

AJO SAMARITANS NEWSLETTER

The Ajo Samaritans are people of conscience who are continuing the historical work of providing humanitarian aid to travelers in the desert in the Ajo, Arizona area. Our mission is to relieve suffering and prevent deaths of all travelers regardless of immigration status.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Ajo Samaritans Virtual Vigil – Thursday, April 29 at 7pm MST. We will honor and celebrate the lives of people who have died in the desert around Ajo and those who have successfully made their journey and been reunited with their families. We will also premier a new, short video about our work. Please “bring” a candle. <https://fb.me/e/JhcV9zlb>

Dear Friends,

We have seen many changes to our humanitarian aid work over the past couple of months. In addition to our work in the desert and at the shelters in Sonoyta, we are collaborating with many community groups here in Ajo to offer support to people seeking asylum who have been abandoned by Border Patrol in our town. If you would like to make a contribution to providing COVID testing, a hot meal, a cool drink and transportation [please click here and select “Ajo Community Support” in the drop-down menu.](#)

As we navigate these new challenges, we continue to put water in the desert and take clothes, shoes and blankets to the shelters. Here are two stories from members of our Desert Aid and Shelter Working Groups...

A Walk in the Desert by Kevin

Wake before sunrise, coffee up. Pack water, snacks, compass, my old medic bag. Finish my second cup of coffee, load my backpack in my vehicle, and head to the Aid Office.

Our crew for the day meets up at the Aid Office. Have a conversation about where we are headed, what is needed for the drop (water, beans, small comfort kits containing toothpaste, deodorant etc.). We load up and head out.

We drive deep into the desert and arrive at our parking area. We have permits for each area Organ Pipe National Monument and Cabeza Prieta. We load our packs and begin to hike. This hike is flat at the beginning then rises to a desert mountain pass. This pass is used by migrants, the trail is well worn and there are foil tuna packets and black gallon jugs that the migrants abandon on the arduous journey upwards of 100 miles. We are not hiking that far thankfully. Most of our crew carries 4 gallons of water and a couple of cans of beans.



We hike on, our drop is 5 miles out. Some chat, the rest hike silently. We continue on for a few hours until we reach our first drop. We check to see if any of the water has been used by migrants. This drop has been cleaned out by the migrants. It is a rewarding feeling that we are putting water out in the useful spots. We leave some of our water and continue on to the next drop. This drop has been animalized, the ravens have pecked holes in the water jugs. This occurs from time to time. We empty the water in the animalized jugs and replace them with fresh jugs. We place a plastic crate over the jugs and line it with cardboard, so animalization doesn't happen.

We begin our hike back, stopping for lunch in a cool spot under a Palo Verde tree. Fueled and water consumed we head towards the vehicles. Arriving tired and foot sore. We gather and discuss the day, and what was good and what may have been better. We say our farewells and head back to town.

Sonoyta by Jan

“Que necesita?” I ask a young man who has been pushed to the table as a newly arrived migrant. He just looks at me blankly. “Necesita pantalones? Camisa? Zapatos?” He answers, “Whatever you want to give me. What I'm wearing is all I have.” I look at his ill-fitting dirty jacket, ragged pants and old shoes. I quickly get him a pair of pants, shirt, socks and shoes. He asked for underwear, but I haven't brought any. I tell him I will next week. He seems shocked that we produced this in minutes for him.

Next in line a young man from Turkey. He speaks perfect English and tells me he knows 5 languages and that people from Turkey are very smart. He says he needs nothing. The following week, I decide to bring him clothes anyway: pants, shirt, jacket. He can't believe it. He just keeps saying, “You are so kind.”



So begins the day at a temporary shelter in Sonoyta where a steady stream of people come and go. Many are families that stay there or at abandoned buildings around town. Some have been here a year, waiting for a chance at asylum. Carol and I come each week, bringing clothing, medicine, diapers, food donations, shoes, always shoes, and dog food for strays they take in.

We go on to another shelter where there are all men. We bring them what they request: usually pants and shoes are at the top of the list. But also, hygiene supplies for a constantly-changing population of 90 or so people. "Juanita, can you get me my medicine? I'm diabetic." "Carolina, can you help with dog food for the puppies?"

Once a week, sometimes twice when needed, we spend the day at the shelters in Sonoyta. The people we meet enrich our lives for sure, and we hope the small kindness that we show are remembered on a very long journey from sometimes thousands of miles away.

Thank you for reading, learning about, engaging and supporting our work. We look forward to seeing you online for our **Virtual Vigil on April 29**.

In solidarity, Ajo Samaritans

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<http://www.ajosamaritans.com/>

<http://www.ajosamaritans.com/support-our-work.html>

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