

GREEN VALLEY NEWS AND SUN

NEWS

Student artists help desert newcomers

By Jaime Richardson

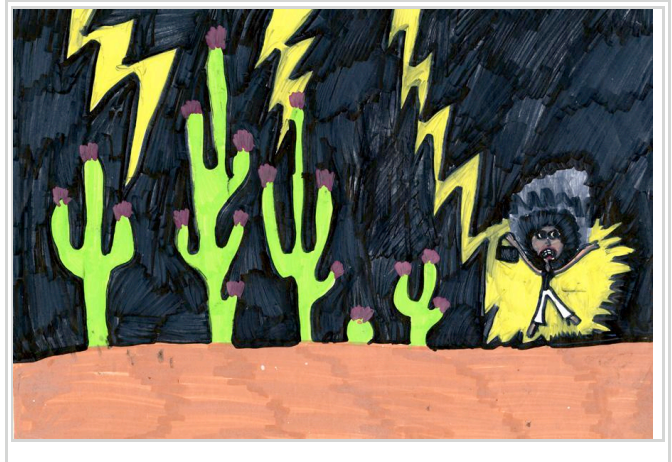
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Green Valley News

Green Valley welcomes hundreds of snowbirds and permanent residents each year, many of whom are unfamiliar with the Sonoran Desert's extreme temperatures, dramatic monsoon storms and myriad prickly and poisonous life forms unique to the region.

An environmental guidebook written and illustrated by local students aims to help those newcomers adjust to life in the desert.



"Desert Living is Different!" was published in October by the Southern Arizona Writing Project in the Department of English at the University of Arizona. The 96-page, environmental guidebook features the essays, poems, short stories and illustrations of K-12 students from several Tucson-area schools, including Sahuarita Intermediate School.

It's free to anyone who has lived in the Tucson area a year or less; a \$5 donation is suggested for those who have lived here longer.

Lisa Luna, a sixth-grader at Anza Trail School, contributed several drawings to the project, which she worked on last year while a student in David DeGroot's class at the intermediate school. Classmates nominated Luna for participation in the project because of her artistic talent, and DeGroot says she "put her heart and soul into the project," imbuing many of the drawings with a unique emotional depth.

Project Director Kitty Reeve, who teaches writing at Pima Community College, said judges chose all six of Luna's illustrations because her work was unusually sophisticated in both the quality of the art and the well-written captions.

"Very few students had more than one illustration or writing entry selected for publication," Reeve said. "We are proud to have her work in this book."

Reeve said she got the idea for the guidebook after recalling her own arrival in Tucson from the Midwest five years ago.

"When I first went hiking, I picked up a prickly pear cactus and got thorns in my hands, I wore the wrong shoes," she said. "I could have used a book like this."

The project has received high-profile support from members of the Tucson City Council and even Rep. Gabrielle Giffords, who is distributing a batch of the guides from her office in Washington, D.C. More than \$26,000 in funding for "Desert Living is Different!" came in from local donors, enough to produce 15,000 copies.

"Desert Living Is Different!" is available at the Green Valley News front office, and at Tucson locations such as Antigone Books, De Grazia Gallery in the Sun, Metropolitan Convention and Visitors Bureau, Tohono Chul Park, Tucson Audobon Society and the Tucson Botanical Gardens.

It will also be available at the Tucson Festival of Books, held at the University of Arizona March 14-15, at the Southern Arizona Writing Project table. More information can be found at the Southern Arizona Writing Project Web site, <http://sawp.web.arizona.edu/DLID.html>.

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