



WRANGLER NEWS

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Our 32nd year of publication

For 67-year-old
Danny Swancey,
driving a school bus
has brought pleasure,
extra money to his
retirement days.

Story on Page 3

Wrangler News photo
by Andrew Lwowski



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In all three area school districts, say officials, there's no lack of available bus drivers.

— Wrangler News photo by Andrew Lwowski

School bus drivers in ample supply, as is their enthusiasm for job

Cover story by
Barbi Walker-Walsh

While school-bus driver shortages continue nationwide, Tempe/West Chandler schools seem to be bucking the trend and managing the challenge through planning and innovative strategies. The situation isn't new, but all three districts—Kyrene, Tempe Union and Tempe Elementary — are earning high

marks for their efforts to avert possible shortages.

“Getting school bus drivers has been notoriously difficult for years,” said Michele Parmley, director of transportation for the Kyrene district.

Kyrene has dedicated substantial effort over the past few years to create a system that not only addresses the national shortage but appears to meet the needs of its students and families. Despite challenging situations

in 2021 and 2022, when Kyrene faced driver shortages, personnel from the transportation office, including Parmley, filled in for missing drivers. They successfully weathered the storm.

As a result, planners established a system that minimizes delays and disruptions.

“Kyrene is proud to have safe, friendly, efficient and on-time bus service,” said Erin Helm, executive director of district

communications, via email.

The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated the driver shortage situation when drivers left due to health concerns. Some districts altered bus routes and staggered start times, while others had to cancel classes or reduce transportation services.

This prompted local districts to become more creative in reimagining their transportation plans to combat the

shortage. Coupled with recruitment and retention challenges, along with driver pay issues, the pandemic created a perfect storm on top of the already challenged industry that brought the situation to light, said the CEO and executive director of the National Association for Pupil Transportation, Molly McGee-Hewit, in a recent online update.

Before the pandemic, recruitment, retirement and retention were already challenges faced

by Tempe's schools. Jessica Palmer, director of transportation and school safety with the Tempe Elementary district, said via email that the driver shortage is not unique to their district, exacerbated

— Please turn the page



by individuals who decided to retire early, further straining the available workforce.

The pandemic also created alternative job opportunities, intensifying competition not only with other school districts and charter schools but with industries that employ commercial driver's license, or CDL, drivers, such as Amazon, UPS, FedEx, logistics charter bus services, sanitation, and more.

Still, the Tempe Union district reported no shortages or disruptions at the beginning of this school year, according to Sam Gonzales, district transportation director.

Another challenge the schools faced was finding individuals willing to work a split schedule, which typically involves morning and mid-afternoon shifts. But for some, that's ideal. Danny Swancey, a 67-year-old school bus driver with the Kyrene district, loves the arrangement. Having retired from the Mississippi Postal Service after 32 years, he said he was drawn to the bus driver job due to the ample time off it offers.

Swancey takes advantage of this by indulging in his passion for hiking between shifts. He says he loves to hike, and in fact, as soon as his morning assignment ended, he headed out for a hike. The day we interviewed him, he texted a photo of

himself at the top of Telegraph Pass in the area of South Mountain. The photo came in at 10:42 a.m.

Swancey also appreciates the flexibility of the job, which allows him to enjoy outdoor activities while earning a steady income. Swancey said he cannot think of a better job for someone over the age of 55.

Competitive wages and benefits have played a significant role in attracting and retaining school bus drivers for Tempe schools. Swancey said that Kyrene paid for him to get his CDL license, and he earns around \$20 per hour, along with a generous amount of time off, including six holidays.

Additionally, he is part of the state's pension plan, a significant advantage. Jessica Palmer said that Tempe Elementary bus drivers start at \$18.01 an hour, offering great daytime hours on weekdays without the necessity of night, weekend or holiday work while also providing opportunities for growth and paid training.

At all three districts, leadership and support appear to have proven instrumental in maintaining a positive work environment. TUHSD's Megan Sterling cites the work of Sam Gonzales, district transportation director, attributing the lack of issues the district has encountered to his effective leadership skills. Driver Swancey noted that, for

him, it is the supportive environment that makes driving such a great job. Kyrene Transportation Director Parmley, for example, makes an effort to remain close to the drivers, having parties with them, playing games etc.

"I look forward to going to work every day and didn't used to in my other jobs," he says.

Ultimately, seems to matter most to all these school districts is the commitment they hold to the students they transport daily.

Those who manage transportation services acknowledge that it takes a special person with patience and grace to be a school bus driver, as they play a crucial role not only in getting students to school but in being a supportive and trusted adult in the students' lives.

As for Gonzales, he emphasizes the value of the media spotlighting his chosen field, noting that school bus drivers can make a profound impact on students' lives beyond just providing transportation.

"Particularly when it comes to showcasing the importance of the job," he said.

"Our drivers not only get kids to where they need to be to learn, but they can also be another supportive and trusted adult in their lives, and that is important."

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Charity group formed to assist families of fallen Chandler officers

West Chandler residents and their citywide neighbors are joining the nation's law enforcement community with the arrival of a non-profit aimed at providing charitable, financial and educational assistance to officers and their families.

Behind the announcement is the Chandler Law Enforcement Association, whose charities unit is an extension of the work it has done to advocate for police officers since 1999.

The initiative was built in part in memory of Officer Jeremy Wilkins, a 23-year law enforcement veteran who died in 2021 after a battle with COVID-19. He is survived by a wife and five children.

The program also supports help for the family of Officer Tyler Britt, who died from the same disease.

CLEA will partner with community groups that support public safety work to make a difference in the lives of their law enforcement professionals.

CLEA'S Wagner said the new chapter is designed to further its support efforts.

"By partnering with our community members



and businesses, we will directly benefit the lives of our officers, their families, and our community groups who support law enforcement," he said.

"We provide our officers with the best tools, services, and support systems so they can continue doing great work."

Specifically, the group's funds are directed at aiding families with immediate financial assistance

after the death of an officer, as well as supporting fallen officers' children during the holidays.

This year, CLEA honored Officer Wilkins and provided support to his family at National Police Week in Washington, D.C., by sending two trustees and members of Wilkins' team.

CLEA Charities was established to provide financial assistance to families of fallen officers and fund opportunities to attend memorial services at the U.S. Capitol.

The organization also provides educational and travel opportunities for Chandler officers and provides scholarship opportunities to youth interested in careers in law enforcement.

In addition, CLEA Charities works to provide additional avenues to receive mental health resources for officers and their families.

"The opportunities...have opened up our ability to support our officers and reinforce the positive relationships and values of law enforcement in our community," said Wagner. To donate or find other ways to support CLEA Charities, visit cleacharities.org or email info@cleacharities.org.

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Tempe's efforts to reduce homelessness appear to be working

Efforts expanded to provide employment, housing, other vital resources

It may not be obvious to those who traverse Tempe area streets, but recent studies show that the city's homeless population is slowly declining. At least for now.

Nearly 200 fewer people were counted in the most recent enumeration by a team of experts who follow the impact of homelessness.

According to a report from Tempe officials, the city's two most recent Point-in-Time surveys have shown decreases during an 11-month period, down from the previous report.

Staff members say the city has conducted each of their counts using the same methodology as a way to ensure to help ensure consistent and reliable numbers.

On June 15, with the support of 60 staff and volunteers, the city counted 355 unsheltered people. That compares with 406 in January and 515 in August 2022.

Maricopa County holds a Point-in-Time count each January to provide a one-day snapshot of homelessness in the region, and Tempe is a part of those counts. Additionally, Tempe holds a

summer count, which is described as a way to better understand the community's needs and guide strategies for improving its development of homeless strategies.

At a recent meeting, the Tempe City Council voted unanimously to approve a new contract designed to enhance the city's homeless solutions. Tempe also plans to hire a nonprofit contractor, Mercy House Living Centers, to staff and manage the city's non-congregate shelter, Sue's Espacio.

The city's HOPE homeless outreach team currently manages the shelter. It is said that using a contractor will free up four HOPE team members for more outreach with unsheltered people across the city, along with a supervisor and coordinator who have been sharing responsibilities for shelter oversight.

Tempe is working to assist more unsheltered people through three other efforts:

- Expanding the Tempe Works program, an innovative approach which connects unsheltered people with employment, housing and other resources. The city is seeking local business partners to provide new job opportunities.

- Recruiting volunteers to work alongside the city's HOPE team to connect people in need with shelter, housing and resources. Volunteers must be 18 years and older, fingerprinted and complete an interview.

Submit an application to volunteerHOPE@tempe.gov.

- Promoting what is envisioned as effective, lasting help for unsheltered people through healthy giving and a public campaign, "Real Change, Not Spare Change." The concept is based on the awareness that one-off giving at intersections or other public places can delay or divert a person from seeking shelter and other help.

Healthy giving, according to studies, supports a person's long-term needs like substance-abuse treatment or housing. As part of that initiative, residents are encouraged to continue giving by joining forces with nonprofits and faith groups.

Tempe Community Council's Together Tempe campaign has been identified as a good place to start to support nonprofits serving people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, say those who have studied proven methodology.

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Domestic violence a problem that is too often ignored

Commentary by Christine Ellis



Christine Ellis

I'm joining the City of Chandler's Domestic Violence Commission, community members and regional partners to raise awareness regarding the ongoing issue of domestic violence in our community.

As a nurse and mother, it is heart-breaking to see the horrific effects domestic violence on victims and their families.

Domestic violence is a complex problem too often ignored. It affects everyone, regardless of background, culture and economics. The only shame in domestic violence is the reality that it persists. Everyone deserves love and safety, and together we can help our neighbors and ourselves thrive. Young people in high school and college also must not forget that no means no in a dating relationship.

I have the distinct pleasure of representing Chandler on the Regional Domestic Violence Council, which provides a forum for coordinated action to address, prevent and eradicate domestic violence in our communities. We're working to educate and empower people young and old to join the field of social work and social services advocacy.

We're hosting a vigil at Chandler City Hall on Oct. 2 at 6 p.m. to draw attention to the prevalence of domestic violence. Our goal is to raise awareness and offer educational resources that aid prevention. You're invited to join us!

Chandler's Domestic Violence Commission has worked since 2005 to bring together community members and professionals from a variety of organizations to raise awareness and educate our City residents on this issue.

The Commission is made up of passionate advocates in our personal and professional lives who know the importance of breaking the silence on cycles of family violence. Recently, they hosted their 15th annual event focusing on survivor stories from our Native American communities.

The statistics around domestic violence often feel overwhelming. Across the nation, one in three women and one in four men have experienced some form of physical violence from an intimate

partner in their lifetime.

Chandler Municipal Court has partnered with My Sisters' Place to enable victims in the domestic violence shelter to file protective orders and be seen by a judge using remote technology that maintains a continued element of safety for the victim. Chandler Municipal Court typically processes about 75 orders of protection monthly.

Here are a few ways to support ending domestic violence:

Break the silence. This isn't a comfortable subject to talk about. Bring it to the light.

Learn about it and listen to advocates and survivors doing the work. Sometimes people are crying out for help, but we don't recognize it or know how to report what we see. When we see something, we need to say something.

Volunteer or donate to organizations supporting families and survivors. My Sister's Place is our local domestic violence shelter in Chandler.

Teach children and youth about healthy relationships. Love Is Respect, a national organization, offers great materials about healthy relationships and dating for youth, caregivers, teachers and friends.

Christine Ellis is a Chandler councilmember

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Small-town education leads to big-time recognition

Growing up in a small Arizona town, Nora Amavisca Reyes, now a senior associate vice president at Mesa Community College, knows what it takes to confront a lack of educational resources to achieve success.

Reyes, who holds a doctoral degree in education, received recognition for her achievements at a reception of the Maricopa County Community College District Innovation Internship program, for which she was honored with a Distinguished Leadership in Higher Education award from the Pete C. Garcia Victoria Foundation.

Said Reyes, looking back on how her early days led to her acknowledged success:

"I became a teacher and a leader in education to help students move toward their academic goals and to help them make their hopes and dreams a reality, so I am honored to receive this award for leadership.

"As a first generation college graduate, I understand the level of commitment and persistence it takes to overcome challenges and



education programming. This occurs in part, she said, by building partnerships with international institutions of higher education as a way to increase international student enrollment, develop student teaching exchange programs and expand opportunities for language learning in alignment with workforce needs.

Named vice provost of the MCC Red Mountain Campus in 2016 prior to serving in her current position at the Southern and Dobson campus, Reyes has served in leadership roles at MCC since 1997.

She chaired the college's Education Studies

achieve success, particularly when resources and relatable role models are limited.

"Reyes' role in the MCCC Innovation Internship program has been to establish a foundation for expanding the opportunity to help create hands-on

Department, MCC Department Chair Association and the Education Instructional Council and Articulation Task Force.

She served as the director of the Guanajuato and Xalapa Study Abroad programs, the administrator of the TL3C Grant Project and acting dean of Innovative Learning and Academic Affairs.

Her first professional experience was as a bilingual second grade teacher in South Phoenix.

Throughout her career Reyes has worked to enrich the college's relationships among numerous organizations and governmental entities with a talent for working collaboratively with leadership, faculty and staff to advance the college's academic mission, promote educational excellence and improve learning outcomes.

Her awards recognizing dedication and success include the Ronald McDonald House Charities Excellence in Education and the League of Latino American Citizens Outstanding Latino Educator.

Reyes earned a Doctorate of Education in Curriculum and Instruction with a specialization in bilingual education, a Master of Education in Multicultural/Bilingual Education, and a Bachelor of Arts in Elementary Education, all from Arizona State University.

Ready to take your business idea to the next level?

The City of Chandler and ASU recently celebrated the opening of the E+I@ACIC coworking space at the ASU Chandler Innovation Center and the launch of the Chandler Endeavor Venture Innovation Incubator — both located in the same building. This free entrepreneurial resource is open to anyone in the community. Learn more and get connected at chandleraz.gov/ChandlerEndeavor.



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Editor:

In the past year the East Valley community has grown stronger in our resolve to justly care for every patient with that special touch of humankindness.

Through your generosity, you have joined our community and stood with us in that resolve - thank you! Because of you, over \$5.8 million was given in support of Chandler Regional Medical Center, Mercy Gilbert Medical Center and the Community Health outreach programs in our most recent fiscal year ending June 30, 2023.

There is an act of kindness behind each and every one of those dollars. In our annual report, we bring you stories and statistics to show you how your donations and kindness are making a difference for our patients, their families, and our community. Also we hope this report shows why we need your continued support in the days ahead.

In this impact report you'll read about how legacy giving bolsters our mission, and you can read an inspiring story about Dignity Health employees and volunteers helping patients and families recovering from a stroke by giving of their own time and treasures.

You will also see how your contributions allow the hospital to quickly address emerging needs and ensure care to the people who call our community home.

We hope to show you the incredible effect you have on so many - individually and collectively - when you give your gratitude, trust and support.

Each gift, no matter the size, makes a positive impact on improving the health of our local community members. We are grateful to those who have made this commitment through philanthropy and caring for the health of everyone. Thank you.

—Julie Ann Alvarado, Foundation President, Dignity Health Foundation East Valley

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Chandler Innovation Center

050 | Playing with Food: Chemistry in the Kitchen

Instructor: Dr. Kjir Hendrickson
Monday, Oct 16, 23, 30 | 1:00 - 3 :00 p.m.
Tempe Public Library

053 | Space Exploration & ASU Innovation

Instructor: Dr. Philip Christensen
Tuesdays, Oct 10, 17, 24 | 10:30 - noon
Tempe Public Library

057 | Lessons & Legacy of Sidney Poitie

Instructor: Jason Davids Scott
Thursday, Oct 12 | 10:30 - 12:00 p.m.
Mesa Arts Center

066 | Vietnam: Your Next Vacation Destination?

Instructor: Dan Fellner
Wednesday, Oct. 18 | 10:30 - 12:00 p.m.
Chandler Innovation Center



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We're always on the lookout for friendly, energetic people who might want to add their writing or photo abilities to our ongoing production needs. Call or email us to talk about how you might fit into this family of happy folks who love what we do. We look forward to hearing from you.

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W. Chandler residents, others invited for Downtown art walk

It's a well known fact: Art is not only invigorating for the soul; it's good for our health, as well.

And, with temperatures finally bearable, folks in West Chandler and nearby Tempe can boost both of those qualities with the upcoming Downtown Art Walk, scheduled 11 a.m.-2 p.m. every other Sunday, Sept. 24, Oct. 8, Oct. 22 and Nov. 5.

Attendees will be able to view and purchase works from local artists in a variety of media, from jewelry to photography.

Said Chandler Vice Mayor Matt Orlando:

"The Downtown Art Walk was a popular event in Chandler



a few years ago. I am pleased that Chandler was able to work with the Downtown Chandler Community Partnership to bring it back and give residents and visitors just one more reason to visit our unique downtown."

Artist booths will line several areas, including Boston Street and on the east side of Arizona Avenue in Dr. A.J. Chandler Park, along Commonwealth Avenue

and San Marcos Place.

Guests can also visit the restaurants and shops in downtown during their visit to this free event. There is ample free parking, including five garages on the east and west of Arizona Avenue.

Information or to submit a vendor application, visit <https://downtownchandler.org/events/downtown-chandler-art-walk>.

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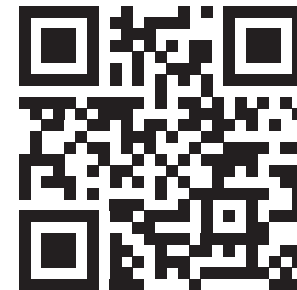
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While we cannot get out the rake and hot cider just yet, we can look forward to all that Tempe has to offer once the weather starts cooperating! Make sure you get out and about this fall to enjoy any of these offerings:

Tempe Old Settlers — Anyone who has lived in Tempe 30 or more years is invited to this annual social gathering of longtime residents on Saturday, Oct. 14, from 9:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m., at Arizona Community Church, 9325 S. Rural Road. Attendees are asked to bring a dish to share. For any questions, call Doug Royse, 602-370-1811.

and hang out with the Tempe Play Mobile for fun pre-movie activities. Celebrate Halloween at our special Boo Bash on Friday, Oct. 27, featuring a screening of “E.T. The Extra-Terrestrial,” carnival-style games, costume contest and more. These events are presented in part by the Tempe Diablos. Visit tempe.gov/FamilyFun for details.



See a show at TCA — Arizona Theatre Company hosts its inaugural season at Tempe Center for the Arts this October, adding to a robust fall schedule that includes GRAMMY Award-winning artists, dance, visual art and theatre. ATC begins with the classic romantic comedy “Barefoot in the Park” by Neil Simon, Oct. 20 through Nov. 5. And the Tempe Symphony Orchestra kicks off its 48th season at TCA on Oct. 9 with its vibrant and dedicated ensemble of more than 80 local musician volunteers. Visit tempecenterforthearts.com.

Get your GAIN on!

It's almost time for neighbors across Tempe to gather for the annual Getting Arizona Involved in Neighborhoods (GAIN) Night! Prepare some special treats, bring out the lawn chairs and games, and connect with neighbors on Saturday, Oct. 21, from 3-7 p.m. Each neighborhood decides how to celebrate, but whatever you do, the City of Tempe is here with support!

Confirm your party specifics and register your party by Sept. 30 at tempe.gov/GAIN in order to receive a party organizer pack. Every effort will be made for a Tempe Police representative to stop by your party, and the Mayor and City Councilmembers and city staff travel to various parties as well. For more information, visit tempe.gov/GAIN, email Neighborhood Services at neighborhoods@tempe.gov or call 480-350-8234.

Tempe Tardeada — The 25th Annual Tempe Tardeada will be Sunday, Oct. 8, from noon to 8 p.m. The free festival features music, dancing, traditional Mexican foods, arts and crafts, face painting and inflatables for children. Non-profit organizations are invited to apply for a free booth. Tempe's family-friendly event takes place each year in conjunction with National Hispanic Heritage Month and celebrates Tempe's Hispanic history and roots. Join us at the Tempe Community Center Complex, 809 E. Southern Ave. For details, call 480-350-8979 or visit tempe.gov/tardeada.

Travel back in time — Visit one of Tempe's historic houses for free, self-guided, drop-in tours on select dates: Eisendrath House, 1400 N. College Ave., Oct. 14 and Nov. 4; Petersen House, 1414 W. Southern Ave., Oct. 28; and Elias-Rodriguez House, 927 E. Eighth St., Nov. 18. Houses are open from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. Learn more at tempe.gov/MuseumHistoricHouses.

Evenings at Kiwanis Park — Tempe's free family-friendly movie series happens every Friday evening this October beginning at approximately 6 p.m. Come early to reserve a spot

SPORTS



Corona del Sol

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Corona coach Jake Barro reflected, alone, over his team's 42-0 defeat by the Chandler Wolves, absorbing the frustration of disappointment and knowing that he doesn't want to feel the same emotions again.

Full story on Page 18

— Wrangler News photo by Andrew Lwowski

The Aztecs tested their talents against a perennial playoff team in the Chandler Wolves, who rank No. 20 in the country. The 42-0 loss showcased the vast difference between where the two programs are, giving the Aztecs a taste of what championship caliber football should look like. Corona coach Jake Barro will now face a tough schedule to battle-test his team in time for the postseason. The Wolves were able to outrun and out-maneuver the Aztecs while limiting Corona's spread offense. If there is any positive outcome from their crushing loss, the Aztecs hopefully will be better prepared than they were at their encounter with the Wolves.

— Photos by Andrew Lwowski





An educated hope: Ready by playoff time

By Andrew Lwowski

It was 2022, and then-first-year Corona del Sol coach Jake Barro saw improvement. But the team ultimately fell short and suffered a loss in the opening round of football playoffs.

This year, Barro is taking a different approach.

The Aztecs are now 1-3, but that's all part of the plan. Well, sort of.

Barro opted for his team to have a tough, non-conference schedule to battle-test his boys for the post season. He realizes that part of last year's shortcomings were due to the team's lack of adversity. This year, Barro is showing his boys that iron sharpens iron.

"Our regular season record may not be as good, but we're going to be ready come playoff time," he said.

"And that's where we are and we have to continue to remind ourselves of that; that's the long term goal. You know, this season is a marathon, not a sprint."

The Aztecs dropped their third straight of the season to the Chandler Wolves, a perennial playoff team in Arizona now ranked No. 20 in the nation. While the Wolves shut the Aztecs out, 42-0, Corona got a taste of what it'll take to compete with championship caliber teams.

Corona found itself in a 28-0 hole at halftime with little going its way, but Barro reminded the team of its goal and laid out a challenge ahead of the second half.

"Take some pride and make a couple of stops; move the ball a little bit and control the line of scrimmage," he said.

"We actually showed flashes of that. So that's a big positive takeaway, you know, getting a stop down here on defense was huge, right?"

"That just shifted the energy of the whole team, and then being able to move the ball a little bit and sustain some drives was very positive, you know."

"We want to be able to put points on the board. So we need to get better at that, but those were some definite pipes that came out of the second half."

Corona limited Chandler's offensive attack and held the Wolves to just 14 second-half points. Corona was able to infiltrate the Wolves' backfield and disrupt plays while getting its defense off the field, including a fourth down stop deep in Aztec territory to prevent any more points.

The offense was able to sustain drives, and although there were no points to show, the potential remained. Senior quarterback Connor Ackerley was able to connect with his receivers for splash plays and Corona's run game was beginning to get established.

The closest the Aztecs came to scoring was in the waning seconds of the game when Corona reached as deep as the Chandler 5-yard line, but the Wolves were able to force a fumble and complete the shutout.

It was dejecting, but Barro understands the pain and process for changing culture and building championship programs, like he did when he was coaching Casa Grande Union – the losingest program in Arizona turned champions.

"That's still our goal," Barro said of his previous success. "And that's where we need to stay focused on, and now I don't want to make any excuses or gloss over the fact that we need to do better than that. 42-0: that's not acceptable, no matter who you play. But we still are focused on the ultimate goal, and that's winning in the playoffs."

Winning takes time and if anyone understands the process, it's Barro. His passion for Corona, his alma mater, along with his family's ties to the Aztec program and his drive for winning, are crucial for Corona to rise once again.

"This is a tough build, tough culture change here," Barro said. "It hasn't been, but we're going to continue to stay the course. There's nowhere on earth I'd rather be than Corona I tell the kids every day. You know, I love my family and Corona del Sol football – in that order."

Corona will travel to Tempe rival Marcos de Niza for Week 5.

This will be the first time these two city rivals have played each other since 2015 when the Padres were able to top the Aztecs.



SPORTS NOTEBOOK . . . with Alex Zener



Corona's girls volleyball team is working hard getting the individual pieces to come together so they are a formidable team when it comes time to defend their state championship in the playoffs at the end of the regular season. Bottom row: Avalon Legg, Cora Bullard, Morgan Moraga, Mia Hutchinson, Erin Clark, Emma Uribe. Middle: Mira Banks, Kennedy Allen, Maggie Beauer, Hayden Conner, Alyssa Aguayo. Top: Julia Owens, Luke Vleck, Stacy Nobel, Ben Maxfield, Geoff Horewitch, Avery Lim. Photo courtesy Southwest Portraits

Different look but same hopes for '23

Corona's defending state championship team is looking a bit different these days from last year, but it still has some of the same qualities.

The trick will be how to mesh these potential talents and abilities to end up with another formidable team—one that could peak at the right time toward the end of the season.

For instance, the Aztecs have only three seniors as opposed to the seven last season who helped Corona win the 2022 6A AIA Girls Volleyball State Championship.

Three returning senior players—Julia Owens, Maggie Beauer and Cora Bullard—have been with the program three or four years and bring a great deal of experience to the team.

"Julia Owens returns for her fourth year as our starting setter," said Coach Ben Maxfield. "She brings a lot of discipline to the court and does a

great job of setting up her hitters for success."

Owens already is averaging 3.8 assists and 2.7 digs a set, and currently has four service aces.

Another similar aspect of this year's team is the strength of the outside and opposite hitters.

"We bring in a lot of experience in our pins—outside and opposite hitters—and our serve-receive element of the game," said Maxfield.

Maggie Beauer, when at the net, not only hits from both the opposite position or left side and the outside hitter position on the right side but is one of the Aztecs' main backrow players who serves, receives service and digs.

She leads the team in aces with 10 aces or 0.8 aces per set and is second on the team in almost every other statistical category including kills, at 3.3 a set, blocks at 10 total blocks and digs per set at 3.7.

"Maggie Beauer is an imposing figure at the net, both on the right side and the left side," said Maxfield. "We will need to use her power and athleticism to beat some of the top teams we will face this season," adding:

"Cora Bullard brings a lot of energy to the team. She is a versatile player who can play many positions for us."

Bullard has been playing backrow for the Aztecs, averaging 12 digs a game.

Two other players who possess qualities for the overall success of the team are junior outside hitter Alyssa Aguayo and sophomore libero Erin Clark.

Last year, Aguayo, as a sophomore, played in every set, amassing 360 kills, third on the team, averaging 3.0 kills a game with a 0.271 hitting percentage.

So far this season, Aguayo leads the team in kills with 54 or 4.5 kills a set, along with a 0.344 hitting percentage. Quite an improvement from one year to the next.

"Alyssa Aguayo is our most consistent player in all facets of the game," said Maxfield. "She has a high volleyball IQ and knows when to hit hard and when to finesse it for a point."

Erin Clark, who leads the team this season in digs with 4.8 a set, gained a great deal of valuable experience last season playing libero as a freshman



Corona's girls golf team took sixth place at the Husky Open held Sept. 12 at the Encanto Golf course. Corona top golfer was Bella Mantini who finished in third place with a score of 70 or 1 under par. Team includes Natalia Hoffman, Layla Davila, Bella Mantini, Mia Ruiz, Sydney Braun, Sadie Peterson, Katie Eberle.

— Photo courtesy Albert Ettinger

“After a whirlwind freshman campaign, Erin brings a calmness to the back line in both defense and serve receive,” said Maxfield. “Every time she steps on the court she gets better. In addition, she has really developed a weapon with her serve.”

Clark had a total of 36 service aces the entire season last year. So far, this season, Clark already has 6 aces and is on track to outperform her previous season's record.

Sophomore Avery Lim is also making an impression at the setter's position leading the team in assists with 64 or 5.3 assists a set. Other players ready to fill in the pieces left when seven seniors graduated last May include junior middle blocker Morgan Moraga, sophomore middle blockers Kennedy Allen, sophomore middle blocker Hayden Conner and sophomore outside hitter Mira Banks.

Moraga has nine total blocks while Allen leads the team with 11 total blocks. Allen also

has 13 kills or an average of 1.1 kills a set while Banks leads the team averaging 1.3 kills a set.

“Hayden Conner, who transferred from Desert Vista, will fill a large hole left when our middle blockers graduated last spring,” said Maxfield. “She hits a heavy ball and is quick in her lateral movements to close the block.

“We will work hard to get our middle blockers up to speed and when that happens, we should be close to having all our pieces in order.”

Additional players contributing to the team's overall success include junior opposite hitter Mia Hutchinson, junior defensive specialist Emma Uribe and sophomore defensive specialist Avalon Legg. Another one of the qualities similar to last year's championship team that the current Aztecs already possess: Team chemistry.

“Our strength will be our team chemistry,” said Maxfield. “Everyone gets along and works hard to

be the best we can be.”

“We will have some growing pains, but it will be fun,” said Maxfield. “If all goes well, in the next month or so, we will have all the pieces put together to make a deep run in the playoffs.”

The Aztecs played at the Tournament of Champions hosted by Mesa Westwood where they defeated Saguaro, Williams Field, Westwood, Eastmark, Snowflake, Mountain View, Millennium and Notre Dame Prep.

The only team Corona lost to in the Tournament of Champions was a close back-and-forth game to Highland, 25-27, 25-27, early on Sept. 9.

The Aztecs would go on to defeat the Hawks, 25-21, 25-21, in the finals to be crowned Gold Bracket champions for the second straight year at the Westwood tournament.

Later, Corona was scheduled to play six away games: Sept. 14 at Xavier Prep; Sept. 19 at Mountain View; Sept. 20 at Desert Vista; Sept. 21 at Highland, Sept. 26 at Gilbert and Sept. 27 at Liberty.

The Aztecs played Sept. 7-9 at the Westwood event, where the scores were not reported before publication. Up next, Corona plays away games: Sept 26 at Gilbert and Sept. 27 at Liberty.

The Aztecs next home game is Sept. 28 with Queen Creek and then they are off to the Nike Tournament of Champions at Bell Bank Park at the Legacy Sports Complex in Mesa.

Corona girls golf

Corona's girls golf team is looking forward to a successful 2023 season with four returning golfers and six new golfers to fill in the gaps lost to graduation last season.

“The returning golfers bring a wealth of experience and leadership to the team,” said coach Albert Ettinger. “Something that every coach looks for in their players.”

Two of the returning golfers, senior Bella Mantini and junior Mia Ruiz, participated in the DI state tournament last season, where Mantini took 33rd and Ruiz was 54th out of close to 100 DI

golfers.

This is Mantini's fourth season on the team and Ruiz's third year.

The other two returning golfers are juniors Sydney Braun and Layla Davila. It is Braun's third year on the team and Davila's second.

In addition, the Aztecs have six new golfers who will be vying every week for a spot to be one of the five golfers to have the opportunity to play in the next event. Two new competitors, who play lacrosse for Corona's club team, are senior Jo Saliego and sophomore Lexie Hoskin.

"Jo and Lexie developed an interest in golf recently and decided to join our team. We are thrilled to have them and they are also excited to be part of the team," said Ettinger.

The other four new members, Katie Eberle, Natalia Hoffman, Gabby Passante and Sadie Peterson are all freshmen. "We are very excited to have an infusion of young, talented golfers join the team this year," said Ettinger. The team recently participated in two invitational tournaments."

First, Mantini, Ruiz, Davila, Peterson and Hoffman played in the Prescott Invitational on Sept. 8 at the Antelope Hills Golf Course where Mantini

finished in third place in a field of 50 golfers.

On Sept. 12, the Aztecs took sixth place at the Husky Open held at the Encanto Golf course with golfers Hoffman, Davila, Mantini, Ruiz, Braun, Peterson and Eberle.

Corona's top golfer was Mantini, who finished in third place with a score of 70 or 1 under par.

Several section two-team small events are scheduled the rest of September, and into November but the next multiple-school tournament was the Aguila Invitational at Aguila Golf Course on Sept. 19.

Marcos de Niza girls volleyball

The Padres have 17 players on the varsity girls volleyball team, where the leading hitter is junior McKenna Baker who is averaging 1.6 kills a set with a 0.200 hitting average.

The other three leading hitters are freshman middle blocker Nailani Joe, junior outside hitter Caylee Ellett and sophomore middle blocker Tammie Wagner. Joe is averaging one kill per set while Ellett has eight kills and Wagner is averaging 0.7 kills a set. Joe, with 14 total blocks, is the

leading blocker while junior LaQuira Alexander is next with 11 blocks while sophomore Tammie Wagner is third with eight blocks. unior libero Grace Vullo leads the team in digs per set, at 4.5, while Baker is second at 2.9 digs per set and junior Natalia Cates is third with 1.6 digs per set.

Senior setter Evelyn Briseno-Rhodea leads the team in assists with 23, sophomore setter Angelina Arispe is second with 21 and senior setter Mariah Estrella is third. Briseno-Rodea and Alexander lead the team in service aces with 4 each while Wagner is next with 3. In service receptions, Vullo took more than any other Padres player at 57, followed by sophomore defensive specialist Lyla Molina at 26 and Ellett at 25.

Additional players who make the 17 up athletes who help the Padres on and off the court are senior outside hitter Cassandra Medina, senior opposite hitter Isabella Newell, senior defensive specialist Daisy Reyes, senior middle blocker Jaydien Giles, junior defensive specialist Yulissa Morales and sophomore outside hitter Neveah Lizzarraga.

The Padres were scheduled to play two at-home games—first against Goldwater on Sept. 12 and then against Combs on Sept 13.

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Plenty to choose from in Tempe Center for the Arts' schedule

Editor's note: Here's a helpful listing of programs coming up during the weeks ahead at Tempe Center for the Arts. For information, tickets and other details, call the TCA Box Office at 480-350-2822 or visit tempecenterforthearts.com.

Thursday, Sept. 28 — Arooj Aftab, Vijay Iyer, Shahzad Ismaily: *Love in Exile*

Love in Exile is an album by three world-class musicians: GRAMMY Award-winner Arooj Aftab, piano virtuoso and jazz composer Vijay Iyer, with multi-instrumentalist Shahzad Ismaily. Released in March 2023, by Verve Records, the album is the trio's first together and was recorded in-studio in

New York. Together, they paint sonic landscapes from delicate piano wisps to textured shimmers, with Aftab's enchanting voice (singing in Urdu) gracefully weaving throughout.

Friday, Sept. 29 — The Okee Dokee Brothers (Family/Youth)

Join the GRAMMY-winning Okee Dokee Brothers for some plaid-shirted adventures! This Americana folk duo, fueled by their love for nature, invites families on a musical journey that'll have everyone singing and dancing.

With five Parents' Choice Awards under their belt, their goal is to inspire kids to explore, create,

and connect with nature, their communities, and themselves through their uplifting music. (Most enjoyed by kids 3-12 and their grownups)

Saturday, Sept. 30 — Mariachi Herencia de México w/special guest La Marisoul

A new generation takes mariachi to whole new heights—Latin GRAMMY nominated Mariachi Herencia de México presents Herederos (the "Heirs") with special guest GRAMMY winner La Marisoul.

Honoring the past, celebrating the present, and creating the future of regional Mexican music, Mariachi Herencia de México and La Marisoul share

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INFO



Tempe Center for the Arts

Artist: Corinne Geertsen



the stage for an unforgettable night of Mexican music and culture.

Adult, family focus of Friday events at Pueblo

Kyrene del Pueblo Middle School will be the place to go when Chandler Recreation launches a series of community nights every third Friday of the month, now through May 17, excluding March.

Programming, from 6-8:30 p.m., will include interactive offerings for children and adults with varying interests, including arts and crafts, yard games, open gym and more.

Each night features a different theme to provide what planners say will be fun and imaginative ways to enjoy seasonal activities.

Programming schedule:

Oct. 20 – Autumn Extravaganza; Nov. 17 – S'more Fun; Dec. 15 – Ugly Sweater; Jan. 19 – Move & Groove; Feb. 16 – Game Night; April 19 – Spring into Fun; May 17 – Summer Olympics.

The school is at 360 S. Twelve Oaks Blvd. Information: City of Chandler Special Events webpage or 480-782-2905.

Movies in the Park back at Kiwanis Park in Oct.

South Tempe's Kiwanis Park promises to be the place to watch classic family friendly movies under the stars this fall. Tempe's free movie series, Movies in the Park, is back on Friday nights with a Family Boo Bash special event on Friday, Oct. 27.

Movies begin at dusk, approximately 6 p.m., on the park's north soccer fields at Baseline Road and Ash Avenue (just west of Mill Avenue).

Viewers should come early to reserve a spot and hang out for fun pre-movie activities with the Tempe Play Mobile, a rolling depository of sports equipment, instructional programming, games, music, snacks and more—free for tweens and teens.

Movies in the Park is sponsored by Tempe Diablos.

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LOVE IN EXILE

Arooj Aftab, Vijay Iyer and
Shahzad Ismaily

SEPTEMBER 28



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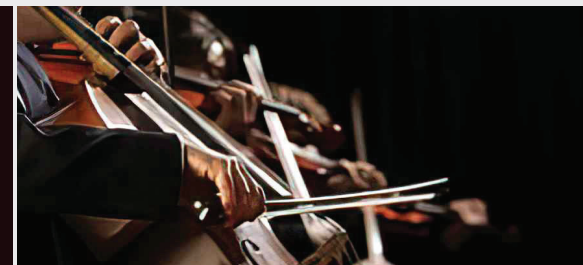
SEPTEMBER 29



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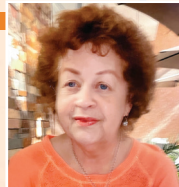


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Tempe Chamber Foundation and Wells Fargo Announce \$100,000 Grant Fund for Metro Phoenix Black Women Entrepreneurs

The Tempe Chamber of Commerce Foundation and Wells Fargo are collaborating to establish a grant fund of \$100,000 to support Phoenix-area Black women entrepreneurs. The grant cycle will open on August 22 and close at 5 p.m. on September 22, 2023. Applicants can apply online at www.tempechamber.org/grants. The grants to assist Black women-owned businesses to develop, grow and sustain their businesses.

“The gap in assistance for Black women-owned businesses continues to be a concern in Arizona as presented by The State of Black Arizona survey findings which show a higher percentage of Black women are in the process of becoming entrepreneurs compared to white women and white men,” said Tempe Chamber President/CEO, Colin Diaz, ACE, IOM. “The ambition and potential is there, but only 3% of Black women-owned businesses survive more than five years. Resources, support and financing are large reasons for the disproportionate rate of business mortality among Black women. The Wells Fargo Grant ultimately can empower these entrepreneurs by offering various forms of resources so these business owners can contribute to the vibrancy of the business community.”

The Black Women in Business Supportive Grant (BWBSG) will be awarded to qualified applicants to advance the growth of businesses in Greater Phoenix while addressing systemic issues affecting access to capital for black women business owners. The grant will be administered by the Tempe Chamber of Commerce Foundation in partnership with Wells Fargo. Awards of \$5,000 to \$15,000 will be provided to selected applicants from a funding pool of \$100,000.

“Wells Fargo has a long history of supporting the Black and African American community in many areas including small business. Our goal has been to help as many small businesses as we can, with a strong emphasis on supporting the needs faced by diverse small business owners. We are thrilled to work with the Tempe Chamber Foundation and provide this grant to help uplift Black women entrepreneurs as they continue their journey towards recovery and a brighter future for their businesses,” said Shannon Tolbert, head of External Engagement & Program Development for Wells Fargo Wealth and Investment Management.

Finalists will be notified on October 10 and will participate in an interview with the review committee. Awardees will be notified by email on October 24 with funding distribution beginning mid-November. Business owners are encouraged to apply at www.tempechamber.org/grants

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SCHOOLS

Fuller Elementary: 'Something special'

Former student now enrolled at Yale University

By Gabi Dunton

Making a difference. That is a common goal educators have when they first decide to enter the teaching profession.

But even with all of the time and effort put forth into this goal, sometimes teachers are left wondering if their impact really sticks. Then one day, when they least expect it, a previous student shows up to share just how much of a difference a teacher has made in their lives.

Silas Botham, a former student at Fuller Elementary located in Tempe, recently started his freshman year at Yale University.

Before heading to Connecticut to begin this chapter in his educational career, he had to make a stop at Fuller Elementary to surprise fifth-grade teacher Nicole Flood, his favorite among many.

"I've had many great teachers that were incredibly impactful in my life, but Ms. Flood has been one of the most impactful," said Botham.

"She was always warm and cared about connecting with her students, rather than just checking off learning targets. She would be so proud of our accomplishments, which, at least for me, gave me confidence in myself."

Botham attended Connolly Middle School after his time at Fuller Elementary. He graduated from Peggy Payne Academy at McClintock High School and was co-valedictorian for the 2022-2023 school year.

Botham is currently planning to study neuroscience in undergrad, then go on to law school to focus on criminal law.

"As teachers, we are often asked 'what is your *why*?' and this is my *why*," said Flood. "Why I have chosen to teach is for the relationships and the connections that I am able to make with students. Silas didn't

need me for academic support; he was always brilliant. But I love that I still made a difference and an impact by loving him and making him feel connected."

Fuller Elementary holds a special place for Flood. Not only did she attend Fuller Elementary as a student – from kindergarten through sixth-grade – but she is a veteran teacher at the school. Flood has taught there for over 27 years.

"I have had the honor of teaching some amazing humans who have gone on to do extraordinary things," Flood said.

After sharing the news of his college acceptance with Flood, Botham passed it along to other Fuller teachers who he says made a difference in his life. He believes that behind many successful students are dozens of incredible teachers and mentors who have cheered them on and got them to where they are today.

"I kind of like to think my accomplishments are just as much theirs as they are mine," Botham said. "Going to Fuller to share this news was a chance to show them what came of me in the past six years, in hopes of showing them they're doing a great job."

For Flood, Fuller is a place where she doesn't have to question if she is making a difference. She says she can see it in action by actively staying in touch with her previous students and watching them become successful adults.

Some of her previous students have even decided to become teachers as well – some, even returning to the Tempe Elementary district to teach. Currently, Fuller Elementary has five staff members who attended the school as students and then returned to teach there.

"You don't find a place like Fuller often," said Flood. "It is something special and I can't imagine working anywhere else."



Tempe Elementary Launches Kindergarten Prep Preschool Program



Carolyn McCleary
Early Childhood Director

A new preschool program at Tempe Elementary is preparing 4-year-olds to enter kindergarten with confidence.

Tempe Elementary's Kindergarten Prep Program, new for the 2023-2024 school year, is equipped with certified teaching staff, strong curriculum, and a supportive school setting.

"Our Kindergarten Prep Program is the perfect blend of academics and play," said Carolyn McCleary, Tempe Elementary's Early Childhood Director.

The preschool program, which follows the Arizona Early Childhood Learning Standards, is built for going beyond childhood learning. Certified preschool teaching staff are supported by District content coaches in areas of math and science to provide a comprehensive curriculum.

"Our certified teachers have elementary school teaching experience and Early Childhood credentials which will allow them to give each

child differentiated instruction and set all of our students up for success in kindergarten," McCleary said.

The program creates a strong academic base for students by extending and reinforcing those skills and concepts. The school day will also incorporate fine arts lessons and specials, including music and PE.

"That's the power of being in a school setting with certified teachers," McCleary said. "It makes a difference."

McCleary said preschoolers will also develop routines and learn how to be on a consistent schedule, behavioral building blocks that provide a foundation for confidence in kindergarten. Preschoolers will also have social and emotional wellness support incorporated throughout the school day.

Tuition is \$880/month with a \$50 registration fee. Financial assistance is available.

Kindergarten Prep is still enrolling for the 2023-2024 school year at Frank, Nevitt, and Rover elementary schools! Enroll Today: Seats fill fast! Enroll online now at www.tempeschools.org/preschool.



TEMPE ELEMENTARY KINDERGARTEN PREP Full-Day Preschool



- The perfect blend of academics and play
- Taught by certified teachers and instructional assistants
- Care from 7 a.m. to 6 p.m.
- Breakfast, lunch, and snack included

Students must be 4 years old by August 31, 2023

CHOOSE YOUR SCHOOL:



Frank Elementary
8409 S. Avenida del Yaqui
Guadalupe, AZ 85283

Rover Elementary

1300 E. Watson Dr.
Tempe, AZ 85283



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For more information or learn how to get involved
please contact Bernadette_Coggins@tempe.gov

Tempe Coalition is a grant-funded project of  a 501(C)3 nonprofit

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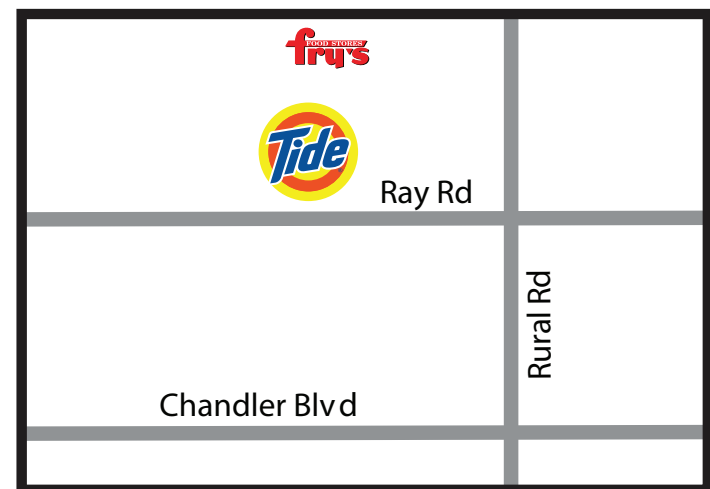
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