



The Foundation Focus

Fall 2025
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The Newsletter of the Catalina High School Foundation

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Students Impress New Asst. Principal So Far

by Stephen Gin, '83

Hopes are high for Catalina's new assistant principal, Dr. Jessica Bernal-Mejia. Starting with the 2025-26 school year, she is one of 14 new faces on staff and



Dr. Jessica Bernal-Mejia

joins Michael Beck as the school's two assistant principals.

Dr. Bernal-Mejia is a native Tucsonan who oversaw TUSD's culturally responsive instruction department and had previously worked with Principal Norma Gonzalez there.

With Trojans coming from 47 different countries and speaking a combined 33

languages, you might think delivering a solid high school education would be almost impossible. But part of what energizes the school is its diversity, and she appreciates that.

Dr. Bernal-Mejia comes from a family of educators, including her parents. In the classroom, she taught high school history. "My focus within all of my education and with teaching was making sure that our students were represented in their culture and their curriculum. As I'm working with (CHS) teachers with the curriculum, we're making sure that everyone is being seen," she notes.

So far, the new assistant principal is impressed with the Trojans. "I think all of the students are pretty respectful and polite," she says. "I'm really proud of the way that they're growing school spirit. Student Council is really strong this year. We just got a cheer coach, and so we started our

Students Impress continued on page 5

Business Program Earns State Champion

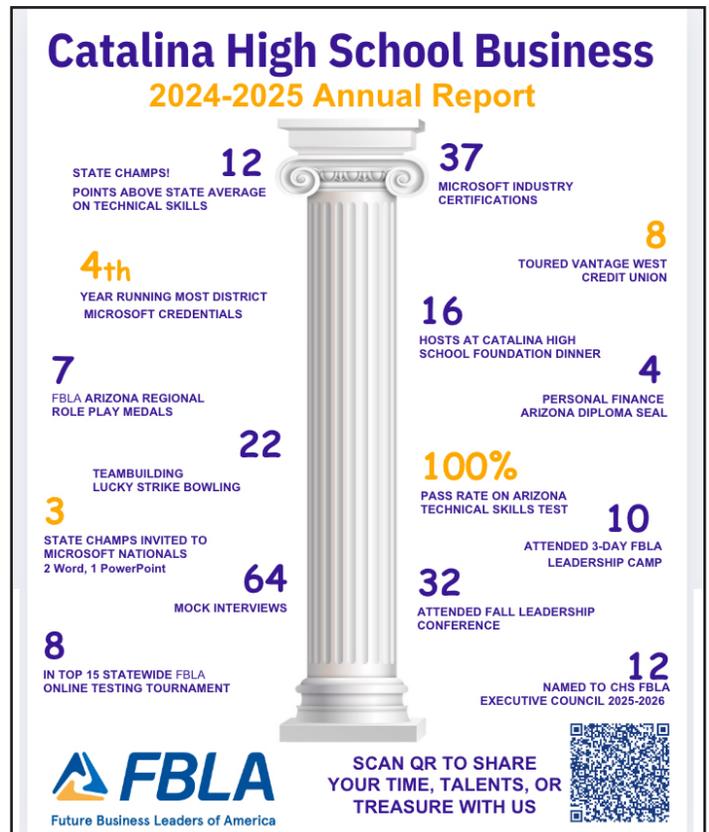
by Karl Oxnam, '86

Each graduating class at Catalina competes to earn the prestigious title of "Best Ever," and last year's Business students proudly claimed this honor. Recognized by the Arizona Dept. of Education as a Distinguished Program, Catalina's Business students achieved the highest scores on the end-of-program Technical Skills Assessment.

Every year, the program publishes an annual report graphic to showcase these outstanding achievements (See graphic).

The program actively participates in the student organization Future Business Leaders of America (FBLA), where students attend leadership camps, conferences and competitive events. This involvement offers students a wide variety of activities designed to build their career skills.

Business Program continued on page 5



2025 Trojan Alum of the Year

by Linda Raymond, '73

The Catalina High School Foundation is pleased to announce Kathy Zillman-Ogden (Class of '75) as the 2025 Alum of the Year. Zillman-Ogden started her career working tirelessly in mortgage banking, helping clients in commercial and residential real estate while she, a single mother, raised her talented daughter, Jenna.

Following that career, Zillman-Ogden followed a more fulfilling career working with the Red Cross organizing blood drives in Southern Arizona. She showed outstanding leadership with the Red Cross, and the number of lives that she helped save with all the blood drives is impossible to quantify.

After losing her 4-year-old daughter to neuroblastoma, Zillman-Ogden

launched Courtney's Courage, a charity that funds pediatric cancer research and provides support services for families battling pediatric cancer. The non-profit started with its "Tee Up for Tots" charity golf tournament in 1999. In August, Courtney's Courage held its 26th annual golf tournament.

Over the years, the charity has raised more than \$800,000 for pediatric cancer research at the UofA's Steele Children's Research Center. It has recently funded its eighth Courtney Page Zillman Doctoral Fellow.

In addition to supporting vital pediatric cancer research, Courtney's Courage has contributed greatly to families and pediatric patients going through cancer treatment. Such assistance includes family assistance programs ranging from emotional



support to financial assistance for necessities like groceries, rent, gas and other utilities. Zillman-Ogden enjoys her personal involvement and coordinates with other local non-profits to make an even greater impact on our community.

Zillman-Ogden is also co-chairing the 50th reunion for the CHS Class of '75 this year and has worked on every past reunion for her class.

Hall of Fame Inductees for 2025

by Linda Raymond, '73

Stanley Robin Parks Athey, '75



A community volunteer and proven leader, '75 grad Robin Parks Athey started her career in healthcare at Pima

Community College's X-ray technicians program, supporting herself the entire way. She went on to work at Tucson General Hospital and Northwest Medical Center in Tucson, eventually working her way to the top as the director of imaging services, which included several departments under her. Parks Athey also made a big impact with her volunteer work for the Tucson community. After retiring, she took on another significant challenge, becoming a "master gardener" so she could volunteer at the UofA Community

Garden. She has volunteered tirelessly in several gardening areas, bringing her leadership, mentoring, intelligence, compassion and vision. As a Trojan, Parks Athey has worked on every reunion committee for the Class of '75.

Mariana Gramajo-Sherman, '04

Catalina's valedictorian in 2004, Mariana Gramajo-Sherman earned awards and high praise academically. Her senior year, she was also named Southern Arizona Student Achiever of the Year for her academics and community service. She graduated summa cum laude from the UofA in 2007 and received her MPA from the University of California Irvine, graduating with a 3.98 GPA. She started as a part-time teller with Wells Fargo in 2004. By 2012, she was promoted to regional treasury management sales support manager where she oversaw a team of treasury management sales analysts covering Arizona and Nevada. The following year,

Gramajo-Sherman became an assistant vice president and became a Certified Treasury Professional,

a prestigious certification in financial services. She moved across several states working for Wells Fargo and is active within the Catholic Church. She has organized and directed Summer Vacation Bible School (VBS) programs for youth at several churches in Arizona and California. One of those VBS churches was St. Cyril's here in Tucson. She is married to Stuart Sherman, also a CHS graduate, and they enjoy attending class reunions.

Lisa Schnebly Heidinger, '74

Lisa Schnebly Heidinger has deep roots in our state. She is a third-generation Arizonan, and Sedona, Arizona, is named after her great-





grandmother, Sedona Schnebly. (Sedona's husband, T.C. Schnebly, named the Oak Creek Canyon town for his wife in 1902.) Born and raised in Tucson, Schnebly Heidinger graduated from Catalina High in 1974. She started her journalism career as a cub reporter at the Green Valley News in 1979, moving to KCEE radio news in 1983 and then to KGUN TV a year later. She earned her journalism degree in 1987 and moved to Flagstaff in 1989 to open the Northern Arizona Bureau for KTVK-TV3. She taught broadcast journalism at the UofA for a year and even got to play a reporter in the movie "Disaster at Silo 7." Moving to Phoenix with husband Tom Heidinger, she began writing "Arizona Correspondent," a regular op-ed column in the Arizona Republic. That led to her first book, "Tucson: The Old Pueblo," published in 1995. She authored 11 more books illuminating different aspects of her beloved state. She has won the Arizona Publishers Association's highest honor, and in 2012, she and her father Larry won the Spirit of NAU award. That same year, her book, "Arizona: 100 Years Grand," came out and was selected as OneBookAZ. This year she and Julie Morrison co-authored "Arizona FriendTrips: Stories from the Road," which was selected to represent the state at the Library of Congress National Book Festival. Schnebly Heidinger and Morrison's new podcast, "Celebrating Arizona," is an official partner of the AZ250 Commission, helping introduce the state's treasures to the nation during the 250th birthday year.

David Baker, '69

Most high school students back in the '60s were happy to attend high school events, go to the movies with friends or just hang out. But not Dave Baker—he was happiest being outdoors hiking and camping. He also had entrepreneurial plans. Baker and his friend Jeff Conn collaborated to offer special order services for Tucsonans who sought backpacking and mountaineering equipment. They conducted business from their bedrooms and stored the inventory under their beds! At 15, both were too young to drive when they started their business. They rented a 150-sq-ft room attached to a small bike shop across from Catalina. Thus were the beginnings of Summit Hut. Later, Baker bought out Conn's interest in the company. After several years of selling camping and outdoor gear and supplies to enthusiasts and the general public, he expanded his business to multiple locations around town. Online, he developed an international clientele who appreciated the quality of Summit Hut's products. Parcels shipped from the warehouse to distant clients in places like Hong Kong, Belgium, Australia, the UK, Argentina, Kuwait and South Africa. Baker also was a major force in bringing rock climbing to Tucson. In 2011, Baker sold Summit Hut to longtime employee Dana Davis and her husband. Sadly, the owners recently announced the last Summit Hut was closing.

Alec (Allison) Hock, '71

At Catalina, Alec Hock delved into many literary activities. Top on Hock's list was writing for The Trumpeteer, Catalina's award-winning weekly, taught by Trojan Hall of Fame English teacher J.G. Carlton. Hock wrote for the



newspaper for three years and rose to managing editor their senior year. Hock was selected for the Quill and Scroll honorary. Hock excelled both academically and athletically as a Trojan. At the UofA, Hock graduated with a journalism degree in 1974 and went to work as a late-night crime reporter for the Tucson Citizen. Using that knowledge working the crime desk, Hock began a two-decades long career as a screenwriter for several hit TV shows, like "Miami Vice," "Blue Thunder" and "T.J. Hooker." For "Cagney & Lacy" Hock was on staff as a story editor and producer. Hock wrote the



teleplay for an episode of Star Trek: The Next Generation and also wrote TV movies like "The Knife and Gun Club" and "Gotta Have

It." Hock was also a member of Mystery Writers of America. Sadly, Hock passed away on Dec. 30, 2020 from cancer-related complications.



Farewell, G. Wayne Schumann, '59

The CHS Foundation Board of Trustees bids farewell to Hall of Fame member G. Wayne Schumann, Class of '59, who passed away Sept. 17, 2025. Schumann was inducted into the Trojan Hall of Fame in 2020.



CHS Reunions

Class of '60 • 65th Reunion

Oct. 17, 2025 • 4–7 p.m. at
Tucson Racquet Club
Emily Kittle Kimball Morrison
ekmorrison3150@gmail.com

Class of '70 • 55th Reunion

Nov. 2, 2025
Jim Franks • chilehouse@mac.com

Class of '73 • 70th Birthday Party

Nov. 1, 4:30–7:30 Tucson Racquet Club
Casual meet & greet
www.Chs73.com • RSVP Keith Pullen

Class of '75 Oct. 25, TBD

Marti Kurtz-Anib
flavsand@outlook.com

Class of '85 • 40th Reunion

Oct. 18, 2025 • 6–10 p.m.
at Ironhorse Fabricators
CHS campus tour at 10 a.m.
Stacy Iveson • siveson@arizona.edu

'88 thru '94 & More Multiclass Reunion

Oct. 16, 2025 • 5 p.m.
CHS Foundation Fall Social
(free campus tour starts at 4 p.m.)
Oct. 17 • 6–7 p.m. Cobra Arcade Bar
during Tucson Meet Yourself
Oct. 18 • Breakfast at Eclectic Café
& Sabino Canyon Hike

Class of '95 • 30th Reunion

Oct. 18, 2025 • 5 p.m. at
Wooden Nickel Tavern
Margeaux Orr Bowers



Donations

\$1,000 – 2,500

Anonymous
Amanda Place

\$250 – 999

Sandy Elers
Ruth Edwards
James Sakrison
Suzanne Van Ort

\$100 – 249

Lucy R. Masterman
Ted & Emily Morrison
Marjorie Ann Scott
James Mouer
Robert S. Williams
Bruce & Gail Grossetta

JD Zimmerman

Kay Ijams

\$1 – 99

William Cunningham III
Julie Barrett Johnson

A Big Thanks to the Class of '73

by Jennifer Bond, '66

The CHS Foundation thanks the Class of '73 for its generous donation of \$8,489. At their 2023 50th Reunion held at Casino del Sol, they raised \$2,540 from a silent auction for the Foundation! Later, they decided to add their “reunion kitty” of \$5,949. These funds bolster our ability to assist Catalina students and teachers. But more fun for the Class of '73 is coming up—a collective 70th birthday party on Nov. 1 from 4:30–7:30 p.m. as well as a 55th reunion. To learn more about the 70th birthday party go to www.Chs73.com. To RSVP: info@Chs73.com.



The Class of '73 celebrated its 50th reunion.



\$6,425 in Mini-grants Awarded Since March 1

by Jennifer Bond, '66

At its monthly meetings, the CHS Foundation Board reviews current Mini-grant requests from Catalina

teachers, career counselors, athletics, dropout prevention specialists, librarian and administrators. Trustee-approved Mini-grants fund a variety of needs from relevant books for the library to team uniforms, from spirit-building events to entry fees and travel expenses for student competitions. Made possible by your generous donations, these grants are a key component of the Foundation's mission to foster and enhance the educational and high school experience of Catalina students by providing opportunities for their success in life.

Karin Bernal, \$500 to add to and refresh the library's Manga book collection including books chosen by students and approved to be high school and age appropriate.

Trinidad Tester, \$500 a loan to provide seed money for the new frosh class to start fundraising activities.

Devin Boyle, \$500 to purchase for his geometry class modern furniture such as foldable chairs and tables, floor mats, and stools to replace the 1990s desks which do not fit the students well. Flexible seating can improve student outcomes, higher reported wellbeing, and less hyperactivity. It will also enable teamwork.

Noel Cerulean, \$100 to purchase used wooden puzzles for exceptional education students, especially one who cannot read or write and is non-verbal. Wooden puzzles will be used to help with concepts like shapes, numbers and the alphabet. Used wooden puzzles average \$115 each.

Melissa Kornmuller, \$500 to purchase small item gift cards to award to the teachers on a lottery basis over the year to express our gratitude and appreciation for their dedication, hard work and positive impact on our students. Recognizing and rewarding our teachers is crucial to maintaining a high-quality educational environment.

Matthew Lai, \$456 to purchase sandbags to anchor the drama flats during performances.

Lola Briones, \$165 for the CHS health office equipment including a computer printer toner and a 33-drawer mobile storage unit.

Elizabeth Enright, \$500 to purchase craft supplies to start a "Crafts and Counseling Club" during the 25 minutes before school starts to provide an informal environment for students to discuss feelings while making crafts which they can keep. This will help the students start the day off better and also allow the counselors to see more students on an informal basis.

Becky Graseck, \$154 to purchase a phone lock box with individual keys for her algebra class. This will help the students focus.

Tim Bridges, \$250 to purchase sandwiches for the track and field team as they were interviewed for a sports show during dinner time at a fast food restaurant.

Karl Oxnam, \$1,800 to support a student delegation of Future Business Leaders of America Leadership Camp in September.

Marie Skeggs, \$500 to purchase Chuck Ball nets and balls for new PE class activities. They borrowed Sabino HS balls last year and really loved the game.

Students Impress continued

cheerleading. The kids are excited. They're excited to participate. They're excited about all the extracurriculars."

Still, big challenges remain at the school. A major focus is "just making sure that we're supporting our ELD (English Language Development) students to the best that we can to make sure that they have the skills they need to graduate and be successful in an English speaking world," she explains. Many of the students and their families need assistance, so there's the Student Success Center—that has a pantry, including food and hygiene items, school supplies, and even a rack of prom dresses. There's also a family resource center on campus.

Upping enrollment numbers is also a priority. The administration is looking into adding relevant courses, like to Catalina's successful Career & Technical Education offerings to attract more students.

"The kids are really great," Dr. Bernal-Mejia notes. "I love it. I love the kids, I love the teachers, the staff—I like everything."

Business Programs story continued

"Throughout the two-year program, students receive a grade each quarter for their resume," states Teacher Karl Oxnam. "My goal is to help them recognize their accomplishments and express them effectively through writing and confident communication. If you commit to the Business program, you will be given countless opportunities to build your resume."

"I want to personally thank the Catalina Foundation for their continued support of our students," Oxnam adds. "Your generosity enables teachers to develop creative ways to help our students grow."

Class of 2025 Graduates!



TAX CREDITS

If you make a \$200 donation for those filing singly (\$400 for those filing jointly) to Catalina High School, the amount of your donation can be deducted from your Arizona State Tax Return Taxes Payable. This basically is a big help to Catalina High School which costs you nothing. (Otherwise, you would pay it in taxes.)

Information on this great deal can be found at: catalinahs.tusd1.org and then choosing "Make a Tax Credit Donation" from the list on the left. These donations can be made any time before April 15, 2026, to receive the credit on your 2025 Arizona State taxes.

See <https://azdor.gov/tax-credits>.



Foundation Welcomes Trojan Teachers

by Stephen Gin '83

CHS Foundation Board Members got up early to greet Catalina faculty and staff to help kick off this school year with the Teachers Welcome. Meeting in the library, teachers get to know the Board and enjoy the food and refreshments provided by the Foundation. Teachers do team-building activities, receive essential information and go over emergency procedures just before students return to campus.



Foundation board members greet teachers.

07/25



The Foundation puts on a breakfast buffet.

07/25



Catalina welcomed 14 new teachers and other staff members.

07/25

Catalina High School Foundation Membership Form

Send completed form to: CHS Foundation • P.O. Box 42016 • Tucson AZ 85733

Name _____ Class Year _____

Address _____ City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____ Email _____

Annual Dues	\$25.00 ____	I would like my donation to go to:	
Founders' Club Dues	\$57.00 ____	General Fund _____	Construction Trades _____
Life Membership	\$250.00 ____	Mini-Grants _____	Future Business Leaders _____
Total Donation	\$ _____	Music/Dramatic Arts _____	Culinary Arts _____
Total Enclosed	\$ _____	Scholarship/Dramatic Arts _____	Athletics _____

This donation is **IN HONOR OF** or **IN MEMORY OF** (circle one): _____

Person to notify _____ Class _____ (If different from above)

Address _____ City _____ State _____ Zip _____

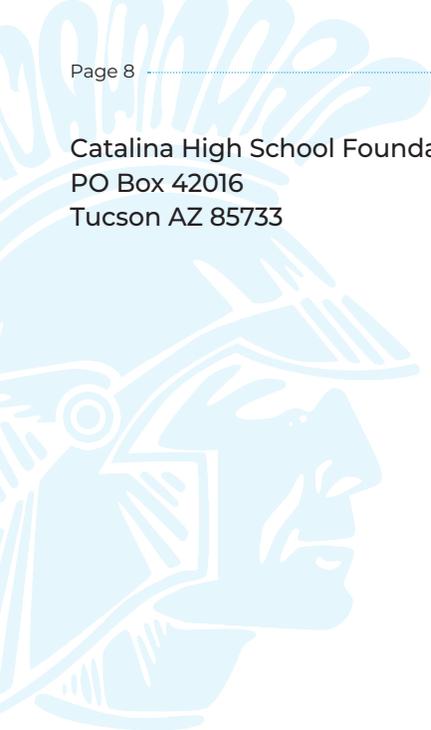
Please do not publish my name – Initial here _____

Questions? Ask Liz at lizwhit@gmail.com.

Annual and Founder's Club Dues run from November 1 to October 31

Life Membership Payment Plan: Pay \$100 per year for two years and a final payment of \$50 in the third year, and become a Life Member. Put Life Member PP on the "For" line of your check.

Catalina High School Foundation
PO Box 42016
Tucson AZ 85733



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The 2025 All Alumni Fall Social

Thursday, Oct. 16 • 5 to 7 pm

Catalina High School Science Patio • 3645 E. Pima Street

RSVP: greenenchalada@gmail.com

\$20 door donation suggested

Casual Dress • FREE Campus Tour at 4 pm



Friend us on
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Website:

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