

Non-Profit Happenings

Young People Building the Infrastructure Their Communities Are Missing

by Justice Ramos, Executive Director, Fundamental Needs

Fundamental Needs has been building things across the Four Corners since 2020. As a 501(c)(3) nonprofit based in Cortez, Colorado, we are powered by foundations, public grants, earned revenue, and donors throughout the region. Led by Executive Director Justice Ramos, Board Chair Jennie Ramos, Makerspace Manager Tyler Bruce, and Entrepreneurship Program Manager Michelle Kardokus, we run three programs built on a single idea: the people who need the work should be the ones trained and paid to do it.

Our founding program is the Oasis Project. Roughly one in three homes on the Navajo Nation has no running water or electricity. Our student crews design, haul, and install off-grid solar power and water systems for those households, and more than 240 systems are now in the ground. Crew members earn a stipend while they train, with a pathway to solar certification and hire.

That same model now runs the Cortez Makerspace, which opened in January 2026 in a 14,000 square foot building on Main Street. The shop has woodworking, metal fabrication, CNC, laser, and 3D printing. It serves as youth workforce training, as open membership for regional makers, and as an incubator for small manufacturers who



Youth and adult makers work side by side, building a robot car during the first Intro to Robotics workshop at Cortez Makerspace. The 501(c)(3) offers open studio hours, workshops and youth programming year-round. (Photo by Mercedes Howard / Cortez Makerspace)

have nowhere else nearby to build. We also run youth entrepreneurship programs in Colorado and New Mexico, where students launch a real venture rather than write a business plan.

This fall we are running the first Cortez Makerspace Innovation Challenge, and it is built for the whole region rather than one town. Entries are open through



A wooden purse built at Cortez Makerspace by a full-time maker as a birthday gift. The body is laser-cut with a flexible hinge pattern that lets the wood curve, and the fabric lining and interior pockets were sewn in the makerspace as well. The piece is not a contest entry; the maker is entering the Innovation Challenge separately. (Photo by Mercedes Howard / Cortez Makerspace)



Young makers monitor a print in the 3D printing lab at Cortez Makerspace. The lab houses both filament and resin printers, available to members and workshop participants. (Photo by Mercedes Howard / Cortez Makerspace)



A hands-free hydration system entered in the Cortez Makerspace Innovation Challenge, shown with the maker's explanatory display. Water flows for as long as the rider holds the handlebar button, in a continuous stream or short bursts, with no need to slow down. The system runs on a rechargeable 12-volt battery, and the complete pack weighs about 1 pound, 3 ounces. (Photo by Mercedes Howard / Cortez Makerspace)

Local Recurring Non-Profit Events:

FREE Financial Empowerment Workshop + \$100 e-gift card*: Learn the basics of budgeting, borrowing, credit, and debt management. Join us in person (RSVP required) at bit.ly/3WfvUet or take the self-paced online workshop by picking up a workbook at a partner location bit.ly/4hqfxWo. *\$50 for workshop completion and \$50 for a 3-month follow-up survey. Contact ariel@seekhaven.org with questions.

LUNCH at the Grand Center 182 N. 500 W., (Noon on Mon, Tues, Wed & Fri) under 60: \$6.00 over 60: \$2.50 suggested donation. Call (435) 259-6623 to make a reservation. There is limited seating.

Moab Valley Multicultural Center Food Pantry Clients may access the Food Pantry once every week. Schedule: Mon, Wed, Thu, Fri: 9am-12pm, 1-5pm Tue: 9am-12pm, 2:30-5pm

Castle Valley Library Hours: Tuesday–Friday 10am–2pm

Mondays
In Stitches: Fiber Arts Club Free! (Mondays 3:30–4:30pm) All skill levels and ages ! No registration required. Moab Public Library, 257 E Center St

USARA Family Bowling Night- 6pm at Gravel Pit Lanes, 1078 Mill Creek Drive. (Every last Monday of the month) Questions: 435-612-2300

This Week in Moab on KZMU (Every Monday at 5pm) On our longest running public affairs radio show, you'll hear live, civic-related discussions about the goings-on in the Moab community. An informed, engaging team of hosts share weekly conversations with the movers and shakers of our community and highlight what's happening locally and in our region. 90.1FM, 106.7FM, 90.7FM Radio

The Juniper Hour on KZMU (3rd Monday of each month at 4pm) Host Ricky Begay, leader of the Native American Club in Moab, interviews guests and produces content focused on

indigenous culture, language, history, traditions, art, and issues that affect our local native communities in our newest public affairs program. 90.1FM, 106.7FM, 90.7FM Radio

Radio Book Club on KZMU (1st Monday of each month at 5pm) Hosts from the Grand County Public Library and Back of Beyond Books discuss the best of what they've been reading, give book reviews, share bestseller lists, and interview local authors. 90.1FM, 106.7FM, 90.7FM Radio

Codd's World on KZMU (1st Monday each month at 4pm) Host Richard Codd discusses art, culture, science, civic happenings, and a wide range of other regionally relevant topics with local nonprofit and business leaders, artists, activists, government officials, and scientists. 90.1FM, 106.7FM, 90.7FM Radio

Tuesdays
Library Lego Club (Tuesdays, 3:30–4:30pm) Dive into our enormous Lego buckets to create your own world, landscape or ocean adventure to display during the week. All ages welcome. Moab Library | 257 E Center St. For more info, please call 435-259-1111 or visit www.moablibrary.org

Equestrian Community Night (Tuesdays 4–8pm) at Old Spanish Trail Arena indoor arena

Delicate Stitchers Quilt Guild Meeting- Delicate Stitchers Quilt Guild meets the second Tuesday of each month at the Grand Center, 182 North 500 W. An informal time to visit begins at 6 p.m. The meeting begins at 6:30 p.m. Meetings include a lesson and show and tell, when members have a chance to show off their latest projects. For more information, call Mary Wakeley, Guild president, at 815-712-6169.

Wednesdays
Toddler Time (Wednesdays, 10:30am) Active songs, rhymes, and stories. All ages welcome, this story time is geared towards ages 0-5 and their caregivers. Free at the Moab Library | 257 E Center St. For more info, please call 435-259-1111 or visit www.moablibrary.org

Green Gatherings (First Wednesday of each month) Do you have questions about recycling and sustainable alternatives in our community? Ever wonder what happens to that glass jar you just dropped off at the recycling center...join Moab Solutions and Canyonlands Solid Waste for our Green Gatherings! Meetings are held in the modular office at the Recycle Center—open house style—drop by anytime between 5:00–6:30pm. Light refreshments are served.

Youth Garden Project Weed N Feed Volunteer at the Youth Garden every other Wednesday, 6-8pm. Aug 5, 19, Sep 2, 16, 30. Help us with weeding in the garden for ~one hour, in exchange for a free, shared, garden-fresh meal. www.youthgarden-project.org

Grand County Public Library's 2nd Wednesday Book Club meets at 6 pm on the 2nd Wednesday of each month. All are welcome! Call the library at 435-259-1111 to learn more or to reserve a copy of the monthly book selection. Info at www.grandcountyutah.net/638/Book-Clubs.

Moab Swing Dance Community Wednesday evenings 7pm at the MARC, 111 E 100 N, This is a progressive series—no experience or partner required. facebook: @moabswingdance

History Moab: On Air on KZMU (2nd Wednesday each month at 6:30pm) Local guide Blaine Reniger covers the significant people, places and events that have shaped Moab and Southeastern Utah into what it is today through storytelling and conversation with expert guests. 90.1FM, 106.7FM, 90.7FM Radio

Thursdays
Moab Taiko Dan (Thursdays 6:00-7:30pm) a local drumming group specializing in the art of Japanese drumming, is recruiting beginners. Center Street Gym. Text 435-201-0209 for info.

Free Community Lunch (Thursdays, from 11:30am to 1:00pm at the St. Francis Episcopal Church (250 Kane Creek Boulevard, Moab). Free lunches for all who come by. Homemade

September 20 in three divisions. Open is \$200 to enter and competes for a \$5,000 top prize. Hobbyist is \$50, built for first-timers and weekend makers, with a \$1,000 prize. Youth, 18 and under, enter free and compete for a \$500 scholarship. Every entry is exhibited online, the entire region votes for four weeks, and awards night is Friday, October 23, with a makers fair, live music, and a public equipment sale. Voting is free and open to everyone, whether or not you enter.

The Cortez Makerspace is located at 209 W Main St. in Cortez, Colorado. Information on entering the Challenge, becoming a member, volunteering, or supporting our work is at www.fundamentalneeds.net, or contact Justice Ramos at justice@fundamentalneeds.net. And be sure to mention you read about Fundamental Needs in *Moab Happenings*.

soups (always several choices) or sandwiches, bread (chips with sandwiches), dessert, coffee and water. Call St. Francis Episcopal Church at 435 259-5831 for information.

Thursdays and Fridays
The Imaginarium (Thursdays and Fridays 2–5pm)) We're back! Crafting for young engineers and designers. This is the place to create cardboard kitties, castles and cars. Come see where your imagination takes you! All ages welcome. Moab Library | 257 E Center St. For more info, please call 435-259-1111 or visit www.moablibrary.org

Fridays
Free Community Food Pantry Fridays from 5–6:30pm at the St. Francis Episcopal Church (250 Kane Creek Boulevard, Moab) No ID, no name, no address, no personal information needed. We always have canned goods, bagged goods, meat. We often have bread, fresh produce, milk, cheese, fruit juice, eggs. Also personal toiletries, cleaning supplies, diapers, dog food. Feel free to pick up for someone who can't get out, or someone who is working. Call St. Francis Episcopal Church at 435 259-5831 for information.

Grand County Public Library's Castle Valley Book Club meets at 10am on the last Friday of each month at the Castle Valley Town Pavilion. All are welcome! Call the library at 435-259-1111 to learn more or to reserve a copy of the monthly book selection. Info at www.grandcountyutah.net/638/Book-Clubs.

Saturdays
Saturday Storytime (10:30am) Stories, songs, games, and crafts! Geared to ages 0-9 and their caregivers. All ages welcome! Free at the Moab Library | 257 E Center St. For more info, please call 435-259-1111 or visit www.moablibrary.org