



Friends of Saguaro National Park

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News Release

For Immediate Release
April 25, 2007

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Friends Group Receives \$80k Grant for Saguaro National Park *Open-Air Environmental Education Facility Announced*

TUCSON, AZ (April 25, 2007) — The Friends of Saguaro National Park announced today that they have received a grant in the amount of \$80,000 from Rocking K Ranch to fund the construction of an open-air Environmental Education Ramada at the park's Rincon Mountain District.

Rocking K Ranch is a master planned community to be developed by Diamond Ventures, Inc., south of the park along Old Spanish Trail. The Ramada, which will be located in the park's Javelina Picnic Area, will be used to support interpretation and environmental educational programs.

"This Ramada will serve to enhance the park's education programs, and will be a valuable resource for students and park visitors alike," said Sarah Craighead, Superintendent of Saguaro National Park. "Most importantly, it will be a wonderful place to learn about and enjoy one of our national treasures."

Representing the Friends of Saguaro National Park, Executive Director Robert Newton added, "We're excited about the Park's plan to interpretively combine this Ramada with the Freeman Homestead Trail, providing visitors with a comprehensive, hands-on interpretive experience describing the natural and cultural history of Saguaro National Park, and the Sonoran Desert ecosystem."

"This park is such an integral part of the community here in the Rincon Valley," said Ken Abrahams, executive vice president with Diamond Ventures and Rocking K Ranch, which granted the application. "We are strong proponents of education and the importance of understanding and enjoying the surrounding wildlife and ecology that this area has to offer. It was a natural fit for us to support this project."

Ray Carroll, Pima County supervisor for the district, attended the announcement, as well as students from the Sunnyside and Vail School Districts who have participated in educational programs through the Park's Teacher - Ranger - Teacher program.

Olivia Velasco, a teacher at Esperanza Elementary School, along with her 4th grade students shared artwork and poetry they had created in class about the Park.

"My students have developed a strong appreciation for the natural wonders available to them by participating in environmental education programs here at the Park," said Velasco. "I love taking my kids out into this beautiful desert and having them understand what a petroglyph or an arroyo is. Their vocabulary has expanded, as well as their minds."

Students from the Vail Unified School District were in attendance as well. They contributed a large Thank You card to Saguaro National Park and Diamond Ventures for funding this project that will enable them to learn about the park.

For more information about the Friends of Saguaro National Park and Saguaro National Park, visit these websites: www.friendsofsaguaro.org, www.nps.gov/sagu

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