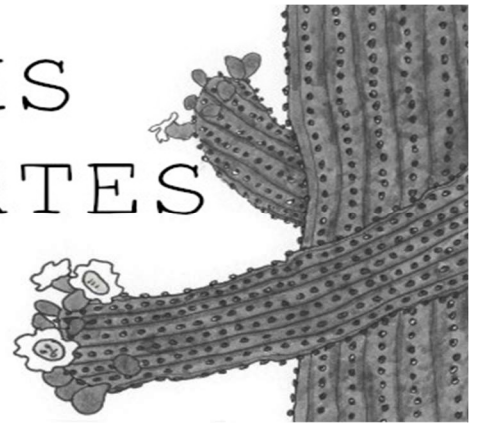


NO MORE DEATHS NO MÁS MUERTES



Winter 2022



Dear Friends,

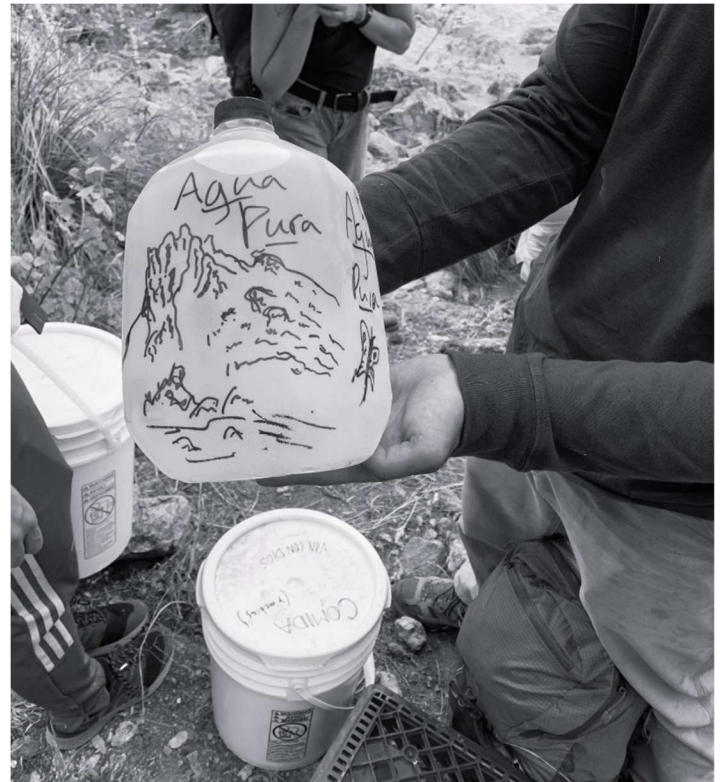
You're probably familiar with the parable of the Good Samaritan: A man is injured and abandoned on the side of a road. The first two people who encounter him do not stop to help. The third person, the Good Samaritan, stops and provides aid to the injured man. He does this despite the fact that he and the injured man belong to groups that are in conflict.

The phrase "Good Samaritan" is one often used to describe individuals and organizations like No More Deaths who provide humanitarian aid to migrants in the borderlands. But it was not until recently that I read the parable itself. The story is mostly what I had imagined – it describes helping someone in need, especially in situations that might be inconvenient or a risk to safety. What I hadn't known was the last part of the parable, that the Good Samaritan and the injured man belonged to conflicting groups. When I read that, I felt less sure of the comparison to humanitarian aid work in the borderlands. The dynamic of care here is not one of "Americans" helping "non-Americans" or "citizens" helping "non-citizens." In fact, most life-saving assistance in the desert happens between migrants themselves, not migrants and aid workers.

This is why we say we work in solidarity, not charity. No More Deaths' aid project is one part of a larger system of care in the borderlands, where everyone's goal is to see each other survive a harrowing journey through a place where the Border Patrol's intention is to inflict suffering and death on those who cross. For the last 18 years, our work at No More Deaths has been to support people in the most essential of ways: we provide water, food, respite, and first aid.

But the process of offering these things is complex. It takes a lot of resources to plan, organize, purchase, and distribute. No More Deaths also operates a Missing Migrant Hotline, supports several shelters in northern Mexico, collaborates with allied organizations, and shares information through public presentations and written reports.

Your support, combined with that of thousands of others, makes all of this work possible. Unlike most non-profits, No More Deaths relies on individuals for more than 90% of our funding. **During this End of Year Campaign, we are asking for your help to raise \$400,000.** You can donate online by visiting our website, nomoredeaths.org, or by mailing a check or cash in the envelope provided.



Wherever you are and whatever you have faced, I am glad you have made it through another year, and I am grateful for the opportunity to ask for your support. I am grateful that you have picked up this newsletter, and I am grateful that you care about the well-being of people walking across the desert. Should you like to learn more about our work or how to support it, you are welcome to contact me directly via email at fundraising@nomoredeaths.org. **Thank you!**



Caring for the Deceased, Caring for the Living

by Bees, Desert Aid worker

I have mixed feelings about writing this piece about death in the desert.

Our organization is named No More Deaths; our stated mission is "to end death and suffering in the Mexico-US borderlands." Death is central here, I know. But so much has already been written about the US government's choice to use the desert as a weapon of genocide, and journalists have produced copious portraits of individual volunteers coming across deceased people at the border.

Let me first tell you, if I may, about the delight.

Let me tell you about getting my ass kicked in pick-up basketball by teenagers who had been walking through the desert for weeks. Let me tell you about how many times I've explained "Yes, you have correctly identified the English word for chicken, but Chicken of the Sea is not, in fact, chicken." Let me tell you about meeting people who hadn't had access to clean water in days and telling them (truthfully) that they smelled better than the ragtag crew of punks dropping fresh gallons and food around the Altar Valley.

Let me tell you about a man who had spent nearly a month trying to get through the Sonoran Desert on foot, whose eyes filled with tears when he spoke about the desert because to him the plants, the birds, the sunrises blossoming across the mountains, were all so wonderful. "The desert is beautiful," he said.

In August, No More Deaths volunteers working around Arivaca found the remains of four recently deceased migrants. Death is central here, and yet none of the longer-term volunteers can recall finding so many people in so short a time in this particular corridor. The desert is wonderful and terrible all at once.

Let me tell you, if I may, about the care and compassion of people in the desert.

One man explained to me why it's difficult to report deceased people on the trails, even to humanitarian aid workers. "It's dangerous, you know? If I tell somebody I saw a body, maybe they'll decide I'm responsible for it. Maybe they call the police."

And then, risk be damned, that man proceeded to tell me where he saw someone who had died and made me promise that we would go look for that person. In fact, undocumented people reported three of the deceased people that we found*, ensuring that we could recover them quickly and help their families find a measure of closure.

When it would be easy to prioritize rage and anguish, I see volunteers prioritize care. People who have had traumatic experiences with law enforcement hike for miles with police to ensure a person is retrieved quickly and with dignity. Volunteers take photos of the surrounding landscape so families can see where their loved ones passed away. Atheists place flowers and pray. Cynical feelings arise in me and I wonder if these gestures are useful. Then I speak with a relative of one of the men who died.

I was in the group that found your loved one. We picked flowers and prayed for him, and for your family.

We pray for you too. Please, if you can tell me, what was it like where he died?

It was peaceful and beautiful. I know that sounds strange,

*Undocumented people who witness a deceased person on the trails cannot easily report to law enforcement without facing apprehension, deportation, and other legal repercussions, as well as potential scrutiny for that person's death. For this reason, No More Deaths's Missing Migrant Hotline and other search and rescue hotlines are integral to finding and recovering people quickly. For more information on how Border Patrol and other law enforcement agencies fail to recover missing people and even prevent their recovery, visit <http://www.thedisappearedreport.org/>.

but it was.

That's good. That is helpful to hear.

Please let us know if there is anything we can do for your family.

Thank you for telling me. Thank God my cousin was found.

What the magazine profiles do not describe is that when we find people in the desert, we care for the people who walk on these trails, for their families, and for ourselves. They care for us in return, sharing food with us, sharing stories with us, asking how they can help us, and praying for us (forgiving any non-believers). Volunteers forgive each other for speaking clumsily and imprecisely, for responding from trauma and anger, for not doing and thinking everything with absolute perfection. One particularly hard day I share a feeling—that these people died close to where we leave gallons and it's hard not to feel haunted by that—and no one shames me for it.

My fellow volunteers know the truth as well as I do. We could drop hundreds of gallons of water on every trail in the desert, and people would still die. They die because of settler colonialist violence, extraction economies, and imperialism. Because Border Patrol agents are paid to scatter and terrorize and kidnap people, instead of help them. Because horror is central to US border policy and no quantity of water can wash the blood off the hands of the people who write it. Because of a lack of care that is antithetical to so many of us in the desert.

I once met someone who carried a member of his group on his back so she could make it through alive. Another who assumed tremendous personal risk to ensure ailing people could receive urgent medical treatment. Another who reported a deceased person with the full knowledge that he might be blamed for that person's death.

I never found a way to contact the man who reported the deceased person directly to us to assure him we kept our promise, but I did run into a group who had walked the same trail. They were relieved someone cared enough to search, and then asked if we knew his name or where he was from. They intended to pray for him and his family. I told them we went to recover the body and saw that police treated the person with respect, and they asked me if I was okay.

Major publications construct a landscape of ceaseless

adrenaline rushes - guides abandoning groups, cartels exacting exorbitant sums from the destitute, brutality of Border Patrol agents, death on the trails - and it feels like strange pathos porn, bordering on romanticization of the worst of humanity. What I would like to offer is that there is also care here, and I have seen the best in people.

I do not ignore or erase the despair in this work, nor do I pretend away the violence. Simply: I agree with the man who told me the desert is beautiful. If you have ever lost someone close to you then you know what this feels like. Your loved one is dead, light shines through the trees, a baby giggles in your arms, the world continues to turn, and the person you loved most in the world is dead. I was present on three occasions when we found people. There were wildflowers everywhere, birds singing sweet and clear around us, creeks flowing gently in the background. We cared for the deceased, and we cared for the living.

This is what I ask us to remember when we read other stories about the border, when despair and doubt settle in to stay for a while, when the challenges feel insurmountable and endless: many awful stories are true, and so are many wonderful ones. Terrible things happen, and we can provide comfort in spite of it all.

Death is central here, and care is all around.

Author's note: I am a white settler who grew up in the Great Lakes region, not the desert. This piece is written from that perspective, and I intend to represent no one's experiences but my own.



By the Numbers, 2021-2022

In the past year, No More Deaths:

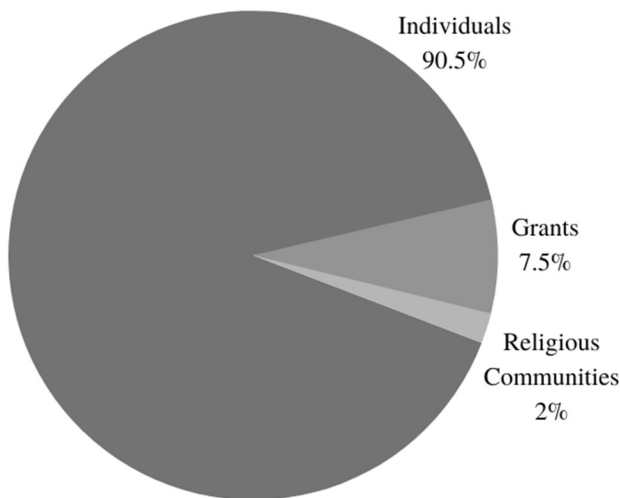
- Placed 14,500 gallons of water on migrant trails.
- Invested \$12,500 to improve the clean water and sanitation infrastructure at our remote humanitarian aid station.
- Received 6,629 phone calls to our Missing Migrant Hotline. 619 calls were emergency cases in which callers provided us with a location, and their loved ones were successfully rescued or recovered from the borderlands.
- Helped 392 people recover \$202,620 from their jail accounts after being deported with a check or debit card that was unusable in Mexico.
- Facilitated 173 transactions from families all over the United States who sent travel money and pocket money safely and cost-free, via volunteers on the ground, to loved ones who found themselves temporarily in Nogales, Sonora.
- Fully or partially funded 77 bus tickets for people traveling from Nogales to their home in Central America or Mexico or to a different part of the US–Mexico border for a court proceeding.
- Delivered \$70,000 worth of humanitarian aid supplies and \$20,000 in personnel funding for migrant shelters in northern Mexico towns of Altar, Caborca, Sasabe, and Sonoyta.
- Provided \$32,000 to allied organizations whose volunteers leave water in the desert, conduct search and rescue operations, and provide other types of humanitarian aid.

These statistics are just a snapshot of No More Deaths' work. To learn more, visit nomoredeaths.org or contact us directly via email at fundraising@nomoredeaths.org. Please note that as of July 1, 2022, Keep Tucson Together (KTT) is no longer part of No More Deaths and we do not accept donations on their behalf.

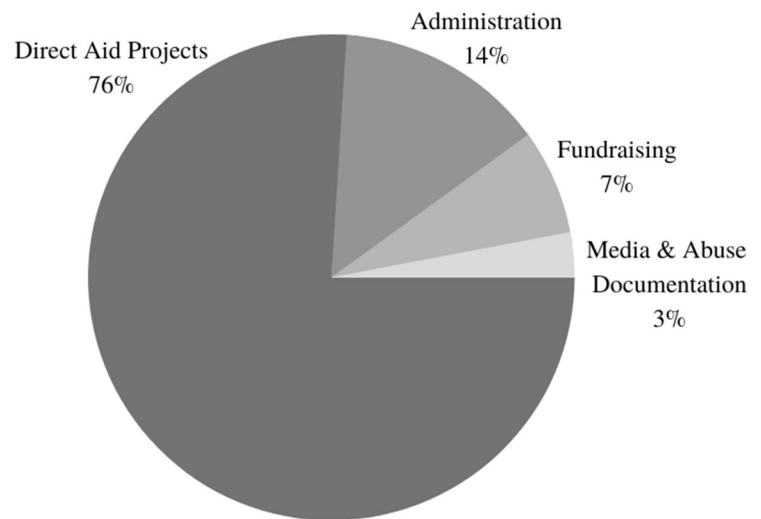
No More Deaths' Financial Review, 2021-2022

grassroots funded & direct-aid focused

INCOME



EXPENSES



Our Desert Aid group has monthly opportunities for folks from Southern Arizona and across the states to engage in border solidarity efforts. Applications for Desert Aid **volunteer programs** are posted every month. Email the Desert Aid volunteer coordinator at volunteer@nomoredeaths.org for more information.

If you're interested in volunteering with the Missing Migrant Hotline, contact our Hotline volunteer coordinator at 520-420-4139.