

The Legacy Project

Cochise County Recorder



Christine Rhodes - Tombstone Rose Parade Marshall 2015

Staff

“Cochise County Recorder’s Office staff includes Chief Deputy Sylvia Gruhn, Administration Assistant Heather Lopez, Voter Registration Technician Lara Beach, and Recording Technicians, Terri Elliott-Sample and Carmen Serrano. Each staff member is cross-trained to perform duties in both departments.”

Christine Rhodes
Cochise County Recorder

Sylvia Gruhn



Sylvia has been employed by the Cochise County Recorder since 1983 and has served in the position of Chief Deputy for over three decades. She provides direction and supervision for both departments: Recording and Voter Registration. As such she superbly handles all the demanding duties required of the position. She states, "I am responsible for the daily operations of both the Recording and Voter Registration Departments. I manage all office expenditures and am responsible for all budget preparation and accountability. In addition, I maintain current knowledge of all new developments

concerning the technical aspects of both departments as well as the current laws that affect the duties of the Recorder's Office. An important aspect of my position includes coordinating work with other county departments and representing the office at the state level."

Sylvia adds, "I also work with a wide range of personnel issues including creating job descriptions, interviewing applicants, and counseling staff." With her natural affinity for supervising employees, the office is proud to report long-term staff tenure.

She is known for her stringent adherence to and knowledge of the statutes governing both departments. Sylvia has successfully led the office into the 21st Century and serves as a key example for promoting and instituting outstanding technological advancements. Furthermore, she has contributed to the County's creation of solutions that promote admirable public service in the face of continuing financial challenges.

Sylvia's extensive experience in public service has given her the opportunity to foster excellent customer relations and communication skills. Many clients have stressful issues that are resolved by Sylvia's cool and confident demeanor coupled with her ability to deal with the complexities of both departments.

She received her education at Cochise College and earned Certification as a Certified Public Manager from Arizona State University in collaboration with state, federal, and local governments, and under the auspices of the National Consortium of the CPA Program. Sylvia maintains Arizona Election Official Certification.

Most proudly, she is the parent of four wonderful children: Elyse, Ashlee, Brittany, and Matthew.

*Only 12 Recorders
have been elected since
the county was
established in 1881.*

"Fascinating Tidbits"

Heather Lopez



Heather serves a strong supervisory role in the Recorder's Office. As Administrative Assistant she works directly under Chief Deputy Gruhn and provides a vital level of leadership by overseeing the daily operations for both departments: Recording and Voter Registration. She is responsible for all the data entry in the Recording Department. Heather is celebrated for her customer service capabilities.

She is one of the "up-and-coming" young people with profound leadership skills. From her early youth she has willingly assumed various responsibilities and shown rare capabilities involving participation in the selection of new technologies related to best practices in both the Recording and Voter Registration Departments. In the Voter Registration Department, Heather ascertains that data from the voter registration applications are entered daily. In addition, she assists in updating all voter files as necessary. During an election season, her duties include mailing voter materials including ID cards, 90-day letters, and the early ballots. When the voted early ballots are returned to the Recorder's Office, Heather verifies signatures and sends the verified ballots to the

Elections' Department for processing. She assists voters who vote in the office during the legally allowed days prior to Election Day.

Heather states, "This year I was very excited to be involved in the process of making the elections' procedures more efficient and voter friendly. I have been involved with the voter registration process since my hire date, and I see good changes coming in the near future." She continues, "I hope for a higher volume of voter turn-out and gaining the voters' trust."

Heather, who has worked in the Recorder's Office for thirteen years, attended Cochise College and maintains Arizona Election Officer Certification. She continues to increase her knowledge for her position by attending conferences, workshops, and by interacting closely with other county offices. Heather represents the office at voter outreach activities and other events as requested. She exudes professionalism and demonstrates a thorough knowledge of the Recorder's Office. Recorder Rhodes adds, "Heather always 'steps-up-to-the plate' when needed."

Most proudly she and husband, Gabe, are parents of wonderful children: Pete, Gabby, and Sebastian.

"Fascinating Tidbits"

9 Recorders located mining claims.

Lara Beach



Lara is the primary contact for voters, candidates, and political party chairpersons seeking to acquire voter lists and collect voter registration statistics. She has achieved stature as the “go-to” person for any information related to voter registration. Lara fills a vital role in all the processes related to the voter registration aspect of election procedures including early voting. As Voter Registration Technician she knows the “ins and outs” of statutorily-required responsibilities necessary to navigate the system as related to the voter registration process. This includes maintaining a close

working relationship with the Arizona Secretary of State’s Election Director since Arizona counties operate under a State-directed centralized system.

Lara’s loyalty and love for voter registration and election work began in 1978 when she began accumulating experience by working the “early boards” in the Cochise County Elections’/Special Districts’ Department. She gained full-time employment in the Recorder’s Office in 2002. Lara also worked in retail for many years so she came into the position with a great deal of “people-experience”.

Recorder Rhodes states, “Lara is fond of learning “cutting-edge” technology, which goes “hand-in-hand” with the position she holds. She takes a strong interest in and easily adapts to the new technologies that have been introduced through the years. She served on the committee that changed certain boundaries for voting precincts and districts by contributing her knowledge of voter statistics and demographics. Lara coordinates closely with the Information Technology Department to ascertain that the complex voter registration system calculates statistical reports accurately. Her excitement in learning different programs that might stress most employees is certainly refreshing.”

Interestingly, Lara was born in New Orleans and lived around the country with her family. She has pursued a wide variety of personal interests. Locally, she served on the Board of Directors of the Bisbee Repertory Theatre while her children performed there. She enjoys reading fiction, mysteries, and romance novels. Her favorite sports’ teams are the Arizona Cardinals, New Orleans’ Saints, and the Bisbee Pumas. Lara attended York Christian College in Nebraska and graduated from Cochise College. She maintains Arizona Election Official Certification. She and partner, Jim, reside in the Bisbee area. Most proudly, she is proud parent of wonderful children: Jeremy, Angel, and Ricky.

Fascinating Tidbits

Cochise was spelled
CACHISE in early
county and territorial
records.

Terri Elliott-Sample



Terri, who came on board in 2002, is often the first person to greet customers at the front counter and is well-known and respected for her knowledge of the many aspects of the Recording Department. She keeps up-to-date on the changing recording laws that include the complexities of the fee schedule.

She is expert in processing documents including examining the document and determining acceptability, exacting the fee, receipting, applying recording data, copying the document, and then returning the recorded document to

the over-the-counter customer. If submitted by United States Postal Service, the recorded document is returned by USPS. A significant number of documents are now recorded electronically (paperless).

As Recording Technician she provides information and answers appropriately submitted inquiries via telephone, e-mail, and USPS. Information provided generally includes accessing recordings via the Saul's Creek Recording System and sending copies, by USPS or e-mail, to the requestor.

She has developed a special affinity for working with the wide variety of maps from the historical town site maps from the early 1880's to the numerous survey maps that are submitted for recording on a regular basis by current surveyors. She is also familiar with the large number of officially recorded subdivision maps. After maps have been accepted for recording she ascertains that each map is properly indexed with accurate notations affixed. She scans the maps which are then electronically available.

Terri responds to a large inventory of questions from the public, attorneys, banks, law enforcement, companies, and other county offices in her own professional style. She is always willing to "go the extra mile" in assisting county constituents as well as providing help to the many out-of state property owners. She works in close cooperation with several other county offices that offer inter-related services.

This experienced member of the staff enjoys cooking, reading, walks and motorcycle trips with husband, Steve Sample. Most proudly, the blended family includes their wonderful children: Jeff, Brianne, Eric, Joseph, Staci, and

Ashley.

"Fascinating Tidbits"

For many years the office was heated by wood and had no cooling except an open window.

Carmen Serrano



Carmen's assigned desk is often called the "Recording Desk" as it contains all the basic supplies and paraphernalia for receiving documents for placement in the public record. At this desk recording fees are submitted, recording data is applied, and receipting is accomplished. Documents are submitted electronically and over-the counter in hard-copy format. In addition documents are submitted by United States Postal Service, which historically has constituted the majority of submissions. However, electronic submissions are continuously increasing.

As Recording Technician Carmen performs a wide variety of duties including accessing recording information and sending copies as requested via e-mail, mail, or over-the-counter. Since joining Recorder staff in 2008 Carmen has developed a strong knowledge of the many aspects of the office including responding to the numerous types of questions posed by the public, law enforcement, companies and other inter-related county offices.

Carmen is forever patient with the public who oftentimes have a general misconception concerning the assistance the Recorder's Office is legally allowed to provide. She courteously informs customers that our primary duty involves recording documents, not providing title reports or legal advice.

Formerly with the Bisbee Chamber of Commerce, Carmen has further nourished an innate ability to address issues of a complex and sensitive nature that are often presented over-the-counter by the public. An important number of customers and property owners request assistance in Spanish, and Carmen is bilingual. In addition she can provide professional level translations for documents, instructions, and forms required by the Voter Registration Department.

Along with other staff members, Carmen is cross-trained to step into other jobs as may be necessary. This especially applies to extra work demands during an election season when she may be requested to provide assistance with voter registration and early voting processes. She effortlessly transitions into any job assignment.

On a personal level Carmen enjoys traveling, cooking, reading, dancing, family reunions, working outdoors, and keeping up with current events. Most proudly, she is mother of wonderful daughters: Priscilla, Lizette, and Alexis.

"Fascinating Tidbits"

The current Recorder continues using some furniture from the Court House in Tombstone. The furniture was moved to Bisbee after voters decided to move the county seat in 1929.

“A few more Fascinating Tidbits”

The office has moved 5 times: Frémont Street to Court House in Tombstone to Court House in Bisbee to old Horace Mann School in Bisbee to county complex on Melody Lane in Bisbee.

On a daily basis since 1923 the Recorder’s Office has used the same perpetual calendar.

The Earp Brothers and Doc Holliday registered to vote in Cochise County during the first registration drive in 1881.

For many years historical records were secured in vacated jail cells in the Court House in Bisbee.

Several Recorders owned saloons and worked as bartenders.

Recorder Jones organized Tombstone Volunteers to chase Apaches accused of murdering Customs Official Billy Daniels. Jones also owned an interest in Tombstone’s horse race track and the McLaury Ranch. Tom and Frank McLaury were killed during the gunfight near the O.K. Corral.

Recorder Bradley owned an interest in the Copper Queen Mine that was formerly owned by George Warren and associates. Warren’s prospector image appears on the Arizona State Seal.

Trick cats owned by Recorder Wentworth turned somersaults. Upon election of U.S. President McKinley, Wentworth swore he wouldn’t cut his hair until a Democrat was elected President. His locks were long and white before his dream came true. (published in The Cochise County Historical Journal Fall/Winter 2010-article by County Treasurer Marsha Bonham and Staff)

Recorder Hare had a horse named “Frank” working at his ice plant in Watervale near Tombstone. Hare also had Jersey cows and bulls as well as horses on his ranch in the St. David area.

Recorder Krebs sold DORT Automobiles and invested in oil leases near the San Pedro River.

Recorder Newbury served simultaneously as a Cochise County Deputy Sheriff.

Current Recorder Rhodes is longest serving Cochise County official and first elected female Recorder. Former Recorder Kathryn Hutchison was appointed but never elected.

Cochise County Recorder Christine Rhodes expresses heartfelt gratitude to the following persons for their contributions to the Legacy Project:

Sylvia Gruhn	Vivian Osborne	Terri Elliott-Sample
Heather Lopez	Kevin Pyles	Carmen Serrano
John Rose	Tom Schelling	Martha Rodriguez
Lara Beach	Rebecca Orozco	Doug Hocking
Katie Howard	Cynthia Hayostek	Annie Larkin
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Sherrie Brown	Kathy Klump	Robert Palmquist
Anne Macak	Jeff Guinn	Ray Madzia

I wholeheartedly apologize if I have inadvertently failed to include any names of those who assisted in this project. CR

In Memory of

Lowell David Rhodes	Doc and Katherine Macnab	Carl Chafin
Larry Elkins	Captain Alister Macrae Macnab	Ed Francis
Tom Shupert	Jimmy Willson	James Dixon

Sources

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