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Keep Sedona Beautiful Honors Verde Valley Champions

Photo Caption: From left to right: Nancy Rominger, Lisa Page, Alice Madar, Spring Graf, Caroline Morgan, Thomasene Cardona, Dr. Emanuel Preciado, Dr. Maurice Crandall. Photo by Larry Kane

Keep Sedona Beautiful (KSB) celebrated outstanding community leadership on April 24, 2026 at its Annual Awards of Excellence ceremony, recognizing individuals, companies and organizations whose work supports KSB's mission "to protect and sustain the scenic beauty and natural environment of Sedona and the Verde Valley."

KSB first honored Spring Graf, founder of [Volunteer Sedona & the Verde Valley](#) (VSVV), with an award for Community Service for creating a centralized hub that makes volunteering easy and accessible. Inspired by her work after the Maui wildfires, Graf launched the nonprofit in 2024. Since its founding, VSVV has grown from 26 to more than 75 partner organizations. In its first year, VSVV recruited 835 volunteers and logged over 2,500 hours of community service for our area. It was able to post 245 calendar volunteer events on behalf of its partners." Her efforts have also elevated "voluntourism," inviting visitors to give back during their stay.

Lisa Page from [Local First Arizona](#) accepted the next award, for Sustainability. Since 2003, Local First Arizona has empowered small businesses to adopt sustainable practices. Their Green Business Boot Camp helps local companies reduce energy, water, waste and transportation impacts by at least 20%. The free, bilingual program provides hands-on training and access to green microloans, ensuring sustainability is achievable for businesses of all sizes and backgrounds.

Thomasene Cardona was recognized with a KSB award for Cultural Heritage for her Yavapai Land and Culture Collective Project, which reconnects Yavapai people with sacred ancestral sites. Through language, ceremony, oral history and time on the land with elders, the project strengthens cultural identity and fosters healing. Cardona has also provided extensive education to KSB's Indigenous Peoples Awareness Committee,

helping bridge cultural divides in the Verde Valley. Dr. Emanuel Preciado and Dr. Maurice Crandall joined Ms. Cardona in accepting this award.

Alice Madar then received an award for Environmental Stewardship on behalf of the [International Hummingbird Society](#), headquartered in West Sedona. For nearly 30 years, the organization has educated the public about hummingbirds, critical pollinators facing steep population declines. Through the Sedona Hummingbird Festival, garden certification programs, live banding demonstrations and extensive outreach, the Society inspires conservation and protects vital habitat across the region.

For more than fifty years, [Northern Arizona Audubon Society](#) has protected birds and the habitats they depend on. The organization manages two key preserves, the Sedona Wetlands Preserve and Bubbling Ponds at Page Springs Fish Hatchery, maintaining trails, hosting bird walks and offering free environmental education. Their survey work helped secure Important Bird Area designation in Camp Verde, paving the way for the creation of Rockin' River Ranch State Park. For this work, they received an award for Environmental Stewardship which was presented to Caroline Morgan.

KSB honored Volunteer of the Year Nancy Rominger for her extraordinary work revitalizing and maintaining the KSB EcoHub Educational Garden. After KSB completed a two-year rehabilitation of the garden, Nancy has continued to nurture the space, repairing irrigation, removing invasive plants, expanding plantings, advising on signage and coordinating volunteers. Her stewardship ensures visitors can "Discover the Wonder" in this thriving community garden.

Keep Sedona Beautiful, Inc. is a nonprofit organization that, by acting through the stewardship of its members and volunteers, is committed to protecting and sustaining the unique scenic beauty and natural environment of the Greater Sedona Area. For more information about Keep Sedona Beautiful, please call 928.282.4938, or visit www.keepersedonabeautiful.org.