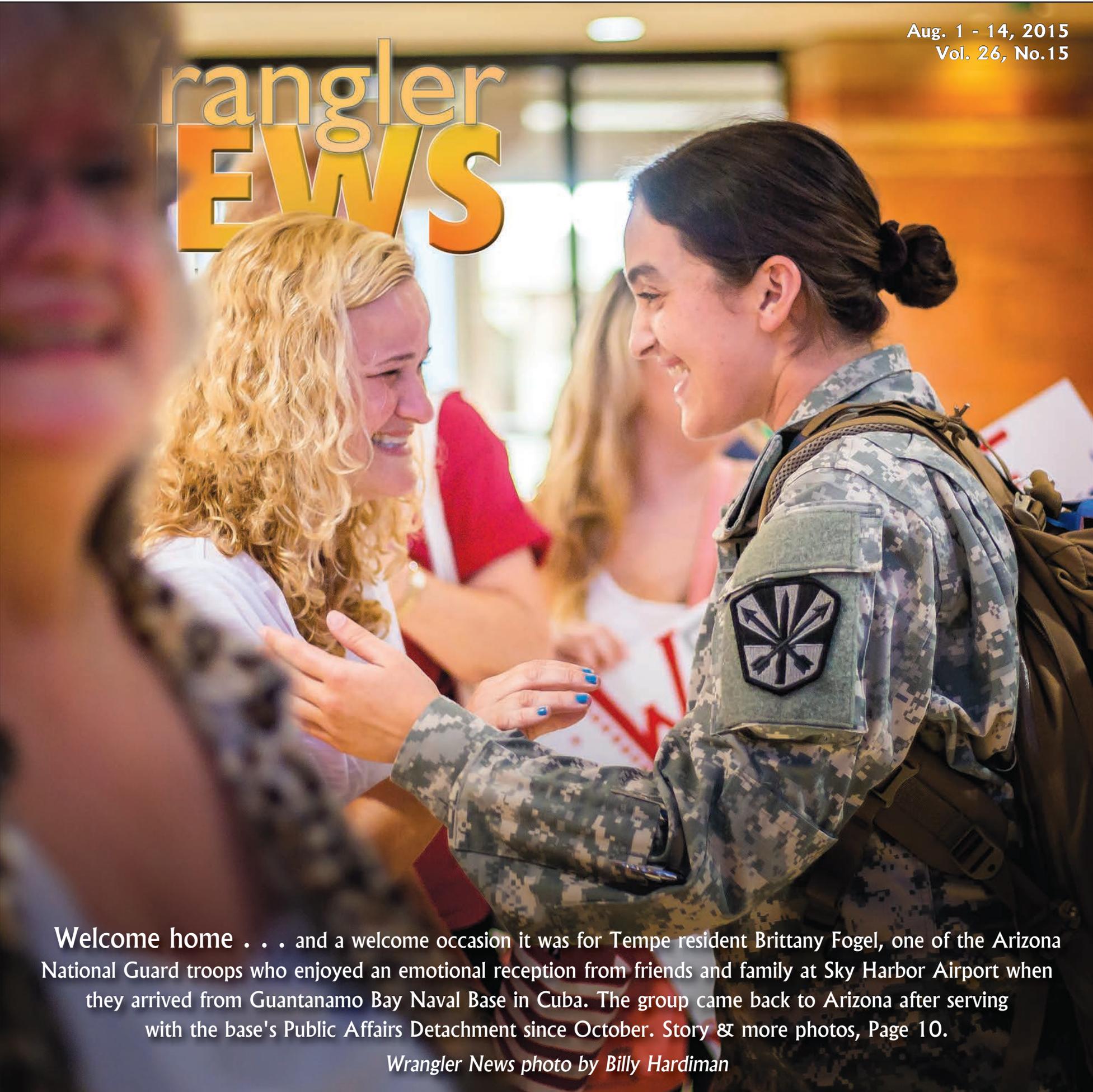


Wrangler NEWS



Welcome home . . . and a welcome occasion it was for Tempe resident Brittany Fogel, one of the Arizona National Guard troops who enjoyed an emotional reception from friends and family at Sky Harbor Airport when they arrived from Guantanamo Bay Naval Base in Cuba. The group came back to Arizona after serving with the base's Public Affairs Detachment since October. Story & more photos, Page 10.

Wrangler News photo by Billy Hardiman

DESIGN QUESTIONS?

See this issue's center spread, Pages 16-17, for answers to your design issues

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One of the city's popular Orbit buses weaves its way around Tempe Public Library.

Photo by Billy Hardiman/Wrangler News

Tempe seeking public's feedback on proposed extension of Orbit bus route south of U.S. 60

Tempe is looking to expand its popular Orbit neighborhood circulator service by adding a new route – Saturn – to serve neighborhoods between the U.S. 60 and Elliot Road.

Over the past several months, area residents participated in planning the proposed route, indicating preferences for points of interest, hours and frequency of service, as well as providing feedback on draft route options.

The final proposed route will be presented for feedback at two

public meetings at Marcos de Niza High School, 6000 S. Lakeshore Drive—Wednesday, Sept. 9, at 6 p.m. and Saturday, Sept. 12, at 9 a.m. Both meetings will cover the same information.

A comment form will be available Sept. 9-28 at www.tempe.gov/orbit.

In 2014, the Tempe City Council authorized staff to explore adding a new Orbit route between U.S. 60 and Elliot Road, from the city's eastern border with Mesa to the western side where Tempe meets Guadalupe and Phoenix.

Chandler residents have until Aug. 25 to cast mail-only ballots on charter changes

The first phase of public involvement began in January, with more than 100 residents participating in public meetings and providing feedback online.

During the second phase, city planners presented draft routes based on input received in January.

At the September meetings, residents will be asked to review and comment on a final proposed route. In December, the Tempe City Council will review the recommended route along with public feedback and determine whether to implement the route in 2017.

Neighborhood circulator service was part of the Tempe Transit Tax approved by voters in 1996, with the five existing routes – Mercury, Venus, Earth, Mars and Jupiter – implemented between 2007 and 2008. The existing routes operate seven days a week, connecting neighborhoods north of U.S. 60 with local destinations, Valley Metro bus routes and light rail.

Tempe began work to expand the Orbit system in 2007, but put its plans on hold due to the economic downturn and associated budget impacts.

The city renewed those efforts last spring, studying the feasibility of implementing a new route, including estimating costs and gauging public interest through a telephone survey of residents in the area. The survey indicated general support for a new route.

The city has \$1.2 million in Tempe Transit Tax funds available annually to operate a new route.

If approved and implemented, the Saturn route would provide connections to neighborhood destinations within the planning area, as well as several Valley Metro bus routes that travel to destinations like downtown Tempe, ASU, Tempe Marketplace, light rail and destinations throughout the Valley.

West Chandler voters and their citywide neighbors are being asked this month to cast ballots for a charter amendment that would formalize the city's cycle of August and November elections in even-numbered years, and authorize January start dates for terms of the mayor and councilmembers.

If approved, the changes would alter an election schedule that has been in place since 2008, conforming to recent changes in state law.

The scheduled special election for Proposition 484 will be conducted entirely by mail-in ballot. No voting will take place at the polls.

Chandler Councilman Rick Heumann, who lives in West Chandler, noted that understanding the election cycle may seem a bit confusing, suggesting that voters read the publicity pamphlet they received recently in the mail for details.

The pamphlet also may be viewed online at chandleraz.gov/elections, he said.

If the measure passes, Heumann said, the city will be able to amend the charter and continue the election process as is. If it does not pass, the city will need to convert back to the election process in place six years ago.

The section of the current charter to be affected is included in the publicity pamphlet identifying the

changes.

Registered voters, who were due to be sent a ballot by mail beginning July 29, have been asked to return their voted ballot by mail in the postage-prepaid affidavit envelope provided.

Voters are advised to allow sufficient time to mail their ballot in, as all ballots must be received no later than 7 p.m. on Election Day, Tuesday, Aug. 25.

Ballots postmarked with an Aug. 25 date will not be counted.

Beginning Aug. 3, ballots also may be dropped off at the City Clerk's office in Chandler City Hall, 175 S. Arizona Ave.

For additional voter convenience, ballots may be hand carried to other Maricopa County Elections Department sites, locations for which are available by calling 480-782-2180.

Replacement ballots may be obtained for voters who did not receive a ballot or who have ballots that are spoiled or destroyed.

The Chandler City Clerk's office will be open on Election Day from 6 a.m. to 7 p.m.

Voters with questions regarding voting in this Special Election may call the City Clerk's office at 480-782-2180.

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Small Business of the Year says Ahwatukee Foothills Chamber

New Price Corridor HR firm set to launch staff recruitment

A California-based company that offers safety and human resources solutions to small businesses is opening an office in West Chandler's Price Corridor.

HR Mobile Services expects to hire up to 10 employees within a year at its new location, 1490 S. Price Road, Suite 308.

The company works with multiple industries, including agriculture, restaurants and dairies.

The city of Chandler and the Greater Phoenix Economic Council made the announcement on July 27.

"I want to extend a warm welcome to the company and its employees, who will soon serve small businesses and establish new roots in our growing

community," said Mayor Jay Tibshraeny.

By having a local presence, said a GPEC official, the company is better suited to work with its clients in the dairy industry by offering a physical office to conduct business and training as needed.

"This will be a great addition to Chandler, providing a full range of services to other small businesses in the region," said Micah Miranda, Chandler's economic development director.

The company reportedly will begin hiring staff immediately. Interested individuals should contact Megan Hernandez at megan@hrmobileservices.com.



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Teens' use of smartphones heightens cyberspace risks, area experts warn

By Joyce Coronel

As kids start back to school, many will be packing smart phones. In some cases, teachers even encourage students to use the devices in the classroom as a learning tool.

But how can parents be sure their children are safe in cyberspace when they leave home?

Rawdon Messenger, CEO of TeenSafe, offered *Wrangler News* some sobering statistics to put the issue in context.

"Five years ago, less than 20 percent of kids had smartphones. Now it's up to 80 percent. And even though that's a wonderful thing in terms of communication, entertainment, all the great learning — there's so much that a device can add in value to our kids' lives — it also brings a lot of issues."

For one thing, there's "sexting."

It is estimated that 40 percent of all high school students have sent or received a "sext" and 70 percent of teens admit to sexting with their boyfriend or girlfriend. Because of feeling pressured, 61 percent of both sexes engage in the behavior, but girls

are asked to send risqué photos 68 percent more often than boys.

"I can't imagine when I was in school taking a picture of myself and handing it around class or handing it to a guy. It just wasn't something that you'd do," Messenger said.

Of course, there were other ways to get into trouble, he added, but the difference now is that kids have a device with a camera wherever they go, and a ton of pressure to fit in and be popular on social media.

Karissa Greving Mehall and Patricia Dobratz, clinical directors of The Arizona Marriage and Family Therapy Clinic, located in the Gila Springs neighborhood of West Chandler, offered words of advice regarding kids and technology.

"For most teenagers, technology and social media are a part of their daily life and can represent an extension of themselves. Along with that familiarity and identity, may come a false sense of safety online," Dobratz said.

"This is where keeping the lines of communication open with parent and

children is critical, because they may be more likely to come to their parent if something is happening to them online."

Both therapists emphasized the importance of having a proactive approach when it comes to technology. Starting when the children are young, they recommend developing a family

plan about the use of devices as well as strategies for monitoring usage.

"If a parent starts to notice their child acting differently, it could be for many different reasons, however in today's parenting world, parents now have to consider how the influences

— TEENS, Page 21

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* Source: Arizona Board of Regents - Arizona University System Board-Approved 2014-15 Base Tuition and Mandatory Fee Report Based on annual average tuition.

8/2015

School chiefs list plans, hopes, challenges they'll face in new year

By Joyce Coronel • Photos by Billy Hardiman

As the summer break drew to a close, Tempe's three school superintendents spoke to the city's Chamber of Commerce about their plans and hopes, as well as the challenges they'll face during the 2015-2016 school year.

Christine Busch, superintendent of Tempe elementary schools, said that although the district had to close four schools a few years back, it reopened them, with McKemy Middle School becoming Tempe Academy of International Studies.

It's an open-enrollment school that offers the International Baccalaureate program to academically bright students.

"It's a very exciting time to be in Tempe Elementary," Busch said. "We have such a generous community that we've been able to pass our bonds and overrides over the last few years, so many of you are able to see the results of what we're doing."

Feedback from parents and students has led the district to change the time classes begin at middle schools. "No more 7:05 start times," Busch said.

Dr. David Schauer, superintendent of the Kyrene School District, also noted in his remarks the generous support of the community.

"Our three districts work very closely. Our goal is to have a seamless K through 12 system for all of our families," Schauer said. He noted the more personalized learning environments that the district has developed.

"That rigid, grade-level system...is really being transformed into a system that meets the needs of individual children, and not only their needs but their interests, their strengths, their desires, to keep them engaged in the learning process."

Schauer, who will retire at the end of the coming school year, said one of his concerns is that all 17,000 students in the district have access to technology throughout the day.

Another Kyrene objective is to help middle school students stay engaged in their education. Younger students he said, are more excited about learning, but kids begin to lose interest around sixth grade.

"We have to keep them with us so they don't get discouraged and have things happen to them that we wouldn't want to happen."

Funding continues to be an issue, and Schauer said they are "looking at creative ways to deal with this shortage of resources instead of the traditional cutting this, cutting that."

Dr. Kenneth Baca, superintendent of the Tempe Union High School District, said he was proud that five of the six TUHSD schools had received the A+ Education of Excellence award by the Arizona Teaching Foundation.

The big thing for the new school year, he said, will



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To returning troops, there's no place like home

By Joyce Coronel

Dressed in fatigues and sporting backpacks, members of the Arizona Army National Guard's 123 Mobile Public Affairs Detachment were finally headed for home. It was a recent Saturday morning, and they were mostly exhausted from the long journey.

Deployed at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, since October 2014, the arriving soldiers were eager to step into the arms of the loved ones who awaited them at Sky Harbor International Airport, where a hot wind belied the monsoon thunderheads gathering on the horizon.

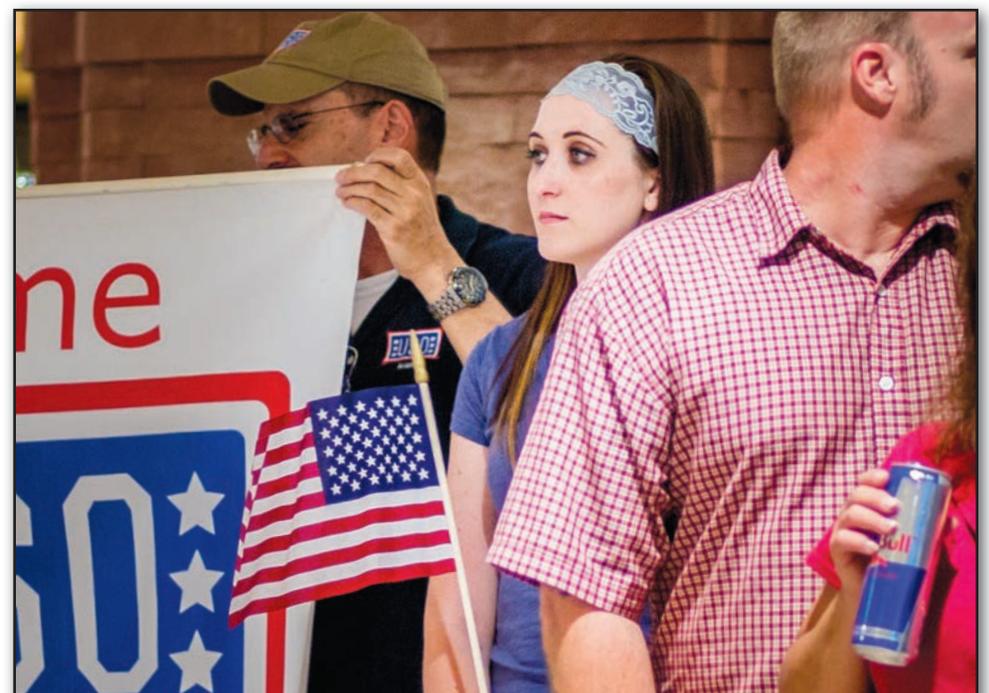
Like most such reunions, there was the usual assortment of American flags

and colorful banners. A cheer erupted as the troops made their way toward the crowd, where they were greeted with red, white and blue balloons, applause and whistles. More than a few family members brushed back tears of joy—and relief.

Not everyone who stood at Checkpoint B inside Terminal 4 was awaiting a loved one, however. Twenty-something Jackie Martin, an anthropology and Spanish student at Arizona State University, wasn't related to any of the returnees.

"I'm just here to welcome them home.

As a volunteer with the USO, we just wanted to have a little celebration for their homecoming with their families and their coworkers, and have the American flags waiting for them."



Flag in hand, USO volunteer Jackie Martin waits patiently to welcome troops home.



Sgt. Brittany Fogel (center) is greeted by family and friends after spending 9 months away serving in Guantanamo Bay.

— Photos by Billy Hardiman/Wrangler News

The United Service Organization originated during World War II as a way to provide emotional support to the millions of troops who battled the enemy and served their country. So what's an ASU student doing at a USO event on a Saturday morning? Isn't the USO, well, something older people do?

"My mom is actually the director of USO Arizona, so she got me into it," Martin laughed. "I didn't really know about it before then. I've been volunteering for about a year and I'm starting to recruit some of my friends. One of them just started. I'm trying to get the ASU crowd in here, too."

The young greeter's long, dark hair, held back by a lace headband, stood holding a small American flag and offered her thoughts on the troops' arrival.

"They're so humble about their service" she said. "They're like, 'Thank you guys, thank you for being here,' but I think it's really heartwarming for them to have a lot of people here, knowing they have so much support. It's nice to come home to a bunch of smiling faces—even people they don't know—who are thanking them for their service."

Guys like Sgt. Robert Freese of Tempe, who admitted he was sleepy after the long flight and glad to be back in the Grand Canyon state. His mother, Kathy Love, was there with her fiancé, Mike Stevens, and Freese's two nieces, 10-year-old Tylin and 9-year-old Jalani. Freese managed to hoist the girls to his hip for a photo.

"I'm so glad to be back and get to see my family," Freese said. "I was born and raised in Arizona. I

joined the National Guard to support my family."

Serving at "Gitmo," as the base has come to be known, "was a great mission," Freese said. The detention camp is operated by Joint Task Force Guantanamo. Joint Task Force Guantanamo is a U.S. military joint task force based at Guantanamo Bay Naval Base, Guantánamo Bay, Cuba on the southeastern end of the island. JTF-GTMO falls under US Southern Command. Since January 2002 the command has operated the Guantanamo Bay detention camps Camp X-Ray and its successors Camp Delta, Camp V, and Camp Echo, where detained prisoners are held who have been captured in the war in Afghanistan and elsewhere since the September 11, 2001 attacks.



Message to the Community from the Superintendent



David K. Schauer, Ed.D.
Superintendent

Welcome to the 2015-16 school year!

The great thing about being an educator is that every year is a new beginning.

This provides the opportunity to reflect on our performance and make appropriate changes for the new school year. The months of June and July provide a short break for our Kyrene staff with the opportunity to pursue additional professional development and training. Our Community Education programs provide creative and enriching summer programs for kids, and our District office is busy registering new students. So here we are at the beginning of August, ready to open the doors of Kyrene schools to welcome our students and their families back for the 2015-16 school year.

School Safety and Security

With support from the community, Kyrene has taken steps over the years to increase safety and security at all of our schools. Technological solutions such as video cameras and electronic badge access have been implemented. Interior corridors were added to protect classrooms and keep our students safer. This year the remainder of our front offices were modified to increase security yet provide a warm and welcoming environment. Thank you for your ongoing support of this important work!

Creative/Exciting Learning Environments

As we begin a new year, it is very satisfying to see so many of the initiatives we have started coming to fruition. Our choice programs are thriving:

- The Kyrene Traditional Academy, Sureño Campus was nominated to be a U.S. Department of Education "Blue Ribbon School"
- Demand for our dual language program continues to grow and has expanded to Kyrene de los Lagos Elementary
- This year Pueblo/Paloma campus is launching a three year roll-out of an arts integration program.
- A multitude of opportunities in science, technology, engineering, math and design are offered at every Kyrene school to provide our students with 21st century skills.

These are just a few of the examples of how we have transformed the system into one that accommodates the needs of all students, regardless of their background or interests, preparing them for college and careers of the future. We never lose sight of our shared commitment to the children and families we serve, with the goal of providing them an exceptional learning experience each and every day.

Welcome back and let's have a fantastic school year!



For more information: www.kyrene.org or call 480-541-1000

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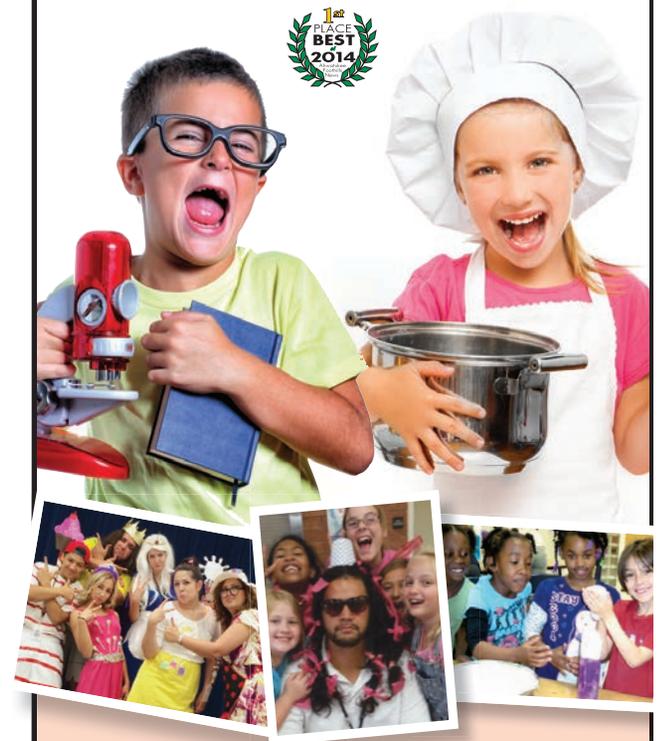
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Guard

From Page 11

The unit is currently under the command of Rear Admiral David B. Woods, who replaced Rear Admiral Jeffrey Harbeson in August 2011.

Previous commanders have included Army Major General Geoffrey D. Miller, who took command in November 2002.

“What the Joint Task Force does is really important for our national security with the detention facility.”

Of course, not all the returning troops are men.

Amber Fogel, another ASU student, was there to welcome home her sister, Brittany.

She'd taken the time to decorate a poster with red, silver and blue glitter and sparkly letters declaring “Welcome Home, Brittany!” What was her sister doing in Guantanamo Bay?

“She's not allowed to tell us. She works with the press,” Fogel said. “She's been gone since October, so I'm very excited and happy that she's coming home today.” The sisters, including older sister Tiffany, have been keeping in touch via Facebook and through email, but admitted they missed Brittany.

“We're very proud of her and I'm glad that she got to get this experience in another country,” Tiffany said.

As for Freese, he's happy to be back in Tempe, but said he enjoyed his time at Gitmo.

“I loved the weather and there's a lot to do down there as far as outdoor stuff. Almost every weekend there's something to do, 5-K runs, different athletic events. Then there's diving, boating, fishing.”

Standing there with his family members, Freese takes in the scene of his fellow soldier streaming toward the baggage claim.

“It's great to be home.”



Sgt. Robert Freese is greeted by his mother, Kathy Love, and two nieces Tylina and Jalani.

— Photo by Billy Hardiman/Wrangler News



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New principals due to take over at Pueblo, Aprende Meet Kelly Alexander and Renee Kory

Getting to know Pueblo's new Principal Kelly Alexander

While recently named as principal of Pueblo Middle School, Kelly Alexander is by no means new to the Kyrene community.

In fact, her entire career has been spent in the district—first as a teacher, then as a principal and most recently as an administrator at the district level where she was director of community education and outreach services.

She is enthusiastic about returning to the school-campus environment and at the time of this interview was looking forward to meeting both students and parents for the Curriculum Night on July 29.

As she prepares for school to resume on Monday, Aug. 3, Alexander took time to answer a few questions about herself and her plans for the upcoming school year.

Are you a first-time principal?

No. I was previously the principal at Kyrene Akimel A-al Middle School.

How long have you been an educator?

A total of 27 years, all in Kyrene. Although, over the last few years, when I had the opportunity to be the Director of Community Education and Outreach Services for the district level, I enjoyed being able to create and offer programs that families desired for their children, such as before and after-school programs, and those held during the summer.

Why did you decide to become a principal?

I am passionate about early adolescents and wanted to provide as much support as possible to their teachers and their families during this very critical stage of development.

What do you look forward to the most about being principal at Pueblo?

I enjoy working directly with students, teachers and families to provide the best education possible.

How would you describe your leadership style?

I am an open and collaborative leader who supports shared leadership. My role is to ask the hard questions and capitalize on the strengths of my staff

to ensure that we meet the goals that we have set. I am a principle centered leader and am passionate about children; and, I enjoy working with other community members who are also passionate about them.

Do you have any changes planned for the programs at the school?

Pueblo is already a school that works together to ensure that every child learns. This is one of the many reasons why we are an A+ School of Excellence. Over the next several years, staff will be working together to develop additional fine arts offerings and to discover additional ways to integrate the arts into our classrooms in ways that make sense.

Please provide a bit about your background, education, etc.

I have been an Arizona resident for over 40 years. I live in Chandler with my husband, Lonnie, and our two children, Brad and Kate. I have both undergraduate and graduate degrees from Arizona State University in the field of education. I am also a diehard Sun Devils fan. In my leisure time I enjoy gardening, travel and spending time with my two Labrador Retrievers.

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Getting to know Aprende's new Principal Renee Kory

It's back-to-school time and for students headed to Aprende Middle School, a new face will be there to greet them—Principal Renee Kory. While new to the Kyrene District, Kory is an experienced educator and Valley resident.

In addition to increasing the school's efforts toward community relations, Kory said she plans to schedule bi-monthly coffees with parents to give them the opportunity to "sit down, ask questions and be updated" as to what is happening at the school.

The dates for the coffees will be posted on the school's website and sent via e-alerts and text notifications, she said.

Leading up to the start of school on Aug. 3, Kory said her days were filled with preparation for the resumption of classes, but she recently responded to a few questions about her background.

Are you a first-time principal?

Yes, this is my first experience as a principal, but I have been an assistant principal for the past five years, including two years at Castro Middle School in the Cartwright School District, and two years at Sossaman Middle School in the Higley School District—the middle schools there were just constructed two years ago; therefore, my first year in Higley I worked at Chaparral Elementary, K-8, as an assistant principal.

How long have you been an educator?

Prior to my five years in administration, I worked in the district office in Cartwright for three years developing and presenting professional development and supporting new teachers. Two years prior, I was a middle-school language arts teacher and then an instructional coach at Borman Middle School, also in the Cartwright district.

Before that, I was a fourth grade teacher in St. Louis, Missouri for six years before I moved to Phoenix.

Why did you decide to become a principal?

I always sought out leadership experiences and roles, but in my third year as a teacher I had an amazing principal who mentored and encouraged me to get my Educational Leadership degree and to pursue the position of principal. To me, it seemed like a natural and strongly desired progression. Besides strong leadership skills, I always had innate interpersonal and relationship building skills, which are essential when leading a school.

What do you look forward to the most about being principal at Aprende?

The outstanding reputation of Aprende Middle School and the Kyrene community

precedes itself, and I look forward to being a part of it. I always had a heart for middle school, and I love the role that we as educators can play to help middle-schoolers as they are developing their identities as students and young adults. I feel very fortunate to have the opportunity to lead the amazing Aprende community.

How would you describe your leadership style?

My greatest strengths as a leader are the ability to multi-task, provide necessary and essential resources, follow through efficiently and thoroughly, and communicate effectively and expeditiously. In addition, I have an innate ability to understand my teachers as educators and as people—showing empathy and support, while maintaining high expectations and keeping what is best for students as the priority.

I would describe myself as a leader who understands the high expectations that both our students and teachers are held to, while having the vision to implement the educational strategies and critical thinking skills necessary as we strive to meet the rigorous standards required in order to compete globally.

Do you have any changes planned for the programs at the school?

I am very passionate about and have a great deal of experience with both Professional Learning Communities (PLC) and One-On-One technology, which are both significant initiatives at Aprende.

I plan to use the strengths of the staff to continue to grow and build the PLC philosophy, and the interests and expertise of the students and staff to continue to develop the One-On-One initiative.

PLC is a philosophy that many school districts embrace and put time, monies, and training into. I always say you don't "do" a PLC, you "live" a PLC.

In PLCs, the expectation is that all teachers on a team collaborate on a regular basis to plan lessons, create assessments, evaluate data, and plan and create student interventions.

Aprende has recently modified our master schedule so that each department has common planning time, allowing them to collaborate daily as a team to examine and put educational practices into place that are best for kids and ultimately increase student achievement.

Please provide a bit about your background, education, etc.

I was born and raised in St. Louis and moved to Arizona nine years ago. I have a B.A. in Psychology and a master's degree in Education and Educational Leadership. I love the Arizona landscape and enjoy participating in any outdoor activity: sports, biking, hiking. I also enjoy reading and writing in my spare time.

— By Diana Whittle



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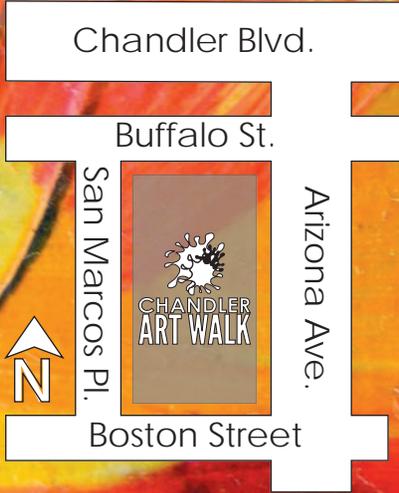
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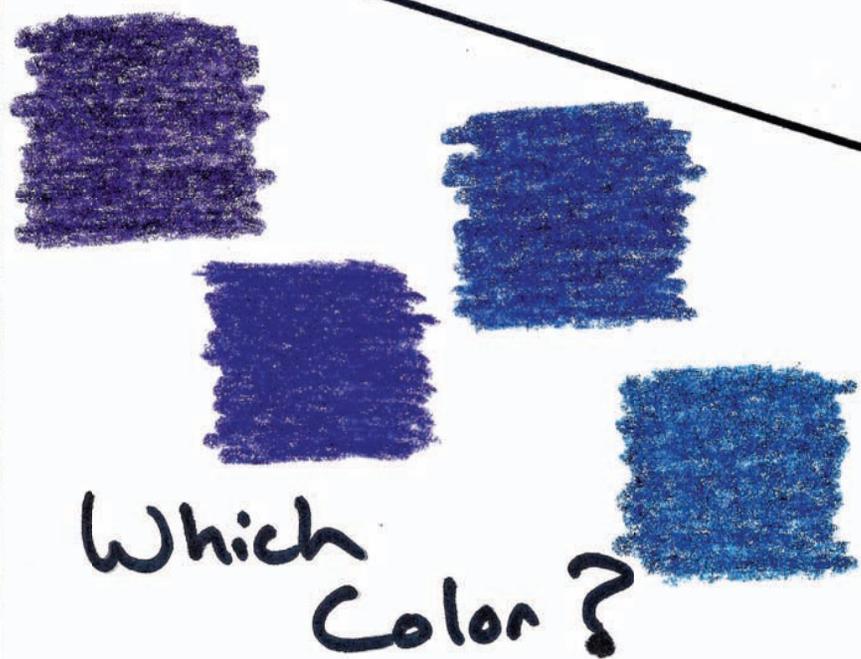
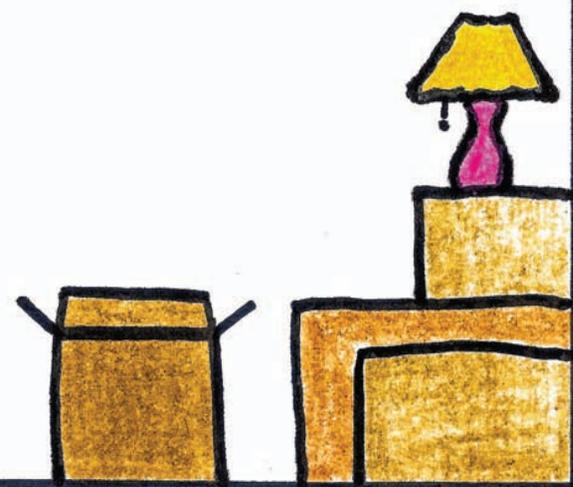




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For teen chess whiz, the game is more about giving than winning

By Diana Whittle

As summer break comes to a close, many students may be savoring one last getaway trip. Not Prateek Piniseti, who soon will begin his sophomore year at the charter school he attends in Chandler.

Instead, he is focused on the promotion of the second annual Chess Helps tournament on Saturday, Aug. 29, beginning at 9 a.m. and ending about 4:30 p.m., at his school at 1800 E. Chandler Blvd.

It's an event he created to combine his love of chess with raising money for two causes he believes are worthy—to benefit teachers at his school, and for KIVA, a non-profit organization whose mission is to alleviate poverty by lending funds to small-business start ups.

Piniseti, who will be 15 in September, developed an early penchant for chess and was already a veteran in several tournaments when he thought of



— CHESS, Page 19

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Chess

From Page 18

the idea for Chess Help.

"I wanted to help the school and the community, and what better avenue than chess, since I had played in several tournaments and knew how it works," Prateek said.

"So after planning it out, in the eighth grade, I started the first Chess Help tournament in August 2014 and it was a great success. In total, we raised about \$9,000, of which \$6,000 went to the school and \$3,000 went to KIVA."

Prateek's event also attracted a good mix of fellow chess enthusiasts.

"We had 135 players who participated last year, of all ages and skill levels. So it is a strong tournament for the serious chess player, but also fun for the casual player," said Prateek.

He says that this year's tournament will be the same—open to all who want to show up and play, regardless of age or skill level.

As for his selection of the non-profit KIVA, he said he first became aware of the organization through an Internet search. He was impressed with the mission of KIVA.

"I knew I would give a portion

of the funds to my school but I also wanted to give to communities in need," said Prateek.

"I picked Kiva because it helps self-sustain people in need, to give them a hand to propel forward—but not make them dependent on handouts. It gives them independence and a sense of achievement, and instills confidence in their future.

"KIVA is not a typical charity," explained Prateek. "It is a micro-lending organization that works with international partners to give small loans to impoverished people around the world."

The loans give individual entrepreneurs the capital to start a small business, get an education or achieve a similar goal. According to KIVA statistics, 98 percent of loans are repaid, which allows for further loans to take place.

By giving back through the chess program, Prateek says "he feels better inside" and he wanted to support his charter school's teachers.

Registration and costs details are available on-line at www.events4chess.com

For questions about the event, call Radhika Guruju at 480-747-0222 or send an email to chesshelps@gmail.com.

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- Lots of little talks are more effective than one "big talk." Big talks can be intimidating. Try everyday opportunities to talk- in the car-dinner or while shopping. Let them know how you feel about alcohol and drugs.
- Show you care about your child's happiness and well being. When children have parents who listen to their feelings and concerns are more likely to say "no" to alcohol. The conversation goes both ways.

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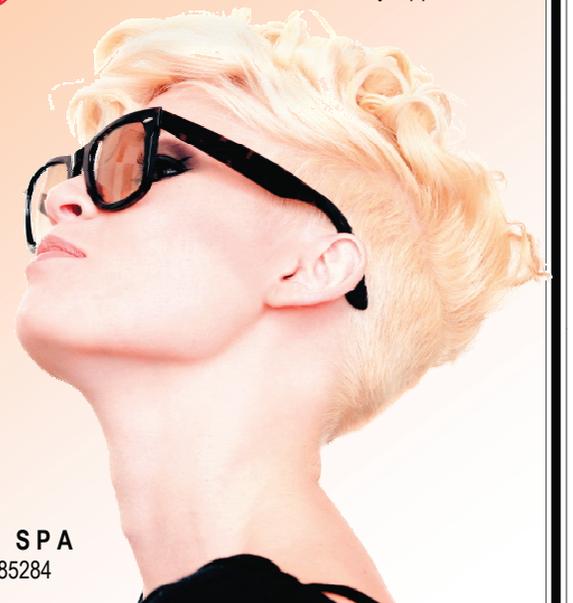


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Forum

From Page 9

be the accreditation process for the schools.

Baca spoke highly of TUHSD students' academic achievement, also touting the district's excellence in fine arts and athletics.

"We continue to lead the pack in regard to the number of National Merit semi-finalists and finalists, and for the last five years we continue to have more Flinn Scholars than any other school district in Arizona," Baca said.

Beyond that, he saluted the teachers who work in the district.

"It's the teachers that truly make the difference as to what goes on in the classrooms," Baca said.

He pointed to \$25 million in the capital budget that TUHSD has lost since 2008. Where the state once paid \$567 per student, that number has dropped to \$79. One textbook might cost over \$100,

he said. It's not just teachers' salaries and class size that pose budget issues, he emphasized; it's providing "instructional materials that teachers need to do what they do so well. The biggest challenge we face is being able to go out to our community and ask for a continuation, and our capital override."

All three superintendents were asked what the community could do to assist them. Baca and Busch both suggested that people in the community become advocates for education and that they appreciate teachers.

"Let them know that we value them, that we know they are key to our economic growth, they are key to the safety of this nation; that they are the key to ensure that we can enjoy the freedoms we have as Americans. The teachers are the ones that truly make a difference," Baca said.

Teachers, Busch said, "have the hardest job in the world. They work 70, 80 hours a week. Many work six or seven days a week or have a second or third job so they can support a family."

She said she hopes people will vote to support officials who "fund teachers and students instead of prisons because the difference is about \$4,500 per student versus \$35,000 per prisoner."

Schauer, for his part, pointed to teaching being perceived as a less desirable career and to the "obsolete school calendar" that originated 150 years ago for a more agrarian society.

"I've always been an advocate of stretching that out through the whole year and giving people time during the school year to plan, reflect and work on the things they need to."

If the number of days in the school calendar were to increase, compensation for teachers would do the same, he said. The community needs to get behind an effort to change the school calendar, he said.

Busch said she was also concerned about compensation for teachers and noted that teachers were leaving Arizona "in droves and going to work in other states where they're compensated in a way where they're respected in a stronger way by those who make policy."

In terms of challenges during the coming year, Schauer pointed to families that are in turmoil and struggling.

"Someone might live in a really nice home but they have no money for groceries and they're trying to figure out how to get by. Basically it's the decline of the middle class that's going on," he said.

Baca said his concern is that students feel both

—FORUM, Page 21

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Forum

From Page 20

self-confident and safe whether they are at school or at home.

“We need to let our students know that nothing’s impossible and to give them that self-confidence within themselves that they can do anything.”

Schauer spoke of “the lack of equity” in that many children don’t have access to all-day kindergarten. The state does not pay for all-day kindergarten, and some districts have managed to provide it by taking money from other places. The schools need to make sure no one is left out, he said.

“No matter what your background is or how they come to us, it’s our responsibility to see to it that they learn.”

Busch said students need “state and national leaders who are willing to go to bat for them and believe that by supporting them and helping them to be successful.”

And though there are many issues to surmount in the coming year, Baca offered an optimistic appraisal to end the session.

“Regardless of all those challenges that are out there, we’re going to come together as a community and overcome them,” he said.

Teens

From Page 7

of technology may be impacting them socially and emotionally,” Dobratz said.

Diane DeLong, senior program manager with the North Star Youth Program, offered her take on the issue.

“Our youth have immediate access to worldwide social connections. As parents, we have to realize the window of danger open to them. It’s important to have conversations with your teen and to set rules about Internet use,” DeLong said.

“Tell them to not feel pressured by others to do something that makes them uncomfortable. It’s important that they also understand this is truly a safety issue, not a parental control issue.”

What many kids don’t realize is that nothing on the internet is truly private. North Star urges parents to teach their kids to keep personal information and passwords private and to not add someone they don’t know to their friend list.

TeenSafe goes a bit further.

For \$15 per month, parents can download an app that allows them to access their children’s smart phones. Things like their location in real time, which internet and social media sites they’ve visited, what they’ve downloaded and their text messages — even if those messages have been deleted.

But does that go too far, invading a child’s privacy?

“I think it’s really all about context. It’s all about your family and your values,” Messenger said. “Some of the stuff that we see, the parents had no idea... There are so many things out there you can’t know about, and if you don’t know about them, you can’t help your child.”

According to bullying.org, only one in 10 teens tell their family they are being bullied. Some of those messages have been known to have devastating consequences.

One mother *Wrangler News* spoke to saw messages such as “Why don’t you just kill yourself? Hurry up and die!” on the phone of her 13-year-old child.

“If you don’t know,” she says, “how can you protect them?”

Information: teensafe.com or azmftc.org



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City of Tempe Page



Healing Field tribute Sept. 11 at Tempe Beach Park

Tempe will honor the nearly 3,000 victims of the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks with a display of American flags at the 12th annual Healing Field tribute at Tempe Beach Park. The free event runs Thursday, Sept. 10, through Sunday, Sept. 13, from 5 a.m. to 11 p.m.

On Sept. 11, there will be a memorial ceremony at 5:46 a.m. and a candlelight vigil at 7 p.m. A moving display of patriotism and unity, Healing Field is presented by the Tempe Exchange Club.



It's time to GAIN with your neighbors

Join fellow neighborhood leaders, neighborhood block watch captains and residents from all over Tempe to do some Getting Arizona Involved in Neighborhoods (GAIN) party planning.

The actual GAIN gatherings happen this fall, but it's time to start planning now! City staff will be on hand to help neighborhoods jumpstart their planning at the GAIN Kickoff Celebration at 6 p.m. on Wednesday, Aug. 26, at the Tempe History Museum, 809 E. Southern Ave.

Whether this is your first experience or you are a seasoned party planner, there



will be plenty of tips and handouts along with chances to win raffle prizes from our event sponsors and opportunities to win party visits from city departments such as Fire, Recycling and Police.

Pre-register your event at www.tempe.gov/gain or come prepared to do so at the kickoff.

This year's GAIN gatherings will be Saturday, Oct. 17, from 3-7 p.m.

More information is at www.tempe.gov/gain.

Tempe students have help in getting college- and career-ready

College Connect Tempe assists young people in fulfilling their dreams of post-secondary education.

The program provides students and their families with the tools to navigate the college process. Through a series of free workshops, participants learn how to apply for college and how to pay for it through financial aid, scholarships or both.

An upcoming workshop series will be held from 10 a.m. to noon on Aug. 15, Sept. 26 and Nov. 14 at the Tempe Public Library, 3500 S. Rural Road.

Series topics will include the college enrollment process, career exploration, scholarship searches, essay writing, FAFSA form completion and more.

Register for fall programs and classes beginning Aug. 10

The fall issue of the Tempe Opportunities brochure is full of new and continuing classes and programs for all ages and interests.

Class topics include exercise and fitness, educational activities/classes, sports leagues, foreign languages, music, art, theatre and dance.

All of our quality programs are offered at convenient times and locations, at affordable prices.

College Connect is a partnership of the City of Tempe, Tempe Union High School District, Tempe Elementary School District, Arizona State University, Grand Canyon University, Mesa Community College, Northern Arizona University, Rio Salado Community College, University of Advancing Technology and University of Arizona.

For more information and to register, visit www.collegeconnecttempe.org.



Banker mom uses her skills to assist early childhood learning

West Chandler resident Catherine Arvizu is a banker, and a single mom. She's also a volunteer, and it's there that the two roles come together.

Arvizu was recently named a 2015 East Maricopa "Champion for Young Children" by First Things First, the statewide organization devoted to funding early childhood education and health programs (azftf.gov).

This honor came about in light of the financial courses Arvizu teaches all over the Valley—including the Chandler neighborhood near her home—aimed at helping mothers make ends meet.

Wrangler News: How did you become interested in education?

Catherine Arvizu: I have two children of my own, and as a single parent I knew how important their early years were. I wanted them to grow up as healthy as they could. I didn't want them to feel the stress of a being raised by a single parent.

WN: What form did your volunteer work take?

CA: After raising two kids on my own with the help of my Mom and friends I realized I need to give back. When the economy took a downturn I was moved to teach basic financial classes.

WN: What is the best benefit that has come back to you because of your volunteer work?

CA: The best benefit is the relationships I've built over the years. I have made some wonderful friends. I also have a purpose in life and that's to make a difference. Teaching financial classes has been a great experience and making a difference in people's lives.

WN: What do you feel is most needed from education volunteers right now?

CA: Their time.

WN: Can you tell us about your background, education and career and how it might have influenced your volunteer work?

CA: I grew up in a small rural town, Douglas, Ariz. I graduated from Western International University in 2007. I dropped out of college and after my divorce and realized I need a plan for my career. I knew I had to go back to school and finish.

I'm currently a Vice President, Business Banker for National Bank of Arizona. I've been there for 13 years. I started as a Mortgage Processor and worked my way up through hard work and perseverance. I've been in banking over 25 years. However, when I teach my classes I let them know that the fact that I've been a banker for 25 years doesn't qualify me to teach the classes. My life experience as a single parent does.

— M.V. Moorhead

A tour of history

Serrano's has been serving authentic Mexican food in Chandler for 36 years, and with that claim to a place in history they are the city's oldest continuous operating business. On Aug. 8, the restaurant will be offering diners an exclusive "tour of Mexico" featuring a six-course dinner served with tequila pairings and a strolling

musician. The menu was developed specifically for the event and includes family recipes from generations past. Menu offerings include Shrimp and Scallop Ceviche, Mexican spice-rubbed Ribeye Steak, stuffed Poblano Chiles, homemade tortillas and Raspberry Mango Tres Leche Cake. The event is limited to 40 guests. Serrano's is located at 141 S. Arizona Ave.

Information: Janet Theborge, 602-510-5403.



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The Chandler Chamber helped connect 366 business leaders at just 3 events in July.

The Chandler Chamber strives to help its members make lasting connections to grow their businesses. In July alone, the Business After Business Mixer at the Crowne Plaza San Marcos Resort boasted 181 attendees, the attendance at the Wake Up Chandler Mixer held at the Hungry Monk attracted over 85 members and guests and the Women in Business Luncheon at SoHo63 saw over 100 luncheon participants. Visit www.ChandlerChamber.com to connect with us in August.

Did You Know. . .

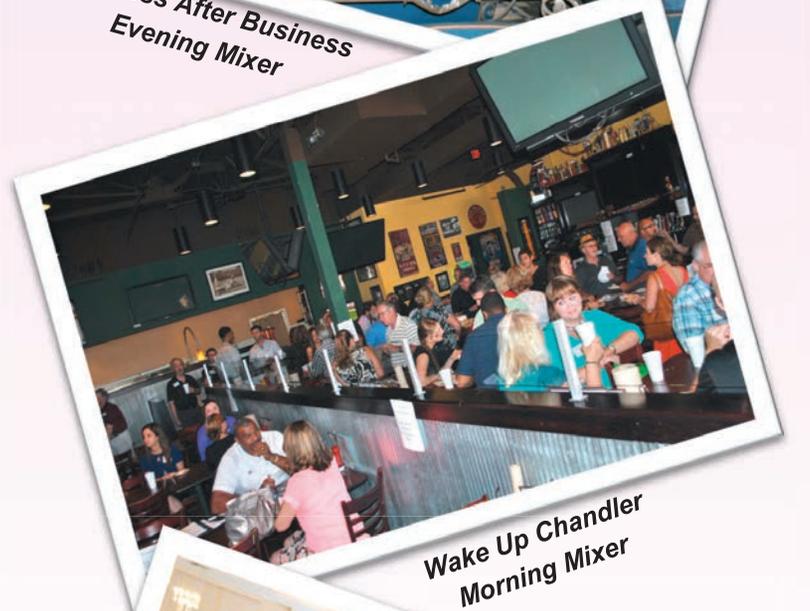
The Chandler Chamber supports **Proposition 484** which will align the portion of Chandler's City Charter relating to when candidate elections are held with the City's long standing practice of holding these elections in the fall. Holding elections in the fall significantly improves voter turnout as well as reduces the cost of these elections by consolidating them with other federal, state and regional elections. For these reasons the Chandler Chamber of Commerce strongly recommends voters support Proposition 484 and vote "Yes" during the August 25th mail in election.

The Chandler Chamber of Commerce **Public Policy Group** will meet Friday, August 14 at 8am at the Chandler Chamber located at 25 S Arizona Place, Chandler, AZ 85225. They will look at the Chandler Unified School District's Bond Election and Tempe Union High School District's Capital Override. Speakers include, Dr. Kenneth Baca, Superintendent of the Tempe Union High School District, Beth Brizel & Veekas Shrivastava, Co-Chairs, Yes Support Our Schools PAC and representatives from the Chandler Unified School district. Visit www.chandlerchamber.com to register.

On Tuesday, August 18 at noon the **Women in Business Luncheon** will feature keynote speaker Kristen Sharma, a multi-award winning entrepreneur sharing her 5 step proven blueprint, "Secrets for Leadership Success." At 10:30am attend an information session on the roll out of a new women's mentoring program coming in September. Visit www.chandlerchamber.com to register.



Business After Business Evening Mixer



Wake Up Chandler Morning Mixer



Women in Business Luncheon



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Sports

with Alex Zener • Photos by Billy Hardiman



Warm-ups already underway for high school cross country season

If you drive around Tempe around 3 p.m. starting the week of Aug. 3, you will most likely see a multitude of high school cross country runners on the sidewalks around Corona, Marcos, McClintock and Tempe high schools, readying for their first main competition the first part of September.

Corona won the boys state championship in 2013 with Corona's top three runners, **Nate Rodriguez**, **Ryan Normand** and **Marcus Wheeler**, crossing the finish line 1-2-3, and placed third in 2014 when Wheeler took first place followed by teammates **Slade Summers**, who took 6th place, **Alex Hart**, at 23rd, **Andrew Eversden** at 34th, **Lucas Ykema** in 62nd, **Graham Eversden** at 79th and **Liam Kovatch** at 90th.

This fall Corona will be relying on junior runner Summers to lead a pack of young runners including Ykema, Graham Eversden, Kovatch and potentially **Johnathan Lopez**.

Rodriguez spent last fall running cross country at Iowa State as one of the top 10 runners on the Cyclone's traveling squad. He was a contributing

member of the 2014 Cyclone team that took third place at the Big 12 Championships and third place at the NCAA Midwest Regional.

Rodriguez ran in the first race of the season in September at The Roy Griak Invitational.

"Unfortunately, I had one of the worst races I have ever run at the Griak Invitational," said Rodriguez. "That first race was a rough transition for me into collegiate competition, but a lesson well learned."

Rodriguez's second race was at the Wisconsin Adidas Invitational in October, where he took more than two minutes off his time from the Griak, finishing 13th overall in the "B" race.

Rodriguez went on place 29th overall at the Big 12 Championships Nov. 1 and 40th overall Nov. 14 at the NCAA Midwest Regional, running the 10K with a time of 30:53.6.

Rodriguez is excited about starting his second year running for the Cyclones and as a student in the Iowa State classroom.

"School here is great, plus I like running for such

a dedicated coaching staff, who are some of the most driven people I have ever met," said Rodriguez.

"Being part of a small group of focused athletes all striving for the same goal, day in and day out, has been a great environment for me."

"In addition, my teammates are all tremendous athletes and some great people to be around."

Rodriguez does miss some things in Arizona, though.

"The thing I like most about college is getting to go away to a new great place like Ames, Iowa, where I have great teammates and coaches. But I do miss my family and friends back home," said Rodriguez. "Moving so far away from my very close knit family and group of friends has been tough."

Corona's girls team, which placed sixth at state last season when senior **Kelly Naumann** ran an incredible race to finish in 2nd place followed by teammates **Renee Clary** in 20th place, **Alexis Artiaga** in 49th, **Mackenzie Harder** in 60th, **Sidney Bussler** at 79th, **Rachel Dietz** in 83rd

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Sports

From Page 25

and **Riley Wright** in 92nd place, will have almost everyone back and could easily move up in the standings at the end of this season.

MLB Draft Selections

Two local baseball players were selected to the MLB first-player draft in early June.

Trevor Allen, an outfielder on Corona's baseball team, was selected in the 25th round at No. 765 by Los Angeles. Allen has committed to play baseball at Arizona State University next season.

Noel Rodriguez, a right-handed pitcher from Marcos de Niza was selected by Tampa Bay in the 26th round at No. 778. Rodriguez has committed to play at Paradise Valley Community College this fall.

Corona Wrestling

Brothers Ryan and Mark Farina both competed as part of the Team Arizona in the ASICS Junior and Cadet National Wrestling Championships in Fargo, N.C., July 18-25.

Ryan, who was a Division I state champion in the 126 lb. weight class last season and Mark who took 5th place at the state championships are from a wrestling family.

Their father, **Lou Farina**, wrestled at Rhode Island University, and their older brother, **Glenn Farina**, currently wrestles at Cal Poly.

While at Corona, Glenn was a state champion in his junior year and state runner-up as a senior.

Defensive Player Standouts

Two local football players were recently recognized among the preseason top 10 defensive football players.

Senior linebacker **Jacob Hernandez** from Marcos de Niza was recognized for his ability to tackle and drop the other team's offensive players. Last season he was credited with an incredible 59 solo tackles and 132 tackles, including one quarterback sack.

Tempe High School's defensive lineman **My-King Johnson** helped the Buffaloes win 12 games last season as a sophomore with his prowess on the defensive side

of the ball. He had 43 solo tackles and 79 total tackles, but most impressive was his ability to use his speed and quickness to get to his opponents' quarterbacks. Johnson was credited last season with over a sack a game, at 13.5.

Duane Coaching Club BB

For any who might have had a hard time believing **Sam Duane Jr.** would stay away from coaching basketball for very long, he recently agreed to work with Arizona Power Basketball Academy—not as a team coach but more as a skills coach.

"My focus will be on helping kids at all different levels improve their basketball skills," said Duane.

Duane is currently in China working at a camp and will not start at the academy until later in August.

Corona Basketball Updates

No surprise for Corona fans, **Marvin Bagley III** continued to be highly rated by college coaches, ESPN and other recruiting agencies during the July basketball evaluation period

when he competed at two 16U tournaments.

A bit of a surprise may be the recruiting activity **Saben Lee** garnered during the July basketball evaluation period by college coaches. Most fans should remember Lee starting to emerge as the sixth man midway through last season only to disappear after suffering what was thought to be an injury in the Putnum Vo-Tech game in January.

It now appears he was suffering from an avulsion fracture in his hip due to a growth spurt his freshman year.

Lee, the son of Amp Lee, a Florida State star running back on the Gators football team, has since healed and had an incredible summer playing point guard for Power Black.

Lee, 6-foot-2 with an improved vertical, has reportedly picked up nine scholarship offers, including one from New Mexico where former teammate **Dane Kuiper** is playing, and another from Florida State.

A healthy Lee, with speed, quickness and ball handling capabilities, will be a welcome addition on the court next season.



Saben Lee during the 2014-2015 season.

Diversions

Earlier thoughts on 'Mockingbird': Are they even more relevant today?

Commentary

By M.V. Moorhead

All of the recent commotion about the newly published Harper Lee novel brought to mind something I wrote for Wrangler News three years ago, about the film version of *To Kill a Mockingbird*.

What I had to say then seems equally relevant, maybe even more so, than I considered it then:

"The signature role of Gregory Peck's career was Atticus Finch, the small-town lawyer and single father who parented by example, eschewing violence while displaying quiet courage, and keeping vigil over those he cared about.

"Many people probably got their prototype for the ideal father from Robert Mulligan's 1962 adaptation of Harper Lee's novel."

I'm one of them. The sound of Peck's voice, or of Kim Stanley's narration, or of Elmer Bernstein's delicate musical score, brings tears to my eyes with Pavlovian ease. So, for that matter, can Lee's exquisite prose, right off the page.

In Lee's *Go Set a Watchman*, published to monster sales last month by HarperCollins, Atticus is less admirable. The novel follows his daughter Jean Louise "Scout" Finch, now an adult living in New York, as she returns to her small Alabama hometown for a visit.

While she's there, she learns that Atticus, as well as the local young man who wants to marry her, are both members of the town's segregationist group, intent on keeping the NAACP and civil rights in general at bay.

Atticus is, simply put, a racist, of the imperturbably condescending, paternalistic, evasive sort, as pernicious in its way as the overtly hateful kind. Remembering her father's defense of a local black man accused, obviously falsely, of rape—the main plot of *Mockingbird*—she's horrified, baffled and, very understandably, furious.

The novel was reportedly written

in 1957, before *Mockingbird*, and is regarded as a first draft of the classic, although in my opinion it's so radically different, both in content and intent, that it constitutes a novel unto itself.

Few would suggest that it's an achievement, either in prose style or in storytelling, on the level of *Mockingbird*.

It's clumsily structured and digressive—though its digressions are some of its strongest episodes—and its last few chapters are tinny debates in the manner of a Golden Age of Television problem play.

But the fingers-in-the-ears, "la-la-la-I-can't-hear-you" reaction that many critics and commentators have had to the very publication of the book suggests that they are as psychologically invested in an idealized view of Atticus as Scout is.

Heartbreakingly, there's nothing implausible about *Watchman's* presentation of the character, nor anything very incompatible with his characterization in *Mockingbird*.

Even if it's a lesser work than *Mockingbird*, it's still an impressive novel on its own terms. The scene in which Scout must endure a "coffee" with other young women and listen to their prattle is a tour de force—horror and comedy and pathos weaving in and out of each other, and not a word of it that isn't still relevant today.

I think it's a very good thing that *Go Set a Watchman* was published. *Mockingbird*, with its expert blend of lofty legal drama and southern gothic fairy tale, is a work of polished beauty and a vision of social decency toward which to aspire.

Go Set a Watchman, roughly sketched but passionate, is a much franker, less romanticized work. It takes on one of the more painfully familiar themes of the last century or so—that of daughters who more or less worship their fathers, struggling to come to terms with the awful ideologies to which those fathers cling.

More broadly, it's about the agony of loving your family and your community of origin while knowing the ugliness that's part of its core.

This, by extension, makes *Watchman* a book for all of us who love America.

Marcos de Niza performing arts honored among nation's best

Marcos de Niza High School theater and performing arts students are being nationally recognized for their talents on stage during the 2014-15 season, earning 23 nominations and six awards in the 10th Annual National Youth Arts Awards.

Marcos drama teacher Patrick McChesney also received a nomination for Outstanding Direction.

More than 400 productions were considered for the awards, including shows from 160 or more organizations in more than 70 cities spanning 13 states.

Winners were selected by a panel of 25 judges and reviewers.

Awards will be formally presented on stage at the 10th Annual National Youth Arts Awards Ceremony at 7 p.m. Sunday, Aug. 16 at Marcos.

Winners include:

Outstanding Lead Actor in a Musical: J.Cole Shryock as Ren in *Footloose*.

Outstanding Lead Actor in a Play: TJ L'Heureux as Walter/Edward/James in *The Plot, Like Gravy, Thickers*.

Outstanding Supporting Actress in a Play: Carly Fiel as Allegra in *The Plot, Like Gravy, Thickers*; Eliana Magallan as Peggy Sue in *The Plot, Like Gravy, Thickers*.

Outstanding Ensemble: *Footloose*.

Outstanding Set Design: Jeff Dobbs for *Footloose*.

Nominees include:

Outstanding Production: *The Plot, Like Gravy, Thicken*.

Outstanding Lead Actor in a Musical: J.Cole Shryock as Ren in *Footloose*.

Outstanding Lead Actress in a Musical: Eliana Magallan as Ariel in *Footloose*.

Outstanding Lead Actor in a Play: TJ L'Heureux as Walter/Edward/James in *The Plot, Like Gravy, Thickers*.

Outstanding Supporting Actor in a Musical: H-Tubtun Hernandez-Elenes as Shaw in *Footloose*

Zach Mauck as Willard in *Footloose*.

Outstanding Supporting Actress in a Musical: Peiton Bursh as Vi in *Footloose*.

Outstanding Supporting Actor in a Play: H-Tubtun Hernandez-Elenes as Roy in *The Plot, Like Gravy, Thickers*.

Zach Mauck as Hollister in *The Plot, Like Gravy, Thickers*.

Mason Paschke as Lawrence in *The Plot, Like Gravy, Thickers*.

Outstanding Supporting Actress in a Play: Alexandra Boles as Justine in *The Plot, Like Gravy, Thickers*;

Peiton Bursh as Connie in *The Plot, Like Gravy, Thickers*;

Carly Fiel as Allegra in *The Plot, Like Gravy, Thickers*; Colleen Jacobson as Edith in *The Plot, Like Gravy, Thickers*;

Eliana Magallan as Peggy Sue in *The Plot, Like Gravy, Thicken*;

Mercedes Zamora as Beatrice in *The Plot, Like Gravy, Thickers*.

Outstanding Ensemble: *Footloose, The Plot, Like Gravy, Thickers*

Outstanding Costume Design: Jeff Dobbs for *Footloose*;

Beth Jacobson for *Footloose*

Outstanding Lighting Design: Donna Petersen for *Footloose*

Outstanding Set Design: Jeff Dobbs for *The Plot, Like Gravy, Thickers*

Outstanding Choreography: Amanda Paige for *Footloose*

Outstanding Direction: Patrick McChesney for *The Plot, Like Gravy, Thickers*

Marcos de Niza's 2015-16 theater schedule includes "More Than Meets the Eye" by Fred Carmichael (Nov. 18-21); "Legally Blonde: The Musical" (March 2-5);

and "Night of Shorts" (April 23-24).

Information about upcoming events is online at www.mdnchoirdrama.org.

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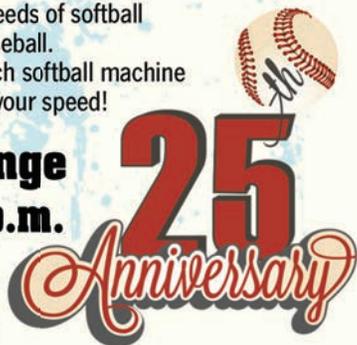
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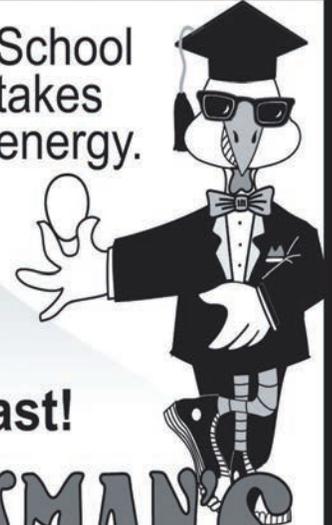


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First Person

A lesson well learned: No joke

By M.V. Moorhead

A little over a month ago I was driving east along Rio Salado Parkway in Tempe, a little too fast.

I hadn't realized I was going too fast, but a nice young Tempe police officer went to the trouble to point it out to me, even though this meant following me on his motorcycle, using the flashing lights mounted on the vehicle to get my attention, and then, when I pulled over to the side of the road, dismounting and coming up to the side of my truck.

He told me that I was doing 46, which under normal circumstances might not be an outrageous speed on Rio Salado.

But that stretch of the road was (and is) under construction, and the posted speed limit was 25. People—like me, for instance—hadn't been paying attention to this, and so the Tempe PD was, as he almost apologetically put it, “doing some enforcement.”

Those who ride with me regularly will attest that, whatever poor driving habits I may have, excessive speed is not usually among them. Indeed, twice in my life—once in Virginia, once here in Arizona—I have been pulled over by cops for going too slowly.

So this Rio Salado citation was sort of funny. Or, rather, it would have been sort of funny had the fine not been upwards of \$200.

At one point in the conversation, this (again:) nice young Tempe motorcycle officer pointed out that he had charged me at the regular fine rate, not at the speeding-in-a-construction-zone rate, which would have been double or something.

Greatly appreciated.

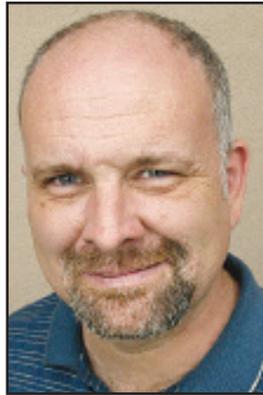
He also pointed out that if I hadn't had a speeding ticket in the officially prescribed time period, I was eligible to go to defensive driving school rather than pay the fine or go to court.

Terrific, I thought. I hadn't had a speeding ticket in well over 10 years, and—as the nice young Tempe motorcycle cop further pointed out—it's now possible to take those courses online.

So I looked online (azdrive.com) at the list of certified remedial driving schools.

It was quite a dizzying array, which included such august institutions of learning as Easy Peasy Defensive Driving, Super Fly Defensive Driving and Slow Your Pony.

I was perhaps most tempted by Sir Waldorf



Bentley's School for Naughty Drivers, because the school's mascot—Sir Waldorf himself, I presume—was a cute puppy in a suit of armor, holding up a big oaken shield which read “ARIZONA SUPREME COURT APPROVED.”

In the end, however, I opted for Comedy Traffic School, by Improv.

Not only has the venerable comedy club chain's traffic school been lauded as the best in the business by voluminous testimonials and media coverage—just ask them—I also felt some personal allegiance, as I worked as an in-house publicist for the Tempe Improv for a little over a year in 2001 and 2002.

Comedy driving schools originated in California (surprise, surprise) some 30 years ago as a way to make the classes less of a drag for students, and for struggling comics to make a few bucks and hone their material by day.

As a staunch believer in law and order, I feel duty-bound to disapprove of this mollicodling. But as I guy who got a ticket, I heartily approve of this progressive approach.

Improv got into the traffic school act early on. As far as I could tell, however, the Improv no longer offers live classes, at least not here in Arizona; it's all done online now.

So I enrolled, and started the lengthy process one night after midnight.

The class lasts four hours—by law, it *has* to last four hours. This is where the comedy content comes into play. A person of normal intelligence could easily read through each lesson and correctly answer the quiz questions on traffic signs and road rage and impaired driving and so on in a matter of minutes, and most people could probably complete the whole class in less than an hour.

But you aren't permitted to move on to the next lesson until enough time has passed to ensure that the whole class has eaten up four hours. So, to pass the time until you can move

on, each lesson includes embedded comedy videos.

Some of these are of comedian Steve Verret, one of the luminaries of the traffic-school world, going over the class materials, with funny embellishments about his small-town Louisiana background.

Other videos are just for fun—stand-ups like Brian Regan and Jim Breuer (both of whom I drove around to various media appearances during my tenure at the Tempe Improv) doing riffs on cars and driving, or a *Saturday Night Live* sketch set at a traffic school featuring Kristen Wiig's obsessive one-upper Penelope.

The levity of tone is a little jarring at first—“During a head-on collision, it is vital to protect your face (especially if you're really good-looking)”—and I was pretty bleary-eyed by the time I finished, after 4 a.m.

But I have to admit, the class was pretty funny. Or, rather, it *would* have been funny if, after tuition and “diversion fees,” it hadn't ended up costing only about \$12 less than just paying the ticket would have.

Therein lies this simple moral to the story: Don't speed. Especially on Rio Salado Parkway.

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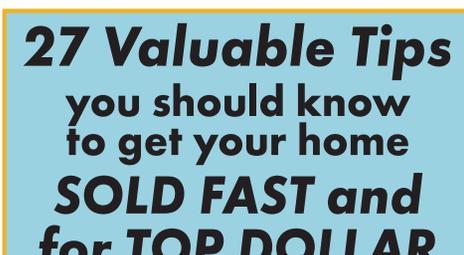
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