

## Mountain Shadows Church

Young Adult Volunteers

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For more than 20 years, the local Tucson Borderlands YAV Program (TBYAV) has been providing opportunities for young adults, ages 19 to 30, to come to Tucson for a year of community service. Although the National YAV program operates approximately 24 partner sites around the world as part of the Presbyterian Church (USA) Mission Agency, Tucson is the only program providing direct engagement at the southern border. Many of the YAVs have either just finished high school or college and are undecided about next steps in their professional career path. The YAV program allows these individuals to take the time to get out of their current environment and to learn new skills and life experiences. The YAVs are provided a bicycle and a stipend to cover food, utility, and other expenses.

Until recently, the TBYAV participants were housed in a rental facility in downtown Tucson and then traveled by bicycle/bus to their assigned community partner (e.g., CHRPA —community home repair); Casa Alitas — migrant resources; and Iskashitaa — community gardening and harvesting) four days weekly. On the fifth day of the workweek, the YAVs participated in relationship building and group activities. All the YAVs were provided resources for learning Spanish (and, if needed, English). Often, on Sundays, the YAVs visited local Presbyterian churches and talked about their experiences. For a shortened period of five weeks in the summer, YAV interns provided assistance at Montlure Youth Camp in Greer, Arizona.

This past year, half of the YAVs were assigned to partners in Agua Prieta, Mexico due, in part to difficulties with attaining Visas to work or participate in retreats and church visits in the U.S. Community partners in Agua Prieta included Frontera de Cristo (humanitarian assistance to deportees returned to Mexico from the US), C.A.M.E. (migrant sheltering while awaiting asylum appointments) and Cuenca Los Ojos (biological- ecological conservation). For this new volunteer year that begins Thursday, August 1, all the YAVs will be placed in Agua Prieta.

TBYAV is unique amongst the YAV programs in that it operates at the border and focuses on migrant issues. Consequently, opportunities for young people to witness and address justice at the border can be a life-changing experience. Young people, regardless of faith background, are eligible to apply to the program that runs from August through July. Uniquely amongst all the YAV programs that are supported by PC(USA) funding, TBYAV also operates as a 5013c nonprofit organization. Local presbyterian churches such as Mountain Shadows in Catalina, Arizona, supports TBYAV through Mission Ministry funding. Mountain Shadows also has a congregant serving on the Board of Directors.

Recently, approximately 14 Mountain Shadows congregants and guests joined the four summer YAV interns (of which all were from Mexico) for a homecooked dinner at a congregant's home in SaddleBrooke. The YAVs were returning from Montlure Camp and stopped by Biosphere2 on their way to the dinner. With many of the congregants and guests being fluent in Spanish, there was a lively discussion with the YAVs throughout the evening. Check out the Mountain Shadows website for updates about TBYAV and other events and opportunities at [mountainshadowschurch.org](http://mountainshadowschurch.org).