

# WRANGLER NEWS

## AS TRADITIONAL DAY NEARS, WE 'PAZ' TO GIVE THANKS

With the holiday almost here, Paz de Cristo, the East Valley's long-respected resource for food, clothing, showers and empowerment, offered up its annual servings of seasonal deliciousness. Kitchen manager and chef John Farley has shown up to help feed the hungry for at least a dozen years. *Story and more photos on Pages 12-13.*

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Photo by Billy Hardiman  
for Wrangler News

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# Tempe voters overwhelmingly approve all parts of \$349M bond

Wrangler Staff report

Tempe voters stepped up in the Nov. 3 General Election to keep their city a desirable place by overwhelmingly favoring measures to maintain and improve basic services.

Approval was given for each of five parts of a \$349 million bond request to go toward capital projects. The bonds are to be paid with secondary property taxes. According to Maricopa County Elections Department returns posted as of Nov. 10:

\$134 for water and sewer improvements: 70.1 percent in favor.

\$74 million for street and storm-drain improvements: 69.7 percent in favor.

\$34 million for public safety: 62.2 percent in favor.

\$45 million for park and community services improvements: 67.6 percent in favor.

\$62 million for municipal infrastructure preservation: 59.2 percent in favor.

## CHANDLER UTILITY FRANCHISE

Chandler voters approved re-awarding a franchise to Southwest Gas to maintain the city's gas system and facilities for 25 years.

The vote, with 51.6 percent in favor, amounts to an extension until Dec. 31, 2045, of a franchise that voters granted Southwest Gas on Dec. 11, 1995, that would have expired in January of 2021.

## TEMPE UNION SCHOOL BOARD

In tight races, Tempe Union High School District Governing Board President Berdetta Hodge was reelected with 45,236 votes. Also elected were 2019 Desert Vista High graduate Armando Montero (43,516), the youngest candidate, and Sarah Lindsay James (41,361), a teacher for 21 years.

They edged Lori Bastian (40,148), former teacher Don Fletcher (36,345), two-term board incumbent Sandy Lowe (31,111), middle school teacher Paige Reesor (31,863) and Michael Myrick (26,969), president of the Kyrene School District Governing Board, who did not seek reelection there to instead run in TUHSD.

## KYRENE SCHOOL BOARD

In still more tight races, incumbent Kyrene School District Governing Board member Michelle Fahy was reelected, leading a five-person field for three seats with 39,106 votes. Also elected was Margaret Wright (34,535),

who has lived in the district for nine years and has three children.

The third seat went to Wanda Kolomyjec (33,212), a Justice Studies professor at Arizona State University, who prevailed in a tight race with Trine Nelson (32,724), a curriculum manager at ASU and the mother of two Kyrene students. They finished ahead of Ivan Alfaro (27,583) in a competitive field.

## TEMPE ELEMENTARY BOARD

This was a mad scramble with the addition of four write-in candidates to two declared candidates vying for three seats on the Tempe Elementary District Governing Board.

Board president Monica Trejo (33,255 votes) was reelected. Allison Ewers, a Tempe mom and business owner, and the other declared candidate, also won a seat 26,437 votes.

The counting of write-in candidates was slow to be posted, but when it finally was, write-in candidate Jim Lemmon, a former board member, who is supported by Mayor Corey Woods, was elected to the third seat with 2,498 votes.

Write-in candidates who were not successful were Michael Metzger, an MIT-trained engineer; Tim Taylor, a 13-year U.S. Marine, who grew up in Tempe; and board incumbent Rochelle Wells, who was not a certified candidate because she said it was inappropriate to go out during the COVID-19 pandemic to get signatures required to get on the ballot.



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# Virus motivates home dwellers to brush up on painting skills

By Joyce Coronel

After several months of staring at dinged-up, blasé walls, many a work-from-home Tempe resident might be ready to take action.

Before embarking on a bold move, you might want to hear what Andy Blatnick has to say about it.

Blatnick, owner of AAA Paint and Supply of Tempe, knows a thing or two about painting. He opened his second paint store on the southwest corner of McClintock and Warner back in February. His store on University Drive is thriving and he's hoping the South Tempe location will pick up speed as do-it-yourselfers decide to improve their living spaces.

After more than 20 years managing hardware stores in the Valley, Blatnick decided to take the plunge and become a business owner five years ago. "All the hours that I put into it are mine. I'm not doing it for somebody else," he says.

"I get started pretty early—about 5:30 in the morning," Blatnick says. "I start taking care of customers about 6 a.m. and go all the way till 5:30 in the afternoon but it's a compilation of taking care of commercial customers, retail customers, making sales calls—everything that has to do with the business."

Most of the sales at the store on University Drive are to commercial contractors while the store on Warner Road attracts DIY customers. The biggest

mistake people make in painting their home has to do with selecting the right color, he says.

"A lot of times you can get the little cards. Well, those are printed. They're not paint so they're not truly what paint is. So that's one of the biggest misconceptions."

Blatnick recommends getting actual paint samples instead. "Paint, when it gets up on the wall, looks a lot different than what those cards look like. When you're in the house, light affects that paint differently so it's very important to understand what that is and to actually put a sample on the wall and see what that paint color looks like in your house."

Other common mistakes include not allowing enough time or not having some of the proper equipment for the job.

"Sometimes they get in over their heads with the size of the room," Blatnick notes. Vaulted ceilings can pose a significant challenge. "Some of those are extremely tall—they're not just 10 or 12 foot, they could be 14 or event 20 foot tall. That's very challenging for somebody to do so they have to make sure what that extra is that has to be done. Some people don't like to go up on a ladder."

Blatnick says he sells Benjamin Moore paint at his stores because the company is "one of the few, true, independent paint dealers out there."

"They've been around since the 1800s and so they do an extremely good job with

their paint.”

Blanick works the business with his wife and three employees.

“It’s locally owned and operated. That’s a big thing to me and it’s a big thing to a lot of people. We’re aiming to be a neighborhood paint store that people can come into and get great service and be taken care of and be known on a first-name basis.”

Opening the South Tempe store just weeks before the pandemic hit has posed unique challenges and Blatnick hopes the local community will step up to support one of its own.

“It’s been challenging and it’s still challenging. I don’t know how else to put it. Things continue to get better but it’s a very slow curve at this point. Things are getting better. The longer I’m here the more people know about me and that’s the biggest benefit.”

*The store is at 1721 E. Warner Road, Suite C7-8. Phone: 480-569-6900.*



Andy Blatnick, owner of AAA Paint and Supply in Tempe, offered some helpful tips for homeowners who might be considering a painting project.

— Photo by Joyce Coronel

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# Remember Me Always Day: Helping ease the pain of a lost loved one

*Profile by Janie Magruder*

Christine Hotchkiss will never forget her daughter, Nicole Marie, a smart, outgoing, giggly teen who loved the outdoors, dreamed of becoming a neonatal anesthesiologist and was so protective of her baby brother that she wanted to sleep with him in his crib.

“Her love was felt when you walked into a room, and she was there for you without judgment,” said Hotchkiss of West Chandler.

On New Year’s Day 2007, Nicole, then a 17-old-year high school senior, died from internal injuries suffered in a vehicle accident. She was on a family vacation in Imperial Sand Dunes Recreation Area near Yuma when the accident took place.

“No time heals all wounds,” her mother said. “But you eventually learn to accept that this person no longer is here, and you do things thinking about them. There isn’t a day I don’t think about my daughter.”

In Nicole’s honor and to help other parents struggling in myriad ways with the loss of a child, Hotchkiss in 2016 started Remember Me Always. The nonprofit organization celebrates the life and memory of those who have died, and provides emotional support and monetary grants to help families pay for funeral expenses.

In recognition of its mission, Chandler Mayor Kevin Hartke proclaimed Nov. 17 Remember Me Always Celebration of Life Day. Hartke urged the community to unite with honor and dignity in proper remembrance of these loved ones every day of the year.

Nicole’s passing was her mother’s first experience with the death of a family member. Her friends and acquaintances largely didn’t know how to respond.

“People don’t know what to say so they don’t say anything, and they just disappear,” Hotchkiss said. “That hurts more. We are not in public crying because we are missing somebody, we are in public trying to survive.”

In addition to Remember Me Always, she started a podcast, “Stories of Hope,” on Spotify. It exists to give hope and inspiration and to let people know they are not alone. Hotchkiss also installs a “Tree of Angels” each Christmas in the lobby of Phoenix Children’s Hospital



Christine Hotchkiss received the official proclamation of the Remember Me Always Celebration of Life Day from Chandler Mayor Kevin Hartke as Hotchkiss’ niece, Amanda Kiker, looks on.  
— Photo courtesy Hotchkiss family

featuring handmade ornaments personalized with the names of children whose families have been helped by Remember Me Always.

The nonprofit has made about a dozen grants to individuals needing help paying for urns, headstones, keepsakes and other items. According to the National Funeral Directors Association, the average cost of a funeral and burial in 2019 was \$9,135.

Shane Rex of Phoenix received two heart-shaped cremation pendant necklaces — one for himself and one for his daughter, MacKenzie — after the death of his younger daughter Isabella. The 11-year-old was diagnosed with leukemia and died six weeks later on July 13, 2018.

Rex hasn’t taken off his necklace, which has a photo

of MacKenzie on one side, her name engraved on the other and a bit of her ashes inside, since he received it from Remember Me Always last Christmas.

“Kenzie was full of life and brought more love and joy to everyone who met her,” he said. “She was a character and always made me laugh.”

Rex, who now sits on Remembers Me Always’ board of directors, is determined to help other families move through their grief and is looking forward to help with fundraising once COVID-19 is managed.

“Can you imagine not being able to afford an urn? Having a little Baggie inside a box that has a printed name on it?” he said. “That’s the last thing people need to worry about.”

For more information, visit [remembermealways.org](http://remembermealways.org).



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## Answering yet another question we've pondered about the king of game shows: How tall was Alex Trebek?

By M.V. Moorhead

Like many longtime fans of *Jeopardy!*, I often wondered how I would do on the show.

In the early '90s, I went so far as to audition to be a contestant, when tryouts were held at the Hyatt in downtown Phoenix.

I made it to the second round before being sent packing, but along the way I got a hint of the degree of Alex Trebek's celebrity. Trebek wasn't there, but the show's rep asked if there were any questions from the group.

"How tall is Alex Trebek?" a woman asked.

"About six-foot-one," said the rep, without hesitation.

It was clearly not the first time the guy had heard the question. Or the second. At least he didn't make the poor woman say, "What is, 'How tall is Alex Trebek?'"

My knowledge of that experience, of Trebek and of his reign over the show that seemingly will, even now, survive into perpetuity, caught my eye when *Saturday Night Live* popped up on our home TV last week.

It was an encore presentation from the mid-'90s, featuring Martin Short as host and No Doubt as the musical guest. It was a pretty good show, but I found myself wondering why NBC had dug so deeply into the archives, until the *Celebrity Jeopardy* sketch came up.

The panelists on this send-up were Jerry Lewis (played by Short), Burt Reynolds (Norm Macdonald) and Sean Connery (Darrell Hammond).

The host, played by Will Farrell, was of course Trebek. It was a particularly sad jolt to realize that every one of the celebs being impersonated has passed on since this show was made, with Trebek and Connery both departing us less than a month ago, and less than two weeks apart.

In the comedy riff, the panelists refuse to listen or show the slightest interest in the game, except when Connery, like a stereotypical thrifty Scot, is horrified to think he's on the hook for the money he's in the hole ("I'll not pay this fine I've incurred, I tell you; it's unjust!").

The joke is simply the old crowd-pleaser that celebrities are heedless dunces.

But *SNL* has revived the sketch many times, and it eventually took on a life of its own, with Hammond's Connery developing an obsessive animosity toward Farrell's long-suffering Trebek.

Hammond later said in an interview that, even though the gag made no sense, he got more feedback about it than anything else he did on the show.

Trebek, who died early this month at 80 after a very public struggle with pancreatic cancer, was not the original host of *Jeopardy!*

In its original run from 1964 until 1975 on NBC, the Merv Griffin quiz show with its famous "answer-and-question" format was hosted by the smooth-voiced, commanding Art Fleming.

My eldest sister won three times on this version of the show in 1973. We watched her in my sixth-grade classroom at the time.

Trebek took over when the show was revived in syndication in 1983, and eventually became the face and voice indelibly associated with it. Because *Jeopardy!* is seen as the most elite and cerebral of all American game shows, Trebek himself came to be regarded as an intellectual sort. But the Canadian immigrant had a long history in less highbrow television fare.

As a kid in northwestern Pennsylvania in the early '70s, I remember seeing Trebek on the CBC, in fuzzy reception from across Lake Erie, hosting stuff like *Reach for the Top*. Also, long before Will Farrell, Trebek's countryman Eugene Levy

spoofed him on the great Canadian sketch-comedy show SCTV. Trebek later hosted such U.S. game shows as *The Wizard of Odds* and *Double Dare* before finally catching on with *Jeopardy!*.

Even after that, however, Trebek remained one of those old-school, all-purpose broadcasters who could be counted on to deliver the goods no matter what the gig, from hawking life insurance in commercials to making an amusing cameo appearance in one of the best episodes of *The X-Files*.

He played himself, or a very slightly fictionalized version of himself, in many movies and TV shows.

So, a final salute to this man we revered in so many ways for so many years:

Answer is:

For more than three decades he was the beloved host of an adored answer-and-question television game show, distinguished by his curiosity, kindness to contestants, calm, professorial demeanor, understated humor and admirable determination to continue working while battling a hideous disease.

Who was Alex Trebek (1940-2020)?

*Alex Trebek's book, "The Answer Is . . ." is available at the Barnes & Noble store at Chandler Fashion Center and online at Amazon.com.*

## BRIEFLY . . .

### Want a turkey day companion? Make a spot for a foster pet

This Thanksgiving is likely to look different, with Arizona recommending smaller gatherings. So how about inviting a shelter pet to spend the holiday weekend with you?

Tempe-based Lost Our Home Pet Rescue is inviting people to foster a dog for Thanksgiving weekend so they can enjoy R&R in a home over the holiday.

"It's a great way to spread your love this holiday season, especially if you can't be friends and family from afar," said Lost Our Home founder Jodi Polanski.

"Dogs can be picked up Wednesday and adoptable animals come back by Friday afternoon. The temporary-care dogs could stay longer if the foster families want.

"This allows the dogs to have a shelter break and families can enjoy a grateful furry guest that won't overstay their welcome."

The foster process will begin online at [www.lostourhome.org/foster](http://www.lostourhome.org/foster). From there, Lost our Home's foster team will set up a short-term foster agreement

and schedule a pick up and drop off appointment.

All of the dogs who are available to "go home for the holiday" have been medically cleared. The shelter is still closed to walk-in guests; appointments are being booked in advance.

### Dementia summit available online

A recording of Tempe's 2020 Dementia Friendly Summit is available for any who were unable to participate in the Nov. 7 event.

The recording and presentation materials can be found at [tempe.gov/DFT](http://tempe.gov/DFT).

According to studies, the health and well-being of people living with dementia and their family caregivers has been greatly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. This year's summit was designed to offer strategies to help members of the community live well during these difficult times.

The panel addressed a range of topics, including a decline in the incidence of dementia diagnoses; self-management of chronic conditions; and the importance of a "Plan B" to share the caregiving reality with others.

Summit participants also learned about virtual Dementia Friends information sessions and training to help support those in our community who are living with dementia.

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## Arts Center deputy director departing

Ralph Remington, Tempe deputy director for arts and culture, will leave the post at year's end. Officials say a national search for his replacement will begin soon.

Remington, who took the job in 2016, will serve as director of cultural affairs for the San Francisco Arts Commission.

"Tempe's loss is most certainly San Francisco's gain and I wish Ralph well in his future endeavors," said Mayor Corey Woods.

"I sincerely appreciate everything that he has brought to Tempe during his time with us. One of his biggest accomplishments has been creating diversified offerings that have exposed new, more multicultural audiences to arts and culture in the city of Tempe."



Responsibilities of the Tempe Community Services Department's Arts and Culture Division include oversight of Tempe Center for the Arts, Tempe History Museum, public art and arts engagement, and a multitude of programs and events.

During Remington's tenure, Tempe voters passed an arts and culture tax to fund community enrichment opportunities. He has recently overseen a business plan to consolidate the city's arts and culture operations.

Community Service Director Keith Burke will collaborate with city staff and with members of the Tempe Arts and Culture Commission and Friends of the Tempe Center for the Arts to coordinate the recruitment of a new deputy director.

## Downtown Chandler holiday celebration offers food, music and bargains

Downtown Chandler Community Partnership is inviting the community to join the fun in a pre-holiday celebration sponsored by more than 50 locally owned businesses during Small Business Saturday on Nov. 28.

Visitors can enjoy live music from pianist Grady Soine and harpist Jocelyn Obermeyer from 1-5 p.m. under the colonnades, grab a bite to eat at one of our unique restaurants and do a little holiday shopping at retailers such as Blue Planet Outdoors, Saba's Western Wear, Shoe Thrill and Sibley's West: the Chandler & Arizona Gift Shop.

"Now more than ever the small businesses in Downtown Chandler need the support of the community," said Mary Murphy-Bessler, DCCP executive

director.

"From authentic Western boots and trendy shoes, to unique clothing and gifts, you'll be getting something special and putting your dollars back into this wonderful community."

Those who come down to support downtown retailers on Small Business Saturday can enter in-store for the chance to win a gift \$25 gift card (two winners) or a \$50 gift card (one winner) to the Chandler Center for the Arts. Some exclusions and details apply.

Visitors can also experience "Sugarland", a brand-new interactive display of holiday decorations to be safely enjoyed in Dr. A.J. Chandler Park West from Saturday, Nov. 28 – Sunday, Jan. 3.

Among the decorations is a candy sleigh, fruit roll-up slide and giant-size cup of hot chocolate with marshmallows for kids and adults alike.

Information: [downtownchandler.org](http://downtownchandler.org).



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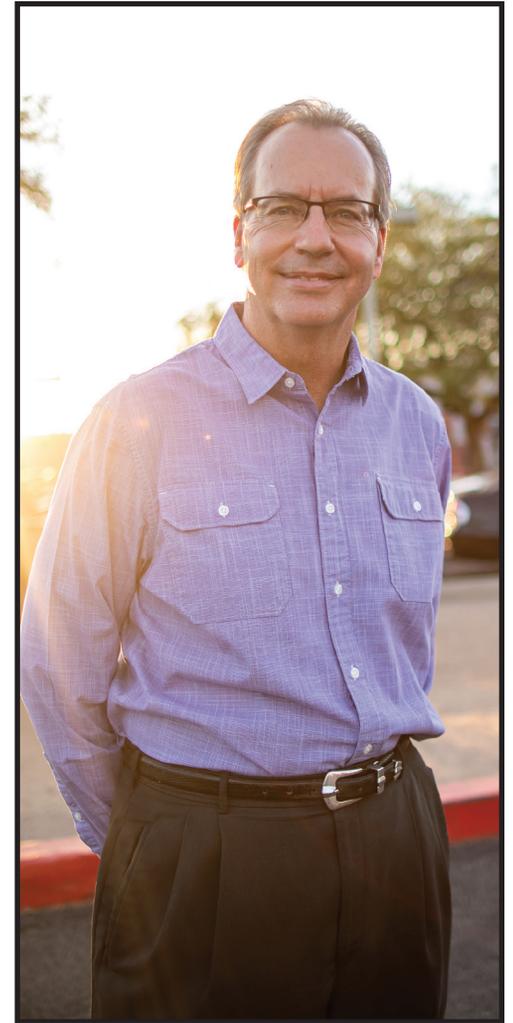
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## Spreading joy

Clockwise from upper left: Chris Dunham directs fellow volunteers at Paz de Cristo as they dish out meals for hungry guests; Joe Tansill, executive director of the non-profit, is on hand to greet volunteers and guests for the evening meal; Chris Lukaszewski, a seminarian preparing for the Catholic priesthood, prays alongside several other seminarians who helped make sandwiches, serve dinner and clean up the kitchen afterward; using 11 loaves of bread, the volunteer team pumped out more than 200 sandwiches to be taken home by patrons.

— Photos by Billy Hardiman  
for Wrangler News





## As pandemic soars, pantry serves up food, hope and love for needy

By Joyce Coronel

Thanksgiving is just around the corner, and for many in Tempe and West Chandler, that means gathering with friends and loved ones to share a special meal and ponder blessings received. Celebrations may be smaller and more understated this year due to the pandemic, but it's a celebration nonetheless.

Even if you're homeless or just down on your luck.

For most of the last 12 years, John Farley, chef and kitchen manager at Paz de Cristo, has overseen the Thanksgiving festivities. Last year 16,000 men, women and children received a hot meal, food boxes, showers, clothing, job search assistance, Arizona identification and other crucial services at "Paz" as it's been lovingly dubbed by the thousands who volunteer there each year.

Joe Tansill, executive director at Paz, said there's a full complement of selfless folks who will spend Thanksgiving Day serving the hungry. "We're very fortunate that we have volunteers who are willing to come and help us every day here at Paz de Cristo. We are actually full with very few gaps in volunteer opportunities through the end of the year," Tansill said.

Chris Dunham is one of them. He grew up in Tempe and said he volunteers regularly and likes giving back to the community. "Our daughter was homeless for a while because she struggled with drug addiction," Dunham said. "I came over here one night to help a friend out and now I'm a meal coordinator three times a month."

Dunham supervises and assists other volunteers who dish out the hot meal and prepare bags of food for guests to take home. The bags are stuffed with peanut butter sandwiches—they've made over 200—as well as fruit, Cheetos and a sports drink.

Zach Zazick is in his first year of seminary studies and came with his fellow seminarians to volunteer in the days leading up to Thanksgiving. He's no stranger to the charms of Paz and belongs to the third generation of Paz volunteers

in his family.

"I've volunteered here a lot—we used to come here every Friday and like once a month. My mom volunteered when she was growing up. Her parents volunteered here all the time so my mom just started taking us with her."

Guests begin lining up outside the gates around 4:30 p.m., waiting for the meal to be served at 5:30 p.m. A few have bikes; some have jackets and stand blinking in the sunlight, talking quietly with each other. The meal on this night will be enchiladas, rice and beans. Other nights it might be chicken drumsticks with mashed potatoes. "Chili dogs are a crowd-pleaser," Farley says. On Christmas Eve, it's steak.

"I like to do that one," Farley says. "We'll grill up almost 300 steaks and everybody gets one. And if they want another one, they come and get a second."

On Thanksgiving, it's turkey, of course. "It's really special. To see people walk out so full and you know that they're not hungry that night for sure. That's one night that I know absolutely nobody's walking away hungry at all," Farley says.

Due to the pandemic, meals are served on a grab-and-go basis.

Guests can walk up and receive their meal or drive up, roll down their windows and receive their dinner.

"We serve a hot, nutritious meal every day of the year to those who are in need. We've been here 32 years," Tansill says. Paz offers a lot more than just meals—a full range of services are available, not the least of which is the mail service.

For many, it's a lifeline.

Tansill recently received a letter from the daughter of a guest who passed away. The family expressed appreciation for the care their father received and sent a donation comprised of the man's entire life savings—\$123.

"How beautiful is that? It's one of the little things we do that make a huge difference in people's lives where they can still be connected to their loved ones," Tansill said.

Information: [pazdecristo.org](http://pazdecristo.org)



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# SPORTS

With Alex Zener

Aztecs seen as contender if  
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Alex Zener

After handily defeating Dobson, 51-0, and Westwood, 44-12, the first two Friday nights in November, Corona, with a 7-0 record, is No. 1 in the 6A East Valley Region and ranked No. 4 in the AIA 6A Conference behind Chandler, Hamilton and Liberty and should be in the playoffs if Arizona schools are allowed to keep playing sports in light of the increase in COVID-19 cases in Arizona.

Although nothing has been changed yet for fall sports, the Arizona Interscholastic Association recommended to its executive board that the start of Arizona high school winter sports, which includes basketball, wrestling and soccer, be postponed until



Corona's Anyale Vasquez runs through a hole in a 51-0 win over Dobson.  
— Photo courtesy Kris Cartwright

January.

Meetings were due to be held during the week of Nov. 16 with state health and education officials, which are expected to include Arizona Department of Health Services **Dr. Cara Christ** and Arizona Superintendent **Kathy Hoffman**, to determine the rising infection rates in Arizona before the executive board meets to vote on the recommendations.

One of the recommendations includes a mandatory two weeks of AIA practices before a team can compete but currently schools in counties and districts that meet the metrics that allowed for a permissible start, as of Nov. 9, can continue practicing until further notice.

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The Aztecs' football team honored its seniors on Nov. 13 with a home game win, 44-12, against Westwood, which included their outstanding quarterback, **Quade Swearingen**, who had completed 71 of his 94 attempted passes or 75 percent for a total of 1,195 yards and 13 touchdowns in seven games. In addition, he has rushed for four touchdowns.

Swearingen has thrown passes to 10 receivers, including seven seniors: **Jake Schmitt**, 20 catches for 409 yards and six TDs; **Bryce Douglass**, 18 receptions for 311 yards and two TDs; **Mitchell Coakley**, 12 catches for 159 yards and two TDs; **Talon Williams**, 8 receptions for 162 yards and three TDs; **Jack Farley**, three receptions; **Deiondre Morrissey**, three receptions; and **Scott Musgrave**, two receptions. Musgrave also ran the ball 23 times for 154 yards and three rushing TDs.

Seniors playing on both sides of the ball with defensive statistics includes Schmitt with 21 solo and 15 assisted tackles for a total of 36, one quarterback sack and one interception; Farley with 13 tackles and two interceptions, and Musgrave with seven tackles and one interception.

Seniors playing defense in their final year in high school include **Tudor Georgescu**, 27 solo and 18 assisted tackles for a team-high total of 45, five quarterback sacks and one fumble recovery; **Alex Rafalski**, 19 solo, 11 assisted for a total of 30 tackles; **Colton Mealer**, 22 total tackles, 2.5 sacks and a safety; **Tristan Shafer**; **Bryce Barks**; **Chase Conrad**; **Matthew Valenzuela**; **Sebastian Castro**; **Kristian Lofton** and **Kailob Bartreau**.

Additional seniors honored on senior night were offensive and defensive linemen **Jamaica Hollins**, **Skylar Gross**, **Jibran Pervez**, **Colin Ferry**, **Luke Bashford**, **Bruce Burgmeier**, and **Jason Cvangros**.

Corona will play its last regular season game, Nov. 20, at Mesa Mountain View. This game, on paper, looks to be their most challenging with the Toros coming off their first loss of the season, 27-20, to Basha on Toros' home field.

The AIA will announce the eight-team playoff fields in Open Division and 6A on Nov. 21.

## Marcos de Niza Football

The Padres came away with a big win at home senior night, Nov. 13, over Seton Catholic, 63-15, to give Marcos the opportunity to earn a berth in the 4A state playoffs play-in round at Northwest Christian on Nov. 20.

The combined efforts of the defense to score a safety and the offense's ability to move the ball on the ground to score nine touchdowns were the keys to the Padres win over the Sentinels.

Altogether, the Padres moved the sticks with a solid ground game that had eight players receive handoffs from sophomore quarterback **Juan Lopez** to gain 446 yards and scored seven of the nine touchdowns

Senior **Jayden Calderon** carried the ball 22 times gaining 173 yards to score three TD's while senior **Tracy Williams** ran for 110 yards on 11 carries to score one TD.

Senior **Tyrik Jones** carried the ball only once but it was for 86 yards and a TD while fellow senior **Chris Ramirez** scored a TD and junior **Isaiah Williams** another rushing TD.

On defense, Marcos made 40 solo tackles and 14 assisted tackles, 10 of which were for lost yardage. In addition, the Padres had seven quarterback sacks, three interceptions, one for a touchdown, a safety and two forced fumbles.

**Isaiah Williams**, while playing defense, led the team with five solo and five assisted tackles, three tackles for lost yardage, one quarterback sack and a safety.

**Tracy Williams** and **Jacob Irick** each had seven total tackles and a quarterback sack while Williams had an interception and Irick caused the two Sentinel fumbles.

Sophomore **Mason Stromstad** intercepted a pass and ran the ball back to score the eighth TD while senior **Ralphie Armenta** was credited with the ninth TD.

Sophomore kicker **Damian Gonzalez** hit seven out of his eight point-after-kicks to score seven of the 63 Marcos points.

## Corona Girls Volleyball

Corona's girls volleyball team, No. 9 in the 6A Conference, lost, 3-1, to No. 8 Xavier College Prep in the first round of the State Girls Volleyball Championships Nov. 14, at Xavier.



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Corona ended its season with a 9-7 record during the COVID-19-restricted schedule with senior **Anna Jackson** as the go-to outside hitter. She played in all 56 regular-season sets, amassing 217 kills, or 3.9 kills a set.

Sophomore middle blocker **Ella Lomigora** was second on the team with 141 kills, or 2.5 a set, hitting .321, while junior outside hitter **Kacie Webb** was next with 85 kills, or 1.5 a set.

Corona played mostly a two-setter rotation, in which junior setter **Taylor Erickson** and freshman setter **Julia Owens** shared responsibilities, each one setting while playing a back-row position. Owens averaged 5.3 assists a set, tallying 299 assists during the regular , while Erickson had 214 assists or 4.1 per set.

Jackson, junior **Angie Bour**, Webb, senior **Toni Berns**, and sophomore **Maddie Kamolz** all earned points for their team with service aces.

Jackson was the ace leader with 31, followed by Bour with 25, Webb with 22, Berns with 21 and Kamolz with 16. On defense, Lomigora, recorded an amazing 25 solo

and 56 assisted blocks for a total of 81 from her middle blocker position. Jackson was the second leading blocker with 31, while senior middle blocker Isabel Niemtschk had 18 blocks. Erickson and freshman opposite hitter Maggie Beauer both had 15 blocks.

Bour, Corona's libero, gave Corona's setter and hitters a chance to win point by digging up 217 balls in the 48 sets she played, averaging more than 18 dug balls a match, while Webb was credited with 138 digs.

Additional players who contributed to the team's success on and off the court include junior opposite hitter **Reese Manross**, who played in 46 sets averaging nearly 1 kill a set; junior outside hitter **Sydney Meyers**, who played in 20 sets; senior defensive specialist **Izzy Solano**, who was recorded serving an ace over 18 percent of the time; junior **Heather Heimlich**, who averaged 1 block per match; senior defensive specialist Mia Lomigora, who averaged more than a dig per set, junior middle blocker **Natalie Meyer** and junior setter **Anita Babic**.

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**THEN AND NOW . . .** By third grade, Jayden Calderon and Nico Updyke, in photo at left, were playing youth-league tackle football together. Today, Jayden and Nico are among four Marcos de Niza High football players who have played on teams together since second grade. They could be playing their final game together as Padres soon. Photo at right, from left: Running back Calderon; wide receiver Nate Camarena; quarterback Antonio Hernandez Jr.; and receiver Updyke this week recalled their time together.

— Photo courtesy Lisa Updyke

## 4 playoff-bound Marcos seniors recall long football camaraderie

By Luke Ottinger  
Wrangler News contributor

As Friday night approaches, the tantalizing smell of hotdogs and popcorn, the deafening sound of drums and trumpets, and the cheers of the faithful who once filled high school football stadiums will be muted by COVID-19.

It's a difficult sendoff for the seniors.

However, for many young men, those traditions from years past remain treasured memories from their high school playing days.

It's not over just yet. Four Marcos de Niza High seniors will get at least one more ride together on Friday when the Padres (4-3) visit seventh-seeded Northwest Christian (4-2) in the play-in round of the Class 4A playoffs.

What makes the journey so special for Nico Updyke, Nate Camarena, Jayden Calderon and Antonio Hernandez Jr., is that they have been playing together on teams for 11 years.

Their odyssey began on a Rio Salado League flag-football team coached by Antonio Hernandez Sr. He, too, has stayed with them. He now is on the coaching staff at Marcos.

Memories are flooding back this week for the four.

Camarena once ate too much before a youth-league game and wasn't allowed to play because he weighed too

much for the division. He tried to run it off.

"I was trying to sweat it all out," he said.

Another year, Calderon almost didn't get signed up in time to play.

And, Hernandez Jr., once broke his collarbone, so Calderon stepped in to play in his place.

Hernandez Jr. recalled a youth-league tournament in Las Vegas in 2015 and how fun it was to be together as the winner of it all.

The four agreed that their favorite moment was a 2014 state playoff berth in youth football and playing in Arizona State University's Sun Devil Stadium.

"Getting to that championship and running through the Pat Tillman Tunnel" was special, Calderon said.

Their victory led to a trip to Florida, where they placed fourth in the national championships.

As they moved on to high school, open enrollment in the Tempe Union High School District presented Updyke with a choice. Corona del Sol was his home school. He had friends and knew coaches at Mountain Pointe. Yet his three buddies were going to Marcos.

He chose to stay with them.

All four are having outstanding senior seasons.

Hernandez Jr., the Padres' quarterback, in six games has completed 70 of 121 passes for 1,017 yards and 13 touchdowns.

Among his favorite targets are Updyke (31 catches, 480 yards, 15.5-yard average and 9 touchdowns) and

Camarena (4 catches, 115 yards, 28.8-yard average).

Calderon is a bruising running back with 613 yards on 96 carries (6.4-yard average) for 102 yards a game.

There was a long silence as each pondered what might come next.

Updyke is hoping to get an offer to play and continue his education at Northern Arizona in sports medicine.

Camarena talked about attending trade school and working with his dad and brothers.

Calderon wants to further his education at NAU and become an accountant or engineer, although he has not ruled out playing football at a community college.

Hernandez, Jr., might play at a community college or pursue an engineering degree at NAU.

Hernandez, Sr., wants to keep coaching at Marcos alongside head coach Anthony Figueroa and rebuild the team into a state-championship contender. He also is hoping to continue coaching Updyke's little brother's flag football team.

"Keep it rolling," Hernandez Sr., said of the tradition.

While friendship and camaraderie always will be at the forefront of youth sports, parents, too, establish bonds with the players and coaches along the way.

"As parents we have been lucky enough to be a part of it all," said Lisa Updyke, Nico's mom. "We all have vacationed and enjoyed holidays together, and just plain old hung out on the weekends. We have become family versus just a parent who has a kid on the team."



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## 2 high school football teams make playoffs; another likely to get in

Wrangler News Staff

It has been a banner year for South Tempe-West Chandler high school football teams.

Marcos de Niza is the No. 10 seed in Class 4A and Valley Christian is No. 8 in 3A in their respective playoffs play-in round Nov. 20, the Arizona Interscholastic Association has announced.

Undefeated Corona del Sol puts it record on the line Friday in its 6A regular-season finale at Mesa Mountain View (6-1). The Aztecs (7-0) are all but a lock to be selected for post-season play.

What remains to be seen is whether Corona makes the Open Division field, reserved for the top eight teams in the state pulled from Classes 6A, 5A and 4A, or whether it is sent to the eight-team 6A playoff bracket as perhaps the top seed.



Corona finds out Nov. 21 whether it is in the Open Division playoffs or Class 6A field.

— Photo courtesy Kris Cartright/kriscartwright.smugmug.com

Open Division and Class 6A brackets will be announced by the AIA on Nov. 21.

Strength of schedule could bite even an undefeated Corona for an Open Division bid. There are teams ranked ahead of it with a loss or two based on schedule strength.

Tenth-seeded Marcos de Niza (4-3) visits No. 7 Northwest Christian (4-2) at 7 p.m. on Friday in

the 4A play-in round.

No. 8 Valley Christian (6-1) plays host to traditional White Mountains power Eager Round Valley (5-2), the No. 9 seed, at 7 p.m. on Friday in the 3A play-in round.

Friday's eight winners in 4A and 3A will be reseeded into their respective classification playoff brackets for the round of 8.

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Residents must meet certain qualifications, including but not limited to:

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- Not already living in a unit subsidized through programs like Housing Choice Voucher (Section 8)
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Find more details and how to apply at [tempe.gov/housing](http://tempe.gov/housing).

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Water shutoffs have temporarily been suspended by the city and it is not yet clear when they will be reinstated, so if your account is delinquent, try to work on that balance today!

Get help stretching your dollars when you:

- Call our customer service representatives at 480-350-8361 to create a payment plan for your water bill. We have flexible options.

- Apply for funds for rent and electricity bills through Tempe Community Action Agency (TCAA). Apply now because TCAA's COVID-19 relief funds expire Dec. 18. Visit [tempeaction.org/programs](http://tempeaction.org/programs) or call 480-389-1375 to apply.

In addition, the City of Tempe offers emergency rent and mortgage assistance to residents impacted by COVID-19.

Residents must meet income and other qualifications: [tempe.gov/housing](http://tempe.gov/housing).

If you secure one of these types of funding, you can use the money you otherwise would have applied to rent and electricity to focus on paying down your city water/sewer bill.

- Connect with our Financial Navigator. This is a no-cost city service for anyone impacted financially by COVID-19. Get help finding resources, working with creditors and maximizing your income.

Set up a one-on-one phone call at [tempe.gov/CARE7](http://tempe.gov/CARE7). Find more resources, including counseling, food pantries, parenting classes and more at [tempe.gov/GetHelp](http://tempe.gov/GetHelp).

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Visit [tempe.gov/WaterSmart](http://tempe.gov/WaterSmart) to register and learn more.

### Holiday solid waste collection dates

Tempe wants residents to know about solid waste collection days this holiday season. This year, Thanksgiving falls on Thursday, Nov. 26, and Tempe's solid waste crews have volunteered to work on that day. There will be no impact to your normal Thursday collection day. Christmas Day is Friday, Dec. 25, and on Fridays there are no solid waste collection pick-ups.

Finally, New Year's Day is Friday, Jan. 1, and it will also not be affected. All other collection days will remain the same. You can always call Tempe 311 at 480-350-4311 if you have questions or visit [tempe.gov/SMART](http://tempe.gov/SMART).

### Tempe Zero Waste Day

The city is holding the next Zero Waste Day on Saturday, Jan. 30, from 7 a.m. to 1 p.m., at the Tempe Fire Training Facility, 1340 E. University Drive. Residents can drop off items that cannot go in blue recycling bins. Bring proof of Tempe or Guadalupe residency through a driver's license or utility bill. Building supplies, plastic bags and Styrofoam will not be accepted at this event. Visit [tempe.gov/ZeroWaste](http://tempe.gov/ZeroWaste) for more information.

### Heed 'No Burn Day' warnings

The Arizona Department of Environmental Quality regularly conducts tests on particulate matter (PM) to ensure our air quality meets federal and state guidelines. On days when PM is expected to be too high, a health watch or high pollution advisory is issued, resulting in a No Burn Day. Residents are not allowed to burn wood in their fireplaces, stoves, chimneys and fire pits on these days. Gas or electric fireplaces are fine to use. Check out [tempe.gov/AirQuality](http://tempe.gov/AirQuality) and visit [www.cleanairmakemore.com](http://www.cleanairmakemore.com) to sign up for No Burn Day alerts.

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, Tempe has a mask requirement in public places and encourages physical distancing, hand washing and sanitizing surfaces. For information on the city's coronavirus response efforts, visit [tempe.gov/reopening](http://tempe.gov/reopening), [tempe.gov/coronavirus](http://tempe.gov/coronavirus), or call Tempe 311 on weekdays at 480-350-4311.

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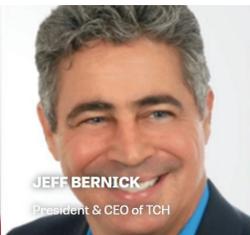
## Emerging Issues Forum: Building Workplace Diversity and Inclusion

On December 11th beginning at 8:00 a.m., Emerging Issues Forum, sponsored by SRP, brings together a panel of diversity and inclusion leaders from different industry sectors to share tangible ways they have advocated for equity in their workplace. Moderated by Jonae Harrison, City of Tempe Diversity & Inclusion Manager, the program will identify ideas and tips attendees can incorporate into improving the culture within their organizations.

This event is an online webinar. To register or learn more, contact [events@tempechamber.org](mailto:events@tempechamber.org).



**JONAE HARRISON**  
Equity & Inclusion Manager at  
City of Tempe



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## 2021 Mentoring Program Applications are Open

The Tempe Chamber of Commerce and its Women in Business Council announce the 2021 Mentoring Program.

Throughout the program, participants will gain an understanding of their true self through assessments and workshops. They will learn how to assess their values, create a vision for their life and career, and live with purpose and passion.

The Mentoring Program will take place from February through April 2021, and culminate with a graduation ceremony at the 2021 Leadership Conference in May.

Mentors and Proteges can apply now through December 15, 2021. For a comprehensive review of the program and application links, visit [tempechamber.org/women-business-council](http://tempechamber.org/women-business-council).



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# Post-holiday cleanup crew branches out to make Christmas brighter for needy families

By Noah Kutz

Fake trees? Forget about them. Those plastic branches and metal spines may be hassle-free, but nothing can replace the aroma of genuine pine and that cozy-Christmas feeling a real tree provides when ornaments are hung on each branch — even if cleaning up afterward often raises assurances like, “This is the last year we’re doing this!”

But what if you didn’t have to haul the bulky (and pokey) item out of your home and clean up the gazillions of tiny needles all over the living room floor?

That’s the question Connor Hogan and Dillon Newgaard answered when they launched their local business just after high school four years ago. If your life has ever felt like the black-and-white portion of an “As Seen On TV” commercial while you lugged a dead tree through the house and into an already overstuffed vehicle, then a newly formed collaboration, Valley Christmas Tree Removal, may be the solution.

Even better: Along the way, you may also be helping a family in need.

For what they call affordable prices, Connor and Dillon, now full-time ASU students, will come to your home with their team of young tree-dismantling specialists and take the sagging sapling directly from your living room and haul it to a recycling center for mulching. Once that job is done, they’ll vacuum the rest of the mess and leave the premises without any trace of what previously could be described as holiday chaos.

This year, to assure their customers who may worry about possible health hazards, they’ve taken precautions



Christmas tree cleanup entrepreneurs, from left, Connor Hogan, Morgan Taylor, Cole Newgaard and Dillon Newgaard.

against coronavirus and ensure a contactless job. However, if you prefer to take care of your living room on your own, the team will perform a curbside pickup (for a lesser price) and sweep the sidewalk when they’ve finished.

Additionally, instead of providing these services only to people who have Christmas trees, the cleanup duo wanted to give something back to some families in the community who have been struggling this year.

“I took Christmas for granted because we had a tree every year,” says Hogan, who grew up with Newgaard in the Ahwatukee area. “I never want a mother or father to have to choose between affording a Christmas tree or presents for their kids for the holidays,” he says.

In order to combat any such issues, their enterprise,

Valley Christmas Tree Removal, has partnered with Randy Fitch, a local vendor, to donate Christmas trees from his lot at 32nd Street and Chandler Boulevard, and provide cleanup services after the holiday.

The fully decorated trees will go to needy families, with an emphasis on those who have suffered from coronavirus — physically, economically or any other way — and who have been nominated to the company via its website or social media.

To add to that, the service’s creative team has designed commemorative ornaments which can be purchased as donations, with proceeds going toward providing more trees and decorations for more families in need.

To nominate a family or make an ornament donation, visit [ValleyChristmas.com](http://ValleyChristmas.com) and select “Christmas Tree Donations” in the menu.

Valley residents may also schedule their own tree-removal service on the website as of Nov. 20, with prices of approximately \$20 for curbside-only service and \$30 for in-home pickup (prices vary per zip code).

If the hassle of purchasing a live Christmas tree always seemed too much to handle, perhaps Valley Christmas Tree Removal can help alleviate the stress this season. And, if you have a plastic tree, they just might get rid of that for you, too.

*Editor’s note: Noah Kutz wrote regularly for Wrangler News until the start of his final semester at ASU, when the combination an extra-heavy load of graduation requirements, virtual classes and the rigors of Marine Corps’ pre-officer training forced him to refocus his priorities. We still hear from him regularly, and welcome his contributions, irregular as they now may be.*

## Commentary. . . by Sandy Lowe

To my Tempe Union Community,

I want to sincerely thank you for giving me the honor to serve on the Tempe Union High School Governing Board for eight years. I am proud of everything we accomplished and am thankful to our dedicated staff and generous community for all you do for our students. I appreciate how kind and welcoming our district, our school sites and our community have been to me.

A special thank you to those that have reached out to me in the last few days with your thoughtful concern and love. I feel the same. While disappointed with the results, I was not surprised. I was the only candidate whose name was not on our Legislative District Republican or Democrat websites because I believe with my whole heart, school board positions are non-partisan, and candidates should be elected on their experience not party affiliation. I am thankful and proud of the 30,000+ community members who voted for me from across the aisle and across the District.

I want to thank all the candidates for keeping our campaigns civil, which is commendable in today’s world. To my existing board members and all the past members I have served with, it’s truly been an honor and privilege to work together with you for the good of our students. Congratulations to

Berdetta Hodge, Sarah Lindsey James and Armando Montero for winning a seat on the Tempe Union Board. I sincerely wish you the best in this new, wonderful chapter of your life.

As I have said many times, I believe in the expertise of our educators, support staff and leaders and hope that whoever is on our board will consult with them often and give thoughtful consideration to their expertise.

I also understand it is critical that all stakeholders have a role in providing input in decisions. We must work together respectfully and give thoughtful consideration to all input, even if we disagree with their perspective. I have occasionally seen the struggle some board members have had in supporting a decision because of their different political, religious or general beliefs, but thankfully this never prevented them from doing the right thing for our students.

Finally, I want to share an observation with the hope that readers don’t assume it’s because I lost this election. I have seen, in the last 3 election cycles across our state, a pattern where school board members are sometimes elected almost exclusively based on political party rather than their experience and qualifications for these positions.

Not discounting the important experiences we have had as students, parents or teachers, might it be more beneficial

if interested candidates first became involved with a District by serving on a stakeholder committee dealing with budgets, hiring and retaining qualified staff or providing academic excellence? Might this experience provide them with even an inkling of what truly is involved in being a school board member and the important, sometimes unique issues Districts face? If board members are truly the stewards for our children, we must return to a time when relevant qualifications and experience are at least given equal consideration in the election of these important roles.

With that said, I am optimistic about Tempe Union and its future in providing excellence in education. I believe our new board will continue to make decisions which focus on providing quality education to all students. We are one of the best districts in Arizona because of all of you, and I care deeply about you and wish only the best for our staff, students and community.

My eight years on this board have truly been a joy and I am a better person because of it. I will never forget the wonderful District leadership as well as our principals, educators, support staff and community I have met and worked with on issues. With much love and respect, thank you for honoring and trusting me as your Governing Board member.

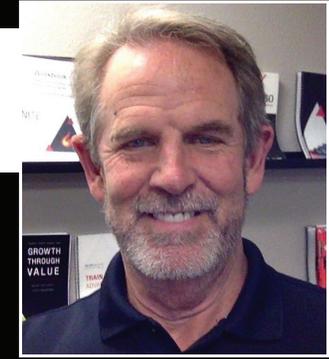


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