



## Taking her life back

Nicole Fisher puts the pieces back together with some help from Cochise Harm Reduction

BY SHAR PORIER  
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BISBEE — Nichole Fisher, 46, was coming out of a fractured relationship and heading for a new life and job when she moved to Arizona two years ago. She quit her job at Chrysler and packed up what remained of her life in her camper and truck and headed south to start a new job at a winery in the Sonoita area. The idea of a quiet little place in the desert to call her own was the goal.

Unfortunately, she lost the job and turned back to a habit she overcame in the past—alcohol. She wrecked her truck and camper while driving under the influence and her dream was shattered. She lost everything, including one of her dogs.

The experience led her once again to seek help and provided a mindset that made her decide, “Never again.”

“It happened for a reason,” she said. “It led me to the Tintown Homeless Shelter and Bisbee. It was strange. You know, I’ve never been at Ground Zero. You know, it’s a very



MARK LEVY HERALD/REVIEW

Cochise Harm Reduction supply assembler Nichole Fischer prepares packets to be given out to those in need Tuesday.

humbling experience. I was actually going to look for property and buy a house. I lost it all on the road that day.”

While at the shelter, she heard about Lu Funk, who has been dubbed the “Desert Angel” by those she serves as executive director of Cochise Harm Reduction (CHR). The nonprofit assists unhoused people across the coun-

ty with the supplies needed to survive outdoors, food, clothing, hygiene kits and a welcome to the family that cares.

CHR helps addicts and those who lost their homes with a kindness born of those who lived the life. Those who work at CHR have kicked their addictions and worked to overcome the incessant craving in order to reach so-

briety. It gives them a leg up when it comes to relating to those who want to make it to that finish line.

“They saved my life,” said Fisher. “Honestly, hands-down. It was really hard at first. You know, drugs are around, alcohol is around. I had nothing. What am I going to do? I was doing well at the shelter.”

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## Burnishing Bisbee

BY LYDA LONGA  
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BISBEE — With a housing stock that is among the oldest in the nation, a number of low-income residents struggling to pay rent, and a large number of

short-term rentals for a town its size, the city of Bisbee is staring at several challenges in its quest to create more affordable housing for the community, a survey done for the municipality shows.

The report prepared by Points Consulting

and titled “BURNISHING BISBEE An Action Plan for Preserving & Enhancing Housing Opportunities,” was an eye-opener to members of the City Council at a work session Tuesday evening.

“It’s very enlightening

New Housing Study Points to Unique Challenges

and concerning,” Councilman Pete Skinner said of the survey.

Mayor Ken Budge hinted to consultant Brian Points that Bisbee’s uniqueness is part of the challenge.

See HOUSING, Page 4

## Sierra Vista Unified School District approves FY26 budget

BY MARK HAYS  
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SIERRA VISTA — The Sierra Vista Unified School District Governing Board approved its adopted budget for Fiscal Year 2026 at its regular meeting Tuesday.

The total budget for the district is set at \$41,114,046, which covers maintenance and operations, capital outlay, and federal project funding.

The largest portion of the budget—\$31.7 million—is allocated for the Maintenance and Operation Fund, which includes salaries, benefits, and general operational costs. The budget also includes \$2.5 million for unrestricted capital expenses, with an additional \$1 million carried over from the previous year, and \$5.9 million earmarked for federal projects.

Revenues for FY 2026 are projected at \$40.72 million, drawn primarily from state sources (\$25.5 million), with additional contributions from local (\$8.4 million) and federal (\$6.82 million) sources.

The approved budget also includes adjustments to property tax rates. The primary tax rate is set to decrease from 3.5002 to 3.1529, while the secondary tax rate—used for bond repayment and special projects—will increase from 0.3991 to 0.4461, reflecting changes in Class A bond obligations.



MARK LEVY HERALD/REVIEW

Teacher salaries are expected to remain flat in the upcoming fiscal year, with the average salary listed at \$52,669, unchanged from FY 2025.

The district’s overall budget for FY 2026 is significantly lower than the previous year, decreasing from \$62.3 million in FY 2025 to \$41.1 million. The reduction reflects lower revenue projections across multiple categories, including a decrease in local funding from \$21 million to \$8.4 million, and a drop in federal revenue from \$14.5 million to \$6.8 million. State funding saw a more modest decline, from \$26 million to \$25.5 million.

The budget was one of several action items addressed by the board during the meeting, which also included approval of a Code of Excellence, multiple personnel actions, and facility use agreements.

The full budget is available on the district’s website at [www.svusd68.org/o/svusd/page/business-office](http://www.svusd68.org/o/svusd/page/business-office)

### MORE STORIES INSIDE

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Fort Huachuca schools will face some impacts, just not as bad as others

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2 arrested following investigation in Golden Acres robbery

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Bisbee Police Chief Stresses Urgency of Policy Adoption

### WEATHER

Today: Light Rain. Hi 87, Lo 70. Rain 15%

Saturday: Light Rain Hi 86, Lo 70 Rain 25%

Sunday: Partly Cloudy: HI 87, Lo 69. Rain 25%

Monday: Rain Hi 82, Lo 67 Rain 50%

FROM PAGE 1

Fisher decided to leave the shelter and Funk and her team helped her settle in with the others who made their homes behind Safeway, on land owned by the city. It was rough at first, especially in the winter when the temperatures dropped.

"Everyone said go to Arizona; it's warm there. But, not in the winter," she said with a smile.

"These people do care. Anything I need, they help me," she added. "Anything I need, I feel like Bisbee gives it to me. And I learned that I don't need everything I thought I did. You know, back to basics kind of deal."

"I feel very fortunate

to have met Lu. I don't know what I would do without her. She always just knows just what to say. I want to be more like her."

Fisher helps the hundreds CHR looks out for by making up the hygiene kits which gives those in need with basic toiletries—shampoo, toothpaste and toothbrushes, feminine products, deodorant and some first aid supplies.

Once she gets her driver's license back, she hopes to join the crews who deliver supplies and hot meals to the various communities around Cochise County. She has ridden with team mates and likes the interaction with those still struggling.

She was a certified nursing assistant and would like to go back to that type of work where



MARK LEVY HERALD/REVIEW

**Harm outreach specialist Bronwen Di Campli stocks the organization's shelves with supplies earlier this week.**

she's helping people.

"And I really enjoy that work," she said. "I just enjoy giving back and doing something worthwhile."

She looks forward to the day, when she can get back to that dream

she lost two years ago.

"I lost everything, but it brought me back to self," she added. "And there's things that I needed to learn about myself and how to deal with individuals and how to deal with just

me."

She has submitted applications for employment for some places around Bisbee, but hasn't had a call from any businesses. But, she is committed to sobriety and to finding

the job that will return her to self sufficiency.

Fisher is one more success story for CHR and she does not want to let down the team who helped her. She is on the road to a happy, sober life.

## Arizona Alcohol Use Statistics Overview

49.44%% of people over 18 in Arizona reported alcohol use in the last 30 days.

22.36%% of people over 18 in Arizona reported binge alcohol use (5 or more drinks for males and 4 or more drinks for females in 1 session) in the last 30 days.

48.64%% of residents of Arizona perceive drinking more than 5 drinks in 1 drinking session as a great risk.

<https://alcoholrehabhelp.org/arizona/alcohol-statistics/>

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