



COCHISE COUNTY
WOMEN'S MAGAZINE

Stephanie Quiroz

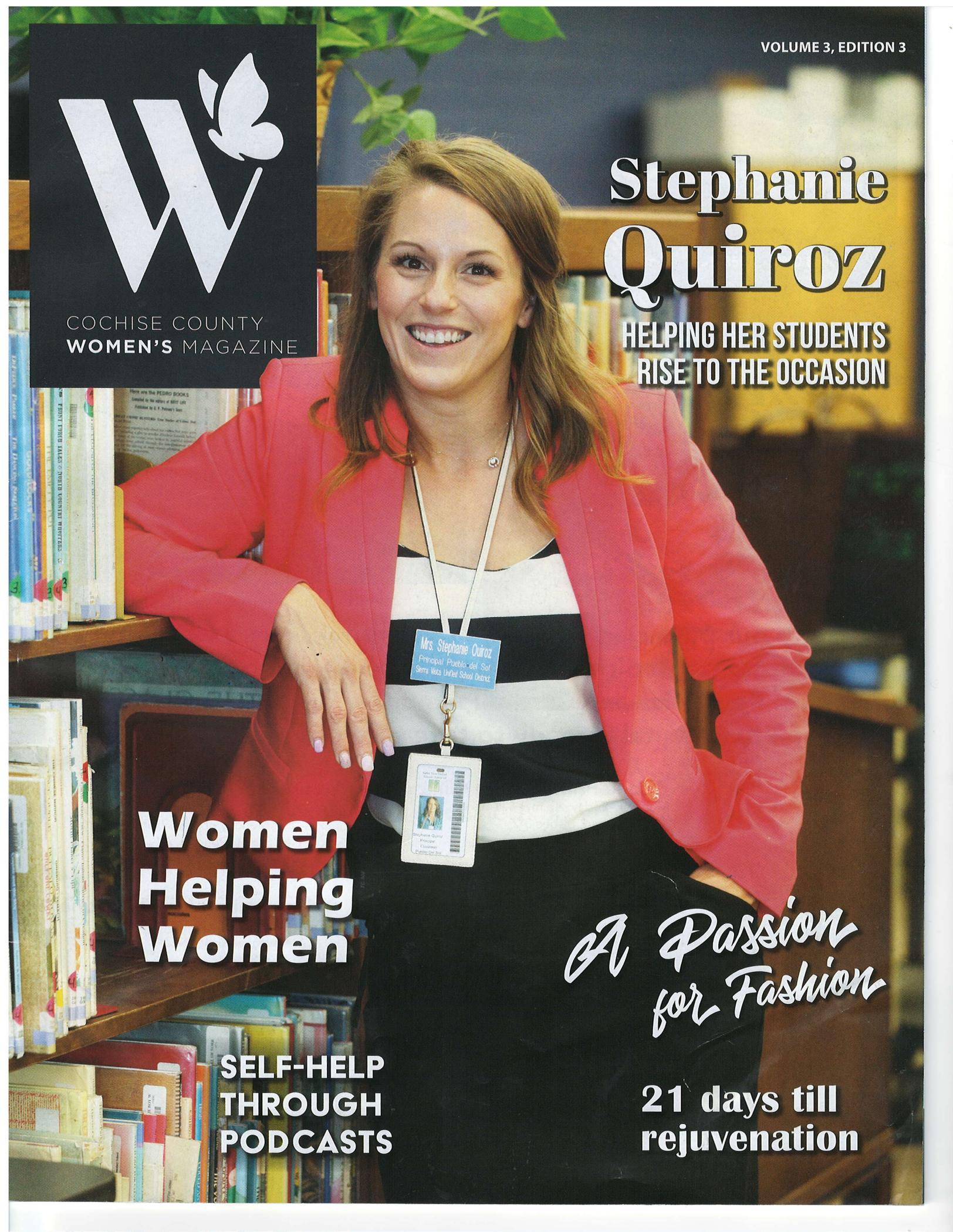
HELPING HER STUDENTS
RISE TO THE OCCASION

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Helping
Women**

*A Passion
for Fashion*

**SELF-HELP
THROUGH
PODCASTS**

**21 days till
rejuvenation**



IT TAKES A VILLAGE



Community support keeps Apache Elementary going strong

BY SHAR PORIER

At Apache Elementary School, basically a one room school, staff consists of one teacher's aide, a bus driver, a business manager and one woman who acts as the teacher, the principal and the school superintendent — Loy Guzman.

The school is located in the high desert between the Peloncillo and Chiricahua Mountains. It is one of four remaining one-room schools in the state providing K-8 education to the children of ranchers, farmers, and others in this sparsely populated area of Arizona.

Just a few years ago it was on the chopping block by county school superintendent Jackie Clay, who had the unenviable task of closure due to a lack of community support.

Once former students of the 114-year-old school and residents of Apache and its neighbors communities of Portal, Cave Creek and Rodeo, N.M., heard about the closure, they put up a ruckus. When Guzman was hired to fill the three important roles, she talked with Clay about the situation of the school closure.

"I fell in love with the kids," said Guzman. "I thought I wanted to be a Certified Public Accountant in college, but I changed my focus to kids. I wanted to help children with special needs and I worked at San Simon. I really liked the rural feel and the one-on-one interaction and parent involvement.

"Jackie told me, 'I want the community to come together on this.' So, we met and decided to do

what was right for the kids."

Together, they managed to reconcile community rifts. After parents, family and community members threw their full support behind the schools, AES has flourished in ways just as important as grades — socially and emotionally.

"Having Ms. Clay as a supporter meant everything to us," continued Guzman. "And, my kids know what she has done for them. They always ask about her when I go to meeting in town. They know she supports everything they do, too."

Guzman also relies on her staff and on the community's artists and musicians who volunteer to teach the students every year about the arts. This year, the students will work on Christmas present projects



for their parents.

"We want the kids to interact with the residents. It's important for them to give back," emphasized Guzman.

This school year, she has six students to teach, a drop from the previous year. The students are K-4th grade and 7th grade.

How does she handle teaching the different grades? The way she explains it makes AES so special.

"While I'm working with the younger kids, we start with the basics," she said. "Then, I'll move to the next grade and discuss subjects which though more advanced, actually keep their attention and they all learn together."

By the smiles on her students' faces and their joy of learning and cooperating by all working together as a team is a testament to Guzman, her staff and the volunteers.

Being in a 50-year-old building, repairs and maintenance are always a financial hurdle. And, keeping up with the needs for students — books and supplies — can be difficult. In order to meet those needs, state and federal grants are a must. Somehow, Guzman finds the time to fill out the applications and waits on pins and needles to find out if AES was awarded them.

One might think certain portions of the curriculum would be forgotten, like art or music, but those are covered

by local musicians and artisans who volunteer time at the school.

And field trips? They go on field trips to Tombstone, Bisbee and beyond when they can.

Those trips can also be to take the rocks they painted up into the Chiricahuas to leave along the trail for hikers to see, or help clean up the Apache Cemetery or pick up garbage along the road.

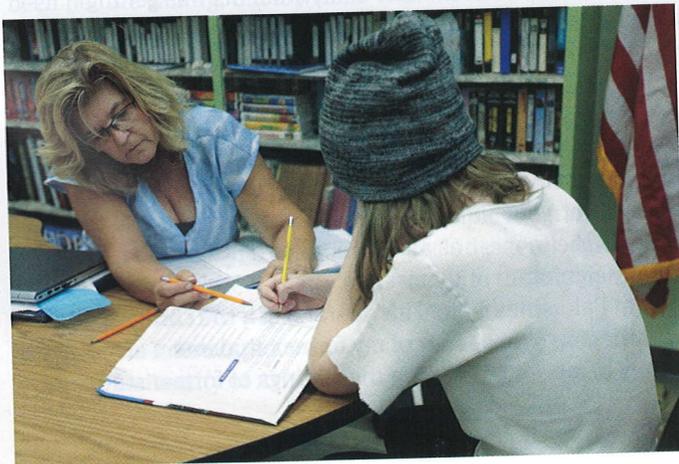
Guzman gives considerable thanks to the parents, family members and community members who donate snacks, books, even money to pay for the field trips.

Being in such a remote area, Cochise County Sheriff Mark Dannels provided the school with a phone to connect directly with law enforcement just in case it is ever needed.

"We haven't used it yet, but it's comforting to have it here. We appreciate what he has done for us," noted Guzman.

The playground is a big concern as the metal structures are as old as the 51-year-old school building and in need of replacement. To help future students, four pecan trees have been planted to provide shade.

"They say it takes a village," said Guzman fondly. "That's true. Without the help of our families, friends and neighbors, we wouldn't be able to do what we do. I thank them constantly." ○



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