

The High Desert

# PALETTE

**KELLIE & LAEHLI**

Read a local authors  
story on pg. 10!

**EXPANDING  
CREATIVITY**

Learn about Willcox  
Theater and Arts'  
art club on pg. 16!



See what you missed out on during  
June 9th - 10th on pg. 20!



**WILLCOX**  
THEATER & ARTS

Presents:

# THE HIGH DESERT PALETTE

Willcox Theater and Art's mission is to provide entertainment, education and cultural programs and activities for all ages! We began producing The High Desert Palette in 2020 as a way to better embrace that mission!

The *High Desert Palette* is published quarterly by Willcox Theater and Arts, Inc. 134 N Railroad Avenue, PO Box 217, Willcox AZ 85644. It is distributed free to Willcox Theater and Arts, Inc. Guest Artist Season Patrons and Willcox area businesses. The online version is published at [willcoxtheater.com](http://willcoxtheater.com).



Jul., 2023  
Vol. 3 No. 4

Welcome to *The High Desert Palette*! In our previous issues, we brought work from local artists to these pages to share – from painters to blacksmiths; writers to culinary artists; photographers to musicians – and we've barely made a dent in the list of talented creatives in the area.

Art is meant to be shared: every page will share something intriguing and creative, and every issue is something that you can share with others after you've read it.

You can share with us your knowledge about more local artists and creatives, so that our future issues can highlight their work and it can be shared with the community of Willcox and its surrounding areas! Contact us at 520-766-3335 or [willcoxtheater@gmail.com](mailto:willcoxtheater@gmail.com) to discuss your ideas.

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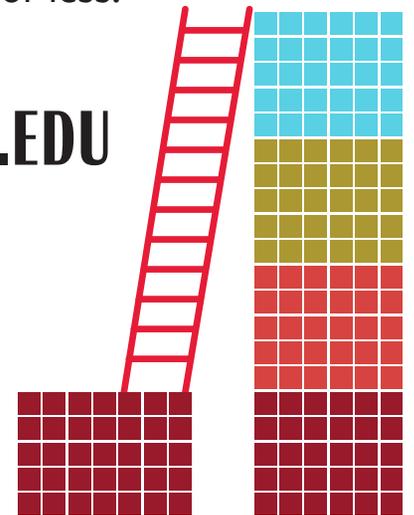
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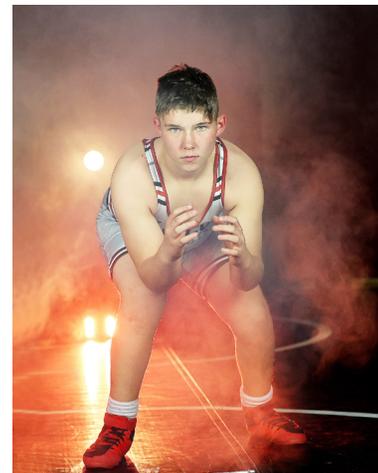


# ART LOOK

Featured are photographs by Sonya Chairez!

"I have always had a passion for photography, but when my husband came home with a huge camera as a gift, we had no idea my hobby would be taken to the next level. I have been a professional photographer for eleven years, with a focus on senior graduation and sports photography. In the last year I have expanded my services to include a fun photo booth for events and am happy to report ownership of a private photo studio! Call, email, or simply stop by in you need a photographer!"

-Sonya Chairez



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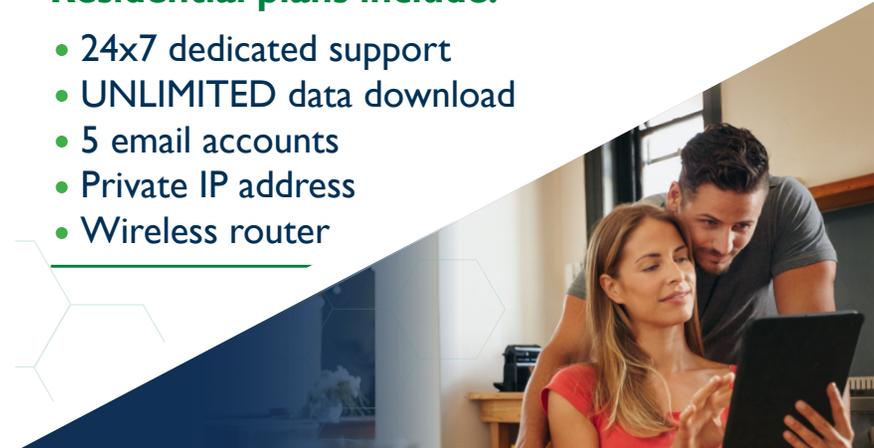
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## Kellie & Laehli

By Mary Peterson

Writing started out as a coping mechanism for Kellie Fitzgerald. As difficult things emerged in her life, everything from

turned to writing. “I was writing to figure out what kind of life my grandson was going to have as a ‘differently abled’ person,” Fitzgerald mused. “What I learned in the process was that he can do anything he wants.” This process led her to the creation of a children’s book series, *Laehli and the Elephants*.

In the series, the principle characters become wildlife warriors and go off on adventures. The lead figure, Laehli, happens to be deaf. The books tackle themes of anti-bullying, inclusion of persons with disabilities, and environmental stewardship. Although Fitzgerald has written other books, this was her first children’s story and she had to learn to use “kid-speak” language to reflect how kids would explain things. In Book Three, Laehli and Aat, the elephant who is her sidekick

published and seven are waiting in the wings. As the books have picked up steam, negotiations about a cartoon series and/or film have emerged. Fitzgerald describes herself as an avid movie buff and her earliest professional interest was film-making so she is very excited by the new opportunities that are being discussed with members of the entertainment industry. “When I initially had the vision for the story, I dreamt it as a film.” Fitzgerald described. “I just wrote the stories for my grandson and it’s exciting and frustrating and overwhelming to see them take off!”

Kellie has roots in the Turkey Creek area, stretching back to the early 1990s. “It was kismet that brought me here,” she recalled. “I used to drive between California and Texas with regularity and Willcox was midway. I never imagined that someday this would be home!”

## Centered Storytelling

Fitzgerald isn’t aware of having a clear process for writing. “Some books write themselves and others I have to think about. Often there is a character that comes to life in my imagination and just starts telling

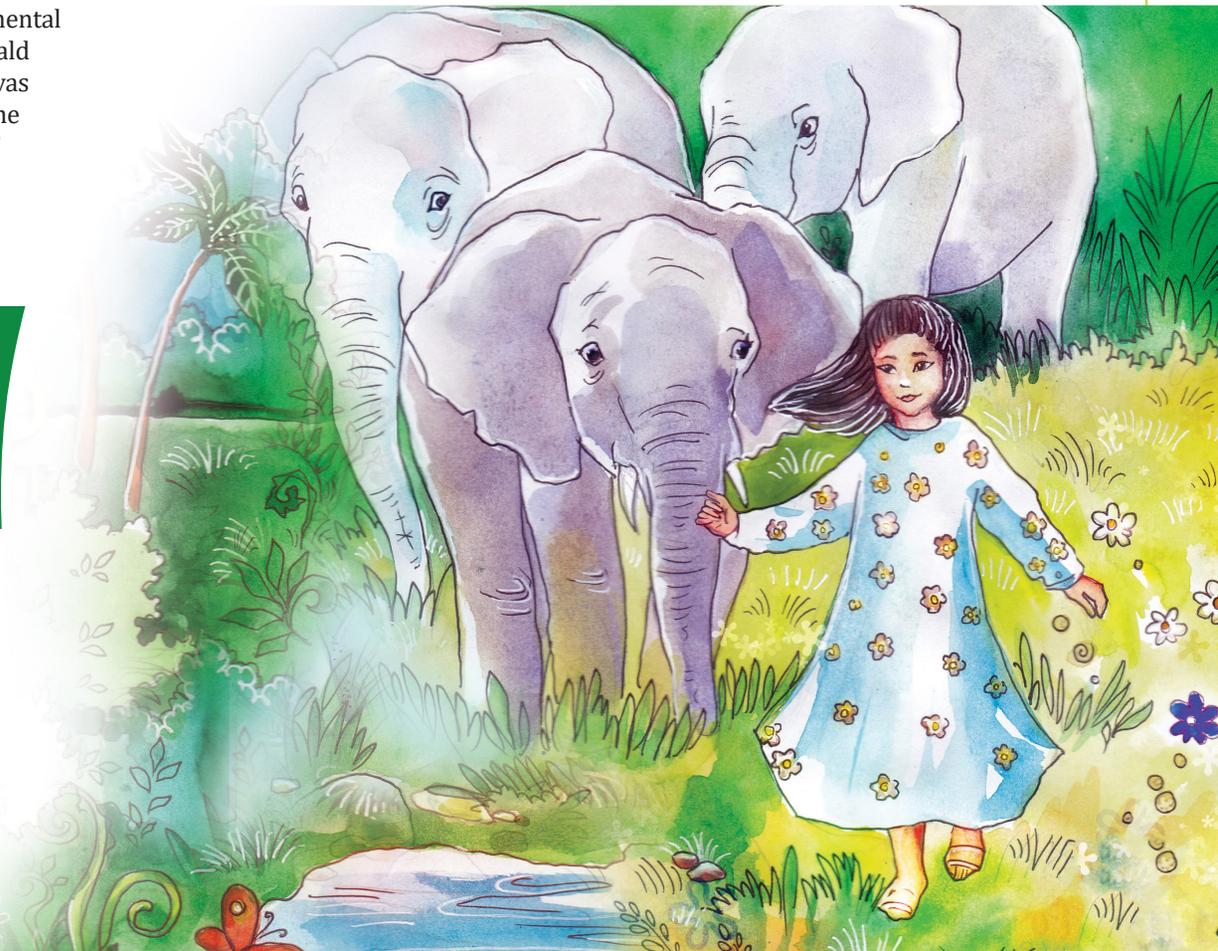
“Even if you never show it to another soul, write! Write it for you. Dig deep and let it all out. The act of writing gets all ‘the trash’ out of your body so you aren’t storing it.”

the death of loved ones to health scares, Kellie would turn to writing. “Even if you never show it to another soul, write! Write it for you. Dig deep and let it all out. The act of writing gets all ‘the trash’ out of your body so you aren’t storing it.”

When her grandson was diagnosed as deaf early in childhood, Kellie

in adventure, encounter a quirky orangutan who is desperately trying to redirect the young ones to safety. “It’s my favorite part of the series at the moment,” Kellie admitted.

Three books in the series have been



their story. The key is to get into the right mental space and let it flow," she mullied.

Accepting life and being present are key principles in Kellie's life. "I meditate every morning and now, my whole life feels wrong if I don't do it," Kellie shared. "Generally, I am pretty hyper and my brain is everywhere but I want to pay attention to what I hear and see. Stories emerge if I am centered and aware of myself and my surroundings."

To achieve that power of observation, Kellie enjoys walking. "Once, when I was on a walk, I saw some cats with their tails

Learn more about the Laehli and the Elephants series at : [www.laehli.com](http://www.laehli.com)



whatever is at hand and accept life as it comes. She rolls with life saying, "when things happen I say to myself, 'okay, this is what we

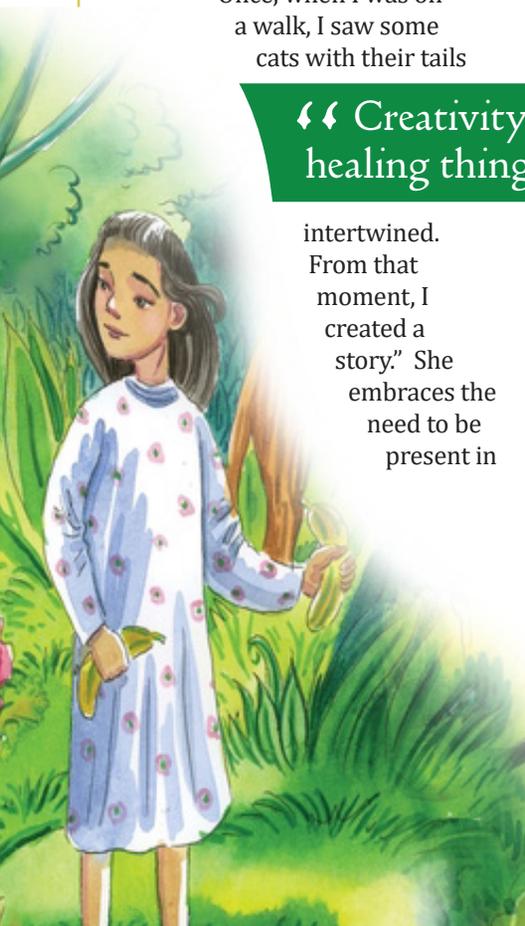
“Creativity is one of the most healing things you can do.”

intertwined. From that moment, I created a story." She embraces the need to be present in

are doing today. Tomorrow will be different, but this is today."

### Healing in Creativity

Kellie wrote her first book in 4<sup>th</sup> grade and remembers having several good teachers that encouraged her storytelling. "You can totally change someone's mood by good storytelling," Kellie asserted as she recalled a story of her best friend whom she greeted with dramatic Shakespeare lines or another friend who must read the room as a stand-up comedian. "Creativity is one of the most healing things you can do."



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@ The Palace of Art and Theater



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### MATINEE MY WAY — SHREK —

Enjoy a sensory friendly movie! That means lights turned up and sound turned down.

Jul. 29th @ 10am  
@ Willcox Historic Theater

### MATINEE MY WAY — SHREK —

Enjoy a sensory friendly movie! That means lights turned up and sound turned down.

Jul. 29th @ 10am  
@ Willcox Historic Theater

### ANT HILL DRIVE IN — E.T. —

Enjoy classic movie, E.T. for free at our drive in movie theater!

Aug. 4th @ 6pm and Aug. 5th @ 7pm  
@ 274 E Stewart Street  
(Baseball Field behind the Elks Lodge)

### THE SCIENCE OF GUINNESS WORLD RECORDS

See the traveling exhibit and try your hand at breaking records!

Aug. 4th - 27th  
@ 320 W Rex Allen Drive



## EXPANDING CREATIVITY

By Taylor Belden

In August 2022, Willcox Theater and Arts decided to revamp its Art Club program. Leading this new format was instructor, Brittany Rhodes. Brittany is WTA's lead visual artist, teaching art in a variety of media at WTA's Palace of Art and Theater. They are currently a student at Eastern Arizona college studying to become an art major.

Art club meets every Friday at 1:30pm. Throughout the meeting, young artists are typically given a warm up exercise before working on a longer form project that may last multiple class sessions!

Brittany sees Art Club as a good way for kids to get some

exposure to art in general and explore their interests early. They make sure young artists are introduced to new art media and technique on a regular basis. "I think art is very important for kids and I think it's a good outlet for them." Brittany said, reminiscing about their own introduction to art through a high school class.

Members of the Art Club, also fondly named Pencils of Doom, benefit not only from an instructors introduction to various forms of art, but from a sense of community and accomplishment too. Participants in the club are mostly long time attendees, some of whom have been with Brittany since the clubs conception and have only improved in their work since.

To honor that progress, a public showcase was presented on December 16th, 2022. Many passerby's noticed the gallery, walked through, and were able to



“It was really good to watch the kids that started off drawing stick figures draw amazing things and show them off.”

admire the artwork and visit with the present club members. “It was really good to watch the kids that started off drawing stick figures draw amazing things and show them off.”

The young creatives artistic progress as well as personal development hasn't gone unnoticed. Brittany has

been happy to receive gratitude from many parents of club members who thank Brittany for teaching their kids and boosting their confidence in more than just drawing.

Brittany hopes more kids will get involved in art and come to art club. They plan on continuing to nudge their Art Club participants out of their comfort zones and help them express and discover their creativity. There sure is a bright future ahead for these amazing young artists!



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## CONTRIBUTOR GUIDELINES

*The High Desert Palette* welcomes contributions that highlight creativity and creative people in Southeastern Arizona. We seek to explore the creative impulse, showcase creative product and inspire creatives in all fields. Original contributions in artistic and/or creative fields and articles or feature interviews with the people who create them will be accepted. Let us know of creative individuals we might highlight in future issues.

Please contact *The High Desert Palette* at 520-766-3335 or [willcoxtheater@gmail.com](mailto:willcoxtheater@gmail.com) to discuss your ideas.



# RANCHING HERITAGE FESTIVAL

JUN. 9TH - JUN. 10TH, WILLCOX  
HISTORIC RAILROAD AVENUE

The weekend of Jun. 9th - 10th marked a celebration of ranching heritage for the whole family to enjoy! See the fun we had with this collage of photos from the event!





# THANK YOU

Willcox Theater and Arts thanks the following individuals, foundations, businesses, and government agencies who are supporting our programming during the 2021-2022 Season.

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Your contributions will support our ability to keep classes, programs, and ticket prices low for the entire community—from students to seniors and everyone in between.

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