMENDOUSLY. IT'S DEFINITELY EASED MY MIND. I AM NOT FEELING ALL OF THE BURDENS OF BEING A SINGLE MOM."***

Jenna is a Cochise County native who grew up in Sierra Vista, attending Coronado Elementary and Buena High School. After spending time in Tucson for college, she returned home to Sierra Vista and is now completing her degree in Special Education at ASU's Mary Lou Fulton Teachers College.

As a single mother, Jenna's decision to return to school wasn't easy, but with

the help of her late mother, Tanya Biami, and the assistance of scholarships, she has been able to balance motherhood and a full-time position as an intern-teacher at Coronado Elementary while completing her degree.

Jenna's passion lies in working with children with Autism. She will pursue a master's degree in Autism Spectrum Disorders after graduation in December 2025.

# 2024 SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENTS

## ISAAC ALBRIGHT

SSVEC **\$1,000**

Major: Library Science

**SIERRA VISTA**



## JAIDEN QUILES

SSVEC **\$2,500**

Pizzeria Mimosa **\$2,000**

Major: Administration of Justice

**SIERRA VISTA**



## THOMAS REID

SSVEC **\$1,750**

ISC - Dan Imholte **\$1,000**

Major: Cyber Operations

**SIERRA VISTA**



## JUAN OSUNA RIOS

SSVEC **\$2,500**

Pizzeria Mimosa **\$2,000**

Major: Psychology

**SIERRA VISTA**



## ERICSSON PRIETO

Jacobs **\$1,000**

Legacy Foundation of

Southeast Arizona **\$1,000**

SSVEC **\$1,000**

Major: Cyber Operations

**SIERRA VISTA**



## JENNA BACKINGER

SSVEC **\$4,000**

Rick Mueller Memorial **\$3,000**

Huachuca Astronomy Club **\$2,000**

Ace Hardware **\$1,000**

Major: Special Education

**SIERRA VISTA**



## VICTOR ANAYA

Education Unidos - AZ Complete Health **\$3,000**

Nemean Solutions **\$1,000**

Steve Hester & Patty Carnovale **\$1,000**

Education Unidos - IME Becas **\$1,000**

Pioneer Title **\$1,000**

Major: Health Informatics

**DOUGLAS**



## LIAM HOLTON

Arizona Electric Power/AZ G&T Cooperatives **\$2,000**

ISC Consulting Group **\$2,000**

Education Unidos - USF **\$2,000**

Friends of Education Unidos **\$1,000**

Major: Global Studies (UA)

**DOUGLAS**





# 2024 SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENTS

### LISA FRIEL

SSVEC **\$5,000**  
DirectViz Solutions LLC **\$4,000**  
3D Management & Consulting  
LLC **\$1,000**  
Besselman Memorial **\$1,000**  
Major: Cyber Operations  
**SIERRA VISTA**



### ANIA BADILLA

Alaka`ina Foundation **\$2,500**  
Teksynap **\$1,500**  
ASRC Federal **\$1,000**  
Dawson Ohana **\$1,000**  
Education Unidos - IME Becas  
**\$1,000**  
Major: Applied Computing  
**DOUGLAS**



### WILHELM BRAUTIGAN

Judy Gignac Memorial **\$3,000**  
Education Unidos - City of  
Douglas **\$1,000**  
Major: Organizational Leadership  
**DOUGLAS**



### SONIA HERNANDEZ

Mandy Gold Team at Haymore  
Real Estate **\$1,000**  
Rainey Pain & Performance  
**\$1,000**  
Major: IDS Strategic  
Leadership  
**BISBEE**



### KIRA LOPEZ

Education Unidos - USF **\$2,000**  
Judy Gignac Memorial **\$1,500**  
ASCU **\$1,000**  
Blackbar Engineering **\$1,000**  
Major: Political Science  
**DOUGLAS**



### EBENEKER BARALLARDOS

Steve Hester & Patty Carnovale  
**\$1,000**  
Major: Business Administration  
**DOUGLAS**



### SARAH SMITH

SSVEC **\$4,000**  
Major: Gifted Education  
**SIERRA VISTA**



### PABLO AGUILAR CHAVEZ

Education Unidos - IME Becas  
**\$1,000**  
Major: Organizational  
Leadership  
**DOUGLAS**



## 2024 SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENTS

### KASSIA ALVAREZ

University South Foundation  
**\$1,000**  
Education Unidos - IME Becas  
**\$500**  
Major: Organizational  
Leadership  
**DOUGLAS**



### VALERIA GARCIA

Education Unidos - USF **\$2,000**  
Patterson Memorial **\$1,500**  
Education Unidos - IME Becas  
**\$1,000**  
Major: Forensic Psychology  
**DOUGLAS**



### CYNDY ORTEGA

Education Unidos - AZ Complete  
Health **\$4,000**  
Herald/Review Media **\$3,000**  
Major: General Psychology  
**DOUGLAS**



### ANA VILLALOBOS

University South Foundation  
**\$4,000**  
Education Unidos - IME Becas  
**\$1,000**  
Major: Early Childhood Education  
**DOUGLAS**



### CURTIS GOODIN

Cox Communications **\$2,000**  
Herald/Review Media **\$2,000**  
Jacobs **\$2,000**  
Hariolation LLC **\$1,000**  
Education Unidos - City of  
Douglas **\$1,000**  
IDS: Social Behavior & Human  
Understanding  
**DOUGLAS**



### MARIELA HURTADO

Pioneer Title Agency **\$3,000**  
University South Foundation  
**\$1,500**  
Education Unidos - IME Becas  
**\$500**  
Major: Leadership & Commerce  
**DOUGLAS**



### ALLISON ALANIZ

Education Unidos - IME Becas  
**\$500**  
Education Unidos - AZ  
Complete Health **\$1,500**  
Major: Human Services  
**DOUGLAS**



### AUSTIN NELSON

University South Foundation  
**\$2,500**  
Education Unidos - AZ Complete  
Health **\$1,500**  
Major: Human Services  
**DOUGLAS**



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# 2024 DONORS, SPONSORS, AND FUNDRAISING EVENTS

Donors, sponsors, and event patrons are the heart of our mission, fueling the impact we make year after year. Their generosity not only provides critical resources but also inspires hope, opportunity, and growth within our community.

Every gift, every event, and every act of support strengthens our ability to change lives - creating a ripple effect that lasts for generations. It is through this collective spirit of giving that we are able to turn vision into action and make a meaningful difference.


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# 2024 ANNUAL DONORS

PREMIER SPONSOR  
\$15,000



**Sulphur Springs Valley  
Electric Cooperative, Inc.**

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

**OWNED BY THOSE WE SERVE**

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PLATINUM SPONSOR  
\$10,000



arizona  
complete health™

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GOLD SPONSOR  
\$6,000



**MÉXICO**  
CONSULADO EN DOUGLAS

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\$2,500

**BETH GIGNAC HOOPER**

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\$2,000



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**8TH ANNUAL**

# **GOLFING FORE SCHOLARSHIPS**



The University South Foundation hosted the 8th Annual Golfing Fore Scholarships tournament on May 4, 2024, at the picturesque Pueblo del Sol Country Club. Over the past eight years, thanks to the unwavering commitment and generosity of our tournament donors, this event has raised over \$100,000 to support students pursuing degrees in cybersecurity, applied computing, and related fields - careers that play a critical role in safeguarding our nation's security and defense.

Welcoming over 80 players, every swing of the club and every hole conquered represented more than just a game; it's a powerful step toward driving innovation and advancement - the very forces that will shape our future and strengthen our communities for generations to come.

TOURNAMENT SPONSORS:

15

GOLFER ATTENDEES:

88

AMOUNT RAISED:

\$22,000



DirectViz Solutions Team, Todd Bradbury, Callie Groth



Nemean Solutions Team



## 2024 GOLFING FORE SCHOLARSHIPS SPONSORS

GOLD SPONSOR | \$5,000



CLOUD SPONSOR | \$4,000



DOMAIN SPONSORS | \$2,500



FIREWALL SPONSOR | \$1500



ZERO TRUST SPONSOR | \$1,000



BOTNET SPONSOR | \$500



HOLE SPONSORS | \$100



## 22ND ANNUAL DINE UNDER THE STARS



The University South Foundation proudly hosted the 22nd Annual Dine Under the Stars on the greens at the University of Arizona College of Applied Science & Technology on September 28, 2024, offering guests an unforgettable evening of elegance and delightfully perfect weather. Attendees dined on a beautifully plated 4-course dinner generously provided by Vicki Gilbert and Pizzeria

Mimosa while listening to live music by Desert Fever. They were also able to enjoy the Southern Arizona night-sky at Patterson Observatory. The event featured a spirited live auction with Sheriff Mark Dannels and Jeff Davenport helping auction off a half side of grass fed beef, luxury golf and glamping vacation packages, and the fan favorite 'Ride Along with Sheriff Dannels'.



EVENT SPONSORS:

17

EVENT ATTENDEES:

223

AMOUNT RAISED:

\$42,690



From left to right: Jeff Davenport, Councilman Mark Rodriguez, Callie Groth, Sheriff Mark Dannels, Mayor Clea McCaa



Brandon & Mellisa Daar  
Winners of the grass-fed beef



Wilhelm Brautigan  
2024 Scholarship Recipient



Sherry Ethell & Kat Hardy  
Winners of the Ride Along



Dara Preciado, UA Alum & Local Artist  
Painted an abstract sunset landscape  
throughout the evening



Desert Fever



Chris Holston  
Winner of the Ritz-Carlton Vacation  
Package



# 2024 DINE UNDER THE STARS EVENT SPONSORS

PATRON SPONSOR | \$10,000



LEGACY SPONSOR | \$4,000



HYPERNOVA SPONSORS | \$3,000



GALAXY SPONSORS | \$2,000 - \$2,500



SUPERNOVA SPONSORS | \$1,000 - \$1,500



DRS. SHAUN & YANNY PHILLIPS

DR. GARY PACKARD HARIOLATION LLC

STEVE HESTER & PATTY CARNOVALE



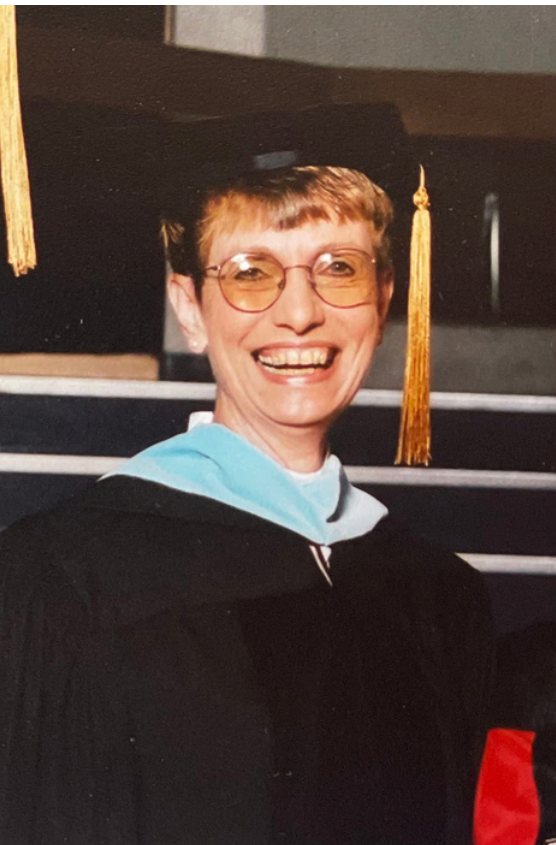
Jacobs

FIREBALL & METEOR SPONSORS | \$500 AND UNDER



GRASSHOPPER LANDSCAPING

## HONORING CONTRIBUTIONS TO EDUCATION



On May 30, 2024, the University South Foundation, with the support of the Arizona Board of Regents and the University of Arizona, proudly dedicated the Judy A. Gignac Education Center (formerly the Learning Resource Center) at the University of Arizona College of Applied Science & Technology in Sierra Vista, AZ.

Dr. Judy Gignac-Leininger was a remarkable businesswoman, civic leader, and advocate for education whose extraordinary contributions greatly shaped our community. She made history as the first woman elected to the Cochise County Board of Supervisors, served on the Arizona Board of Regents from 1994 to 2002, and was awarded an honorary doctorate from the University of Arizona.

Judy also helped establish vital organizations, such as the Legacy Foundation of Southeastern Arizona and Fort Huachuca 50, which continue to positively impact our region to this day.



Perhaps her most significant achievement was facilitating the donation of land from the Cracchiolo family and playing a key role in establishing the University of Arizona campus in Sierra Vista. This brought first-of-its-kind access to university-level higher education for traditional, non-traditional, and first-generation students in rural Arizona.

The University of Arizona's Sierra Vista campus and the University South Foundation stand as enduring testaments to her vision for public service, innovation, and the advancement of higher education—values that have left an indelible mark on our community.

The dedication of this building symbolizes the principles we hold dear and the ideals we continually strive to uphold. For every student, administrator, professional, and community member who passes through its doors, the Judy A. Gignac Education Center serves as a lasting reminder of her vision, dedication, and tireless commitment to improving our community, county, and state.

More importantly, this building connects future generations, inspiring the leaders of today and those coming tomorrow. In a close-knit community like Sierra Vista, where personal connections are strong, individual contributions have the power to create extraordinary impacts, demonstrating how hard work and relentless dedication can bring about profound, lasting change.

The dedication ceremony was widely attended by friends and colleagues of Judy, Arizona Board of Regent Senior Leadership, College of Applied Science and Technology leadership, elected officials, community leaders, and long-time supporters of the University of Arizona.

Cecilia Mata, Chair of the Arizona Board of Regents, reflected on Judy's contributions and influence during her tenure as a Regent. Dr. Randy Groth, founding Dean of the University of Arizona Sierra Vista campus, highlighted Judy's deep expertise and lasting impact in all she pursued.

Melany Edwards-Barton, CEO of the Sky Islands Regional Partnership, presented the Dedication Proclamation.



Cecilia Mata, Chair  
Arizona Board of Regents



Dr. Randy Groth, Founding Dean  
University of Arizona South



Nicol Rae, Acting Dean  
College of Applied Science & Technology



Callie Groth, President  
University South Foundation



From left: Chris Gignac, Beth Gignac Hooper, Callie Groth, Cecilia Mata, Melany Edwards-Barton

## PATTERSON OBSERVATORY: CELEBRATING 20 YEARS OF ASTRONOMY IN SOUTHERN ARIZONA



Dr. David H. Levy  
Astronomer, Comet Discoverer

On September 5, 2024, Patterson Observatory celebrated its 20th anniversary, marking two decades of dedication to astronomy, education, and public engagement.

This milestone was highlighted by the return of renowned comet hunter, Dr. David H. Levy, who had previously spoken at the Observatory's dedication ceremony on September 11, 2004. Dr. Levy, who has never actually taken a single astronomy class, has authored more than three dozen books, written for a variety of astronomy magazines, won an Emmy for his documentary *3 Minutes to Impact*, and has received five honorary doctorate degrees in science. Among his many accomplishments, he has also discovered, or co-discovered, hundreds of asteroids and 23 comets, with the most famous discovery being the Shoemaker-Levy 9 Comet that impacted the planet Jupiter in 1994.



The anniversary celebration also featured stargazing with members of the Huachuca Astronomy Club.

The concept of Patterson Observatory was first proposed in 2002 by Dr. Frank Zizza, a mathematician from UC Berkeley and one of the first professors at the University of Arizona South in Sierra Vista. Driven by a passion for both mathematics and the local community, Dr. Zizza recognized the need for a high-quality research observatory in an optimal location. While Ivy League institutions on the East Coast had observatories, their research efforts were frequently hindered by persistent cloud cover and poor atmospheric conditions. In contrast, southeastern Arizona offered near-perfect conditions for astronomical observation.

Dr. Zizza shared his vision with Dr. Randy Groth, the founding Dean of the University of Arizona South. What was initially planned as a brief 15-minute meeting turned into a nearly two-hour discussion, during which the idea gained immediate momentum. Dr. Groth quickly launched a fundraising campaign to bring the project to life.

David Healy, an astrophotographer and member of the Huachuca Astronomy Club, donated the Ritchey-Chretien telescope to be donated that is still in use today. David Patterson, founding member of the Huachuca Astronomy Club, along with his wife June, were major supporters of the University of Arizona and University South Foundation, and generously funded the majority of the observatory's construction costs. David and June Patterson gave the Foundation an endowment to support all facility maintenance. The Patterson Observatory is a designated NASA Space Place and a member of the NASA Night Sky Network. It has a 16-foot dome, housing a Ritchey-Chretien telescope of 20" aperture. This telescope, with its sophisticated detectors, is capable of observing objects one million times fainter than the human eye can detect.



# EXECUTIVE BOARD OF DIRECTORS



## President

*president@usfaz.org*

Callie Groth, CEO of BlackBar Engineering and Entrepreneur in Residence at the University of Arizona's McGuire Center for Entrepreneurship, holds a degree in International Diplomacy and an MBA from the University of Arizona. A Sierra Vista native, she returned to the region in 2022 and joined the board, serving as Vice President and Marketing Chair. She now serves as President through 2025.

## Executive Vice President

Penny Brondum, a retired Aerospace Resource Management professional, holds degrees from CSUN and Pepperdine, along with a certificate in Professional Management. A Sierra Vista resident since 2018, she joined the board in 2021, previously served as President, and now holds the role of Executive Vice President. She is also actively involved in the Scholarship, Board Development, and Education Unidos Committees.



## Vice President



Rachel Hansen, a Realtor with Long Realty representing R.L. Workman Homes, holds a bachelor's in History and Government & Public Service from the University of Arizona. A Sierra Vista resident for 11 years, she joined the University South Foundation board in 2021, served as Secretary and the Scholarship Committee Chair in 2022, and Vice President in 2023.

## Treasurer

Mary Hyder, a Business and Finance Manager with an MBA and specialized training in contracting, has been a resident of Sierra Vista since 1986. She joined the University South Foundation board in July 2024, and serves as Treasurer as well as contributes as a member of the Dine Under the Stars Committee, helping to advance the foundation's educational initiatives.



## Secretary



Susan Pater, a retired professional with a B.S. and an M.S. from the University of Arizona is a Cochise County native. A University South Foundation board member since 2018, she currently serves as secretary and contributes to the Master Plan, Scholarship, Education Unidos, and Marketing Committees.



# BOARD OF DIRECTORS



## *Ted Forte*

Ted Forte, a Cochise County resident since 2012, is a contributing editor for Sky & Telescope Magazine and a retired Senior Field Service Engineer with BAE Systems. A former Senior Chief Petty Officer in the U.S. Navy, he holds a B.S. in Occupational Education from Southern Illinois University. Ted has been an active community member for 13 years, is a member of the Huachuca Astronomy Club, and has served on the board since 2013 contributing to the Dine Under the Stars Committee and as well as the lead volunteer coordinator the Patterson Observatory.

## *Nancy Ledesma*

Nancy Ledesma, a teacher of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing in Cochise County, supports Pre-K-12 students and offers parent education classes. She holds a degree in Early Childhood Development, and is currently completing a Master’s in Deaf Education. Nancy joined the board in 2023 and contributes to the Scholarship Committee, promoting education and community growth.



## *Wallace Ricks*



Wallace Ricks, a retired Army Signal Corps Warrant Officer, has been a member of the Sierra Vista community since 1983, and officially retired here in 1996. With a background in defense contracting and a home-based small business, he holds a BS and an MBA in Information Systems. Wallace has served on the board for more than five years and has actively contributed as Treasurer, as well as to Golf and Scholarship committees.

## *Mary Rivas Anderson*

Mary Anderson, a retired Adult Probation Officer and current Court Liaison, has lived in Cochise County since 1986. She holds degrees in Communications, Political Science, and Government, and an MBA in Virtuous Leadership. Mary joined the board in 2023 and serves on the Scholarship and Education Unidos Committees.



## *Jerry Jones*



Jerry Jones, a retired U.S. Army veteran with 30 years of service and 22 years as a civilian employee, is a Distinguished Civilian of the Military Intelligence Corps. A Sierra Vista resident since 1995, Jerry joined the board in 2024 and contributes to the Master Planning, Dine Under the Stars, and Golf committees.

# BOARD OF DIRECTORS

## *J.P. Villalobos*

Juan Pablo (J.P.) Villalobos, an instructor with the State Department of Corrections and Cochise College, specializes in organizational psychology and supports inmate education. A Sierra Vista native, he holds a B.S. in psychology and an M.S. in human service counseling. J.P. joined the board in 2023, has served as Secretary, and actively contributes to the Scholarship and Dine Under the Stars committees.



## *Anne Borowiec*



Anne Borowiec, a partner at Borowiec & Borowiec, PC, is an attorney with a B.S. in Family Relations from the University of Arizona and a J.D. from California Western School of Law. A Cochise County resident for 39 years, she has lived in Bisbee and Sierra Vista. Anne has served on the University South Foundation board for 16 years, contributing to the Investment, DUTS, and Golf Committees. Her dedication and expertise continue to benefit the foundation and her community.



## *Dianna Cameron*

Dianna Cameron, an Army veteran and Economic Development Business Liaison for Sierra Vista, holds a B.S. in Interdisciplinary Studies and an M.P.A. in Business and Government from Liberty University. A Certified Entrepreneurship Development Professional, she lived in Sierra Vista from 2006 to 2009 and returned in 2020. Dianna joined the University South Foundation in August 2024 and co-chairs the Golfing Fore Scholarships Committee, promoting education in Cochise County.



## *Aimee Randazzo*



Aimee is a dedicated servant leader and USO Senior Area Operations Manager in Arizona, supporting service members and families. With degrees in Psychology and Social Work, Army Family Advocacy experience, and 26 years as a military spouse, she understands their needs firsthand. A longtime Sierra Vista resident, she actively volunteers in military, educational, and civic organizations. She is married to Retired U.S. Army Colonel Dylan T. Randazzo, with whom she has four children. She joined the foundation in June 2024 and she is a part of the Dine Under the Stars committee and serves as co-chair of the Golfing Fore Scholarship Committee.

## FOUNDATION COORDINATOR



**Jahdai Jones**

*jahdaijones@usfaz.org*

*+1(520) 224-0426 Business*

Jahdai Jones is a marketing professional with expertise in content creation and communication. She initially joined the Foundation part-time in July 2024 as Marketing Coordinator, then transitioned to the full-time position of Foundation Coordinator in November 2024. Previously, she was a Content Creation Specialist for Herald/Review Media. A Buena High School graduate and Sierra Vista native, she is a self-taught videographer passionate about creative storytelling.

The Foundation Coordinator is responsible for managing the daily operations, marketing strategies, and overall administrative functions of the University South Foundation, Inc. This role ensures the efficient execution of the foundation's goals and serves as the primary liaison for the Board of Directors, providing essential support and facilitating communication. Reporting directly to the President, the Foundation Coordinator oversees financial management, donor relations, event planning, and community engagement efforts.

# ON A MISSION TO AWARD \$120,000 IN 2025



STAY CONNECTED WITH US

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