

## **Partners in Palo Duro Canyon Foundation**

***On the Edge!***



**Joseph Allen, Superintendent  
Palo Duro Canyon State Park**



### **Joseph Allen Virus 2020**

To say the last few months have been historic would be putting it lightly. I didn't think any of us could have predicted the changes we have been experiencing lately. And what a rollercoaster it has been. Spring Break 2020 was set to be another busy time for Palo Duro Canyon State Park, and it was, except that it didn't really end.

Going into spring, the Park team was busy with normal duties like serving visitors, dealing with contractors, fixing water leaks, mowing grass, and trying to hire additional team members. And then April hit, and suddenly the world changed. In a very short amount of time, we went from normal operations to a limited visitor capacity with shortened Park hours and a full-on Park closure for a time. I would never have imagined an entire state park system closed, but it did. And we have learned a lot from it.

We have learned who really loves their state parks. Many people, who had previously been silent, have come out to support state parks. We have also learned many new ways that we can serve the public, including distance learning and online research. Many park and program staff members quickly started getting necessary content available online to connect with those

who couldn't visit the park or those who were learning from home.

Now I can't sit here and say that it has all been easy. The Park team and volunteers, concessionaires, and special-event organizers have all had their share of stress and sleepless nights over the risk of exposure to the virus, lost revenue and wages, as well as the wellbeing of those we serve. There have been several periods of uneasiness when one or another of the team had to be quarantined for allergies or other reasons. Everyone has definitely gotten good at the "what if" game. But it really comes down to our core values as a Park team: Service, Integrity, Teamwork, Excellence, Stewardship. Our integrity is "choosing courage over comfort" as Brene Brown has said. I'd say Brown's statement is the definition of our work over the last few months.

Some really positive things that have already come out of this experience are an increased awareness concerning how to visit state parks with online reservations and save-the-day passes and a refocused attention on safety for the public, the staff, and our amazing volunteers. We are already seeing folks, who had never considered themselves to be "park people," coming out to discover the Park. We are making connections with new groups of people, and, if we do a good job, will make them lifelong users and advocates for these special places which some of us are lucky enough to take care of.



I know for myself, I am thankful to have been with this team while learning to manage the Park into the unknown each day. I am thankful for each and everyone of the extended Palo Duro Canyon family that loves and takes care of this special place. It's a big job and we all play a part. And as the day comes to an end, we must prepare for whatever challenges and opportunities tomorrow will most surely bring. **Ja**



### **David Townsend Canyon Gallery Manager**

Just as everyone else in the world has been affected greatly by Covid 19, so has the Canyon Gallery and crew. March and Spring Break is one of our busiest months in the store, usually generating three record-breaking weeks. This year's Spring Break, by all accounts, started out to be another record-breaking month until the virus hit full force.

The whole time we have been experiencing this plague, information has been so fluid that rules and regulations seem to change by the day. Starting after the original mandates took place—limiting the number of people allowed in all state park buildings, sanitizing all surfaces twice a day, social distancing within the store—were requirements which we assiduously followed.

Finally, with the Governor's closing of all buildings within the system, we were forced to close the Gallery for several weeks. Charlie Munger and I took advantage of the situation the first week and spent three days installing much-needed lighting in our jewelry display cases.

For the past two weeks [prior to submitting this article], we have been easing back into a strange, temporary normal. The museum in the Visitor Center is still closed, and we still have limitations to the number of visitors allowed into the store at one time. All sales during this time are hit and miss, and we are still working with a skeleton crew of volunteers. We are keeping surfaces in the store sanitized between customers as well as keeping the inventory sanitized.

It is hoped that we will be back to a more normal situation in the near future. *Dt*



**Photo by David Townsend**

**Editor's note: Eddie Tubbs, volunteer, photographer, etc., and Jeanna Lilley, assistant Gallery Manager lighten things up in the Visitor Center/Canyon Gallery**



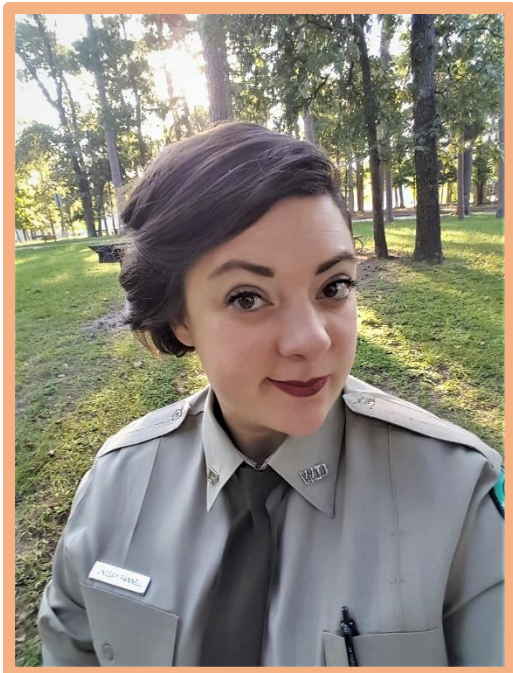


**Jenna Lilley, far right, and Toni Molino, volunteer, assist visitors in the Canyon Gallery/Visitor Center**



**Visitors in the Canyon Gallery/Visitor Center**

**Photos by David Townsend**



**Lindsay Pannell**  
**Park Interpreter**

“Gratitude is the healthiest of all human experiences. The more you express gratitude for what you have, the more likely you will have even more to express gratitude for.” *Zig Ziglar*

### **Gratitude**

Our world has changed remarkably in the few months since the illness, Covid 19, landed in America. Families and friends are separated, normal activities are shut down; and since their livelihood disappeared in the wake of this virus, many families struggle just to survive. In this time of chaos, focusing on stress and negativity is a natural reaction. But I want to challenge our readers to look for opportunities for gratitude.

Did you know that people give and receive gratitude in different ways? It is part of a person’s love language. Examples of

love languages are acts of service, quality time, or words of affirmation. Think about a time in your life when you felt appreciated. How was the person who was showing his or her gratitude showing the gratitude? Personally, I receive gratitude best by acts of service.

Why should we express our gratitude? Expressing and contemplating gratitude leads to improved relationships, increased positivity, and decreased stress.

Below are five easy steps to a gratitude-filled life:

1. **Write a letter:** A handwritten letter, particularly during this time of isolation, is thoughtful and a personalized way to show gratitude.
2. **Start a gratitude journal:** Grab a notebook and write down all the things you are grateful for today. As you make a habit of writing down moments of gratitude, you will start to look for them.
3. **Be an active listener:** Show your gratitude by listening to learn, rather than to respond.
4. **Express gratitude:** Tell a person you are grateful for him or her by being specific.
5. **Gift gratitude:** Do your friends or co-workers love geology? Send them an article on the famous Lighthouse formation at Palo Duro Canyon. It shows that you remember their passion and are grateful for them. *Lp*







**Photo by Eddie Tubbs**

### **New Rangers By Eddie Tubbs**

Kenney Schneider is Palo Duro Canyon State Park's new Lead Maintenance Ranger (above left). His position oversees the Field and Grounds rangers who do so much to take care of the Park. From mowing and weed eating to building maintenance and improvements, the maintenance rangers are the ones who make sure that the Park is functional and beautiful for our guests.

Kenny comes to us with many years of experience in carpentry and other building trades. He was the lead exhibit builder for the Panhandle-Plains Historical Museum for nearly thirty years until his retirement. He has also run the woodshop at the prison in Amarillo, and he has been owner/operator of his own carpentry business. Kenny brings not only a wealth of knowledge and skills to the job but also a care and concern for his team that can be seen in everything he does.

Jamie Sappington (above right) has stepped into a role that is not only new to him but also new to Palo Duro Canyon State Park. As the Assistant Lead Ranger and Mechanic, Jamie will help lead our maintenance team while also ensuring that our wide range of vehicles and equipment are running safely and well.

Jamie has served proudly in the United States Army and the National Guard for twenty years, and he has worked professionally as a heavy-equipment mechanic and auto mechanic. Most recently, he was owner and mechanic of Wrench Benders, his own shop located in Canyon, Texas. Jamie has decades of experience helping mold young soldiers into successful professionals, experience which will serve him and the Palo Duro team well as he helps shape the Park and its team for a successful future. ***Et***

## Musings by the Editor

Sometimes an editor finds himself with empty space to fill. This is one of those times. So, I have decided to fill it with me:

I have been on the Board of Partners in Palo Duro Canyon Foundation since either 1998 or 1999. Simultaneously, during that time, I have been a volunteer in the Canyon Gallery/ Visitor Center, a period of 21 or 22 years. I have met many people during that time, both on the Board and at the cash register, who have left indelible impressions upon me. Sadly, during these years, a number of former Board members have (putting it in a Texan vernacular) gone on to that Great Canyon in the sky. I was fond of them all. Yes, I know, you find “Great Canyon” to be a peculiar analogy. So do I, but since I’m only rambling, I’ll leave it in. Doing such a thing is a habit of mine—to let escape whatever enters my mind. I won’t name names, since to do so would fill up too much space, a paradox, since I’m trying to fill up space. No matter! Life is full of paradoxes, or is that paradoxi? My computer tells me the latter spelling is a misspelled word, but I kind of like it. Life is filled as well with misspelled words.

At the cash register, I once had a couple, who were among the original cast members of the play (pageant?) “Texas,” give an impromptu rendition of a song from the play. They sang to me, my wife, and others in the Gallery, along with the proper dance that went with it. I wished we had had more room.

One fellow from Germany entered the Gallery dressed in cowboy regalia, complete with boots, hats, belt, and bandana, who told me he knew more about Texas than I did. I didn’t see a gun on his hip, but, just in case, I didn’t argue with him. It sort of hurt my feelings, though.

I could go on, but I am running out of space, and I want to leave you with a picture of a fellow Board member and volunteer, who is also a photographer. These pages and other newsletters contain examples of his work. Thanks, Eddie Tubbs. *Cf*





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