

Wrangler NEWS

Think Local. Read Local.

December 5 - 18, 2015 • Volume 26, Number 23

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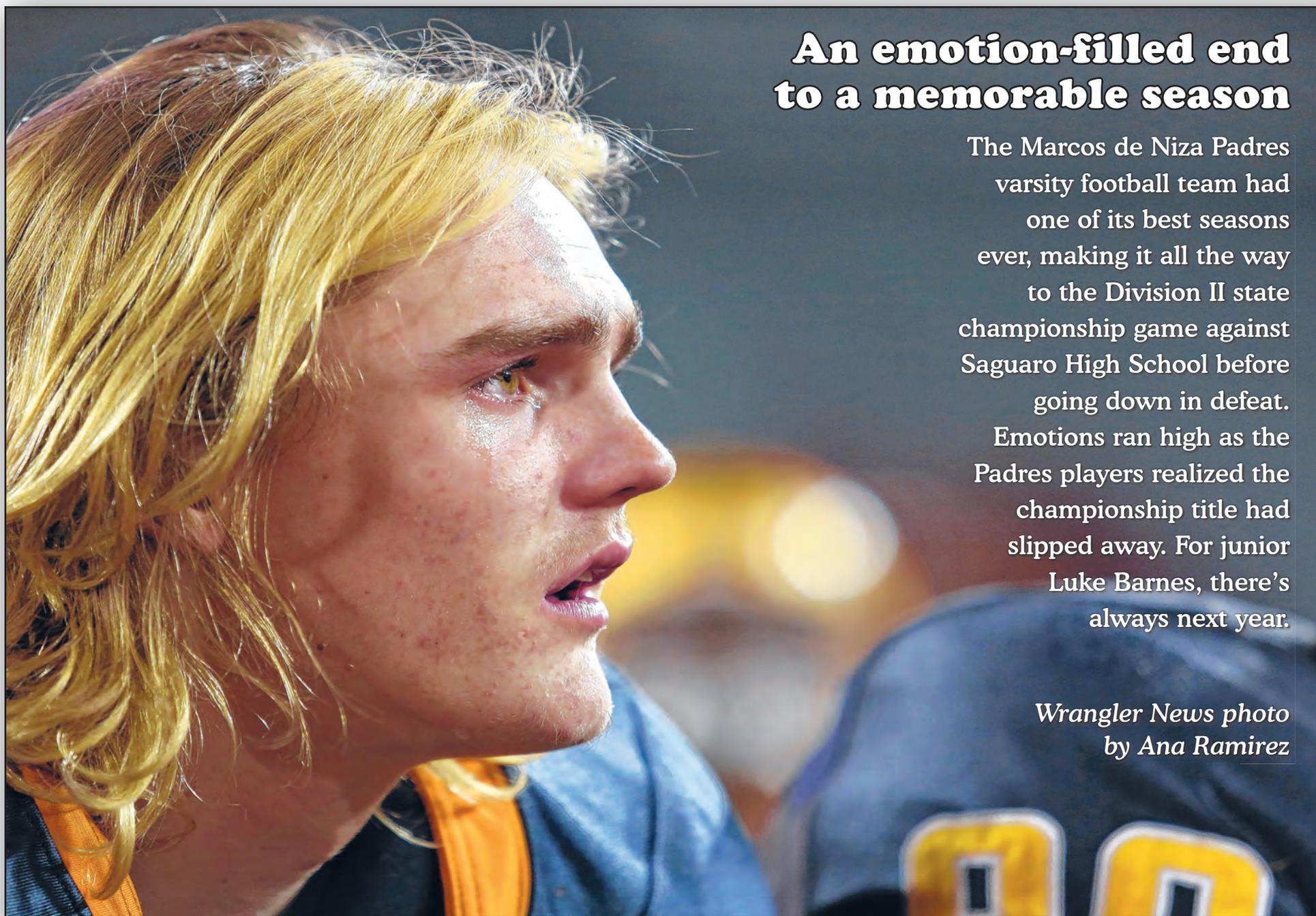
Family, friends gather in memory of Corona grad Blake Norvell, Pg. 4

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An emotion-filled end to a memorable season

The Marcos de Niza Padres varsity football team had one of its best seasons ever, making it all the way to the Division II state championship game against Saguaro High School before going down in defeat. Emotions ran high as the Padres players realized the championship title had slipped away. For junior Luke Barnes, there's always next year.

Wrangler News photo by Ana Ramirez

Padres: 'A proud family and a team that never stops playing'

By Alex Zener

It was an emotional end to an otherwise outstanding season for Marcos de Niza in its quest for the school's first state high school football championship when the Saguaro Sabercats scored back-to-back touchdowns in the fourth quarter

to ultimately defeat the Padres 38-20 on Nov. 28 at Tucson's Arizona Stadium.

The Padres should be proud of their accomplishments. They had to beat some talented teams to make it to the finals against Saguaro, including Ironwood Ridge in Tucson

on Nov. 13, to advance to the Division II semifinals and then undefeated Skyline on Nov. 20 to face Saguaro in the finals.

Defeating Ironwood Ridge 35-16 proved to the Padres what could happen if they stuck together and fought hard,

especially since they lost to the Night Hawks in the regular season at home 35-24. Marcos put together a complete game against Ironwood Ridge, rushing the ball for more than 300 yards and passing for over

— PADRES, Page 18

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Friends and family joined forces on Thanksgiving eve at the Hurricane Wings and Grille for a fundraiser in support of the Blake Norvell "Smiles" scholarship. Norvell, a 2006 graduate of Corona del Sol High School, died unexpectedly in 2013.

For departed friend, a celebration of life raises funds for scholarship

Story & photo by Chelsea Martin

A community that strives to maintain strong threads throughout all parts of its intricate web is crucial to its prosperity.

When one member of a tightly knit community faces a difficult situation, the rational solution is to firmly support one another.

Residents of the neighboring community to Corona del Sol High School have shown such reinforcement since Blake Norvell, a 2006 Corona graduate, died unexpectedly in 2013. Without a moment's hesitation, family and friends gathered to establish a "Smiles" scholarship as their ideal way to honor his passing.

Each year the scholarship recipient has embodied all the niche qualities that made Norvell such a special individual, most notably his academic integrity, community leadership and his magnetic personality. The first two recipients of the scholarship, Jessie Briggs and Shaye Busse, said they were humbled by the recognition and an opportunity to continue Blake's legacy through their own academic experience.

"We want to encourage the seniors who have a 3.0-3.8 GPA that have clearly established their efforts through leadership within their school and community, but don't necessarily get other scholarship opportunities," said Stephanie Norvell, Blake's mother.

"We really want to help that group of kids because I think it will give people hope."

Since inception, the sole fundraising

event for the annual scholarship is a one-night get-together with some of Norvell's closest friends and family at a local establishment. Although this year's event on Thanksgiving eve at the Hurricane Wings and Grille was only the third annual, the event has exponentially grown in just that short time, Stephanie reported.

"Once business owners heard Blake's story, there wasn't a doubt in their mind they would contribute," she said. "Everyone was so generous. About 60 local businesses donated."

The previous year they raised \$2,000; this year the grand total was roughly \$7,000, with nearly 200 people attending.

Longtime friend Tim Martin was among those who were pleased with this year's turnout.

"I can't believe how many people contributed and how much money was raised this year," Martin said. "It really shows what kind of person Blake was to have all these people coming together every year to show their support. It's powerful stuff."

The official sponsors of the fundraiser included Hurricane Wings and Grille and Arizona Business Forms Inc., the latter of which donated all of the printing supplies for the event. The owner of Hurricane, Jacee Carosella, generated special menus that included Blake's favorite drinks and appetizers, and provided the scholarship fund with 15 percent of the proceeds.

"I cannot stress to you just how supportive Jacee and her staff were

Phone-survey option extends Chandler census push thru Dec. 31

If you live in West Chandler and have been missed in Chandler's 2015 Special Census, it's not too late to be counted.

The city has worked with the U.S. Census Bureau to establish a phone bank staffed by sworn Census enumerators to obtain the information over the phone. The phone number, active as of Nov. 30, is 480-782-3269.

Residents who believe they were missed or who want to verify that everyone in their household was accurately counted can speak with a Census worker until Sunday, Dec. 6.

Phones are staffed from 9 a.m. to 8 p.m. Thursday, Dec. 3, and Friday, Dec. 4. On Saturday, hours are 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. and on Sunday, 11 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Chandler and six other Arizona

cities and towns are participating in a mid-decade census to update their population counts, which can translate into additional state-shared revenues to fund city services.

"By being counted, Chandler receives funding that helps provide the important city services our residents rely on," Mayor Jay Tibshraeny said.

"This money helps pay for essential public services such as police and fire protection, properly maintained streets, parks, libraries and more."

Census Bureau enumerators have been going door to door collecting census data since October. Approximately 90 percent of the city has been counted.

They will continue to knock on doors in Chandler neighborhoods through early December.



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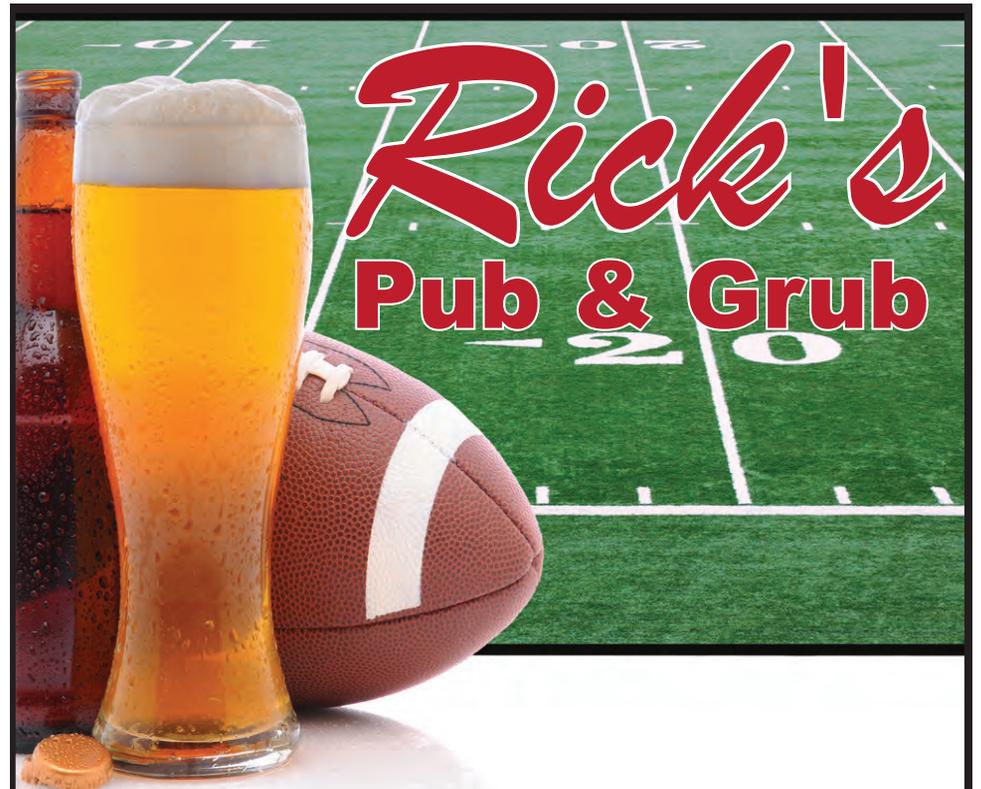
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Survey suggests new Kyrene chief will have big shoes to fill

Commentary by Jonathan Coronel

After a successful 10-year tenure as the Kyrene School District's superintendent, Dr. David Schauer will be retiring in the summer of 2016. With his departure now imminent, the five-member Kyrene Governing Board has begun the search for a new superintendent in earnest with the help the recruitment and development firm McPherson and Jacobson LLC.

On Dec. 1 the board convened a public meeting with Dr. Mary Kamerzell from McPherson and Jacobson. Kamerzell presented the information she had gathered from community outreach with Kyrene students and parents, as well as other selected target audiences.

On the whole, the respondents had glowing things to say about the district, noting the quality of the education as well as the safe environments all parents want for their children.

Teachers are generally seen as well qualified and parents and students alike are happy with the amount of extracurricular activities and sense of community in the district.

The number of respondents to the informal surveys ranged from 150 to 200. Kamerzell noted that a number this small usually means most people are satisfied with a district; large turnouts usually only occur when people have a lot to complain about.

Notably, parents and students of the Kyrene district feel their new superintendent will have big shoes to fill.

Their informal list of desirable qualities was lengthy, ranging from intangibles like leadership and political savvy to good business and technical skills.

Although Kyrene stakeholders certainly were not afraid to state what they would like to see in

As to Kyrene board members requesting videos from the superintendent candidates, member Bernadette Coggins supported the idea. 'We are really looking forward to coming in here, enjoying some popcorn and reviewing these applicants' videos,' she said when the subject turned to how useful such videos might be.

their new superintendent, the Governing Board was purposely circumspect and cautious during their public deliberations.

Governing Board President Ross Robb hesitated to list specific desires in a candidate lest they simply

tell the board what they want to hear during the interview process.

However, the board did discuss the vetting process at length, focusing on how much time they would spend reviewing applications.

Robb and fellow board member Bernadette Coggins even expressed their wishes that all semifinalist candidates send in a video application to the Governing Board.

"We are really looking forward to coming in here, enjoying some popcorn and reviewing these applicants' videos," said Coggins when the subject turned to how useful videos could be in vetting candidates.

With the application deadline for the new superintendent fast approaching in mid-February, Kyrene students, parents and administrators anxiously await the selection of a new district leader.

Kyrene stakeholders and board members may have high standards for a superintendent, but Kamerzell was quick to remind them they were not the only ones with high standards.

"Remember, when someone applies to this position, they're interviewing you as well."

One can't help but think that with its reputation, the Kyrene district should ace that interview.

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Kyrene loses ground in competitiveness for teacher salaries, consultants report

By Diana Whittle

Teachers in the East Valley can receive higher compensation in several nearby school districts, when compared to Kyrene.

This is one of the key research findings, gathered by human resources consultants Fox Lawson and Associates in a review of salary competitiveness for the 2015-16 school year.

Researcher Annette Hoefler warned the Kyrene Governing Board during her recent presentation that “Kyrene is losing ground in the marketplace.

“To attract high-quality applicants and to retain experienced teachers, Kyrene may want to consider a phased approach to increasing salaries over the next five years,” said Hoefler.

The consultants’ task was to review four categories of school-district employees, including support personnel, selected directors, the speech language technician, and teachers in grades K -8.

Currently the range difference of the teachers’ salary is approximately 12.7 percent below the market minimum, which looks at comparable school districts across the state. Other districts studied in the East Valley include Chandler, Gilbert, Higley, Mesa and Tempe Elementary. Last year, the researchers identified that the market difference was 10 percent.

Director positions in human resources, community education and facilities also showed a substantial lag in their salary ranges by 13 percent; along with support staff who were found to be paid about 11 percent behind colleagues in other districts.

Only the speech language technician earned a salary that ranked higher than other districts by 8.2 percent.

The pay philosophy adopted by the Kyrene Governing Board is to increase total compensation for employee groups from the 2013-14 baselines to being in the top third or

— SALARIES, Page 13



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Weekend art fest draws TV tech-turned metal sculptor

By M.V. Moorhead

With the weather finally tolerable and the gift-giving season looming large, the Tempe Arts Festival is a jolly way to spend a few hours (and some money).

Wandering the dizzying bazaar crammed with artists, craftspeople, curio merchants and food peddlers has become an annual tradition in our family.

Among the exhibitors at this year's fest, scheduled Dec. 4-6, is Jeff Walker. The Valley-based metal sculptor and furniture maker will be showing off his industrial yet elegantly angular work throughout the weekend.

A native of Greensboro, N.C. who has lived in Arizona since 2000, Walker has been a full-time metal artist for only the past two years. Prior to that, he spent almost 12 years as a technician at Channel 12.

"I started out doing camera and graphics," he recalls, "but for the last few years I was a director and technical director for live broadcast. I still do some freelance technical directing."

Somewhere in there Walker decided to try his hand at creating furnishings.

"I'd been doing it all my life as a hobby," says Walker, who also worked for a time with Tempe-based sculptor Gary Slater.

Walker's decision to get more serious about it, however, may have been spurred by economic considerations, at least at first.

"The first apartment I lived in, I had a lot of ideas for stuff I wanted, but I couldn't afford it," Walker says. "I'm a pretty handy guy, so I just started making it myself. My initial motivation was functionality, along with being unique."

The result of this ambition is Walker's business, Big Time Stuff, under which banner he sells outdoor fireplaces, some intricately ornate and detailed, others clean-lined and simple—furniture ranging from traditional tables to end-tables to cabinetry, and small items like containers and oversize stainless-steel dice.

— SCULPTOR, Page 12

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At home in his garage-turned-workshop, Walker carefully crafts his elegant artwork. A lifelong hobby, Walker took up the trade full-time two years ago. — Wrangler News photo by Ana Ramirez

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Tilted Kilt president Ron Lynch, Tempe Mayor Mark Mitchell, Arizona State University's mascot Sparky and others gripped ceremonial shovels, helping to break ground at the southwest corner of Warner and Priest, the future site for the popular pub.
— Wrangler News photo by Tracy Doren

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



Metal sculptor and furniture maker Jeff Walker shows off one of his latest creations, many of which will be on display and for sale at the Tempe Arts Festival Dec. 4-6.

— Wrangler News photo by Ana Ramirez

Sculptor

From Page 8

There are also non-functional sculptures, like a geodesic-looking sphere, or a robot bearing the weight of such a sphere on his shoulders, like a sci-fi vision of Atlas—all of it is rendered in metal with a cool, steampunk-ish edge that's somehow both futuristic and vintage.

Walker's works often have another distinctive trait:

"I do a lot of things with three legs," he

observes. "Tables with three legs, fire pits with three legs."

This isn't a self-conscious eccentricity, however. According to Walker, it's functional.

"Things with three legs fit in a corner," he explains. "Plus there's zero chance it'll wobble. I don't know why it isn't more common."

Go to bigtimestuff.com for details on Jeff Walker's work. For general information on this year's Tempe Festival of the Arts, go to tempefestivalofthearts.com.

Community service made simple

Want to make a positive impact on the community this holiday season, but don't have enough time?

Consider dropping off diapers at Summit School of Ahwatukee.

Summit's preschool through eighth grade supports "Homeward Bound," providing transitional housing and comprehensive social services to families with children fleeing domestic violence and/or homelessness.

During Summit's 11th annual drive, diapers can be dropped off at the school office from 7:45 a.m.-3:45 p.m. Monday through Friday until Dec. 17.

Summit will provide donors with a tax receipt from Homeward Bound, and deliver the diapers to deserving recipients.

Summit families and friends donated 35,000 diapers last year—more than any one school or business in 17 years.

Summit is at 4515 E. Muirwood Drive, Ahwatukee, one block south of Chandler Boulevard, at 46th Street and Muirwood.

Information: Homewardboundaz.org or SummitSchoolaz.org

Salaries

From Page 7

67th percentile of comparable districts in Arizona by Feb. 15, 2017. But, this pay increase must be accomplished in a way that is affordable and does not compromise student learning.

Starting pay for a teacher with a bachelor's degree begins at \$35,332 in Kyrene. This is adjusted to \$37, 943 for teachers with master's degrees. Kyrene does not have a salary cap on teachers in the system, but the current top salary is \$68, 477.

"Fox Lawson will help Kyrene to conduct annual surveys for the next three years on the pay ranges of specific jobs and make expert compensation recommendations to be included in the budget plan," said Mark Knight, assistant superintendent, who is responsible for the Human Resources Services Division.

"We are currently in the second year of the surveys and Fox Lawson is recommending to

the board that the Kyrene School District consider a five percent market adjustment for the next three years to bring pay ranges in alignment with the market."

As the lead negotiator for the Kyrene employees in their meet and confer processes, Knight requested that the Governing Board consider the recommended market adjustment during the upcoming budget hearings, so he can take that message to employee groups.

Board president Ross Robb indicated that he is favorable to the salary increase, but that the issue would have to be considered closely to determine its fiscal impact.

"I don't know if we will be able to meet our goal of moving into the 67th percentile, but at the same time, it's disturbing to know that we are currently moving backward in teacher pay."

Another discussion on compensation is on the Governing Board's agenda for Jan. 26.

Tips from Chandler PD on making sure holidays are fun, happy — and safe

In case you hadn't noticed, this year's holiday shopping season is upon us, reminds Sgt. Joe Favazzo, Chandler Police Department media relations officer.

"While this time of year is for celebrating all of the blessings in our lives, the hectic pace and deadlines add stress as well," says Favazzo.

"With this comes a lack of focus, and the results can lead to victimization or tragedy."

Here are a few of the Police Department's suggestions to help West Chandler residents and their neighbors be happy and safe through the holidays:

- When you're out shopping, remember to conceal any items of value in your vehicle.
- Remember where you parked and which door or store entrance you utilized when shopping at a mall.
- Park your vehicle in a well-lit area and, whenever possible, avoiding shopping alone.
- Be aware of your surroundings in the parking lot and while you're shopping.
- Avoid looking down at your cellular phone when you should be watching for potential dangers around you.
- Try not to become overloaded with shopping bags – this can make you an easy target for would-be thieves.
- Avoid confrontations with other shoppers or drivers. Defensive driving and roadway courtesy can prevent a collision or road rage incident.
- If you do encounter an aggressive or hostile driver, avoid the conflict, leave the area, and

contact the police.

- And remember to always wear your seatbelt and to designate a driver when alcohol consumption is a part of your holiday celebration.

Bright launch for holidays

Chandler will officially kick off the holiday season Dec. 5 with its annual Parade of Lights and Tumbleweed Tree Lighting ceremony. Some 12,000 people are expected to join in celebrating Chandler's unique Southwestern holiday tradition that dates to 1957.

The festivities begin at 4:30 p.m. with a variety of musical and dance entertainment and visits with Santa Claus in Dr. A.J. Chandler Park.

The parade begins at 7 p.m. at the corner of Arizona Avenue and Frye Road and will make its way past city hall and continue through the downtown area. Immediately following the parade, guests will gather at of the park on the west side of Arizona Avenue for the Tumbleweed Tree lighting ceremony.

Those who attend are strongly encouraged to arrive early to find parking. There are multiple locations with free parking, including two parking garages on the east side of Arizona Avenue, and several surface lots.

Information: www.chandleraz.gov/tumbleweedtree.



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15 Black Violin 7:30pm
17 TIMBER! A Production of Cirque Alfonse! 7pm
23 Deana Martin
Honoring Dean Martin & Frank Sinatra 7:30pm
29 Moscow Festival Ballet presents Don Quixote 7:30pm
30 Fiesta Mexico-Americana with Los Lobos 7:30pm

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6 The Wellington International
Ukulele Orchestra 7:30pm
12 Tap Factory 7:30pm
14 The Summit
The Manhattan Transfer meets Take 6 7pm
20 Frankie Avalon 7:30pm
21 Lee Ann Womack 7pm
27 Steppin' Out LIVE with Ben Vereen & Trio 7:30pm

March 2016

4 The Second City Fully Loaded 7:30pm
5 Vicki Lawrence & Mama:
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8-13 Tony n' Tina's Wedding Times Vary
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1 The von Trapps 7:30pm



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Upcoming Dates:
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Dust off the ugly holiday sweater your aunt gave you last year, and wear it with pride at the December 18th Chandler Art Walk! The night will feature free photography of your family striking an awkward photo with Santa, carolers, live music and local artists showcasing their work.

Date: Dec. 18th

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MCC profile

NASA workshop proves a rare treat for budding biotechnology scientist



By Sally Mesarosh

Upon arriving at NASA's Johnson Space Center in Houston, Mesa Community College student Greg Howard was immediately assigned a mission: to form a theoretical space exploration company and build a rover out of a basic robotics kit in about a day.

Howard, a Tempe resident, quickly teamed up with nine other college students from across the country to complete the project. They took on the roles of project manager, marketing manager, financial officer and a variety of engineering positions.

Although the team ran out of money and time, in the end they successfully built a rover that beat three other teams tasked with the same mission.

A total of 43 students from across the country were involved in the rover workshop.

"I was really excited when we won," Howard said. "The final product wasn't what we envisioned, but it was functional. The whole experience was amazing, and winning was just the icing on the cake."

Howard, 26, learned about the National Community College Aerospace Scholars onsite workshop through his involvement in MCC's Omicron Beta Chapter of Phi Theta Kappa, an honor society for two-year community college students.

After completing an intensive five-week online course, Howard was chosen for the NASA workshop based on his module scores and overall mission design.

"I was pretty ecstatic," said Howard, who grew up in Show Low and now lives in Tempe. "NASA represents the

apex in scientific pursuits."

Howard is majoring in molecular biology at MCC and has plans to be a synthetic biologist in the biotechnology field.

"This is a fantastic opportunity for Greg," said Duane Oakes, faculty director of the MCC Center for Community & Civic Engagement and Phi Theta Kappa adviser.

"We have a great tradition of Phi Theta Kappa Students from MCC being selected and they all say this is one of their life-changing experiences.

One of our past students now works for NASA so his opportunity is a great stepping stone for our students."

Howard has already applied for an internship and would love to work as an intern for NASA researching bone density in long-duration space travel. He currently works part-time as a data processor, is a full time student, and is also a husband and a father of a two-year old son.

In his spare time he ghostwrites science-fiction novels, a fitting sideline that enriched his NASA experience.

He said the workshop taught him teamwork, accountability, leadership and the importance of keeping an open mind.

For Howard, the best part of being at NASA was the opportunity to watch a spacewalk from the International Space Station in Mission Control Center.

"We got up early and went to Mission Control to watch the spacewalk live," Howard said. "Not many people get to do that."

The worst part of his NASA experience, revealed Howard:

"Having to leave!"



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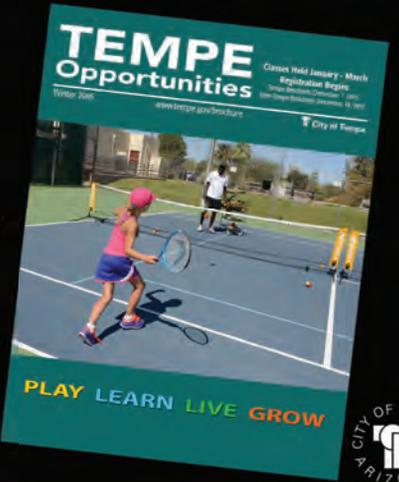
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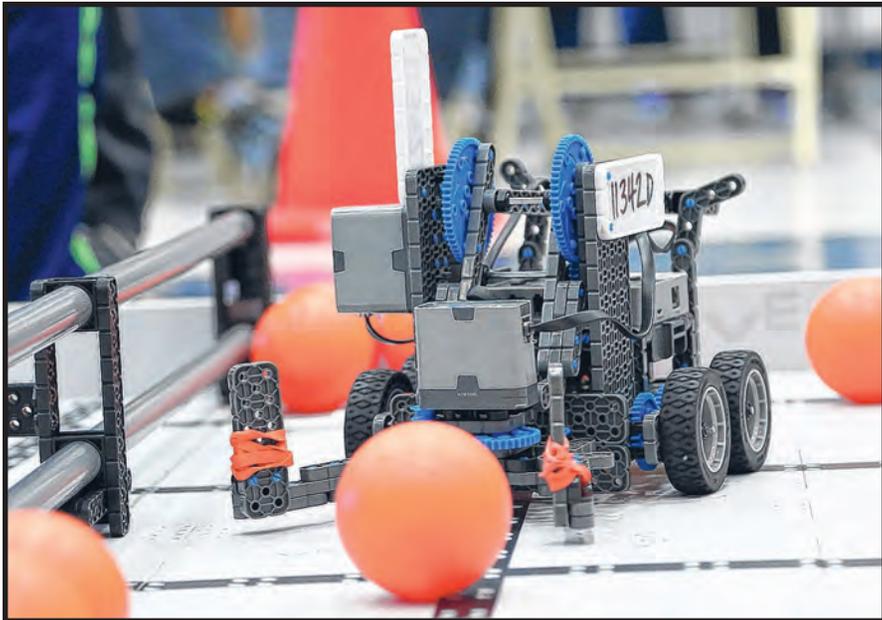
Non-Tempe Resident
Registration Begins
Monday, Dec. 14

**Classes begin the week of
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Students from Kyrene Aprende Middle School strutted their stuff in the Orangewood Vex IQ Qualifying Event in Phoenix. Four teams from Aprende competed in the robotics extravaganza, which featured Schima-bots, Nyan Robots, CyborgJags and Doge Hound. This is the first year that Aprende students have had an opportunity to engage in the hands-on learning that makes the Vex Robotics Club an entertaining pastime. Teams have been building the robots since September. To view more photos from this event, visit www.wranglernews.com.

WRANGLER NEWS PHOTOS BY ANA RAMIREZ

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Blake

From Page 4

that night," Stephanie said. "They were so wonderful to work with."

The impact of one is strong, but cannot match the overwhelming power of a united group, say program planners.

Stephanie had support from peers, including daughter Julianna, Tempe Dollars for Scholars and close friends Cindy Williams and Robin Todd.

The event itself was a tradition long before Blake passed away.

"I think what makes this fundraiser so special is that we always had this tradition to spend Thanksgiving Eve together with our close friends, and now even though Blake is gone he's still bringing us together," Maycie Thorton, one of the scholarship founders, said.

"Corona was such a special place for all of us, and Blake was quite an important part of that experience for everyone in our class, so it's really wonderful to have the chance to keep the memory alive there."

Simply captivated by the unrelenting support, Stephanie notes, "The one thing I've really learned through all this is how giving and truly supportive our community is. Blake's friends have taken the time to transform a heartbreaking tragedy into something so positive. A way to help the community while at the same time carrying on his name.

"It's simply amazing. If Blake could see this he would be smiling from ear to ear."

To make a donation for the Smiles Scholarship, visit <http://www.tempe.dollarsforscholars.org/index.php?section=chapterWebsite&action=donate&fwID=2034> and write Blake Norvell's name in the memo line.

Local companies that contributed:

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Small Business of the Year Credits Tempe Chamber for Growth, Success

Dear Tempe Chamber Leadership,

I am writing this letter to the body of fellow and prospective members of the Tempe Chamber of Commerce to express our deep sense of gratitude for having been considered a worthy candidate for the Chamber's Small Business of the Year Award. We are both humbled and proud to have been selected as the winner of this prestigious award. I wish to share some of the benefits and rewards of being the recipient as well as just being a member of the Chamber.

First off, my industry is oftentimes plagued with rumors and sentiments of dissatisfaction, thievery, misrepresentation, unprofessionalism, etc. We have always held the philosophy and flesh out the mission statement we are determined to uphold: "changing the image of our industry one repair at a time".

That being said, people are still oftentimes predisposed to the notion of that they're about to be taken advantage of by the person standing at the other side of the counter. My philosophy is, and always has been that if you have a personal relationship with someone, you are much more apt to trust them and do business with them.

The Tempe Chamber offers this great opportunity to introduce yourself, have conversations, form relationships, and do business with LOCAL businesses. The secret of course is "you must be present to win". Winning the Small Business of the year award came about through many such events. Since winning, we are having record sales, having record numbers of new customers, and will have the best year ever since our inception nearly twelve years ago!

We will always be grateful for having been invited to be members of the Tempe Chamber of Commerce, and HIGHLY recommend that anyone who is sitting on the fence should get off of it and join today!

If I had to do it all over again, the answer would be YES!

Sincerely Yours,

Glen R. Hayward
Owner / Manager



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L to R: Congresswoman Krysten Sinema, Good Works Auto Repair owners RaeAnn and Glenn Hayward

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Sports



Marcos de Niza varsity football players pose prior to Division II playoffs vs Saguaro Sabercats at Arizona Stadium in Tucson. Saguaro won the game 38-20.

For more photos go to www.wranglernews.com

— Wrangler News photos by Ana Ramirez

Padres

From Page 1

140 yards.

The Padres carried the momentum into their next game to hand Skyline their first loss of the season, 44-37. Taking what the defense gave them, **Nazareth Greer** threw the ball for over 270 yards and rushing for over 100 yards.

In the finals, against Saguaro, Marcos de Niza faced a championship-caliber team that was looking for not only its third straight state championship win but its eighth state championship in 10 years. It was obvious the Padres were going to have to start on a high note and continue playing strong the entire game if they were going to have a chance to win.

Marcos came out in the first quarter determined to make a statement which the Padres did by scoring the first points of the game with six minutes left in the quarter on a 13-yard receiving touchdown by **Marcus Naisant** from quarterback Greer.

The Padres took a 7-0 lead after junior **Krysten**

Muir scored her 66th point-after kick of the season.

Saguaro's offense, with an offensive line that averages over 300 pounds, followed with a momentum changing 64-yard touchdown pass to former Marcos player, Byron Murphy, just before the end of the first quarter.

Saguaro scored another touchdown about four minutes into the second quarter before the Padres second leading rusher, **Shaun Richards**, busted through the defense to score a 46-yard second touchdown and give Marcos a 14-12 lead with Muir's second point-after kick of the game.

Once again Saguaro's quarterback connected with Murphy, who is said to be one of the top recruits in the state, to score their third touchdown of the half and take a four-point lead heading into halftime.

The Padres pulled within five points, 25-20, in the third quarter when their leading rusher on the season, senior **Avery Sander**, helped Marcos put together an 80-yard drive culminating on a 12-yard rushing touchdown by junior **Zyayre Moss**.

Unfortunately for the Padres, Saguaro's passing and running game started firing on all cylinders, and the Padres, who continued to play hard until the final

seconds and never gave up, had no answer.

What should have been the final crushing blow, when the Sabercats scored back-to-back touchdowns in a matter of minutes in the fourth quarter, failed to break the Padres, who continued to fight. Marcos even blocked the extra-point kick on the last Saguaro touchdown thus losing the game and ending the team's hopes and dreams at 20-38 instead of 20-39.

That one-point difference was important to the Padres, who are a family as well as a team. Blocking that last point-after kick against Saguaro defined the way the team members play and think of themselves. They are a proud family and team that never stops playing no matter what the score.

It will be hard to replicate this season's team next year but there are key players returning to give the Padres a fighting chance.

Greer, who is averaging over 230 yards a game passing, will be a senior as will Naisant and Moss, the only non-senior pass receivers, out of a total 14 players to catch the ball this season.

The Padres will no doubt miss their leading senior receivers Richards, **Tanner Blankenship**, **Montre Williams**, **Anthony Trujillo**, **Anthony Gonzales**

and Sanders.

Naisant, **Tyshawn Britton** and Moss, the top junior rushers in 2015, will return along with Greer. Two other juniors also carried the ball in 2015: **Jesse Guzman** and **Sam Johnson**.

The Padres will be without the over 56 yards that Sanders contributed, 40 yards that Richards added and 12 yards that **Erik Bolster** provided rushing the ball per game let alone the touchdowns that each scored.

The Padres should also be proud of their defense that not only blocked that final-point-after kick but also stopped three attempts by the Sabercats to score two-point conversions.

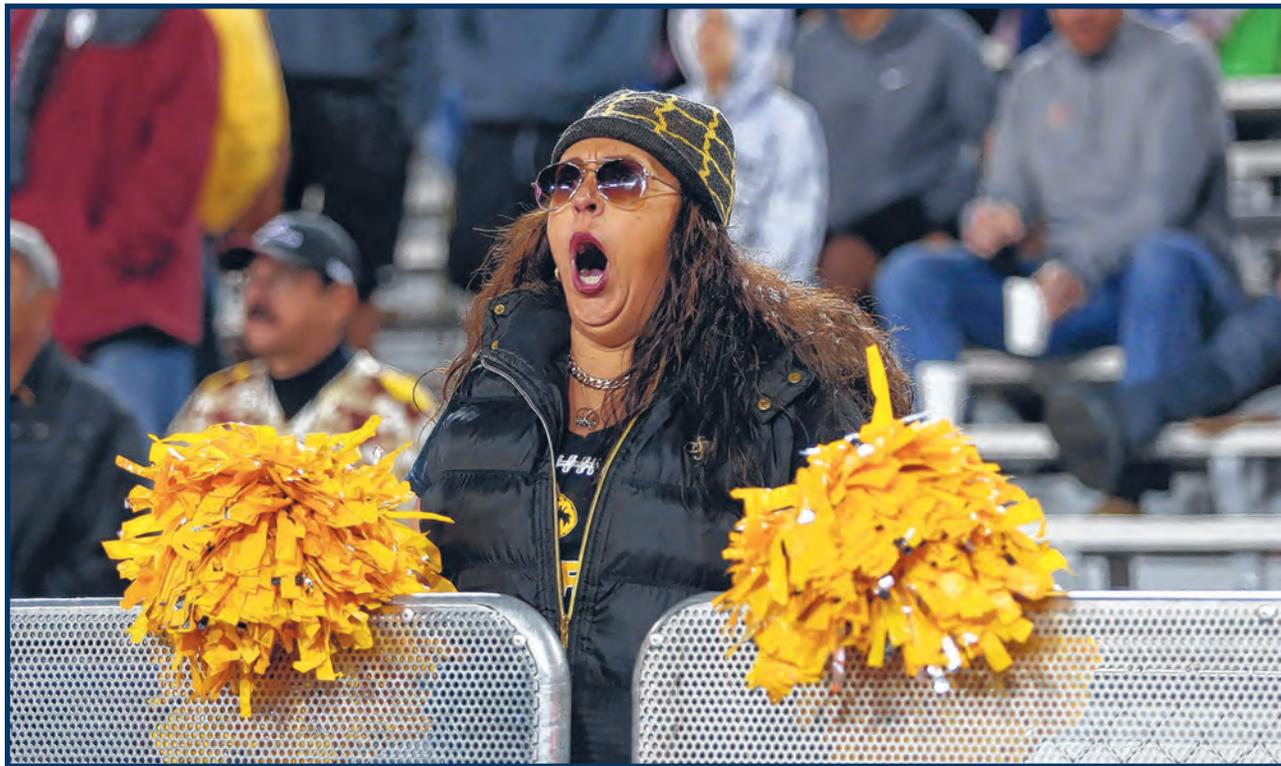
The defense that averages close to 55 tackles a game will most surely miss senior **Jacob Hernandez** who averaged over one-fifth of those tackles per game at almost 11 per game and recorded three interceptions and three sacks during the season.

The defensive contributions that fellow seniors like **James Reynosa**, over seven tackles a game; Sanders, over five tackles per game and three sacks; **Daviaughn Reagan**, the sack leader on the team with over 10 sacks; Griffith, with four interceptions; and **Tyler Dennis**, around three tackles per game and over three sacks contributed per game will need to be replaced.

Marcos will have some return players who could help fill this defensive void including **Anthony Nicastro** who already averaged over 3.5 tackles per game plus had over 10 sacks this season.

Other juniors who had decent defensive stats but who will be expected to contribute more next season include Guzman, who had three interceptions in only 10 games, **Marcus Green**, **Johnny Moreno** and **Christian Rodriguez**.

Kicker Muir, who already reportedly beat out four male kickers for her spot on the team this season, will return no doubt but the two senior kickoff and punt kickers, Griffith and Blankenship will need to



A woman shouts while Marcos de Niza plays Saguaro during the 2015 Division II State Football Championship at Arizona

be replaced possibly by current sophomore kicker **Matt Gill** who already averaged over 45 yards per kickoff this season.

Everyone ever associated with Marcos de Niza, the school and the football program, should be proud of what this season's team has accomplished. They ended the season with a 12-3 record ranked No. 11 in the state scoring 65 touchdowns by averaging close to 215 passing and 145 rushing yards a game. They are only the second Marcos football team in school history, besides the 2009 team, to make it to the state championship finals. The 2009 team also received a state championship runner-up trophy.

Corona Girls Basketball — Corona's girls basketball team has returned three starters and three players from last season's team to start the 2015-16 season with what coach **Andrew Strom** feels will lead to a successful season: good shooters, strong defensive skills and team chemistry.

"I am really excited about the season," said Strom. "We have amazing chemistry and I believe that will translate to the court."

One of the team's issues will be how to replace the ball handling and scoring ability of **Taylor Kalmer** now playing at Oregon State, who led the team in points per game at close to 19 and assists at four

per game.

"We will have to find a way to replace her scoring and ball handling. I believe that ball handling may be our biggest worry," said Strom. "It won't be one person that can take Taylor's place. We will have to rely on each other to handle any pressure from other teams."

The three returning starters from last season's team, **Hannah Lauer**, **Bri Bell** and **Leilani Peat**, will be looked upon to help pick up for Kalmer as well as the other returning players, **Baylee Watson**, **Marin Ridge** and **Mallory Hanscom**.

Ridge is currently out with an ACL injury.

The team has 14 girls on the roster this year including three newcomers who are working hard to get into the rotation. "**Hope Frazier** and **Kiara El Amin**, who moved up this season from the JV team, are playing well," said Strom. "Freshman **Angelica Lopez** is fitting in and doing well, too."

Coach Strom is pleased with the improvement and the dedication to basketball shown by each of the team members including newcomers **Anne Osman**, **Elyse Olson**, **Nathena Silvers**, **Nicole Whitaker** and **Aarushi Sangwan**.

Although coach Strom believes he has several girls who could play at the next level, if they so desired, he admits that Peat is getting the most attention. Once again Corona's girls' basketball Division I section will be very competitive with maybe Hamilton as the front leader this early into the season not only in the section but in the state according to Strom.

Corona started the season playing in the Lady Padres Tip Off Classic, Nov. 24-27, compiling a 3-2 record as of Nov. 30 defeating South Mountain 37-29, Marcos de Niza 57-31 and Horizon 64-45 while losing to Mountain Pointe 54-38 and Ironwood Ridge 47-38.

Corona was scheduled to play Desert Mountain on Dec. 1 and Mountain Pointe on Dec. 3 before playing at Highland on Dec. 8, Maricopa on Dec. 10, and at home against Mountain View on Dec. 12.



Marcos de Niza's Marcus Naisant (9) seemed almost airborne when he scored a touchdown during the 2015 Division II State Football Championship against Saguaro at Arizona Stadium. Sabercats defeated the Padres 38-20. To view photos from this event and others like it, visit www.wranglernews.com.
— Wrangler News photos by Ana Ramirez

Ancient, modern come together at Chanukah ceremony

Chanukah begins Dec. 6 and, for the first time ever, a giant 7-foot menorah will stand at the center of a celebration at the Tempe Public Library.

Local dignitaries, including Tempe Mayor Mark Mitchell, will take part in a lighting ceremony that begins at 5 p.m. in a celebration combining ancient traditions with a unique and modern twist.

Temple Emanuel's youth choir will perform and there's a free raffle for prizes. Attendees will also have the opportunity to engage in Chanukah crafts.

Rabbi Mendy Deitsch, director of Chabad of the East Valley, said the crafts will allow children to create their own colorful menorahs.

"We have these small menorahs that are hollow. You fill it with different color sand. It's a lot of fun," Rabbi Deitsch said.

It's the first time for the city of Tempe to collaborate in such a large-scale way with the Jewish community, Rabbi Deitsch said.

"The city is coming to understand and appreciate the diversity, the culture and celebrate that," he added.

Earlier in the day, the community is invited to enjoy the Chanukah Wonderland, a free event that will be held at the Chabad Center at 875 N. McClintock in Chandler. It will be an opportunity for both children and adults to experience Chanukah through an intriguing hands-on olive press demonstration, a Chanukah donut bar, authentic Israeli cuisine and other activities. The day begins at 9:30 a.m. and runs through 1 p.m.

"In ancient times our ancestors rededicated the Temple in Jerusalem with the Menorah. Today, we rededicate ourselves to making this world a better and brighter place," Rabbi Dietsch said.

In a world where violence and oppression is all too commonplace, Chanukah points the community to the message that ultimately good will prevail over evil.

As part of that effort to bring about good, those who attend the Chanukah Wonderland are asked to bring an unwrapped gift for the Chabad of the East Valley's toy drive for children with special needs.

"We want to bring the community together and share our Jewish festival of Chanukah, expose people to it and promote a strong community," Rabbi Deitsch said.

Information: 480-855-4333

Need critical for blood

Tempe and West Chandler residents who visit any United Blood Services blood drive or donor center in December will be rewarded with a voucher for a free 14-inch cheese pizza, courtesy of the Streets of New York.

UBS officials say that, since blood has a shelf life of 42 days, donors will help save patients' lives throughout the most challenging time of the year to maintain the state's blood supply.

Prospective donors can call 877-827-4376 or visit www.BloodHero.com.

Said Lorrie Glaeser, owner of Streets of New York: "Arizona has been home to our headquarters and restaurants for 38 years, so we feel that it's our responsibility to help those who are in need. Part of our commitment to quality is giving back to the communities in which our team members and customers live and work."

Area Bloodmobile locations will be:
Arizona State University — Monday, Dec. 7, 10 a.m.-2 p.m., ASU Orange Mall.

Tempe — Wednesday, Dec. 2, 8 a.m.- noon
Parkway Realty Services, 60 E. Rio Salado Parkway;
Sunday, Dec. 6, 8:30a.m. - 12:30 p.m., Church of the Epiphany-Episcopal, 2222 S. Price Road;
Tuesday, Dec. 8, 8 a.m.- 12p.m., Tempe Gateway, 222 S. Mill Ave.;

Wednesday, Dec. 16, 8 a.m.-1p.m., RICOH USA, 1516 W. 17th St.;

Thursday, Dec. 17, 8 a.m.- 12 p.m., Circle K Offices, 1130 W. Warner Road.

Tuesday, Dec. 22, 2:30 - 7:30p.m., BSI Customer Contact Center, 4920 S. Wendler Drive.



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WINTER BREAK
CAMP

December 18, 21-24, 28-31



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SPECIAL EVENTS:
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DJ Dance and Pizza Party

Locations: Brisas and Milenio, plus ELC
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Dec 18, 21, 22, 23, 24*, 28, 29, 30, 31*

Early Birds—Register by 4 p.m. on Dec 11 and save \$10 per child!
**Operating hours on 12/24 and 12/31 will be 6:30 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.; no camp on 12/25 and 1/1.*



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Gathering to celebrate the opening of a remodeled second-floor surgical unit at Tempe St. Luke's Hospital were, from left, Mary Ann Miller, Tempe Chamber president; Tempe Mayor Mark Mitchell; Hospital Administrator Jake Golich. Event commemorated pioneering physician Dr. Ernest von Pohle, whose daughter Ellen Hardin helped cut the ribbon. — Wrangler News photo

Tempe St. Luke's Hospital reopens a 27-bed surgical floor; first patients due to arrive Dec. 7

Tempe St. Luke's Hospital is celebrating the reopening of its newly remodeled medical/surgical floor, a \$412,000 renovation that includes 27 beds on an all-private-room floor.

Tempe Mayor Mark Mitchell was joined in an opening observance by hospital administrator Jacob Golich, who dedicated the remodeled unit in memory of Dr. Ernest von Pohle.

Von Pohle opened the original 10-bed Tempe Clinic Hospital in 1944.

Hospital officials say the remodel is focused on providing patient-centric care and an enhanced healing environment that offers greater privacy, reduced noise and disturbance.

The second floor, which provides a third of the hospital beds, will be staffed by hospitalists and up to six registered nurses caring for patients.

The first patients are expected to populate the floor beginning Monday, Dec. 7.

Tempe St. Luke's is at 1500 S. Mill Ave.

Free rides for kids on Chandler fire engines Dec. 12

West Chandler's fire substation at 275 S. Ellis St. will be among sites accepting toys for the Chandler Fire, Health & Medical Department's annual holiday season collection drive, with donations benefitting disadvantaged children in the community.

Battalion Chief Keith Welch, a department spokesman, said the highlight of the drive will be a holiday toy ride, where anyone who donates a new, unwrapped, non-battery-operated toy from 2 to 8 p.m. Saturday, Dec. 12, will receive a ride in a fire engine.

The toy collection point, at Chandler Fashion Center, is near the valet parking area outside the food court on the south side of the mall.

An adult must accompany all children 6 and younger on their ride.

Chandler firefighters and volunteers will help deliver donated toys to the Chandler CARE Center, where they will be presented to disadvantaged children.

"Chandler residents have been very generous and supportive of our toy drive through the years, said department chief Jeff Clark.

"Our firefighters have a lot of fun giving rides to kids and their parents. And the donated toys make Christmas more joyful for a lot of Chandler children."

Donations can also be dropped off in the lobby of the Fire Administration Headquarters at 151 E. Boston St. through Dec. 15 or at any Chandler fire station, including the West Chandler station at 275 S. Ellis St.

Tax credit can help rehab center improve its efforts to build independence

Officials at Tempe's Center for Habilitation are advising Wrangler News readers they can receive a dollar-for-dollar tax credit through the Arizona Charitable Tax Credit, helping to create paths to independence for people with disabilities.

Dawn Hocking, director of development for the center, noted that the charitable tax credit is separate from the school tax credit and contributors can take advantage of both. No itemizing is needed.

Making a donation of up to \$200 as an individual or \$400 as a couple qualifies for the credit.

However, says Hocking, prospective donors no doubt will want to contact a qualified tax adviser for individualized advice.

At TCH, this year's tax credit donations will be used to update the work space that the centers' clients utilize to learn job skills and be as independent as possible.

In the course of the day they will be taught skills that will help them gain competitive employment, also learning how important it is to arrive on time to work and developing their abilities to interact with coworkers.

Program participants also are challenged to increase productivity while keeping accuracy, and find confidence in a job well done.

Donors can contribute online by visiting www.tch-az.com or send a check to TCH, 215 W. Lodge Drive, Tempe 85283. Information: 480-730-4221.

IRS seeking input for new program affecting PEOs

Tempe and West Chandler business owners are among many being queried by the Internal Revenue Service to provide information about current professional employer organization practices.

Bill Brunson, communications director for the agency's Phoenix branch, says the project is being undertaken in an effort to streamline the implementation of a new federal program.

Under legislation enacted last December, the IRS must establish a voluntary certification program for professional employer organizations, or PEOs, said Brunson.

The law requires them to meet a number of requirements, including certain bond and independent financial review requirements.

The IRS has been working to determine the procedures and information system changes necessary to implement the new law and plans to begin accepting applications for PEO certification on July 1.

Currently, PEOs are subject to licensing, registration and other requirements in many states. In addition, there are private assurance organizations that offer PEOs accreditation if they satisfy certain requirements.

The IRS is requesting information related to these state requirements and accreditation programs.



City of Tempe Page



Charter amendment on March 8 ballot



The City Council has set a March 8 Special Election for voters to weigh in on a proposed amendment to the City Charter.

This election will be held at the same time as the Primary Election for the Mayoral seat and three City Council seats.

The proposed Charter amendment relates to candidate contribution limits, adding a new subsection:

There shall be a limitation on contributions accepted by candidates for city elected office in order to maintain the public trust, eliminate quid pro

quo corruption, and eliminate the potential for fraud in city elections. The city council shall adopt by ordinance all regulations for the establishment of and compliance with limitation amounts.

At its Nov. 12 Regular Council Meeting, the Council adopted a related ordinance that establishes the specific regulations of the proposed charter amendment. The ordinance would only be enacted if the Charter amendment is approved by voters. The City of Tempe neither supports nor opposes the proposed Charter amendment.

The deadline for voter registration is Feb. 8. Early voting details will be announced soon. The City Clerk's Office will post candidates certified for the ballot at www.tempe.gov/election. Publicity pamphlets will be mailed the week of Feb. 1.

For questions, contact the City Clerk's Office at clerk@tempe.gov or 480-350-8241.

For information on all 2016 city elections, visit www.tempe.gov/election.

Enrich your life this winter

Between January and March, Tempe is offering lots of new and continuing classes and programs for all ages.

The winter issue of the Tempe Opportunities brochure lists them all; it is available online and in all City of Tempe facilities.

Class topics include exercise and fitness, educational programming, sports leagues, music, art, dance and more.

These quality programs are offered at convenient times and locations, and at affordable prices.

Registration is open now.

For more information, visit www.tempe.gov/brochure or call 480-350-5200.



Holiday trash and recycling collection schedule

The City of Tempe wants to ensure that community members make note of this year's trash and recycling holiday schedule changes.

- If your regular collection day is Thursday, Dec. 24, your modified collection day will be Wednesday, Dec. 23.
- If your regular collection day is Friday, Dec. 25, your modified collection day will be Thursday, Dec. 24.
- If your regular collection day is Thursday, Dec. 31, your modified collection

day will be Wednesday, Dec. 30.

- If your regular collection day is Friday, Jan. 1, your modified collection day will be Thursday, Dec. 31.

To see the full schedule, visit www.tempe.gov/slashthetrash.

The Household Products Collection Center, 1320 E. University Drive (480-858-2223), will be closed on Christmas and New Year's Day.

The Tempe 311 customer service center also will be closed.

News in Brief . . .

Recycle your holiday tree this year

Give your Christmas tree new life by helping Tempe turn it into compost for city parks and gardens.

Drop your tree anytime for free, seven days a week, through Jan. 30 at the city's Household Products Collection Center, 1320 E. University Drive, or at the Kiwanis Recreation Center, 6111 W. All-America Way, in

the west parking lot.

Trees also will be collected on Sunday, Jan. 3, from 8 a.m. to 1 p.m. as part of the United Blood Service Saving Arizona Blood Drive at the Tempe Center for the Arts, 700 W. Rio Salado Parkway.

Before dropping off trees, remove tree stands and nails, ornaments, lights, garland and tinsel.

For more information, call 480-350-4311, or visit www.tempe.gov/slashthetrash.

2016 bulk trash and green organics schedule now available

The 2016 Bulk Trash and Green Organics schedule is now available. The enhanced program offers Tempe residents curbside or alley collection for mixed bulk trash while also providing seasonal collections for green organic waste, which is turned into compost and returned to the community.

The new schedule, along with more information about Tempe's citywide composting program, is available at www.tempe.gov/slashthetrash.

Nominate a neighbor for annual awards

Colorful art, beautiful landscaping, community building activities, cheerful holiday displays and clean alleys are just a few examples of how Tempeans make a difference in their community.

To honor residents who go above and beyond to help neighborhoods shine, Tempe is accepting nominations for the 2016 State of the Neighborhood Awards.

Superstar neighbors can be nominated in categories like Neighbor of the Year, Property Beautification and Alley Upkeep. Nominations are due Feb. 10. Go to www.tempe.gov/stateoftheneighborhoods for a nomination form.

Boy's autism takes positive new direction as Mt. Pointe sports announcer

By Deborah Hilcove

With stadium lights blazing and the high school band playing, Mountain Pointe's football team—the Pride—ran onto the field. Roaring cheers greeted them. During the first timeout, a student announcer thanked several sponsors.

When he finished, Tommy Ponesse gave a big smile and thumbs up to his mentor.

Until the first grade, Ponesse was nonverbal. When he did begin speaking, his parents realized he was intrigued by other voices, as well as his own, and often repeated sounds and words.

Tests confirmed autism.

Correctly called autism spectrum disorder, the condition is one of complex brain and developmental disorder, characterized by repetitive behavior and affecting communicative and interpersonal skills. Symptoms range from mild, including those of Asperger's syndrome, to more severe.

People with this condition may have high intelligence but lack social skills. Many scientists, artists, musicians, educators and public speakers are autistic in varying degrees.

As many as one in 68 American children may be affected with ASD—an estimated three million—with an unexplained 10-fold increase in the last 40 years. Studies show the condition four to five times more common in boys than girls, with one in 42 boys being diagnosed with the disorder and only one of 189 girls.

Researchers do not agree on causes, but extensive research suggests genetics, brain structure, and

environmental impact. Although many parents fault vaccines containing thimerosal, a mercury-based preservative used until 2001, nearly all leading health organizations, including the Center for Disease Control and the National Institute of Health, say there is no relation.

There is no known cure, either, although two treatments approved by the medical mainstream include applied behavioral analysis and anti-psychotic medication to reduce aggression.

If parents suspect autism in their child—perhaps language delays, eye contact avoidance, or unusual sensitivity to light or sound—their pediatrician can order diagnostic tests, for hearing or genetic studies, including a Fragile X syndrome test, to detect chromosomal changes. Other tests might include an EEG to test brain waves and detect seizures, or a brain MRI if the head is unusually large or small.

Lou and Mili Ponesse have encouraged their son to be as social as possible. They credit the teachers at Pueblo middle school with helping Tommy make the transition to Mountain Pointe.

"It's a difficult dynamic in school," Ponesse says. "But we've been lucky. Tommy's special education teacher, Jason Johnson, noticed he liked to use his voice and a microphone."

Ponesse continues, "Mr. Johnson suggested Tommy try the public address as an announcer, and last year invited him up to the press box during basketball season. He introduced the game, you know, the rules and expectations of good sportsmanship. He introduced the starters, and by

the end of the year, he developed a flair for it. He had a good time and felt like part of the team.

This year, Matthew Henry, the main announcer, invited Tommy to help out and read the list of 20 or 30 sponsors, thanking a few during each timeout. It means a lot for the staff members and teachers to help him be included, keep him involved."

The Ponesse family has explored options, too. They are active with the Southwest Autism Research and Resource Center and Autism Speaks, the nation's largest grassroots autism walk program, to help raise funds for research and awareness about the increasing prevalence of autism.

Because their son loves singing—"whatever is currently popular," his father says—they have enrolled him at ASU's Music Therapy Clinic, Higher Octave Healing, where Tommy belongs to a three-member rock band, "Wreckless."

Although his favorite gig is singing, he takes turns on drums and guitar, rocking out with classic 80s music by Journey and Bon Jovi.

Although there is no proven cure for ASD, early diagnosis and proper medical care, together with a supportive family, can reduce the symptoms and help a child grow and learn new skills.

Tommy Ponesse's father laughs and says, "Tommy didn't speak for his first few years. Now we can't keep him quiet!"

For further information about the Autism Walk, visit www.autismspeaks.org and www.autismcenter.org; and for information about ASU's Music Therapy Clinic, www.HigherOctaveHealing.org

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The top 100 businesses in Chandler at the Chandler 100. Pictured are Chamber Board Chair, Camille Cisek from Orbital, ATK, Chandler School District staff, Superintendent, Camille Casteel holding Certificate, Mayor Jay Tibshraeny, far right. Photo by Everardo Keeme



The Chamber's Holiday Enchantment—Taste of Chandler® held at Big Two Toyota, was a festive kick off to the holidays, a portion of the proceeds to benefit Chamber Community Foundation scholarships. Photo by Everardo Keeme Photography

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Chandler Chamber—Your Chandler Business Connection

With over 1,300 stakeholders in the Chamber's business community we are proud to offer our members over 300 events, seminars, forums to festivals to expand their business horizons and grow their companies. Join us to improve the economic, civic and cultural fortitude of the region.

Save the Date for Meet the Elected Officials

Friday, January 8, 2016 the Chandler Chamber will host the Meet the Elected Officials Breakfast at 7:30 am at the Hilton Chandler/Phoenix located at 2929 W Frye Road, Chandler AZ. This is your chance to meet the 2015 Arizona State Legislators. As one of the Chamber premiere legislative events, this breakfast will feature Jennings Imel from the U.S. Chamber of Commerce giving updates on the current discussions in Washington. The Chamber will also unveil it's 2016 "How We Stand" document which depicts legislative agendas and priorities for the coming year. The public is welcome. To register for this event visit, www.chandlerchamber.com.

Calendar of Events

Wednesday, December 9, 7:30 am to 9 am

Wake Up Chandler

Kyrene Schools, Brisas Campus, 777 N Desert Breeze Blvd. East, #1, Chandler, AZ 85226
Start your Morning off with networking to make connections that will grow your business. Bring business cards and a door prize to showcase your business.

Thursday, December 10, 7:30 am to 9am

Chamber 101

Chandler Chamber of Commerce, 25 S Arizona Place, #201, Chandler AZ, 85225
Meet the Chamber staff and see how we can help you grow your business. Learn more about the Chamber and how becoming a member will benefit you and your business. Register at www.chandlerchamber.com

Thursday, December 17, 5 pm to 7 pm

Business After Business Mixer

25 S Arizona Pl, # 201, Chandler, AZ 85225

Tour the Chamber's newly expanded and renovated offices while growing your business. Visit www.chandlerchamber.com to register.



Burst of Butterflies hosted the Wake Up Chandler mixer in November



The Chamber Young Executive Series was at the Crowne Plaza San Marcos for Fright Night Networking



Sun Lakes Nails recently celebrated their Chandler Chamber membership with a ribbon cutting

Film Fare with M.V. Moorhead

'Creed' brings back the classic Stalone, and the clichés as well

Creed

The title refers to the son of Apollo Creed, Rocky's opponent-turned-friend in the Rocky films.

Our hero, Adonis Johnson (Michael B. Jordan) is the posthumously born and then orphaned product of an extramarital affair by the fighter, rather graciously raised by Apollo's widow (Phylicia Rashad).

Adonis grows up a rich kid, but pursues a boxing career anyway, not using his dad's name initially because he wants to make it on his own.

Unable to get L.A. trainers to take him seriously, he travels to Philly and talks his dad's old pal Rocky Balboa, now a lonely widower and restaurateur, into training him.

Word of his lineage leaks out, and this leads to a heavyweight title bout in Liverpool with a Brit brute (Tony Bellew) desperate for a payday.

Creed's director is the talented Ryan

Coogler, of 2013's intense yet lucid Fruitvale Station.

His naturalistic touch is similar to that of John G. Avildsen, who gave such a lived-in, convincing atmosphere to the 1976 Rocky.

Creed needs this edge, because it's every bit as melodramatic, sloppily sentimental and realistically dubious as any other Rocky movie.

And as with the original, knowing this isn't likely to help you resist. Creed is a hair overlong—it has a plot complication or two more than it needs—but it quickly pulls us into investing in the hero's fortunes, and Coogler's handling of the



fight is speedy and supple.

Stallone slips easily into his classic old role and is very entertaining. After four decades, his line readings have become such a cliché that it's hard not to chuckle at them, but the chuckles are affectionate.

Probably the biggest key to the film's success, however, is Michael B. Jordan, who also starred in Fruitvale Station.

His Adonis is both wary and callow in a way that's disarming; you can believe that Rocky would take an avuncular interest in him.

He's also given a love interest, a club singer (Tessa Thompson) who lives in the apartment downstairs. This strand felt obligatory at first, but the two play their scenes together with such directness that I came to care far more about their relationship than about the silly fight.

Love the Coopers

The Coopers, and their extremely First-World problems, being:

Dad (John Goodman) wants to leave mom (Diane Keaton) because he's sick of her putting the concerns of their grown kids ahead of their own relationship.

She's talked him into sticking around for one more picturesque family Christmas in their handsome suburban Pittsburgh home.

Meanwhile, Gramps (Alan Arkin) has bonded with a young diner waitress (Amanda Seyfried) and now she's planning to move away.

Son (Ed Helms) has lost his job, and is hiding it from his family. Daughter (Olivia Wilde), dawdling in the Pittsburgh airport, meets a

handsome young solidier (Jake Lacy) on his way to deployment and talks him into posing as her boyfriend for the holiday in hopes of avoiding the disappointed, disapproving, worried looks of her parents.

Gee, wouldn't it be something if two of them actually fell in love?

Directed by Jessie Nelson from a script by Steven Rogers (which went into production under the better title *The Most Wonderful Time*), *Love the Coopers* is slickly produced and more likely to put you in a holiday mood than it really deserves to be. Partly this is thanks to a Starbucks-compilation-CD-style soundtrack of genteel holiday numbers, including Sting's lovely version of "Soul Cake."

Partly it's because of the underrated winter beauty of Pittsburgh.

But mostly, as you might guess, it's because of the ability of that cast to engage, even with fairly blah material. Along with the above, by the way, the ensemble includes June Squibb as a dotty old aunt, and Marisa Tomei and Anthony Mackie as, respectively, Keaton's shoplifting sister and the cop stuck with taking her in.

This promises to become the most interesting strand—Mackie gives his role a little tension and sting, and he and Tomei have a nice rapport—but it peters out without a real payoff.

There's also narration, but both the (unmistakable) voice of the famous speaker and the identity of the narrator seem meant to be a surprise until the end credits.

Creed and Love the Coopers are both rated PG-13 and play at Tempe Marketplace, Chandler Fashion 20, Arizona Mills and other multiplexes Valleywide.



Parents and guardians: Over 80% of young people ages 10-18 say their parents are the leading influence on their decision to drink or not drink. **THEY REALLY ARE LISTENING!** Talk with them. The sooner you talk with your children about alcohol, the greater chance you have of influencing their decisions about drinking.

Some simple ideas:

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

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to reduce underage drinking and drug use

The Tempe Coalition, a partnership between the City of Tempe and Tempe Community Council.
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An inside look at Jerusalem, as it was yesterday and is today

The Wailing Wall in Jerusalem is the holiest of sites in Judaism and the last vestige of the Second Temple. Women and men pray separately, often leaving written prayer intentions in the crevices between the massive stones. The lush Bahai Gardens of Haifa built on Mount Carmel attract tourists from around the world to take in the verdant, beautifully symmetrical landscape.

— Wrangler News photo essay by Joyce Coronel

A joyful visit at a joyous time of the year Wrangler journalist on third trip to Israel

Wrangler News Editor Joyce Coronel toured the Holy Land last month as a guest of the Israeli government. Her impressions and her photos appear on these pages, in perfect timing with the approaching Jewish and Christian holidays.

Tempe resident Erika Jacobs and Corona del Sol graduate Jason Soronson don't know each other but share an uncommon insight.

Both Jacobs and Soronson were selected to travel to Israel and get in touch with their Jewish roots as part of Birthright Israel, an innovative partnership between Israel's government and donors.

Young adults ages 18-26 who are selected have the opportunity to travel to the Jewish nation for 10 days.

It's a trip that many believers long to make but often cannot. As Chanukah and Christmas approach, faithful followers of Judaism and Christianity the world over turn their hearts toward Jerusalem, a focal point for both religions.

Jacobs, who volunteers with the Make a Wish Foundation, said her mother is Catholic and her father is Jewish. "I thought it was really great to experience some of the oldest history in the world, just to be able to see all the sights and be able to finally understand what everyone had been talking about in terms of Passover," Jacobs said.

"I think it definitely helped me connect more with my cultural roots." I caught up with Jacobs recently as she stood in front of the Western Wall, or Wailing Wall, Judaism's holiest site.

The wall is the last vestige of the Second Temple and stands on the Temple Mount in Jerusalem's Old City.

People travel from all over the world to pray at the site, often leaving their prayer intentions written on a slip of paper they insert between cracks in the ancient wall. After paying my respects — and leaving a few prayer intentions of my own — I politely asked those assembled a short distance away if any of them would want to comment on what it meant for them to be there.

Imagine my surprise when Jacobs stepped forward and told me she was from Tempe. After a week in Israel, I hadn't had a taste of home in a while. What were the chances of us meeting? We exchanged phone numbers and reconnected after we'd both returned.

I was curious as to what Jacobs thought the highlight of her experience was. It's a small country, but packed with a rich history. Each time I travel there, I learn something new.

For Jacobs, the best part was a visit to the Dead Sea.

At 1400 feet below sea level, it's the lowest place on earth and also the saltiest. The water is 37 percent saline and as you walk along the beach, you find large chunks of the stuff.

There's also the dark mud tourists spread all over their bodies that's supposed to have a healing quality to it.

"It'll make you look younger," our tour guide, Ziv Cohen, told us. "Be careful with that. We don't want

you to disappear," he told a fellow journalist, the 27-year-old Matt Hadro of Washington, D.C.

"I know there's a lot more impressive things to be your favorite but I really loved going to the Dead Sea," Jacobs told me.

She also enjoyed getting to know some of her fellow travelers.

"My favorite part of the trip overall was the camaraderie and the bonding with all the other people who were on Birthright as well. I made some



The Church of the Beatitudes overlooks the Sea of Galilee and the site where Jesus Christ is said to have given his Sermon on the Mount.

pretty good friendships out of the trip," Jacobs said.

Soronson offered a similar take, touched by the warmth of the Israelis who welcomed him when he made his Birthright trip.

There's usually a sense of unease when traveling to a foreign land, he said, but he saw something different in Israel.

"It was a really unique feeling being so welcomed and at home while being so far away from your own country," Soronson said. "Every Israeli I encountered was so warm and welcoming and would not hesitate to invite you to stay at their house or come over for dinner."

Did I mention the food in Israel is amazing? It was a little hard to face my lonely bowl of oatmeal back in Chandler after a tour of Tel Aviv, Haifa, Nazareth and Jerusalem. The Israeli hotels offer a buffet each morning and this isn't like anything you've seen elsewhere. From the freshly chopped cucumber and tomato salad to delicate pastries, smoked fish and pomegranate-seeded fresh fruit salad, breakfast is something for the tourist to dream about.

Then it's off to see the incredibly lush Bahai hanging gardens in Haifa or a sail on the Sea of Galilee. Near the shore is a museum that houses an ancient fishing boat discovered some 30 years ago. Archeologists say it is 2,000 years old and is typical of the boats of the era. Standing inside the museum, not far from the gentle waves of Galilee, you can picture St. Peter and his companions fishing.

In Bethlehem, visitors enter the Basilica of the Nativity where they can kneel on the silver star that marks the spot where Jesus Christ was born. As the neighborhoods around South Tempe and West Chandler begin to glow with Christmas lights, it's a good time to remember that long ago moment when a young Jewish maiden gave birth to the one many throughout the world revere as Savior.

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The Last Word

Arizona forests: A vital role in sustaining our state's quality of life

By Jeff Lane



Why is it important to residents of Tempe, Chandler and other area cities to understand that the health of Arizona's forests is critically important to the Valley's water supply and its long-term sustainability and quality of life?

For starters, Chandler and Tempe both obtain a majority of their raw water supplies from Salt River Project. That water comes from the national forests in northern Arizona by way of rain and snowmelt

making their way to reservoirs on the Salt and Verde rivers, which represent vital surface water supplies to the Valley's downstream users.

Unfortunately, increasingly devastating severe wildfires, drought and historic forest management practices have affected the health of these Arizona forests, impacting the sustainability and quality of our water supplies.

At a conference in October hosted by SRP, business leaders, lawmakers and others concerned about Arizona's forest health convened to hear a discussion about the importance of improving conditions in northern Arizona, but many asked about how to walk the walk. That's where the Northern Arizona Forest Foundation comes in.

NAFF is a program that invests in on-the-ground projects on national forest lands to improve the health of the forests and the function of their watersheds.

Investors are stepping up to participate in the NAFF, which is a partnership between SRP and the National Forest Foundation working with the U.S. Forest Service.

These kinds of collaborative and shared

contributions have allowed NAFF to increase the number of projects that interested parties can invest in, said Marcus Selig, interim vice president of the National Forest Foundation.

"These contributions increase local capacity and landscape benefits," he said, "ultimately moving us toward a healthy and more resilient watershed that can withstand the impacts from catastrophic wildfire and drought."

Forest fund contributions are collected and administered by NFF, which then uses the collected funds to implement these projects.

More about how communities can become involved in the effort to invest in the NAFF or help promote the importance of the health of Arizona's forests can be learned by visiting the healthy forests website at www.srpnet.com/water/forest/default.aspx.

For any still motivated to make an investment in the forest fund, contact the NFF's Marcus Selig at 720-437-0290 or SRP's Rebecca Davidson at 602-236-6617.

Jeff Lane is on the staff of SRP's Media Relations Department.

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