

THE PEOPLE OF BCA



PROFILE: JERRY HAAS, BCA SENIOR ADVISOR

Interview by Dar Goatley

How long have you been involved with BCA?

I have been active in BCA since its inception in 2013. I served as a volunteer, then as a board member before becoming the volunteer Executive Director in 2015. In the past six months, I have served as Senior Advisor to the Board of Directors.

What inspired you to get involved with BCA?

I was introduced to BCA when I took the Cross Border Tour into Nogales, Sonora in 2013, soon after retiring to Green Valley. Bob Phillips and Alma Cota de Yanez ran the tour. Even though I had been introduced to the border before as a political agenda, I had never heard anyone offer a Mexican perspective. It blew my mind to see what the Mexican nonprofits were doing and to get a sense of their people and culture. I have been inspired ever since to continue the BCA mission of education and cultural exchange.

What life experiences and skills did you bring to BCA?

I spent my career as a leader in non-profit organizations, including being a Senior Pastor for the United Methodist Church and Director for the Academy of Spiritual Formation, an international retreat organization. I have also published a number of books and articles. I have always focused on bringing people together, building relationships and doing fundraising.

How does BCA reflect your personal humanitarian values?

BCA is about holistic understanding of people and culture. I believe that education provides a basis of understanding and that BCA promotes education about our neighbor, Mexico. I value facilitating a middle ground of knowledge, without political partisanship. BCA is a community connected across the border and I value community.

How have you been impacted by your involvement with BCA?

Working with BCA has definitely been humbling and gratifying. Not only has it been rewarding to pursue the mission of BCA, but I have also been impressed by the community of BCA. In 2018 there was a snow storm in Nogales, Sonora bringing 8-10 inches of snow. No cars could manage the streets and supplies could not get to the

migrant shelter in Nogales. Alex and I sent out an appeal to raise funds and quickly received over \$10,000 in donations! Seeing how people of BCA come together to help others is very rewarding.

How do you plan to continue your engagement with BCA?

I will continue as the Senior Advisor to the Board of Directors, as a consultant. I would be happy to continue this role as long as I can be helpful. The strong relationships that I have made over the years may continue to be beneficial in facilitating the mission of BCA and helping the organization to grow.

How would you like to see BCA move into the future?

BCA has many great established programs: the cross-cultural tours, Spanish conversation classes, Borderlands Forums, the Literature and Film Circle, the Internship program, etc. We have been able to manage and transform many of these programs virtually during COVID. Of course, I hope to see these flourish even more when the pandemic passes.

I also hope to see us offer educational programming for high school students and even grade school students and expand the college program. We'll continue to serve the retirement community of Green Valley and Tubac, but I hope we can engage students, especially in Santa Cruz County, so that they can recognize and honor their heritage.

And as a Green Valley resident, I hope we can cultivate a growing desire in the good people here to move beyond the "white island" that we are and learn about the rich and unique cross border region in which we live.