



January 2024

Vol. 40 – No. 1

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SHHA Office

12700 San Rafael Avenue NE, Ste. 3
Albuquerque, NM 87122

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Fri, 9 AM – noon

Closed on federal holidays

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Website: www.sandiahomeowners.org

Emails: sandiaheights@comcast.net
shha@sandiahomeowners.org

SHHA Annual Meeting

Please set aside **Saturday morning, February 24th from 9:00 a.m.** to join us for the annual SHHA annual meeting. As in recent years, we will meet in the lower-level fellowship hall of **Church of the Good Shepherd, 7834 Tennyson St. NE.** Come a little early for refreshments and to meet and visit with your Board of Directors and neighbors.

We will review SHHA’s 2023 activities, achievements, and challenges; hold an election for new Directors; and host a time for Q & A. Only SHHA members are eligible to vote, but we invite every resident to attend, to listen and learn, and to ask questions. We intend to steward the time well in order to both be thorough and conclude the meeting promptly.

Your presence and participation are crucial to the success of our association. Let’s shape the future of Sandia Heights together!
We look forward to seeing you there.



GRIT Editor Needed

If you value this publication, please consider volunteering. The job takes approximately 4 to 8 hours a month, mostly right after the 10th of the month. The following qualifications are desirable, but not required:

- Computer capability with Microsoft Word, Adobe and/or a layout application of your choosing.
- Good English grammar and the ability to spot grammatical and typographical errors.
- Good writing ability, because sometimes there aren’t enough submissions to fill the newsletter.

The new editor can have on-the-job training and assistance from the entire Communications & Publications Committee.

If you are interested, please contact the front office—phone number and emails are on the front page of this newsletter.

2024 Directory Cover Photo: Winner

Out of many photos submitted for the 2024 cover of the Sandia Heights Resident Guide and Directory, the SHHA Board chose the work of **Beverly FitzSimons**. As usual, the choice was difficult, given the many beautiful entries. GRIT readers will be able to enjoy them all as we feature them in future issues. Thanks so much to every contributor. Your 2024 directory will be in the mail this month.

More Memories from an Old-timer

Ann B. List, Resident

Only about thirty-five families lived in the entire sprawling community of Sandia Heights when we moved here in 1972. In this small community we did our best to help each other out. We regularly carpoled to get our kids into the city for activities such as pre-school, kindergarten, and summer day camp. Since the ABQ Journal didn't deliver to "the boonies", every Sunday various guys in the neighborhood drove to the corner of Montgomery and Tramway Blvd to pick up a stack of papers and hand deliver them to subscribers in Sandia Heights.

We watched the construction of new homes in the neighborhood, thinking they were 'encroaching' upon the open spaces we regarded as our very own, with vast views of the mountains and city lights. Since we didn't know the folks who would eventually move in, we referred to the new structures with names such as: the small adobe round house, the ugly city-looking house, the party house (ablaze with lights most every night), the sloping roof house, the tall house, the 'mole house' (embedded so deeply into the soil that it was almost hidden), the pink house, etc. Eventually, though, we got to know each other as we began to celebrate various holidays together. On Halloween parents shepherded their children around the neighborhood. On Christmas Eve small groups trudged from house to house singing carols. The best year was when a family invited us inside on a very cold night to meet their friends and enjoy warm beverages. Some people held progressive dinner parties on New Year's Eve.

Our children also got to know each other. Some joined the swim team that practiced in the neighborhood pool (Yes, Sandia Heights used to have a community pool!) and competed in and around Albuquerque. Many of our children joined the Sandia Peak ski team that travelled

to other slopes in the Southwest for competitions. The most fun activity of all was our Sandia Heights Sloppy Slalom back in the early 70's. We held it on the weekend after the ski area closed to the general public, so we had the main slope under the chairlift all to ourselves. We skiers wore light blue tee-shirts announcing our participation, and non-skiers stood on the side cheering us on and chuckling over our mishaps. After the event on the slopes, there was a casual meal with music and dancing in the restaurant at the base of the mountain. Prizes were awarded in various categories, such as the fastest and slowest skiers, and the funniest headgear and costumes. I sadly won the category of the skier with the most falls on the slope, although fortunately the ski patrol never had to be called that day.

Sometimes, Ben and Pat Abruzzo joined us in these events, along with Sandia Ski Area partner Bob Nordhaus and his wife Marge.

A mainstay in the community was Will Jackson – the one person we called when we were in trouble. Will was one of our volunteer firemen who had access to the "bomb-loader", a weird-looking contraption he used to haul our vehicles out of arroyos whenever we slid into them off muddy or icy roads.

Most of us came together on a regular basis for Homeowners' Association meetings at our neighborhood fire station. I vividly remember one meeting when several neighbors voiced concerns about minor issues. Ben's response was something like, "I don't know if you realize it, but I envision around 500 homes being built in Sandia Heights over the years." Silence in the room gripped us all for several moments. But then, there were remarks such as, "You can't do this, Ben, you've betrayed us." I recall Ben shrugging his shoulders while saying something like, "I'm sorry friends, but that's always been the plan. And I regret you haven't known about it until now." Of course, in spite of this disheartening news, most of us continued to follow Ben's balloon adventures on the world stage. This was partly because we also knew his children, Louis, Benny, and Mary Pat. The worst news of all was learning about Ben's deadly crash onto the median of I-25 in 1985 in the small plane he was piloting. In addition to Ben, we lost his wife Pat and four other gals from the neighborhood. This ripped the heart out of our small Sandia Heights community, and many of our traditions ceased.

Continued on page 14...

Sandia Peak Tram (and TEN 3) Closure

In case you haven't heard, the Sandia Peak Tram and the TEN 3 restaurant will be closed for an extended period soon after the holidays. The dates are subject to change, but as of this writing, the Tram will close January 9th and reopen on or around March 13, 2024.

Over the past 57 years, the Tram has carried more than 12 million riders up and down "our" mountain. The extended closure will allow time for updates and upgrades to their drive and control system. "The current system has served us well since 1966 but it is time for a modernized, automated and more energy-efficient system. In addition to the controls, we will be renovating the Lower and Upper Terminal's Tram Consoles, the drive and control room and adding solar-powered cameras and weather stations on Towers 1 & 2."

According to the website <https://sandiapeak.com/2024-maintenance-closure/> some of the anticipated benefits will be:

- Smoother Trip Experience
- Greener and More Energy-Efficient Drive System
- Enhanced Control Monitoring Systems
- Improved Localized Weather Monitoring
- Quicker Tram Trips During Busy Periods
- Enhanced Guest Experience

Stay tuned to the website above for updates!

NOTE: As reported in October, Sandia Peak Ski has brought on Mountain Capital Partners (MCP) to operate the ski area. While they hope to open as soon as possible, they first need to perform maintenance and hire staff. Once Sandia Peak Ski opens, Ski Santa Fe pass holders will not be able to use those passes here, but MCP pass holders will. For the full article see <https://www.krqe.com/news/albuquerque-metro/sandia-peak-ski-area-taken-over-by-new-operators/>,



Directory Photo Submissions

These two photos were submitted by residents. They were close call runners-up to the winning photo.



Photo by Connie Welty



Photo by Susan Seligman

NOVEMBER CALLS TO SANDIA HEIGHTS SECURITY PATROL

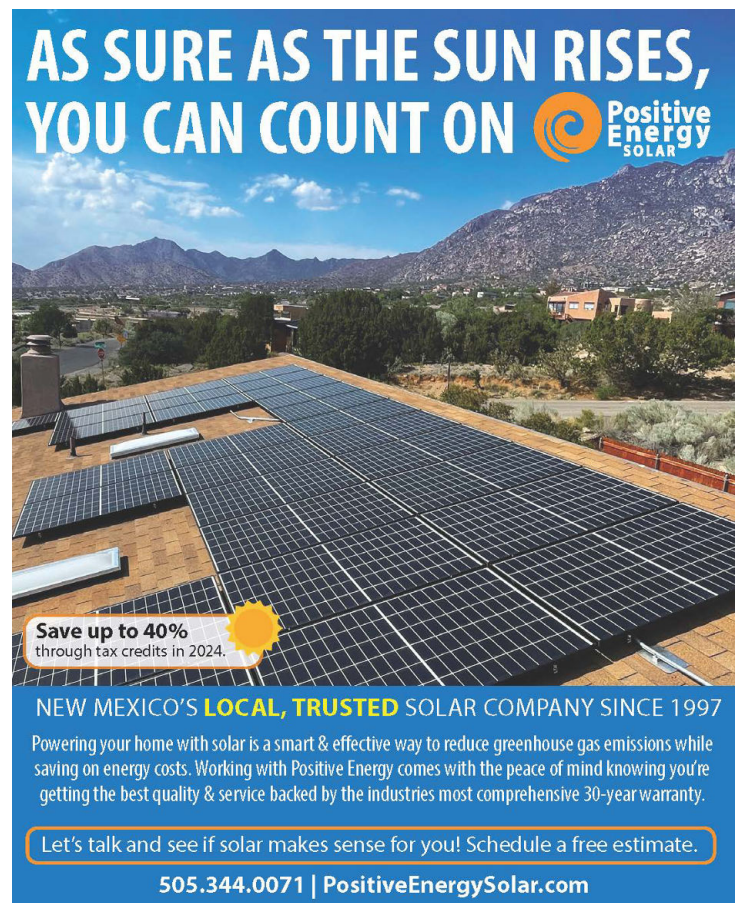
The following statistics are the latest provided by Sandia Heights Security since the last GRIT. **Please be reminded that Sandia Heights Services (they provide water, sewer, trash and recycle collection, and security services) is a subscription service separate from Sandia Heights Homeowners Association membership.** Also, Membership in SHHA does not include Sandia Heights Security membership. You can call Security to confirm your membership with them. If you have questions, please call **Sandia Heights Security** at (505) 856-6347, **mobile** (505) 263-4654.


November 2023	# of calls		# of calls
Alarms	12	Special Extra Patrol	1
Customer Assist	2	Special Request/Vacation	114
Dumped/Spilled Material	1	Suspicious Activity	2
Motorist Assist	1	Suspicious Person	5
Newspaper/Package Pickup	16	Suspicious Vehicle	4
Noise Complaint/Suspicious Noise	3	Utility Co. Assist	1
Open Door/Window/Garage	5	Wildlife Report	1
Salesman Complaint	1		
		Total	169

Useful Numbers: Emergency Police/Fire/Rescue: 9-1-1 (Be sure to let the operator know you are in Sandia Heights – an unincorporated area of Bernalillo County) **Bernalillo County Sheriff Non-Emergency:** (505) 798-7000 **Bernalillo County Fire Department Non-Emergency:** (505) 468-1310 **SHS Water/Sewer Emergencies (M-F 7AM – 4PM):** (505) 856-6345 **SHS Water/Sewer Emergencies After Hours:** (505) 888-5336 **NM Gas Co. Emergencies:** (505) 697-3335 **PNM Outage & Emergencies:** 1-888-342-5766

Announcements & Notices:

- **Office hours:** Monday – Thursday 9 AM to 4 PM and Fridays 9 AM to Noon.
- **Board Meeting:** scheduled January 10, 2024, at 6:30 pm in person.
- **Office Closures for Holiday(s):** Mondays: January 1 for New Year's & January 15 for the MLK holiday.
- **Notary services (Tues–Thurs, by appointment),** copies (20 per month) and faxes, e-mail alerts, and searching contractor evaluation binder are free to members.
- **Committee meeting dates** are posted on our web-site calendar: www.sandiahomeowners.org
- **Classified ads** can be found on the website on the top bar menu under Notices and Information/Classifieds.
- **Safety vests for sale** in the SHHA Office. \$3.00 per vest for members, cash or check only.
- **Tram passes** for sale in the SHHA Office. \$10.00 per ticket for members on a first-come first-served basis. Cash or check only. Tickets purchased must be for one date at a time per residence. To view the Tram Pass Procedures for SHHA Members go to the SHHA website.
- **Please note: the Tram will be closed January 9 through at least March 13, 2024 for upgrades.**



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Sharon's Sandia Heights Market Update Past Year 12/2022 to 12/2023

9 Larger homes For Sale on Larger Lots | Avg Asking price \$814,106 Avg Asking price/sf \$250.42

6 Homes Pending | Avg Asking Price \$870,650 Avg Asking price/sf \$265.11

49 Homes Closed past year to date | Avg Sold Price \$839,190 Avg Sold price/sf. \$253.95

4 Smaller homes on smaller lots | Avg Asking price \$443,475 Avg Asking price/sf \$259.13

5 homes pending | Avg Asking Price \$489,600 Avg Asking price/sf \$256.18

41 Homes Closed past year to date | Avg Sold Price \$519,209 Avg Sold price/sf \$260.82

Note Every Home Is Unique . Price is always based on condition, updates, market appeal, location and views.

Current Interest rates hovering around 7.035% for 30 year conventional & 6.5% 30 year VA!



1114 San Rafael Ave NE



1195 Bobcat Blvd NE



730 Tramway Lane NE



1723 Quail Run Ct. NE

ANOTHER GREAT SANDIA HEIGHTS HOME SOLD!

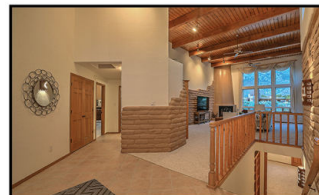
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Views!

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APPLIANCE SERVICE

Layton's Appliance Service344-9663
Ole's Appliance Service.....244-1010

APPRAISER

Stephanie Adams292-9224
Jeff Sorenson.....239-1629

ARCHITECTS

Roger Cinelli & Associates.....243-8211

ATTORNEY

Cathy Davis.....884-1260
Ed Roibal.....247-4404
Tim Steider.....237-9880

CARPET & FLOOR COVERINGS

Pro-Source.....761-4076
Raby Carpet & Tile Outlet (Baird).....298-7710

CARPET CLEANING

Best Way Cleaners.....344-1616
PSR&M.....366-4166

CARPET STRETCHING

Pro Source.....761-4076
PSR&M.....366-4166

COMPUTER NETWORKING (HOME & SMALL BUSINESS)

PCWise (Glen).....934-0606

ELECTRICIAN (GENERAL)

Elks.....352-9000
Jeff Barela.....615-4559

ESTATE SALES

Wings.....352-9000
Pinnacle.....615-4559

GARAGE DOOR INSTALLATION

Quality Garage Door (Joe).....350-7734
Windsor.....345-6604

HANDYMAN SERVICES

Aaron Newport.....934-9298
Dane Jacobs.....720-2332

HEATING & COOLING

Byar's/Roberto.....659-7070
Signature.....898-4822

HOUSE CLEANERS

Marina.....261-0914
Minerva.....319-1739



REAL ESTATE SERVICES
Greg Lobbereg
269-GREG(4734)
greg@greglobb.com

HOME ENTERTAINMENT SYSTEMS

AVR Resources (Richard Gallegos).....9696-AVR

INSURANCE

Farmers Insurance (Maegan Martin).....803-8048
State Farm (Joanna Boothe).....892-5690

INTERIOR DECORATING/STAGING

Molly Roberts.....259-8963
Su Casa Staging (Nicole).....681-5642

KITCHEN REMODEL

Davis Kitchens.....292-4800

LANDSCAPING

The Hilltop (Jim Forrester).....220-2370

LANDSCAPE MAINTENANCE

Empire.....220-2370
Lawn Rangers.....220-2370

MORTGAGE COMPANY

Waterstone Mortgage (Jason Pike).....828-9400

MOVERS

United (Tom Reichart).....307-3032

PAINTING

A+ Painting (Micán).....463-8999
Andy's Painting.....934-0660

PEST CONTROL

J&H Pest Control.....975-9724
Preventive Pest Control.....792-8380

PET GROOMING

Bills' Mobile Pet Grooming.....856-2760

PLUMBERS

PSR&M.....366-4166
Swanson Services.....328-9183

POOL MAINTENANCE

Bluewater Pools.....345-6789
Desert Pools.....410-3535
ABQ Pool & Spas.....296-8063

PROPERTY MANAGEMENT (RESIDENTIAL)

Bruni Karr.....296-0726
Jim Siebenthal Property Mgt.....797-8764
Coldwell Banker Property Mgt.....222-2222

RESURFACING SINKS TUBS/ COUNTER

New Surface (Patrick).....294-4966
Get A Grip.....268-0929

ROOFER

Alex's Roofing.....440-9866
Doyle Roofing.....242-9447
AAA Roofing.....244-1252

SECURITY SYSTEMS

ADT.....206-5609
TAS.....881-0001

SPRINKLER MAINTENANCE

Anything Sprinklers.....275-0996
The Lawn Rangers.....828-0198

STORAGE

Economy Storage.....294-4444
Guardian Storage.....717-1199

STUCCO WORK

Rich Construction.....883-7070
PSR&M.....235-0106

TILE WORK

PSR&M.....366-4166
R.A. Tile.....975-4753

TITLE/ESCROW SERVICES

Centric/Monica Borrego-Robinson.....480-3512

TERMITE TREATMENT

Brent's Termite.....907-3539
Geary's Pest Mgmt.....304-6174

WALL ART

Things On The Wall (Don Bremner).....720-9019

WINDOW CLEANING

Eric.....712-0122
Sam.....321-0011

WINDOW REPAIR

Mobile Screen & Glass.....294-0542

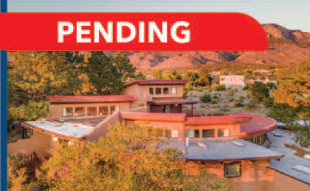
WROUGHT IRON

Action Security Iron, Inc.....344-5451



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\$650,000

1104 San Rafael Avenue NE
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PENDING

1213 Marigold Drive NE
3920 SQ FT 4BR 3BA .71 Acres



PENDING

12709 Carmel Court NE
1583 SQ FT 3BR 2BA .14 Acres



SOLD

1182 Laurel Loop NE
3839 SQ FT 4BR 3.5BA .72 Acres

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The Artist Next Door

Claudia Mitchell

Patricia Apt

Patricia Apt finds her artistic expression in woodworking and she puts a unique spin on it.



Patricia is a native New Mexican who grew up in Albuquerque's North Valley and has deep roots in northern New Mexico. As a child she loved doing art projects and was encouraged by her grandmother in Taos who painted and knew some of the original artists who had founded the art colony there. Patricia was not too interested in painting, but she developed a love for the feel of clay, papier mâché, and woodcarving. "I wasn't any good at painting," she said with a laugh, "but I really enjoyed making things, 3-D things. I found that I loved wood: its luster, warmth, and grain."

Patricia married, moved to West Albuquerque, and raised a son. She and her family would drive regularly to the east side where they enjoyed hiking and biking in the Sandia foothills. She worked first for the City of Albuquerque and then the Albuquerque School District

as a mapping planner. Although she was busy, she decided to take an "Introduction to Furniture Making" adult education class at CNM. There was only one other woman in the class. She gained a basic knowledge of the equipment and language of woodworking. She also learned that the large equipment, space needed, and materials for making furniture was just not feasible for her to pursue.

Her office was near the convention center downtown. If there was an event, she would often pop over to see what was going on. One fateful day, the American Association of Woodturners was holding their annual symposium. Patricia, having never seen a demonstration of woodturning, intently watched a small lady at a lathe turning elegant wooden finials. The lady was renowned woodturner, Cindy Drozda, and she had put Patricia under her spell. In time, Patricia and Cindy would become friends.

Patricia went back to her office intrigued. This could be feasible and fun, but she could not find any place where she could learn woodturning. She kept looking and eventually found an article in the *Albuquerque Journal* about a woodturning class offered by the Santa Fe Community College's woodworking program. She took the class, then took another. She started buying tools. She had found a buried passion that started with the woodcarving at her grandmother's house. The Sandia foothill treks continued. The family began looking for a house in Sandia Heights where they could head out their front door into the wilderness, and with



Continued on page 11...

Renowned Ground at U-Mound

Stan Davis, Resident

“U-Mound” is a prominent conical knob of rock in the Sandia Foothills that has a series of “Natural Landmark” signs leading you up to the top for the nice vistas (fig. A below). It is located just off the 365 Trail near the Copper trailhead parking for the Foothills OpenSpace.

U-Mound was named for a giant letter “U” constructed of rocks painted white by UNM students in the 1920’s on the city-facing side of the knob. A later generation of students flipped them all over in the 1960’s, so the “U” is now gone. Aside from the historical interest, U-Mound is a prime example of an interesting geologic phenomenon we find in some places in the Sandias. This phenomenon turns the Sandia Granite into a stunning *red-and-black* “polka-dot”-type of rock (fig. B below).

ACC Activity Log

Summary of **Approved -Projects** activity since the last GRIT:

19 Cedar Hill Rd NE – Replace HVAC Units
212 Spring Creek Place -- Re-roof with Tan TPO
346 White Oaks Road -- Deck re-build
938 Bobcat Blvd -- Re-stucco/Paint Fireplace Ledge
1468 Morning Glory Road -- Patch Stucco/Restore Wood
1531 Eagle Ridge Drive -- Cover Porches/Wine Cellar
1550 Eagle Ridge Lane -- Replace Windows
1830 Tramway Terrace Loop -- Re-roof with Tan Silicone
2121 Black Willow Drive --Re-stucco
2801 Tramway Circle -- Remove Fence/Install Wall
7713 Cedar Canyon Place --Paint Beams Front Entry
8215 Indigo Court --Replace Porch Pillar in Courtyard

Continued on page 15 ...



The figure illustrates the interesting bed-rock of U-Mound: (A) U-Mound forms a prominent, erosion-resistant landmark along Trail 365; (B) Black hematite and pink feldspar form a polka-dot pattern; (C) Fresh surfaces exposed by cracking the rock open reveal black hematite inside; (D) Black hematite leaves a reddish streak. (E) A strong neodymium (Nd) magnet sticks to the rock.

Sandia Heights YTD MARKET TRENDS

Year to date 1/1/23 to 12/13/23

Closed Sales	Average Sale Price	Total New Listings	Avg Price per sq.ft.	Avg Days on Market
88	\$718,318	117	\$258.31	24
+8% from 2022	+3% from 2022	+8% from 2022		13 Avg DOM in 2022

REAL ESTATE NEWS

- 38.7% of Americans today own their home free and clear.
- 30% of homeowners have over 50% equity.
- The average homeowner has about \$290,000 in equity.
- Apartment construction is at a 40-year-high

Sandia Heights

1548 Eagle Ridge Ln. \$1,025,000



1.21 Acres LAND

9 La Luz Trl. \$395,000



Home on 10 acres

46 Circle Dr \$600,000



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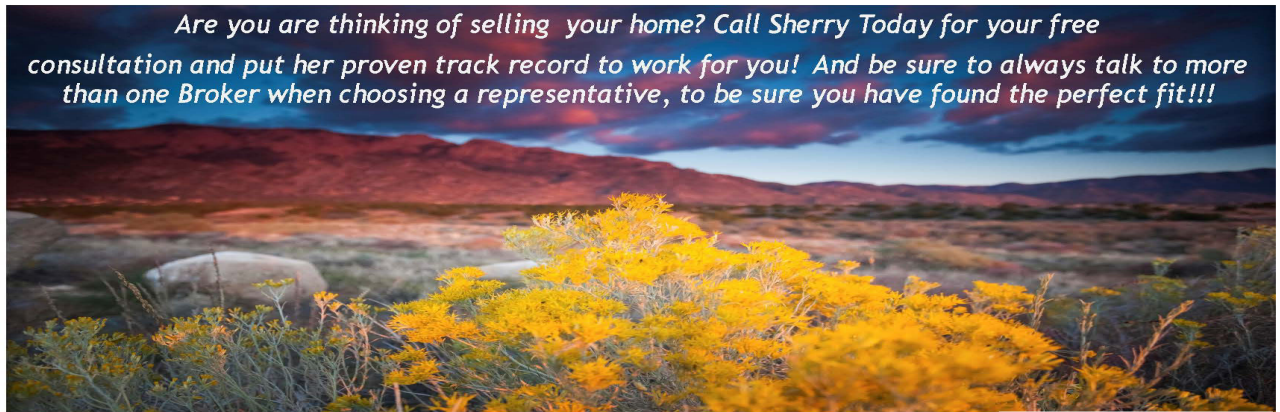


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... continued from page 7

space where Patricia could have a workshop. Their search paid off. Twelve years ago, they were very happy to find their current home. “I love it here. I feel so blessed to live here. We just walk/bike out our front door and we are in the foothills. And there was an extra bedroom that I could use for my woodturning studio.” They put a lot of work into the house to make it their home. Some of that work included converting that extra bedroom into Patricia’s woodturning shop which included a 600-pound lathe. “I saw signs for the Sandia Heights Artists Tour. We went to several sites. I thought it was really cool, but at the time I was just learning my craft and I never dreamed I would participate.”

Patricia became a member of the New Mexico chapter of the American Association of Woodturners (AAW). There were only two other women in the chapter but “the guys were very supportive of us.” Patricia took advantage of all that the local AAW chapter could offer, plus attending many workshops locally and nationally. She currently does demonstrations herself and heads the local Women in Turning group, a sub-committee within the local AAW chapter.

In 2016, although still working full time, Patricia had advanced enough in her skills to “give the Sandia Heights Artists Tour a try”, and she joined the group and participated in the tour. In 2018, Patricia retired and had the time to devote to her avocation. “I progressed from craft to making more artful pieces.” She especially enjoyed making miniature pieces. To accommodate the tiny dimensions, she started making her own small-sized tools. Her desire for excellence propels her. “I want to express how a form *should* look. I strive for perfection. However, she said with a smile, “I have a sign in my shop that reminds me: Perfection is the enemy of good.” She explained to me how woodworking is a process of planning, creating, and bringing out the luster with specific finishes. The turning lathe spins a spell. “I am inspired by the grain of the wood and have an idea. I start with a cube, round off the corners, and it just kind of appears. I get into a flow. It is very enjoyable.” Patricia has done public demonstrations at the New Mexico State Fair. “Many women and girls watch me and want to try it.”

Patricia has found that woodturning is as satisfying as the furniture-making she considered years ago. She does not need all the large, elaborate equipment and shop to do it. She does not need large amounts of wood. She often uses small scrap pieces. She gets to revel in her love of the wood. “The beauty is in there. Nature already made something beautiful. I just reveal it.”

Patricia will be participating in the next Sandia Heights Artists Tour in fall of 2024.

Okjoo Lee

Some folks are not comfortable with experimentation and unexpected outcomes, but Okjoo Lee thrives on it as she explores her chosen art of pottery.



Okjoo has a rich cultural heritage that informs every aspect of her life. She was born in Seoul, South Korea and grew up with four sisters. Her mother wanted her children to become professionals and, although Okjoo was good at drawing and painting, it was decided that Okjoo would become a nurse. Following her mother’s

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direction, Okjoo dutifully went to nursing school, but got side-tracked in an unusual way. A friend encouraged her to enter a talent contest and by golly, Okjoo won the competition to become a comedienne on South Korean TV and radio! She was successful and became a nationally-known celebrity. The work was rather glamorous but grueling. After 15 years in show biz, she decided she really needed to get better at English. She was set up on a blind date with her now husband, Tom, an American who was in the international medical business. Okjoo told me that she did not learn much English on that date; but she told me with a smile, “I learned something else.” This knowledge led to their marriage in South Korea.

In 2000, they moved to Colorado, Tom’s home state; but Tom quickly landed a job in Albuquerque. His new boss lived in Sandia Heights. They immediately looked at a house here because they loved the amazing beauty of the area. It was love at first sight and no other house could measure up. Now twenty-two years and many renovations later, they are still very happy in the home where they raised two sons and a daughter.



Raising the children kept Okjoo very busy. She had little time to pursue any artistic activity. But soon after her first son turned 18, she took a pottery class at the Not Made in China pottery studio in Albuquerque. Her choice of pottery was very much influenced by the ubiquitous role of ceramics in South Korean life. Korean pottery began with the oldest earthenware from around 8000 BCE. It is an integral part of the culture and has evolved into a highly developed art form which

is world famous. “You grow up with it,” she explained. There are entire specialized buildings called *anagama*, which are multi-chambered firing kilns. Pottery is taught in the public schools and that is where Okjoo learned the basics of making pottery.

Once her children became independent, she turned more to her love of getting her hands in clay. She put an electric kiln in the garage and converted a room downstairs into her studio. “It was so relaxing and enjoyable. It made me very happy. When I focused on the process I did not think or worry about anything else.” Even though she was still busy with family, she practiced in earnest and began showing her work at Mariposa and Weem’s galleries in Albuquerque. A few years later, she heard about the Sandia Heights Artists Tour, but she felt too busy. With the encouragement from other Sandia Heights Artists members, she participated in her first tour this year. “I finally did it! They were such an open and supportive group. They did not stop when their kids were raised. Stop did not mean stop—it meant start something new. They motivated and inspired me. It was a very positive experience.”

Okjoo loves to explore every aspect of her art form. She hand-builds some items and utilizes her wheel with others. She uses several clays, many firing methods, as well as a myriad of glazes and techniques. As Okjoo showed me examples of her pottery, she explained enthusiastically, “I love to experiment—to try this color, this pattern, this combination. I want to do as many types as I can. I do not want to do the same thing over and over. I cannot replicate the same thing. It is unpredictable. The kiln technique is the hardest part. You can never be finished with learning. The temperature, length of time in the kiln, and even humidity, combine in unexpected ways. I am always scared when I open the kiln. We say, ‘The kiln god decides.’”

Okjoo told me that she wants to create a merging of her two cultures. “I have lived in New Mexico for 22 years, but I have my Korean culture inside. I am striving for a balance between the Korean influence and the American Southwest influence. I want to blend this to create something new. I hope that people can see that in my work.”

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Things were never the same; we no longer celebrated Halloween, Christmas, and New Year's together as an entire community. Instead, smaller clusters of neighbors formed with individuals designated as 'block captains' charged with hosting occasional informal get-togethers and distributing lists of neighbors with addresses, phone numbers, and makes of vehicles owned by all. This enabled us to be on the alert for any unusual activity occurring at a neighbor's home. We now have much more Sandia Heights security coverage than in earlier years.

Many advances have been made in the last 50-plus years in our community, but the serenity of the Sandias, the city lights at night, and the ever-changing skies and cloud formations continue. I truly feel blessed to be part of this community that Ben Abruzzo and Bob Nordhaus envisioned decades ago, and that Will Jackson was instrumental in helping bring to fruition.

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Artist

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Okjoo has made a personal journey with her art. She explained to me that coming to the USA as an adult was hard. The language barrier was tough and isolating. She could not communicate like she wanted. “I was well known at home, a celebrity. Here no one knew me. My self-esteem was low.” But when she began to show her ceramics, she was able to present her talent through her art. Folks who bought her work sent her photographs of her pieces in their homes, along with notes about how much they loved them. This made Okjoo very happy. Art, as it is meant to do, had transcended the language barrier.

You can see and purchase Okjoo’s art at Mariposa Gallery and Weem’s Gallery in Albuquerque. She will also be participating in the Sandia Heights Artists Tour in Fall 2024.



Renowned Ground

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According to academics, some time after the injection of white-appearing dikes into the Sandia Granite (see *GRIT*, June 2023), a more recent episode of hydrothermal activity injected hot iron-rich fluids into the granite along faults and small fractures and cracks. While white/milky quartz and pink feldspar remained mostly unaltered, white feldspar and brown biotite were chemically altered to black hematite (iron oxide, Fe_2O_3) and some green non-gem-quality epidote (a silicate). Hematite is often red, but in this case, it is black. The resulting rock is generally harder than the original granite, helping U-Mound to remain a local erosion-resistant knob within the slightly more erosion-prone unaltered granite surrounding it.

The black hematite does not just form a weathering-type coating on exposed surfaces; being quite brittle, it allows rock samples to be easily cracked open with

a hammer, revealing that hematite is present throughout the rock matrix (along with the pink feldspar, fig. C). When the hematite is scraped across an unglazed porcelain tile, it leaves a reddish streak, typical of all hematite, regardless of color (fig. D).

Unlike magnetite (another iron oxide, Fe_3O_4), which is strongly magnetic (*GRIT*, Jan 2023), hematite is only very weakly magnetic; conventional magnets won’t stick to it, but a very strong magnet will (fig. E). Other examples of knobs of resistant granite with black hematite exist in the foothills. A knob that is only slightly smaller than U-Mound is located at the southern extremity of Trail 365, on the way to the “Metal Yucca” along I-40. An easily accessed miniature version of U-Dome called “Supper Rock” stands prominently in the otherwise flat Supper Rock Park in the Supper Rock neighborhood.

U-Mound was once famous for its giant white “U”, but it and these other prominent knobs are now famous (or at least distinctive) for their black-and-red rocks!



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