

VISITOR INFORMATION CENTER

By Rolf Koford

In a normal year, the VIC is a popular stop for visitors to Cave Creek Canyon. This year started normally. With staffing by FOCCC volunteers, the VIC was open seven days a week to assist visitors with information about campgrounds, hiking, birding and the area. There is also the occasional tire needing air, access to Wi-Fi, or just someone wanting to chat after spending hours on the road. All this activity came to a screeching halt in March, when the Forest Service told us to close because of the pandemic.



For the next six months, the building and grounds remained closed to visitors. The Forest Service allowed volunteers to remain in the RV sites and we were able to have multiple volunteers on site throughout the closure. The volunteers answered phone calls during restricted business hours, watered the lawn and plants, etc. Their presence was appreciated, and they appreciated having a safe port in the pandemic storm. There was turnover, as volunteers returned to a place they knew and loved.

In October, the Forest Service gave us permission to partially reopen. Visitors were to be kept outside the fence. Picnic tables were positioned near the fence and we put out the OPEN flag for four hours a day. Volunteers wore face masks and encouraged visitors to do the same. As visitation picked up, so did requests for souvenir merchandise. Group meetings led to sales procedures with which volunteers were comfortable.



In November, when local campgrounds also opened, things at the VIC felt almost normal again, but outdoors. It remains to be seen how we will do when the weather turns colder. We have erected a canopy on the lawn to provide some shelter. November sales totaled over \$1200, which is close to last year's total. The profit from these sales goes to maintaining the grounds and facility. In addition to hand wipes and disinfectant spray, we pay for supplies like printer paper and ink cartridges. We pay for internet capability, which serves visitors and volunteers. We provide propane for volunteers, especially important in winter. This year, we bought a portable air conditioner, a washing machine and a dryer. Equipment like computers and printers need replacing every few years.

Financially, the VIC has a history of at least breaking even each year. In part because we received a grant to help make up for COVID-19 losses, we expect to do so again this year. Our most important task is to make visitors feel welcome and to help them learn about and explore Cave Creek Canyon. Based on the feedback the volunteers and VIC managers hear, we succeeded again in 2020.

VIC Volunteer hosts 2020

Linda Castor
Alan Craig
Debra Davison
Forest and Cynthia Duncan
Michael Jacobi
Steve and Laura Paulson
Cathie Sandell
Rick and Joan Schneider
Duanne and Ann Swift
Steve Wolfe

Volunteer landscapers

Trey Dawkins and Kim Hunter

