


A man with dark hair and a beard is wearing a white surgical face mask. He is looking directly at the camera. Overlaid on his image are several semi-transparent agricultural scenes: a man in a denim jacket holding tomatoes, a man in a field, and a close-up of tomatoes on a vine. The background is a soft, warm gradient.

# STAA

SEED TRADE ASSOCIATION OF ARIZONA

## *the* Essential Seed



A close-up photograph of a person's hand, with the index and thumb fingers pointing towards several small, light-colored seeds planted in dark, rich soil. The background is a solid dark red color.

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---

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providing uninterrupted service and knowledge from the  
seed to the grower to the market place.

*We walk the fields for you.*

A stylized yellow line-art logo of a mountain range with a sun or moon rising behind it.

---

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Sabrina Hallman, the 2020-21 president of Seed Trade Association of Arizona, has followed in her father's footsteps in more ways than one. She is the president and CEO of the company, Sierra Seed Company/Sierra Seed Internacional, that Rod Hallman established in 1989. And she continues the family's legacy of active involvement in STAA begun by her father, who served as president of the organization in 1997-98.

"It's such an honor to follow him," she said. "We've come full circle. In the entryway to my office hangs the plaque my father received and his honorary membership plaque. I look forward to being able to hang my own president's plaque next to his."

She continued: "He was such a good man. He was genuine, funny, honest ... he truly cared about people. Being able to do this in his honor for me is just huge."

Her presidency has been very different than her father's, though, driven by changing times and the year-long COVID-19 pandemic. She thought that after all the times she had driven to Yuma over the years to attend board meetings, she could host at least one meeting in Nogales during her presidency. It wasn't to be. Due to the pandemic, all the board meetings have been held via Zoom.

Another change this year is that the annual STAA magazine is moving to a virtual platform – there will be no printed copies. While last year's convention was cancelled due to COVID and the subsequent shut down, the convention will take place again this year, Hallman said. "It will probably be smaller than usual, but the STAA Board felt it was needed. As a deposit had already been made last year for the Tubac Golf Resort & Spa, the venue was chosen to be used and therefore, this year's convention will take place May 6-7, 2021 at the Tubac venue. Activities will begin the evening before with a bocce ball tournament for early arrivals. The main events will occur on Thursday, May 6 with the general session, updates on the current legislative session and University of Arizona academic programs, keynote speakers and the business meeting. The convention will conclude in the evening with a reception, dinner and silent auction as the organization honors Charlie Cain for his many years of service to the seed industry. The Al Simons golf tournament will be held May 7.

"This year's convention theme is 'The Essential Seed,' as we focus on the many essential businesses and workers who contribute to feeding the planet," Hallman said. "We understand that seed production and distribution are the crux of the seed industry and the crucial building block to the world's provision of food. It all begins with the seed." ■



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# Native Seeds

BY JOYCE LOBECK



The very essence of the seed industry is “The Essential Seed,” the theme for this year’s convention. “The drought and feeding of people ... the seed remains essential and truly a beginning,” noted Sabrina Hallman, 2020-21 president of the Seed Trade Association of Arizona.

And who could be more fitting for the keynote speaker than Alexandra Zamecnik, executive director of a nonprofit organization dedicated to the conservation of crop seeds important to the Native American peoples of the desert Southwest. The mission, “Native Seeds/SEARCH seeks to find, protect and preserve the seeds of the people of the Greater Southwest so that these arid adapted crops may benefit all peoples and nourish a changing world” becomes more critical with the desert Southwest in the grip of a two-decade megadrought that shows no signs of easing.

“The resilience of our food systems depends on agricultural biodiversity, as farmers can draw on the myriad genetic combinations as raw materials to develop new varieties better adapted to an uncertain and changing environment,” states the organization’s website. “Climate change, water scarcity, new and more virulent crop pests and diseases — all of these troubling trends currently threatening our food security require a wide pool of genetic diversity to prevent catastrophic crop failure and famine.”

The website continues: “... our priority today is no longer in collecting rare seeds, but in exploring the rich and varied potential of these plants to provide nutrition and livelihoods to today’s farmers, gardeners and consumers. While continuing to preserve our collection, NS/S also provides high quality training in seed saving and farming techniques to empower communities to use and conserve this treasure themselves.”

The story of Native Seeds/SEARCH began in 1983 when co-founders Barney Burns, Mahina Drees, Gary Nabhan and Karen Reichhardt worked on a food security Meals for Millions project to support the Tohono O’odham Nation in establishing gardens for their sustainable food needs. Over the years, the forces of colonization and then modern commercial farming had eroded the cultures and economies related to these vital crops.

In discussions with tribal elders, they were told: “What we are really looking for are the seeds for the foods our grandparents used to grow.” This remark inspired the formation of Native Seeds/SEARCH as a collector and preserver of endangered traditional seeds from communities in the Southwest.

It’s about more than food, though. It’s also about preserving and restoring the culture of Native American people as it’s centered around these ancient crops, Zamecnik said.



*Alexandra Zamecnik, Executive Director of Native Seeds/SEARCH*

*The Native Seeds/SEARCH seed bank stores nearly 2,000 accessions of traditional crops utilized as food, fiber and dye by Native American and other communities of the Southwest.*



"As we move forward, we are dedicated to reestablishing our connection to the Indigenous communities and people whose centuries-old relationships have developed unique seed varieties that are perfectly suited for cultivation in the desert Southwest," stated Jacob Butler, NS/S board chairman. "These relationships transcend the physical connection of a farmer/gardener to a crop, to a level that is fully intertwined in the cultural beliefs and traditions of the people. To many of us these seeds are not just things to plant but are our relatives. We have stories of their creation or how they came to live amongst our people."

At the Conservation Center in Tucson there is a huge walk-in freezer for storing seed. In its seed bank NS/S is preserving seeds of nearly 2,000 accessions of traditional crops utilized as food, fiber and dye by the various Native American nations of the Southwest, heirloom varieties with an historical connection to the Southwest and adapted to local environmental conditions. It also has species from outside the collection but that perform well in the Southwest to broaden offerings. Some of the seeds are for rare and endangered crops, others are wild relatives of domesticated crops. Over one-half of the accessions are comprised of the three sisters: corn, beans and squash.

"The NS/S Seed Bank is at the core of our conservation efforts," states the organization's website. "It serves as a repository for seeds, guarded in a safe environment for the proverbial 'rainy day.' In this case, the rainy day is when a crop can no longer be found growing in a farmer's field. A seed bank's primary function is to conserve this genetic diversity for the future."

Each year, a portion of the collection is regenerated by growing the crops at the center's garden or by partner farmers. Some of the new seeds are returned to cold storage; others are distributed to Native American people, partner farmers, and food-security and education groups such as schools, community gardens and feeding organizations. Seeds are also available for sale through the annual seedlisting and online.

In recent years, NS/S has moved away from growing the crops itself and toward more partnerships among small-scale private farms and tribes to ensure greater biodiversity, Zamecnik said. Education has become a bigger component of the organization's mission, sharing farming knowledge and advice on how to grow the crops.

Zamecnik brings an international background to the position of executive director she has held since early February. Her mother is from Argentina and her father from Boston and she grew up in both cultures. Both her bachelor and master-degrees are focused on international relations and she has done a lot of work on international conservation and forestry. Prior to NS/S, she worked for the U.S. Forest Service International Programs for nearly 10 years and moved to Tucson five years ago. She brings her international diplomacy experience to this position and her breadth of knowledge of working with communities and tribes in Mexico.

"I see the work of Native Seeds/SEARCH as international," she said. "Each tribe is a nation."

For more information about Native Seeds/SEARCH, visit the website at [www.nativeseeds.org](http://www.nativeseeds.org). The organization can be reached at [info@nativeseeds.org](mailto:info@nativeseeds.org). ■

*"What we are really looking for are the seeds for the foods our grandparents used to grow."*



*Havasupai striped sunflower seeds were collected from the Havasupai Reservation at the bottom of the Grand Canyon.*

*One of the most important low desert crops in the Native Seeds/SEARCH collection is 60-day corn from the Tohono O'odham and Akimel O'odham people. These fast-growing, short-stature corn varieties can go from planted seed to harvestable green corn in about 60 days, requiring much less water than other corn varieties.*





# The Spotlight Sierra Seed Company

BY JOYCE LOBECK

**S**abrina Hallman had absolutely no intention of following in her father's footsteps into the agriculture business. Furthermore, she had no background in it, having been raised as an Army brat.

Yet, that's what she found herself doing mid-life, going from years as an educator to taking over the reins of her father's business, Sierra Seed Company, in 2007. Reflecting back, she acknowledged, "it has proven to be the right move for the company and for myself. In 14 years, we've expanded the company while maintaining the core team. In mid-life I did a complete 180-turn and started a new career, kind of what Dad did."

Career military, Rodney Hallman retired from the Army as a lieutenant colonel in 1980 and went to work as vice president of a building company in Tucson while Sabrina was an education major at the University of Arizona. With the housing bust in the 1990s, Rodney spent a year laying off people, then finally himself.

From there, he purchased a little seed distribution company in Nogales, with a small office, a post office box and one salesman. Over the years, he grew the company into a successful international business, selling seed to commercial growers in Mexico. He urged Sabrina to join him but she was established as

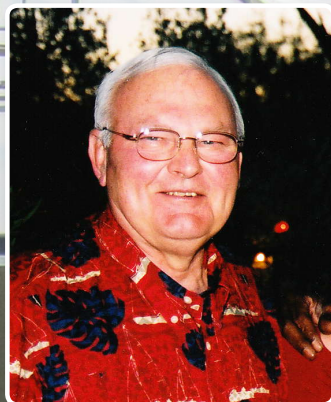
a school principal. Then in 2007, she began to get phone calls from people concerned about her father. In September she took a family medical leave; a month later she walked into her father's office and offered to stay if he would for awhile. In December he retired, knowing his daughter would keep the business going. He died in 2010.

"I knew nothing about seed, agriculture or Mexico," Sabrina said. But she made a commitment to her father's long-time employees who had become family to keep the company and save their jobs. She set out on a crash course to learn about the seed business, taking Seed Executive Management with Purdue University, Seed Biotechnology with the University of California-Davis and Greenhouse Crop Production at the University of Arizona.

By 2009, she "could speak the language" when she attended an American Seed Trade Association convention and "was able to baffle my way through the meeting and dinner."

In November of 2011, Sierra Seed opened a greenhouse operation just south of Nogales, Sonora, under the name Invernaderos Sierra to provide grafted watermelon seedlings for Syngenta. The company is now producing grafted watermelon, tomato, cucumber and chili seedlings for customers in Sonora, Sinaloa and Chihuahua. At capacity, the greenhouse holds 10 million plants, turned over every 60 to 90 days.





*Sabrina Hallman, head of Sierra Seed Company, with her mother, Phyllis, still considered the matriarch of the family-owned company.*

*Rodney Hallman, founder of Sierra Seed Company*

*Cody Anderson and Julio Vega move seed in the Sierra Seed Company warehouse in Nogales.*

*Sierra Seed Company in Nogales has grown into a large international seed distribution business.*

"In 2007, we had three offices in Mexico; we just added a seventh," Sabrina said. "Our sales team has gone from five to 20 and we've expanded our footprint throughout Mexico. We operate in both the U.S. and Mexico as two interrelated companies. We act as the middle man between large vegetable seed producers and the large commercial growers providing goods from Mexico to Costco, Wal Mart, Safeway, Vons, etc."

In 2018, a partnership with some members of the Sierra team was formed to open a produce distribution company based in Nogales, Ariz. EarthBlend provides an outlet for commercial growers to sell product into U.S. markets – and also helps ensure that Sierra Seeds gets paid for the seed that was sold to grow the product. "Our goal now is to offer the farmer service from the seed to the dining table," Sabrina explained.

"The business has shifted dramatically," she said. So, too, has her role switched with Carlos Fisher, an accountant and close friend of her father who was controller when she started in the business. "I've become the pragmatic one taking care of the financial side of the business, while Carlos has become the dreamer." He's also the main contact for the business in Mexico.

While friends are retiring, she still has things she wants to accomplish. "I think we have not reached our full potential and I would like to continue to see growth in the southern

regions of Mexico as well as the greenhouse operations. And I need something to do! My adult life has been enriched by my professions and my community service has always been tied into my job/career/position."

Over the years, the business has been recognized and Sabrina was honored by the Fresh Produce Association of the Americas with its Member of the Year award for going "above and beyond in working for the betterment of the industry and its membership" as a familiar presence in meetings in Washington, D.C., Phoenix, Tucson, Nogales and elsewhere. In addition to her efforts for the FPAA, Hallman is active in local civic groups, including the Zonta Club of Nogales and the Santa Cruz Community Foundation, for which her father was a founding member.

And she retains "a sense of wonder" for the business she had no intention of taking over until 2007. Above all, she values the close ties she has with employees and their families, as does her 82-year-old mother "who is revered" by the employees. ■

*Sabrina Hallman and Carlos Fisher pose with Sierra Seed Company salesmen and trial engineers in Mexico.*





# Drought!

BY JOYCE LOBECK

Without a miracle precipitation event in May, a dreaded but anticipated shortage will be declared on the Colorado River for 2022. While that won't affect agriculture in Yuma County, at least for now, it will be devastating for farmers in Pinal County, said Wade Noble, a Yuma attorney who specializes in water issues.

The Drought Contingency Plan signed in 2019 states that an official shortage is to be declared in the river's Lower Basin for the following year when it is forecast in August that Lake Mead will drop below 1,075 feet on Dec. 31. Extreme drought since 2000 with little respite has had a major impact on Lake Mead, the reservoir behind Hoover Dam. "There's been far too many years of below or way below precipitation," Noble said.

The Contingency Plan has come due. As of April 16, the reservoir was at 40 percent of capacity at 1,082 feet. The current forecast is for the level to fall to 1,068 feet on Dec. 31, seven feet below the threshold for Tier 1 of a shortage declaration. Tiers 2 and 3 likely won't be far behind, because as Noble explained, the reservoir is "V" shaped so the lower the level the less actual water stored. "It would happen before we blink if we don't have multiple precipitation years."

There have been miracles before in May, he said. "But once we get beyond that, we're into June, July and August and there's no precipitation help."

*"We've increased production by 25 percent while reducing water use by 10 to 15 percent."*

Colorado River provides water for 40 million people and several million acres of farmland in seven states across the Southwest. Of that water, Arizona is entitled to 2.8 million acre-feet a year, of which 1.4 million acre-feet plus any unused portion of the state's supply is carried to central Arizona by the Central Arizona Project canal, with any excess stored underground.

According to a deal struck to gain the California congressional delegation's backing for approval of a bill in 1968 to allow the construction of the CAP, Arizona's allotment would be reduced



by 320,000 acre-feet if a Tier 1 shortage were ever declared, with central Arizona farmers dependent on CAP water taking the biggest hit, Noble said. Nevada's allotment would be reduced by 13,000 acre-feet and Mexico by 50,000 acre-feet. California would not be impacted, at least initially. But that state, too, is facing a water crisis, with widespread drought conditions, declining reservoirs and fears of another disastrous wildfire year.

Yuma County irrigation districts hold among the highest priority water rights to the river, Noble said, "so farmers here won't suffer first when the reduction is made." That is significant, given Yuma County's production of high-value winter vegetable crops as well as its seed production. For example, the Yuma area produces 80 varieties of onion seed, one of only four areas in the world known for its onion seed production, he noted.

"Because of the prolonged drought, we knew the day would come when a shortage would be declared," Noble said. In an effort to delay it, an agreement was reached in 2007 with guidelines to reduce water use and keep up Mead's level.

Meanwhile, agriculture in Yuma County has reduced its water use significantly over the last 40 years, Noble said. The reduction has been achieved through such improvements as laser leveling, more efficient irrigation systems, changes to farming methods and a shift away from summer crops to the winter production of high-value vegetables so there's less irrigation during the hottest months of the year.

"Agriculture here has done its part to save water," said Noble.

"We've increased production by 25 percent while reducing water use by 10 to 15 percent. Over the decades, millions of acre-feet of water went to Pinal County from Yuma County. We're criticized heavily for not doing anything. But we've simply farmed better so others get the benefit of our farming practices and water saved."

However, Noble cautioned, as the drought continues, compounded by rising temperatures, and other areas face catastrophic loss of their water, "they'll do anything possible. That has us worried. Yuma already is under great pressure."

The greatest threat to Yuma County agriculture, though, is from investors who live in other parts of the U.S. or world, he said. "They see the value in water. They don't care if we grow seeds to produce crops around the world. They figure they will make lots of money by buying the land and selling the water."

Case in point is a proposal by GSC Farm LLC, whose parent company is a hedge fund, to sell the water entitlement for farmland it owns in the Cibola Irrigation District to Queen Creek for several million dollars. The deal was endorsed in part last year by the Arizona Department of Water Resources but still requires federal approval. Opponents said they fear the deal would set a precedent for further transfers of Colorado River water from farmland to cities.

"The stakes are so great," Noble concluded. "We fight by how we farm efficiently and the value of our crops. We have world-class seed production, world-class vegetables, world-class production. We just do it better than anywhere else in the world." ■

*"We have world-class seed production, world-class vegetables, world-class production. We just do it better than anywhere else in the world."*



*A good portion of Arizona's allocation of 2.8 million acre-feet of Colorado River water is carried to central Arizona through the Central Arizona Project canal. Arizona's allotment would be reduced by 320,000 acre-feet if a Tier 1 shortage is declared, impacting central Arizona farmers.*



*The current forecast is for Lake Mead, the reservoir behind Hoover Dam, to fall below 1,075 feet this summer, triggering a declaration of a shortage for the Colorado River for 2022.*



*Yuma County's production of seed crops such as broccoli wouldn't initially be impacted if a shortage is declared on the Colorado River as irrigation districts hold high priority rights to the water.*





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A photograph of four people standing in a desert landscape at sunset. From left to right: a man in a blue denim shirt and cap, a man in a denim jacket and cap, an elderly woman in a white vest and blue skirt using a cane, and a woman in a red dress. All are wearing face masks. The background shows a vast, flat desert under a warm, orange sky.

# Food Drive

BY JOYCE LOBECK

Covid-19 brought illness and death to the Navajo, the Hopi and the White Mountain Apache tribes. And it brought hunger to the rural, isolated reservations in northeastern Arizona.

"When I spoke to Navajo County Supervisor Jessie Thompson (now retired), he said they could use some help," recalled Bruce Bracker, a Santa Cruz supervisor. The community was in a position to help.





*“the food drive has distributed some 10,000 boxes of mixed vegetables a week”*

Coolers were full of produce grown in northern Mexico and imported into Nogales for distribution across the country. Each year Nogales imports nearly 3 million tons of Mexican produce. But suddenly it wasn't going anywhere, the produce industry brought nearly to a standstill when the economy was shut down last spring in an effort to stem the rapidly escalating pandemic. Meanwhile, families were going hungry.

Jaime Chamberlain of Chamberlain Distributing issued a challenge to his colleagues. Members of the Fresh Produce Association of the Americas donated the imported food – “first-quality produce,” Santa Cruz Cold Storage donated their services and coordinated loading of the assorted pallets of produce. A \$10,000 grant was obtained, and Community Foundation of Southern Arizona found a donor to contribute \$20,000.

On April 29, 2020, three truckloads carrying thousands of pounds of healthy vegetables, such as tomatoes, cucumbers, bell peppers and squash, made their way from the U.S.-Mexican border north to the three Indian nations. George Wise of Wise Truck Lines without hesitation said “come and get them” when asked to provide the refrigerated truck trailers. WestRock provided the boxes.

In all, 10 truckloads with 200 pallets of 400,000 pounds of fresh produce were delivered to the northern Arizona reservations in April and May of last year. In later shipments, bags of rice and beans were purchased with a donation and included. “It was also a huge effort by the tribes,” Bracker said, to get 20 pallets each trip of produce sorted, a mix of produce packed into each box and the food distributed to tribal members.

LOANED PHOTOS

*Pallets of donated produce from southern Arizona are being repacked for distribution at the Navajo Nation.*

*Bruce Bracker, Santa Cruz Supervisor*



Food banks and nonprofits have since stepped up to meet the Northern Arizona reservations' needs. But the food drive continues to provide for communities in need in southern Arizona as well as the Pascua Yaqui Tribe.

It all began last spring with calls were coming in from surrounding counties and local food relief agencies trying to find food to help hungry families, Bracker said. Meanwhile, people in the produce industry were telling him business was terrible. “All this produce wasn't being distributed.”

It quickly became clear to community leaders and the agriculture industry that it was time for a food drive. It all began with volunteers filling food boxes with a mix of the fresh vegetables and setting up shop on the parking lot of Nogales High School. “We told them to come and get it,” Bracker said. The word got out and families did indeed come and get it, creating a traffic jam through town and onto the highway. “That showed the need,” he said.



# *“This whole food drive started when I answered my phone and heard Supervisor Bracker from Santa Cruz County telling me about the desperate need for food relief,”*

Efrain Triguera, produce operations manager for the Community Food Bank of Southern Arizona in Nogales, too, reported receiving numerous requests for assistance and in two weeks handed out more than 3,100 boxes of produce in Santa Cruz County.

From there, the effort continued and spread throughout southern Arizona with Bracker partnering with Pima County Supervisor Sharon Bronson to address the issues. Produce distributors continue to donate produce and Wilson Produce donated use of its cold storage facility for three months. The Arizona Army National Guard came in to help sort the produce, fill the food boxes with a variety of vegetables and distribute them.

“This whole food drive started when I answered my phone and heard Supervisor Bracker from Santa Cruz County telling me about the desperate need for food relief,” FPAA Chairman Scott Vandervoet said in an online posting by the organization. “When he said we needed to help out our neighboring counties, too, because they had been calling his office looking for help, I knew we really needed to step up.”

Since then, the food drive has distributed some 10,000 boxes of mixed vegetables a week. That would not be possible without the National Guard (which is now scheduled to stay until September), the counties, the agriculture industry, the food bank and volunteers, Bracker said. “So many people ... such a community effort.”

The food drive has also included lemons, lettuce and other produce in season from Yuma County.

“There are lots of people doing their part during this challenge, from healthcare workers to CBP officers at our ports, first responders and more,” Vandervoet said in the FPAA posting. “Our strength in Santa Cruz County happens to be fresh produce, so that’s what we’re bringing to the table to help our community and our country.”

Bracker concluded: “It helps them, it helps us, it helps the communities. This is probably the best thing I’ve done as a supervisor.” ■



*Produce being distributed to needy families during a food drive at Rio Rico High School. The food, which was imported from northern Mexico, was donated by area produce distributors.*

*A volunteer prepares to hand a box of mixed vegetables during a food drive at Rio Rico High School. The vegetables were donated by Nogales produce distributors during the Covid-19 pandemic.*







# Thank You for Your Service

## Past Presidents of STAA

ANNUAL	PRESIDENT	YEAR	CONVENTION LOCATION
1	Duane Palmer	1993	Yuma - Shilo Inn
2	Duane Palmer	1994	Yuma - Shilo Inn
3	Pat Hodges, Jr.	1995	Phoenix - Pointe Hilton Tapatio Cliffs
4	Larry Taylor	1996	Prescott - Prescott Resort
5	Ernie Milner	1997	Prescott - Prescott Resort
6	Rod Hallman	1998	Sedona - Poco Diablo Resort
7	Manny Martinez	1999	Gold Canyon - Gold Canyon Resort
8	Charlie Cain	2000	Tucson - Westin La Paloma Resort
9	Lynn Adams	2001	Tucson - Leows Ventana Canyon Resort
10	Michael Edgar	2002	San Diego - Embassy Suites, Mission Valley
11	Kevin Ford	2003	Sedona - Sedona Hilton Resort
12	John Hodges	2004	Chandler - Wild Horse Pass Resort
13	Tim Thompson	2005	Prescott - Prescott Resort
14	Denney McKay	2006	Tucson - Omni Tucson National Resort
15	Alan Rubida	2007	Tucson - Westward Look Resort
16	Barry Case	2008	Carefree - Carefree Resort
17	Ron Berens	2009	Tucson - Omni Tucson National Resort
18	Jon Pasquinnelli	2010	Tubac - Tubac Golf Resort & Spa
19	JP Tom Bodderij	2011	Litchfield Park - Wigwam Resort & Spa
20	Justin Smith	2012	Tucson - Hilton El Conquistador Golf & Tennis Resort
21	Jose Solorzano	2013	Tubac - Tubac Golf Resort & Spa
22	Pam Ferguson	2014	Tubac - Tubac Golf Resort & Spa
23	Doug Henry	2015	Scottsdale - Talking Stick Casino & Resort
24	Dean Wolfe	2016	Sedona - Hilton Resort at Bell Rock
25	Justin Lewis	2017	Tucson - Marriott Starr Pass Resort
26	Tim Butcher	2018	Scottsdale - McCormick Ranch
27	Justin Gillies	2019	Tucson - Westin La Paloma Resort
28	Chad Hefner	2020	Cancelled due to Covid-19 Pandemic
29	Sabrina Hallman	2021	Tubac - Tubac Golf Resort & Spa

## Honorary Members

Patrick K. Hodges Sr. (2005)  
 Louis Didier (2007)  
 Duane Palmer (2007)  
 Larry Taylor (2007)  
 Allan B. Simons (2008)  
 Rod Hallman (2010)  
 Carrel Loveless (2013)  
 Kelly Keithly (2015)  
 Ernie Milner (2016)  
 Michael Edgar (2017)  
 Tom Tolman (2018)  
 Barry Case (2019)  
 Charlie Cain (2020 - 2021)







# *Providing* Scholarships

*Providing agriculture with a future*

The Seed Trade Association of Arizona offers scholarships annually to qualifying students in the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences at the University of Arizona and other institutions in the state.

Matching contributions from the Southern Seed Association and the American Seed Trade Association augment the scholarships.

#### The award criteria established by STAA are:

- Arizona residency and graduate of an Arizona high school
- Upper division student status - junior or senior
- Majoring in plant sciences, crop production or ag-tech management

*There were eight recipients of STAA scholarships for the 2020-21 school year. Six of the recipients each received \$1,000 and two were awarded \$500 each.*

#### **Jesus J. Urquides**

Jesus J. Urquides is a senior at the University of Arizona majoring in Agricultural Systems Management. He is the first in his family to attend college.

After graduation, he plans to continue his higher education in agriculture, related to management or education. His ultimate goal is to someday become a professor and share his knowledge with future generations of college students.

"Thank you again for your thoughtful contribution to my academic pursuits," he wrote in a thank you letter to STAA for his \$1,000 scholarship.

#### **Gilberto Ramos Hernandez**

A first-generation college student, Gilberto Ramos Hernandez is a senior attending the University of Arizona in Yuma as a major in Agriculture Systems Management. His career goal is to attain his pest control adviser's license and eventually plans on working in production by becoming a grower.

In his thank you letter to STAA, he stated that the \$1,000 scholarship has helped him realize his and his family's dream of his attaining an education. "I also want to set a prime example not only to myself but also to my younger siblings and anyone else that is going through a harsh moment that even though times are tough, all it takes is a bit of heart, dedication and sacrifice to accomplish anything you want in life. I cannot express my emotions to know that there are people out there who believe in my potential and my eager(ness) to become a valuable asset to the farming industry."





### **Victoria Ramsay**

Victoria Ramsay is a junior at the University of Arizona pursuing a bachelor's degree in Sustainable Plant Systems with an emphasis on Agronomy and a minor in Agribusiness Economics and Management. A first-generation college student, she has strived to be an active and involved student as a member and peer mentor for the Arizona Science, Engineering and Mathematics Scholars Program. She also serves as an ambassador to the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences as well as a student worker for the career and advising center within the college.

She wrote in her thank you letter to STAA for her \$1,000 scholarship: "This scholarship will allow me to continue to pursue my academic and career goals without being worried of the financial hardships that higher education often brings. I will be better able to focus on maintaining a high GPA and learning as much as I can from each of my classes."

After graduation, she plans to seek a job with a seed company as an agronomist or crop protection specialist. "I look forward to being able to utilize the information that I have learned throughout the courses I have taken in college and I am excited to become a part of the agriculture industry."

### **Meghan Marlowe**

Meghan Marlowe is a senior at the University of Arizona majoring in Biosystems Engineering with a minor in Mechanical Engineering. On campus, she is part of the Engineering Ambassadors and the Society of Women Engineers. Outside of school, she likes to run, bake and read and is hoping to run a half-marathon within a year.

Upon graduating, she plans to attend graduate school to earn a master's degree in Civil Engineering. From there, she hopes to go into industry, working for an engineering consulting company focusing on water and infrastructure projects.

She noted in her thank you letter to STAA that the \$1,000 scholarship will help cover the cost of course fees and textbooks for her final year during which she is taking classes in hydrology, soil sciences and watershed engineering. "I want to express my gratitude for being awarded this scholarship. Thank you ... for this support as I move into my senior year."

### **Michelle Nicole Escobar**

In her thank you letter to STAA and the American Seed Trade Association for her \$1,000 scholarship, Michelle Nicole Escobar

wrote: I am extremely grateful that you've given me this opportunity to continue my studies without the stress of student loans and debt weighing upon my shoulders as it does for countless university students. Groups like yours make higher education possible for first-generation students like myself. Without help from generous donors like yourself, college and university wouldn't have been an option for me."

Despite personal hardships, she finished high school with the third highest GPA in her class and graduated with honors. A junior at the University of Arizona, she is working toward a degree in Environmental Science with a minor in Spanish. She hopes to graduate with honors and continue on to earn a master's degree.

In the future, she hopes to conduct research on her own or collaborate with other researchers to find more sustainable ways of living and to protect natural resources. "My passion for environmental science will continue to grow throughout the years to come," she concluded.

### **Amy Pierce**

Amy Pierce's goal is to become a biosystems engineer, to use Controlled Environment Agriculture to empower socioeconomically vulnerable communities. "I will take what I've learned from my engineering degree and use it to promote access to fresh, affordable food in low-income and minority communities," she wrote in her thank you letter to STAA for her \$1,000 scholarship. "My dream is to develop CEA technology and implement it in a way that promotes access to CEA for the people that need it the most."

She noted that the scholarship "lifted a great weight off my shoulders" as her work as a research assistant in Dr. Barry Pryor's mycology laboratory at the University of Arizona had been paused due to Covid-19 precautions. In the lab, she was working on fungal pathogen identification research as well as gourmet mushroom production.

"Your support alleviates the uncertainty of being able to pay my tuition and for that I am grateful," she wrote. "I will repay with hard work and persistence."

### **Jackson Howe**

A 2020 Gila Ridge High School graduate in Yuma and a former member of FFA and 4-H, Jackson Howe is a freshman at Arizona Western College as a Crop Production major. He has managed to balance a full-time course load and work at Weddle Farms.

Howe looks forward to earning his PCA license while at AWC and transferring to a university in 2022. He received a \$500 scholarship from STAA for his freshman year.

### **Taylor McNeece**

Taylor McNeece is a 2020 graduate of Cibola High School in Yuma and is a former member of FFA and 4-H. She is a freshman attending Arizona Western College, where she is majoring in Agronomy. She received a \$500 scholarship from STAA.





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# Charlie Cain

## 2020 -2021 Seed Trade Association of Arizona Honorary Member

Seed Trade Association of Arizona to honor longtime member Charlie Cain to be recognized as the organization's honorary member

Named as the 2020 honorary member of the Seed Trade Association, Charlie Cain has had a bit of a wait for formal recognition before his peers because of the cancellation of last year's convention due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

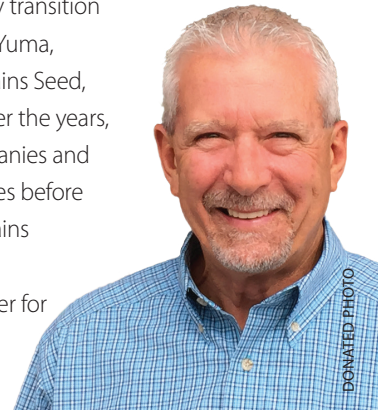
And so he will be honored during this year's convention May 6. Cain was selected as the organization's honorary member for his longtime involvement, going back to the issue that led to the organization's establishment. "It's quite an honor. It feels good to know I have a little bit of respect in the industry after all the years I've been in it. It seems like only yesterday."

He recalled the circumstances: In the early 1990s, the Legislature was proposing a tax on the sale of commercial seed. "It would have caused a hardship," he said. "We called our suppliers and asked them for their support. We hired a lobbyist and attorney and started chatting with the state." The measure was defeated.

Over the years, Cain has stayed involved in the organization, sitting on the board for a number of years and serving as president in 2000. While less active in the organization today, he firmly believes in its value to the industry. "An organization as a whole has much more

strength than individuals. Absolutely, it's good to have it in place" to keep up with rules, regulations and issues that might impact the seed industry. "Over the years, we've become a small, close-knit group. We've become friends even though many of the group are competitors."

A native of the Midwest, Cain earned a business management degree from Indiana University after serving in the Army. In 1976, he loaded up his family and headed to Arizona. Following a career in agriculture in southern Indiana, it was an easy transition to that industry when moving to Yuma, where he found a job with Germain's Seed, an agronomic seed company. Over the years, he worked for various seed companies and had a couple of his own businesses before returning full circle back to Germain's Seed Technology and his current position as sales accounts manager for the company's North America Horticulture Commercial Team.



DONATED PHOTO

## *STAA remembers* Carrel Loveless



Seed Trade Association of Arizona has learned of the death of Carrel Loveless, longtime supporter of the organization, who died in September 2020. She was an important part of the group's history and an honorary member.

Carrel worked for Arizona Crop Improvement Association (ACIA) for 15 years, retiring in May 2013. In that time, she did a variety of administrative duties as well as planning meetings for

both ACIA and Seed Trade Association of Arizona (STAA). She loved to play golf and would plan the golf tournaments for both ACIA and STAA meetings. And she enjoyed the dancing at the conventions.

"She really loved the STAA group and grew to have many close friends among the membership. She will be missed," reminisced Kathy Startt, Carrel's successor as senior program coordinator for ACIA.

Carrel was an artist and enjoyed making outdoor sculptures to sell and give away during retirement. She also was an art collector, mostly of Southwest and Native American art, donating many pieces from her collection to STAA to raffle off to benefit the organization's scholarship fund.

"The Seed Trade Association of Arizona lost one of our most ardent supporters during the past year," said Sabrina Hallman, STAA president. "Carrel Loveless served us - and often times, kept us in line - for 15 years before finally giving up on us and retiring in Green Valley, Arizona. There she continued to spend time side by side with her husband, Justin, as they pursued a life of sculpture art and scavenging for new materials to share with friends across the region."

Hallman continued: "Carrell became a lifetime Honorary member of STAA in 2013 (upon her retirement) and she continued to attend our annual conferences. There she would give Barry Case a run for his money on the dance floor. Clearly, Carrel loved life and lived it to the fullest and we will miss her buoyant laughter but know she is watching and smiling down on us from above. We were lucky to have been included in her life."



