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Have a look at our wonderful website, openspacealliance.org, recently redesigned by Sunny505 here in Albuquerque!



OSA Mission: OSA will enhance the experiences of all users of Albuquerque Open Space lands by providing financial support for Open Space programs; by advocating for sustainability and expansion of Open Space programs; and by encouraging increased public involvement with and use of Open Space lands.

Lance Chilton – Bicycle and Nature Enthusiast, Retired Pediatrician, and (luckily for us) OSA Board Member

by Bill Pentler



Catching up to Lance for an interview is no small feat. He’s currently going back and forth daily to attend legislative sessions at the Roundhouse (a habit of many years), and is a member of multiple organization’s boards including End of Life Options NM, The Poison and Drug Information Center, is a Co-Chair of the NM Immunization Coalition (the last two through UNM Health Sciences), and also for our OSA. Beyond that, he’s a doting husband, father, and grandfather, a bicycle enthusiast who rarely utilizes a car, and is passionate about walking, hiking, and spending time in nature.

As Lance stated to me, many of his passions for nature and interest in Open Space stem from his father, an engineer, who made sure his family embraced and spent time in nature through skiing trips in the Sierra Nevada and hiking in woods and areas around San Francisco, where he grew up. Lance and his wife of 57 years, Kathy, carried on that tradition with their two daughters, Annelise, now a lawyer who runs a nonprofit outside of San Francisco and Noël, who does graphics for a botanic garden in Oahu, Hawaii, and also on outings with their families including five grandchildren. I take personal joy in mentioning that Kathy, an art teacher and incredible creative force, has had her art and calligraphy shown at the OS Visitor Center on many occasions and Visitor Center.

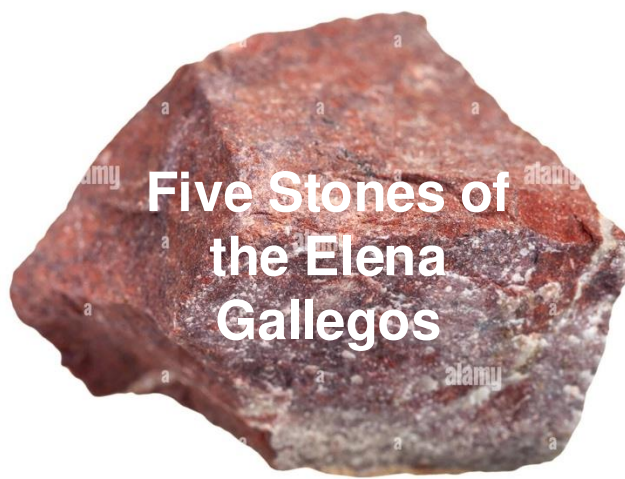
throughout their neighborhood. We in Open Space had the pleasure of working with Noël for a few years when she was the Education Coordinator at the Lance and Kathy came to NM after he graduated from medical school in Baltimore, MD through the choice of being an Army doctor in the Vietnam War or working in Gallup, NM for the US Public Health Service. Luckily for us, he chose the latter. He retired around 10 years ago after many years working as a pediatrician, 41 of which were in Albuquerque. A bicycle enthusiast his whole life, retirement gave him the freedom to tackle much longer excursions beginning with riding from Canada to NM on the Continental Trail. He’s also ridden all over Europe, with one trip taking him from Stockholm, Sweden to Rome, Italy, another beginning in Milan, Italy riding along the Danube River to Turkey, and a third from Oslo, Norway to Lisbon, Portugal.

Through his many passions and activities, Lance is an active member and contributor to the community at large, and even worldwide. I, my wife, and mother-in-law were recently lucky enough to be invited to a lunch with Kathy, Lance, and a young physician they were sponsoring as an offset of the American Field Service (now just called AFS). Lance and his family are some of the kindest, most giving, and wonderful folks we know and I’m honored to have the chance to write this, join him on the OSA Board, and accompany him on his goal of exploring the varied Open Space trails and outlying properties.



Other OSA board members include Steve Glass, Jeannie Allen, Kent Swanson, Robin Abrett, and Bill Pentler.





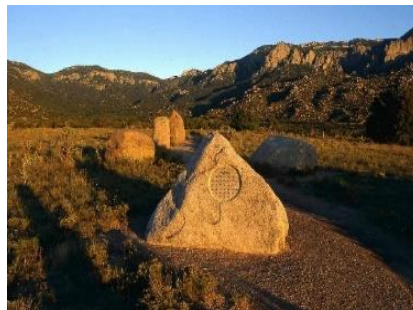
By Richard Shackley

Not only does the Elena Gallegos Open Space offer unequalled vistas, wonderful opportunities for quiet reflection, and a wide variety of interesting plants and animals, it is one of the gems of the City's Open Space properties. About 200,000 visitors each year hike, bike, run, and ride horses throughout the 640 acres of serene countryside. The Elena Gallegos Open Space has become one of the most popular destinations for local nature seekers and visitors from around the world.

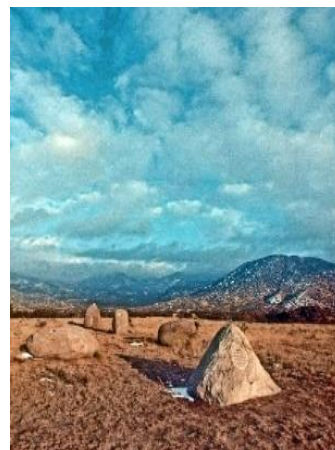
Nestled in the heart of this park is the Five Stones of the Elena Gallegos sculpture. The sculpture is located just a few hundred feet east of the Pino trailhead. This awe-inspiring work of art was created in 1983 by renowned artist Billie Walters, and was the first art installation commissioned by the Albuquerque Public Art program. The Five Stones sculpture was Ms. Walter's first, and last creation made from stone. Hundreds, if not thousands, of art installations commissioned by the Albuquerque Public Art program can be found sprinkled throughout the Albuquerque metropolitan area.

The Five Stones sculpture is a memorial to Philip B. Tollefsrud. Tollefsrud was a leading proponent of Open Space and was instrumental in the effort to preserve the Elena Gallegos Land Grant. Sadly, he died in 1976 before his dream became a reality. The sculpture consists of five granite boulders, all found close by, and collectively represents humans in nature. The first stone contains 38 brass studs, one for each year of Tollefsrud's life. The remaining stones symbolize the connection of humanity to the environment.

In June of 2020, Billie Walters, her family in tow, visited her spectacular work for the first time in over ten years... She seemed overjoyed to see her work once again.



Photos courtesy of
Billie Walters



Hidden Gems of Albuquerque's Open Space: Placitas Open Space

This month we'll continue to highlight some of our wonderful city open spaces that aren't actually within the city. Most of us know the Bosque along the Rio Grande, the Open Space Visitor Center or the Elena Gallegos Grant, but we are very fortunate to have some very non-urban City Open Spaces as well. This month, let's talk about the Placitas Open Space.

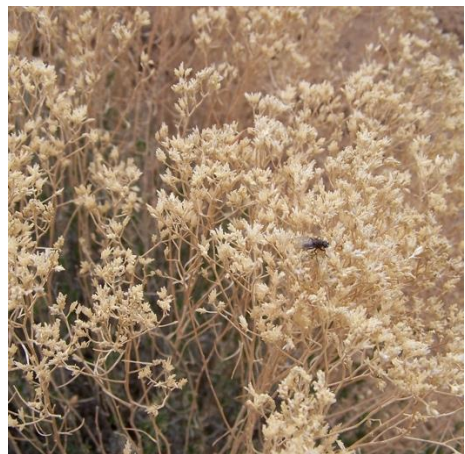
Placitas Open Space is both near and far: the west end of the space is just off Interstate 25, and the east end is relatively easily accessible off State Highway 165, the road from Bernalillo that crosses I-25 on its way to Placitas.

My first trip to Placitas Open Space several years ago was to the east end with then Open Space ranger Bill Pentler. Now retired, Bill is still passionate about Open Space and a member of the board and a fine photographer whose work is splashed all over these pages.

Bill took us in the east end, stopping on the way to show us the magnificent Placitas petroglyphs. Parking at the end of the road, we walked along well-developed trails on a brilliantly sunny day, past piñons and junipers and cacti and yuccas; Bill would frequently point out a bird flying happily as we were walking happily along. He told us of the history of Placitas Open Space, purchased from the Bureau of Land Management in 1968.

This past Sunday three of us with our two (leashed) dogs parked at the end of the west approach to the Open Space and walked up alongside an arroyo. We encountered just a few people, and probably because of the dogs, we didn't see wildlife. A few houses sit spectacularly above the trail in, but otherwise we were nearly alone. What a great way to spend aa couple of hours, waling in beautiful [Placitas Open Space](#)!

Photos by Kathy Chilton and Bill Pentler



Alexandra Bezner, OSD Education Coordinator, Keeps Informative Programs Coming



Alexandra Bezner at Saguaro National Park in Arizona

Talking with Alexandra Bezner, Education Coordinator working throughout Open Space but housed at the Open Space Visitor Center, it's easy to hear her enthusiasm with all that she does.

Alexandra has been at her job for about six months – she has previously served as a City Parks Programs specialist, planning excursions, wall-climbing events and lots else. Before that, she worked at the Albuquerque Zoo, and before that, with freshwater fish in Tennessee. She brings talents as an educator, as someone passionate about nature and all that comes with it, and with teaching about conservation.

We're very fortunate that Alexandra came here from travels and stays around the country. Her Bachelor of Science degree came from the University of Tennessee in Chattanooga – she studied conservation, natural resources and education there. – at least when she wasn't hiking in the mountains of eastern Tennessee or northern Georgia. But she and her husband, who also works for the Open Space Division, "saw the light", and moved to Albuquerque in 2019.

She and her husband love to walk in the foothills near their home, to explore our beautiful Bosque – "the Rio Grande is the heart of Albuquerque; I love

its cottonwoods," she says. She also loves Tingley Beach (co-managed with the Biopark, another city entity).

I spoke with Alexandra about her work and the vast array of educational and enjoyable programs she and other Open Space Division put on. She agreed with me that Albuquerqueños might know their open space better, but she's working on that. The Open Space website, already excellent, is being redesigned, and will give even more information to those who seek it there. She is also considering alliances with news organizations that might spread the word about the wonders of our open space.

We talked briefly about the Tijeras Biozone, that lovely piece of Open Space property just west of Tramway on Old Route 66. The old building there, previously a horse stable and a bar, is used occasionally for events like lectures and concerts, and will probably see increasing use, perhaps also as office space for OSD staff.

Alexandra closed out interview by thanking Open Space volunteers and all the wonderful people with whom she works. We are lucky to have her working to educate us on the glories of Albuquerque Open Space.

What's Happening in Space (ABQ Open Space) in March and April?

There are too many wonderful events happening every two months in city and county Open Space to list in each issue of a short newsletter. So here are some highlights of coming attractions, and details are available on the [City's Open Space Division events website](#) and on [Bernalillo County's Open Space](#) webpage.

A few extra-special events to highlight these two months:

Bosque Birds Exploration | Open Space Visitor Center (OSVC), Sat., March 8, 10 am-noon: Come join us on an adventure to discover the seasonal bird life around the Open Space Visitor Center! We will be taking a one-mile bird walk on the River Loop trail to explore riparian specific species as well as other visitors from afar. All materials will be provided.

Opening Gallery Reception for Geometry of Nature | OSVC, March 15, 2-4 pm: Join us as we celebrate the talented artists Donna Loraine Contractor, Catalina Salinas Gamarra, and Carol Lutz.

Spring Cleanups | Tijeras Biozone, Saturdays, March 29, 8:30 am to noon, Menaul Trailhead, April 19, 10 am-1 pm and Piedra Lisa Trailhead, April 26, 8:30 am-noon: Join us for a morning of community service at various open space facilities and trailheads! We have projects for all ages and abilities, including trash pick-up, revegetation, trail maintenance, and graffiti removal. Please dress appropriately for outdoor work and bring water, a hat, sturdy footwear, work gloves, sunglasses, and sunscreen. Parking may be limited, so carpooling is encouraged if possible. We look forward to seeing you there!

City Nature Challenge | OSVC, April 25, 10 am-noon: Join the Open Space Coordinator and Volunteers on a mission to document local plants and animals within the Middle Rio Grande Valley. Learn how to download and use Seek and iNaturalist to contribute to an international citizen science project!

Earth Day Celebration | OSVC, April 19, 8 am - noon: Join the Open Space Coordinator and Volunteers for a morning of planting at Common Edge Habitat Field in celebration of Earth Day. Come honor our Mother Earth as we take time to reflect on our actions to care for all beings, human and non-human!

Date: Saturday, April 19th

There's so much more going on that we don't have space to print, so go to the website (above) to find a lot more! And enjoy YOUR Open Space.



Bosque Wild Volunteer docents leading a guided hike through the Bosque.



The Albuquerque Astronomical Society volunteer greeting Star Party guests at OSVC.

We want you!... to join us and/or to donate toward our work.

Please see how to support our efforts at openspacealliance.org. And you're always welcome at our meetings.