

Dec. 16, 2023 -

Jan. 12, 2024

Vol. 33, No. 770

Our 34th year
of publication



WRANGLER NEWS

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— Wrangler News photo by Andrew Lwowski

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CHEVROLET

FIND NEW ROADS™



Beanies more than just a pasttime for enterprising teen (Sew what? you ask)

Story & photos by Andrew Lwowski

Cody Jack Armstrong is like any average seventh grader. He enjoys soccer, especially ASU soccer, has Fathead stickers on his bedroom walls and apparatus for weightlifting in the corner. What Cody also has is a pair of sewing machines and about a half dozen storage tubs with beanies and materials waiting to be cut and sewn.

Cody, who is his grandmother's only grandson, said he used to sew with her, and when the opportunity arose for a textile class in sixth grade, Cody signed up.

There, his teacher, Mrs. Smith, taught him how to sew and stitch the warm caps.

That was in May of this year and now, seven months later, Cody could be on the verge of opening his own shop.

"Mrs. Smith taught him how to make the beanies," Cody's mother said. "His grandmother is the one that first taught him how to sew, and Ms. Kari (a family friend) is the one that has been mentoring him."

Kari, who also has a sewing business, makes leotards, and even helped Cody create and print his "Cody Jack" logo, which he sews onto each handmade cap, and recommended he take part in boutiques.

When Cody's grandfather was hospitalized, he made him a beanie to counter the cold rooms. Around that same time, a family friend was diagnosed with cancer and, as a result, lost his hair. That's when Cody made it a mission to create the softest possible beanie for him.

Cody Jack Armstrong keeps his beanie-making setup in his bedroom, equipped with everything he needs for his fledgling business.

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Undertaking his small, home-based business hasn't been smooth, however. Finding the right materials and learning how to sew the beanies in a way that won't itch or create discomfort for someone with no hair has been tricky.

"Fleece is typically softer so it feels nicer on the head," Cody said.

He tried making some with liners and some that are reversible, but he is still experimenting with various options.

"At the end of the day, his goal is to donate 10 percent of his proceeds," his mom said, adding that he also hopes to donate fabric to his teacher and, if possible, beanies to kids at Phoenix Children's Hospital, where the friend is receiving treatment.

After word of Cody's beanie-making got around, his friends have been hoping for custom designs. "People asked me to make them some, so I would just make

a couple and have them try them on," he said. Since he has been taking orders from friends and family, his mom says the sports-themed ones are the hot item right now, however the ones with gummy bears sell nearly as well.

Cody has even tried selling his collection at a boutique at Dayspring United Methodist Church, but inclement weather at the time dampened his turnout.

He is now ramping up production with as many as four beanies a day to create enough inventory for his a boutique planned for next year.

While his business is still developing and he is still finding a production rhythm, Cody is taking orders for ultra soft and handmade beanies with custom designs.

For inquiries or orders, those interested can contact cnamstrong@cox.net for more information.



Cody's bedroom is filled with tubs of materials and beanies waiting to be made and shipped out.

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It's Christmastime. Neighbors light up the night.





Creativity reigns once again in West Chandler

West Orchid Lane was again a prime destination this year for celebrating the holiday season. Nearly every home along the way participates, each one with decorations seeming to top those of years past. Featuring thousands of lights, holiday music, blowups and animal cut-outs, the neighborhood also includes Santa's sleigh and a booth for family photos.

—Wrangler News photo album by Andrew Lwowski



Hospital's trauma chief outlines cautions for holiday decorating

Home accidents seem to occur more frequently during the holidays, and staff at Dignity Health Chandler Regional Medical Center say it's a good time to be extra alert.

Falls from ladders and other holiday-related accidents are common—and they can be catastrophic, resulting in debilitating brain and spinal cord injuries.

"Holiday decorating is fun and festive, but it's important to do it safely," says Dr. Charles Hu, medical director of Trauma, Critical Care and Acute Care Surgery for Chandler Regional.

"I've treated many patients who have suffered major injuries while they were stringing holiday lights or hanging decorations, and in every case, the injuries were avoidable."

About 160 Christmas decorating-related injuries occur each day in the U.S. during time of the year, with more than 40 percent of the incidents involving falls, according to the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission.

In the 2022 holiday season (Nov. 1, 2021 - Jan. 31, 2022), about 14,800 people were treated in U.S. hospital emergency departments due to decorating-related injuries, the CPSC said.

Holiday falls aren't limited to tumbles from outdoor ladders and roofs. Decorators may be tempted to stand on a chair when placing ornaments high on a Christmas tree, one of the common errors in judgment that can result in a serious injury.

Year-round, especially during November and December, Hu says people should be careful when using a ladder. In addition to making sure the ladder is on a firm, solid surface, they are advised not to climb ladders

alone and to resist stretching to hang decorations.

It is also important not to consume alcoholic beverages while decorating, as dizziness or lightheadedness can contribute to falls.

"Hanging holiday lights brightens the season, but we urge people to do it safely," Hu says.

"When we're celebrating, we don't always think about safety. One poor decision can have lifelong consequences."

Chandler Regional's Level I Trauma Center and its injury prevention program have also compiled a list of fall prevention safety tips for holiday decorating:

1. Don't drink and decorate.
2. Don't decorate alone.
3. Check your ladder before using it: Confirm it is in good condition, and don't use ladders with loose or missing parts.
4. Set the ladder properly: Make sure the base is on a firm, solid surface. Use the 4-to-1 rule—for every four feet you have to climb, move the base one foot away from the wall. Always maintain three points of contact.
5. While climbing: If you feel tired or dizzy, or are prone to losing your balance, stay off ladders.
6. Wear slip resistant shoes. Don't climb while carrying tools or other objects. Don't have someone climb up the same ladder to bring you something.
7. Finish ladder work safely: Never get off a ladder from the side. Make sure to climb all the way to the ground.
8. Keep kids safe on the ground. Secure all cords to the ground and keep big items off the floor to prevent kids from tripping.

2023

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Veteran educator will guide high schools

Tempe Union High School District's governing board has voted unanimously to appoint Dr. Stacia Wilson as the district's new superintendent, succeeding Dr. Kevin Mendivil, who resigned three months ago.

Wilson has been serving as acting superintendent since Mendivil quit following a discussion of ways to improve students' academic performance, based on test scores.



Said Governing Board President Armando Montero in a statement regarding the change: "Dr. Wilson stepped into the role of Acting Superintendent in August and has been an exemplary leader. The Governing Board has full confidence in Dr. Wilson and we believe that her leadership style and skill set are the best fit for the District, our students and families, and the community."

Wilson has spent 25 years in the district, beginning as an English teacher at Desert Vista High School. She went on to serve in administrative roles within the district, including principal of Tempe High and associate superintendent, her most recent position. Wilson will assume her duties as superintendent beginning July 1, remaining in an acting capacity through the 2023-24 school year.



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Commentary

Shopping, dining locally called a great way to support our city



Randy Keating

By Randy Keating

Greetings Tempeans and Happy Holiday season! Give the gift of local love this holiday season by shopping and dining right here in our beautiful city.

According to Local First Arizona, when you shop at a locally owned business, 45

cents of every dollar stays in Arizona! Shopping and dining in Tempe is a great way to support our community. While I am admittedly not much of a shopper, I do love to frequent several local Tempe restaurants and would encourage you and yours to do the same.

At least once a week, you can find me at Passage to India. Known for their authentic and delicious Indian dishes, only the best quality imported meats, spices, and fresh ingredients coexist in their kitchen.

The next time you find yourself on Elliott and Rural, the aroma alone may be enough to summon you indoors. Passage to India is family-owned and staffed by an incredibly kind and knowledgeable group of individuals. Make sure to try the house-made mango and pistachio ice cream!

Another great south Tempe spot is The Porch. I'm there nearly every Wednesday evening for trivia. The Porch is a lively, retro-inspired backyard bar serving creative pub food and classic cocktails. Beyond Wednesday trivia, they also offer DJs at night, brunch parties on the weekend, happy hour every weekday, daily specials and countless TVs for viewing sports.

You would be hard-pressed to not enjoy yourself at The Porch, and with activities and bites for the whole family, it is the perfect neighborhood spot to

spread some holiday cheer.

Since 1994, RigaTony's has been locally owned and operated right here in Tempe. RigaTony's is a family friendly, family-owned Italian restaurant reminiscent of New York's Little Italy.

Owners Mike and Chrissy have been recognized by Tempe Tourism Office as "Hospitality Champions."

Like many dining establishments, RigaTony's faced uncertainty in the wake of the pandemic, but they rose to the occasion and were able to temporarily transform their restaurant into a functional drive-thru facility. Fast forward to today, where they have implemented and invested in various tools to keep their staff and customers as safe as possible.

Despite 2020's struggles, they never failed to give back to the community, donating to local nonprofits such as Paz De Cristo Outreach Center and Tempe Community Action Agency. Please give back to them by visiting their restaurant on Warner Road and enjoying a delicious meal!

Here's wishes for a warm holiday season and a very happy new year. Be sure to say hello if you run into me while deciding to dine local!

Randy Keating is a member of the Tempe City Council

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SPORTS



Corona del Sol's basketball team, featuring 14 seniors, has created an identity of tough, gritty defense.

2nd half shores up Aztecs' win over Red Mountain

Story & photos by Andrew Lwowski

The Aztecs had trouble containing the perimeter, yet trailed by only a couple of points at the half against the Red Mountain Lions.

In the second half, however, the Aztec defense tightened up, and a scoring run broke the game open for Corona.

That's how the young season has gone for the Aztecs, says coach Neil MacDonald, whose

team is now sitting 3-1 after a 69-52 win in Mesa.

"We didn't communicate very well in the first half; we switched defenses a couple of times and we didn't do a very good job talking about defense," MacDonald said. "So, we left shooters open, and they made shots. In the second half we did a much better job of communicating and we didn't really change anything—we just did what we were doing better."

Senior power forward Bo Dolinsek said the

team talked about cleaning up their mistakes before moving into and controlling the second half. He paced the Aztecs with 21 points, and his success came from the paint with his 6-foot-7 frame.

"(I) just got to the paint and the free throw line, and scored easy buckets. This team has a lot of heart; we're 14 seniors, we're all together and we know how to play well together."

This year's team is composed of nearly all seniors, and is much shorter than last year's

team. But that doesn't matter to Dolinsek or MacDonald.

It's the continuity and playing style that has driven the fast start to the season.

"All the guys that are playing right now played a lot of minutes last year," MacDonald said.

"We got a lot of interchangeable pieces that we lost in size, but now we can run a lot of bodies of people and defense has been key right now – that was the key tonight.

"We didn't execute very well offensively, but in the fourth quarter, we defended really well."

While shorter, the gritty defense of the Aztecs has helped generate turnovers and past-break points. It was evident against the Lions, and guys like senior Crew Swearingen, who had 15 points with a handful of steals.

MacDonald says it's a luxury to have players like Dolinsek and Swearingen, but it's a complete team effort and the chemistry of his roster is the leading factor.

"Every guy in this program is one of our guys," he said.

"We have no transfers here. They're all guys that started here as freshmen."

While it's only four games into the season and the Aztecs are still finding their legs, the players are excited and MacDonald has high aspirations for what his team can accomplish.

"I think that we've got a lot of weapons and when we get everybody healthy and firing on all cylinders, we might actually be pretty good," he said.

"We might be really hard to guard and we know we can guard people."

Added Dolinsek: "I'm really confident about this year. I think we can go a long way."



The Corona del Sol boys varsity basketball team turned up the pressure in the second half versus the Red Mountain Lions, coming home with a 69-52 victory and improving their record to 3-1 on the season. The gritty defense shut down the perimeter shooting for the Lions, while all players for the Aztecs made their contributions during a 28-6 run late in the game.

Sports Notebook . . . with Alex Zener

1 point makes big difference in finals

The Corona del Sol boys basketball team missed taking home the championship trophy at the Gilbert High School's Jungle Holiday Tournament by one point, 69-68, on Nov. 24.

"Although we lost in the finals to Gilbert by one point," said head coach **Neil MacDonald**, "we played well but missed 10 free throws, which you just cannot do against good teams. Overall, we were pleased with the improvement we saw each game as the tournament progressed."

The Aztecs have won five out of their first seven games but still have areas to continue working on.

"Although we have had a solid 5-2 start to the season and we are happy with where we are at this early point in the year, we still have a long ways to go, and a lot of areas to improve in," MacDonald said.

Focusing on skills that need improvement as the season progresses may be easier than other seasons because the Aztecs have 14 seniors and only one junior on this year's team, which is not usually the norm for a high school basketball team.

"All 14 of our senior players began with us as freshman and it's nice to see them all finishing Corona's basketball program together," said MacDonald. "Obviously, we think experience and maturity will be advantageous for us as we go forward."

"Having this much experience on the team allows us to be much more focused on details and less on teaching how we do things in our program. These players have already learned those lessons."

Having 14 seniors with experience has also given the Aztecs a lot of depth on both offense and defense.

"We believe our depth is a key strength of our team," said MacDonald.

One of the Aztecs offensive threats among the senior starters was named No. 42 on the Arizona Republic's top 100 best boys high school basketball players of 2023-24.

The 6-foot-7 senior, **Bo Dolinsek**, was named to the first-team all-region last season when he was the leading scorer and rebounder in the Central Region



Corona basketball's head coach Neil MacDonald said he is excited about what his team can do this season after the Aztecs secured another win on the road over the Red Mountain Lions. The team plays 94 feet of defense and can generate offense from deep or in the paint, but most importantly, says MacDonald, is his team has fun. He says his group of boys have been together for all four years and enjoy their time with one another on and off the court.

and he averaged a double-double while playing during the high school summer competition this past June.

"Bo has grown tremendously as a young man and as a player, particularly over the last year," said MacDonald. "His game has matured along with him. He is a threat to score equally inside and out."

"In addition to being able to shoot baskets in the paint, Bo shoots a very high percentage from the three-point range and is excellent at the free-throw line," said MacDonald. "He began the year averaging around 21 points and 10 rebounds a game, and he is still improving."

In the Aztecs 47-34 win over Mesa Mountain View on Dec. 8, Dolinsek scored 28 points and had 13 rebounds.

"Most importantly, Bo is not afraid of the moment," said MacDonald. "He wants the ball in his hands at crucial times, which is great to watch."

Dolinsek is not the only offensive weapon the Aztecs have on their team.

"**Crew Swearingen** is a proven 6A varsity scoring threat who is capable of putting up big numbers," said MacDonald.

For instance, Swearingen and Dolinsek were both named MVP's in Gilbert's Jungle Holiday Tournament held Nov. 20-24.

In the game against Higley, as part of that tournament, Swearingen scored 16 points with 12 of his 16 points coming from behind the three-point line.

Against Red Mountain, on Dec. 5, Swearingen scored 15 points along with five steals.

"**DeShaun (DJ) Johnson** has had some big nights offensively for us, as well," said MacDonald. "DJ along with **Jayson Covington**, **LaVelle Lewis** and **Anderson Lim**, have all shown they are capable of going on a run on any given night."

Johnson, the only player on the team who is not a senior, had 17 points and nine rebounds in the Aztecs 69-52 win over Red Mountain and 10 points against both Higley and Gilbert.

Covington had nine points and four rebounds against Gilbert while Lewis scored nine points in both the Aztecs win over Arizona College Prep and Desert Ridge during the Jungle Holiday Tournament.

The Aztecs are not short on defenders either. "Covington, Lewis and Johnson, and **Justin Lam** have all shown the ability to be excellent on-ball defenders," said MacDonald.

The Aztecs have been successful in stealing the ball this season, as well. Covington had three steals against Red Mountain and two steals each against both Casteel and Gilbert while Lim had three steals against Arizona College Prep.

Additional members of the team who contribute to the team on and off the court include seniors **Zak Ali, Mihail Kostadinovski, Isaac Elzy, Tyler Lelakowski, RJ Rucker, Shokoi Yarde, Mason Alexander** and **Nick Hille**.

Corona only had two games scheduled before the semester break. On Dec. 11 they were scheduled to play at home against Pinnacle,

Pinnacle, with a 7-2 record, was averaging 73.6 points a game and ranked No. 12 in 6A while the

Aztecs at 5-2 were ranked No. 8 in 6A and were averaging 61.9 points a game.

On Dec. 14, the Aztecs were scheduled to play at Gilbert Highland, their first 6A Central Region foe.

The Hawks had the same 5-2 record as the Aztecs but were ranked No. 6 in the 6A division. Corona is not scheduled to play again until Jan. 4 against the Chandler High School Wolves.

Marcos de Niza basketball

The Marcos de Niza boys basketball team, playing in the 4A Division, with a 4-4 overall record, defeated Mohave High School from Bullhead City by a close two-point margin, 47-45, on Dec. 9.

The Padres leading scorers are junior James Steward, who averages 17.4 points a game, and senior Jhaimier Walker at 14.3 points a game. Sophomore Elorik Washington is third on the team with almost nine points a game.

The 6-ft-8 Steward not only leads the team in scoring and field goal percentage at 68 percent, but he also leads the team in rebounds at 12.4 a game. In addition, Steward is ranked in the top 37 nationally with an average of 3.4 blocks per game.

In the Padres game at Prescott on Dec. 6, Steward was outstanding. He scored 20 points and snagged 12 rebounds in the Padres 73-57 loss, to record a double-double.

Walker is the Padres three-point percentage leader on the team, hitting 47 percent of his trey attempts.

Washington leads the team with 2.3 assists a game followed by senior Jamari Johnson and junior Chimal Garcia, both with almost two assists a game.

Senior DJ Drew is first on the team with two steals a game and a 70 percent free throw percentage while junior Myrie Drew is second on the team in three-point field goal percentages and third on the team in rebounds with 33.

Additional players who are part of the team and contribute to the Padres overall success on and off the court are juniors Amare Clark and Josiah Cockrell, sophomores Tisean George and Damien Baker along with freshman Ryan Doyle.

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Music talent to shine at Dayspring services on Christmas Eve

By Janie Magruder

If you're like me, you didn't dare deviate last month from the annual crowd-pleasing Thanksgiving dinner menu — roast turkey, stuffing and mashed potatoes drenched in rich gravy, (canned) green bean casserole with French fried onions, (canned) jellied cranberry sauce, dinner roles and pumpkin pie.

As lyricist Sheldon Harnick wrote in "Fiddler on the Roof" — Tradition!

Acknowledging the heartfelt chords that often are struck this time of year, Dayspring United Methodist Church in Tempe will serve up a heaping helping of convention with a side of something special at two Christmas Eve Communion services.

"Because of the place that Christmas holds in the liturgical year and in people's emotions, we want it to be really special, because it is really special. It's tantamount to bringing out the good china," said David Schildkret, Dayspring's director of music ministries.

"You don't deviate from the traditional songs on Christmas Eve. What people love is hearing 'Silent Night.'"

Dayspring is pulling out all the stops at 8 p.m. and 10 p.m. on Saturday, Dec. 24, with rare opportunities to hear an 11-piece string orchestra, comprising ASU graduate students.

The church is leaning into its considerable in-house talent, including Chandler resident Schildkret, who retired from ASU in May after a 21-year career as a professor and director of choral activities, and pianist Robert Mills, an ASU clinical professor and accompanist for ASU's Music Theatre and Opera. Nathan Arch, who holds a doctorate in collaborative piano from ASU, will play the organ, and the Burn City Quartet, ASU graduates who are Dayspring's artists-in-residence this year, is the core of the evening's orchestra.

"Dayspring has an extraordinary music program because of the level of the talent and the level of worship," Schildkret said. "But it's not excellence just for the sake of excellence, because we're trying to deliver a message about the birth of God's son that we think is important, and that deserves to be

done in the best way."

Because Christmas hymns typically are arranged for brass, not strings, Schildkret is arranging four hymns and one anthem for the orchestra, piano, organ and 50-voice Dayspring Celebration Chorale. They pieces include "Jesus, Jesus, Rest Your Head," "Go Tell in on the Mountain," and "Love Came Down at Christmas," among others. "Silent Night" will be sung outside in the courtyard by candlelight.

"Brass instruments are festive, and strings can be, too, but strings are more sound-equivalent to candlelight," Schildkret said. "There's a certain warmth and sweetness to them."

Pastor Jeff Procter-Murphy thinks strings will produce a more tranquil celebration.

"Music has a deep, rich history in the Methodist church — co-founder Charles Wesley penned some 6,000 hymn texts, including 'Hark, the Herald Angels Sing,' and music has always held a prominent place in Sunday celebrations at Dayspring," Procter-Murphy said. "This year's Christmas Eve services will feature extraordinary musicians leading the congregation in carols arranged especially for this Silent Night by David."

Dayspring's aim is to choose music, often with updated, progressive lyrics, that reflect the church's commitments to inclusion, justice, compassion and peace.

Schildkret, a Brooklyn native, joined Dayspring in 2019. He has a long career in music education, conducting and arranging, starting as an undergraduate at Rutgers University, then in master's and doctoral programs at Indiana University. Schildkret's faculty appointments include the University of Rochester and the Salem College School of Music, where he was dean, and at ASU, starting in 2002.

In the community, Schildkret is the new conductor of the Chandler-based Arizona Cantilena Chorale, and is founder and conductor of Euphony Ensemble, comprising professional musicians from the Phoenix area and based at Dayspring. He also directs the Mount Desert Summer Chorale in Maine, and in 2018, he conducted at Carnegie Hall in New York City, and will do so again at the renowned concert venue in 2025.

At both Christmas Eve services, Dayspring will be collecting diapers for AZCEND, a Chandler nonprofit that helps vulnerable people struggling with hunger, poverty and homelessness.

AZCEND CEO Trinity Donovan, a Dayspring member, said any size are welcome, but the greatest need is for sizes 3 and 5.

All are welcome to join Christmas Eve services at Dayspring, 1365 E. Elliot Road, in Tempe.

"I hope people will receive from us that sense of a warm hug," Schildkret said.

'The Journey': Jan. 22 event features survivors' stories about the power of healing

By Barbi Walker-Walsh

Join Amplify Voices, a local nonprofit dedicated to empowering marginalized communities, for a free screening of the documentary "The Journey" on Jan. 22.

This event coincides with Human Trafficking Prevention Month and aims to raise awareness about this critical issue.

"The Journey" offers a compassionate look at the stories of trafficking survivors and their journeys toward healing. The film highlights the diverse experiences that lead to trafficking, showcasing the remarkable strength and resilience of ordinary women who have never spoken openly about their experiences.

Following the screening, Amplify Voices will host a Q&A session with survivors featured in the film, providing an opportunity to learn more about their experiences, ask questions and gain a deeper understanding of an all-too-prevalent issue.

Amplify Voices, founded by Tempe businesswoman Deborah Shapiro, created the non-profit to empower individuals from various marginalized communities through its unique speaker training program.

This powerful program helps individuals find their voice and share their stories, leading to profound personal transformations.

Beyond raising awareness, Amplify serves those who have been historically silenced, working with individuals impacted by trafficking, sexual assault, incarceration and breast cancer. In 2024, they will expand their reach by launching a new initiative focusing on mental wellness.

Amanda Schneider, Amplify Voices' executive director and a survivor, emphasizes the importance of community involvement.

"Raising awareness is the first step in prevention," she said. "This film and event, while emotional, will leave you feeling hopeful, inspired, and deeply connected to humanity."

Join the movement by attending the screening and learning more about Amplify Voices' mission at <https://amplifyvoices.org/>.

Event Details:

- Date: January 22
- Time: 7 p.m.
- Location: Majestic Tempe 7 Theater
- Admission: Free



December - January

A message to all: Remember to vote in Tempe's March 12 election

Six candidates are running for one mayoral seat and three city council seats:

- Mayor Corey Woods is running unopposed.
- Nikki Amberg, Doreen Garlid, Randy Keating, David Lucier and Hugo Tapia and are running for the three Tempe City Council seats.
- Also on the ballot is General Plan 2050.

The general plan is the overarching policy document for the City of Tempe. It reflects the community's vision for the future and is an

expression of how the community wants to grow and change over the next 30 years.

All Arizona cities are required to update their general plans every 10 years. These plans are created in concert with residents, area businesses and other interested people. To view the general plan that was adopted by the City Council on Aug. 24, 2023, visit tempe.gov/2050.

Register to vote by Feb. 12, 2024, for the March 12, 2024 election.

Visit BeBallotReady.Vote to check your voter registration status.

Ballots will be mailed to all registered Tempe voters beginning Feb. 14, 2024. Those ballots may be returned by mail, at Maricopa County drop boxes, or in person at vote centers.

Information about vote centers and ballot drop boxes will be posted to Locations.Maricopa.Vote.

Details about the election are posted on tempe.gov/election.

Say hi to our Park Rangers

If you're out and about in Tempe parks, be on the lookout for our Park Rangers!

The city launched its Park Rangers program in late November, with full-time city employees serving as the community's connections to our parks and preserves.

Rangers will offer a positive, visible presence and community engagement, and they will have the ability to address code of conduct, park rule violations and city code.

Park Rangers will be scheduled to serve at various parks throughout the city and can also be dispatched to address any issues or concerns. To reach a Park Ranger, contact Tempe 311 at 480-350-4311.

Learn more at tempe.gov/ParkRangers.



25th Annual MLK Awards Honoring diversity in our community

The City of Tempe and the Tempe Human Relations Commission will host the 25th Annual Martin Luther King, Jr. Diversity Awards Breakfast on Monday, Jan. 9.

The event begins at 8 a.m. at The Buttes, Marriott Phoenix Resort, 2000 W. Westcourt Way, in Tempe.

This vibrant tradition is a chance to connect, celebrate diversity and honor the impactful work of adults, young people, community groups, schools and businesses. Tickets for the breakfast are \$10.

Purchases can be made by calling 480-350-8979 or by visiting tempe.gov/MLK.

Holiday season changes to waste collection schedule

This holiday season, the City of Tempe will not collect trash, recycling or green waste on Christmas Day and New Year's Day.

All regular collection days will be moved one day later for the week of the holiday.

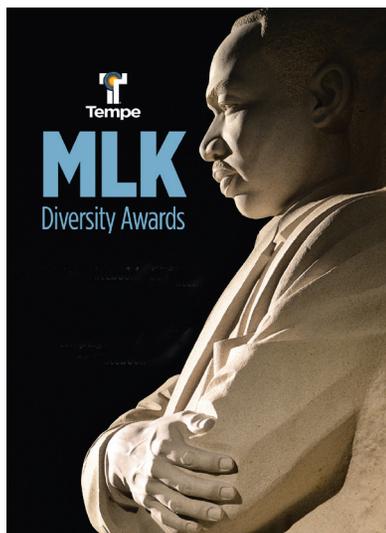
For the weeks of Dec. 25 and Jan. 1, place trash,

recycling or green waste curbside by 6 a.m. the day after your regular scheduled collection day.

All other holidays will follow the normal collection schedule and will not be affected.

For a list of items that can be recycled, visit tempe.gov/recycling.

For information about the holiday collection schedule, call 480-350-4311 or email tempe311@tempe.gov.



www.tempe.gov

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Annual competition open for artists, writers from Jan. 8 through Feb. 20

Aspiring writers and artists are being invited to show off their talents in the 2024 Tempe Writing Contest.

Writers can submit original work for a chance to be published in this year's Tempe Writes: An Anthology.

Artists also can submit original designs for a cover design contest.

Submissions will be accepted Jan. 8 through Feb. 20.

There are three writing genres from which to choose—fiction, poetry or creative nonfiction like memoirs or essays.

Writers can enter one of three categories: high school student, college student or adult.

The contest is open to Tempe residents, Tempe Public Library cardholders, Phoenix-area residents, high school students and college students.

Writers can prepare their

submissions using free resources from the Tempe Public Library, such as personal consultations with the library's writer-in-residence, writing workshops, and the Pen to Paper resources for writers newsletter. Artists and writers can submit their work at tempepubliclibrary.gov/WritingContest Jan. 8 through Feb. 20.

All work entered must use the designated theme of "Celebration" to qualify. Theme areas focus on how to honor personal triumphs, losses, memories and accomplishments.

Entries are judged by members of ASU's creative writing community. Contest winners will be published in Tempe Writes: An Anthology, and receive a cash prize.

The contest is a collaboration between Tempe Public Library, ASU and Friends of the Tempe Public Library.

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Published since 1991 by Newslink LLC

Founder/Publisher: Don Kirkland

Associate Publisher: Ty Tabat

Content Coordinator: Andrew Lwowski

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Memories of the days of movie magazines, intrigue . . . and me

By Don Kirkland

I don't often look back on my early days as a freshman reporter in L.A., not because there's nothing to remember but because, well, a lot has happened since then.

Which is why I suppose that hearing recently about actor Ryan O'Neal's death at age 82 called to mind my stint as an occasional Hollywood movie-magazine writer and the little circle of celebrities I rubbed shoulders with.



Among the most interesting of those was Joanna Moore, whose tumultuous marriage to Ryan almost became the subject

of a book that she and I set out to write about her early life, her children Tatum and Griffin, and the weird and wacky unraveling of a relationship with the volatile film star that I'm sure was headed for disaster from the very beginning.

In fact, by the time I got to know Joanna from hanging out with her and the kids on the sands of Hermosa Beach, the parents' partnership had devolved into something akin to a minefield, depth-charged by genuine abhorrence for each other and, in Joanna's mind, fear that the guy she'd borne children with would do almost anything to get them under his control instead of hers. That included her insistence, whenever she and I went somewhere in her Cadillac, that I open

the trunk to see if Ryan had hidden drugs inside so, she truly feared, the police could arrest her and turn the children's parenting over to him.

I never found anything suspicious, of course, but it was indeed one of the highlights of taking an afternoon drive somewhere.

Joanna Moore, actually, was one of the first celebrity types I met through my longtime, and now sadly gone, friend Nancy Anderson. Nancy and I had worked on the same newspaper for a while, and she supplemented her income by writing for what, at the time, were the biggest so-called movie magazines overseen by the New York publishing house MacFadden-Bartell.

The company, seen as a pioneer in the industry since the early 1900s, listed as its titles not only Photoplay but some 50 other magazines that were viewed around the country and around the world. Even though my friends at the time were delighted to have someone in their circle who hung with actual movie stars, it seemed as though they were more fascinated with the connection than I was.

Although I continued to interview and write about various personalities, the only connection I kept alive during those beach-going days was the one with Joanna, who died in 1997 at age 63. I fell out of touch with her after moving to Arizona, and our mutual friend Nancy Anderson died a few years later in her hometown of Bell Buckle, Tennessee.

Fun days, interesting relationships and memories that, no matter how far away I get from them, seem certain to always be with me.

— Don Kirkland is the founder and publisher of *Wrangler News*

DIVERSIONS



Kyrene kids visit Hall of Flame

—Wrangler News file photo by Billy Hardiman

Familiarity, not fear, key to teaching kids fire safety

By M.V. Moorhead

The rules we're taught as children are the most unshakeable of our lives. And of those, the basic rules of fire safety are among the strongest of all.

As long as somebody teaches them, that is.

For the past 18 years, I've had the honor to work as the curator of education at the Hall of Flame Museum of Firefighting in Phoenix, just on the Tempe line, not far from the Phoenix Zoo. Part of the museum's mission is to preserve the history and traditions of the fire service, and to teach visitors about it.

Our museum's founder, George Getz, Jr., once said that he wanted the Hall of Flame to be to firefighting what Cooperstown is to baseball.

But alongside this worthy mission is a second goal, which we regard as even more important: We want everyone who visits the museum, but especially children, to learn basics of fire safety.

Hall of Flame Executive Director Chuck Montgomery, a veteran firefighter and retired deputy chief of the Glendale, Arizona Fire Department, sums it up: "The importance of educating grade school children is that it allows them to focus on the many different ways they can save themselves and their families instead of dwelling on the fear of the fire."

Through our “storytime” field trips, we attempt to impart to children from preschool age up to seven years old some of the most essential tools and knowledge both to prevent fires and also to know what to do, and what not to do, if a fire does happen. Over the years we have hosted field trips from all over Arizona, including from Kyrene and Tempe school districts.

Through our “storytime” field trips, we attempt to impart to children from preschool age up to seven years old some of the most essential tools and knowledge both to prevent fires and also to know what to do, and what not to do, if a fire does happen. Over the years we have hosted field trips from all over Arizona, including from Kyrene and Tempe school districts.

A storytime begins, as the name suggests, with reading a fun, non-threatening fire safety story to the kids. The usual choice is *No Dragons for Tea*, a 1999 Canadian children’s book by Jean Pendziwol, in which a little girl invites her new friend, a big green dragon, over to her house for tea, only to have him accidentally start a fire when some sprinkled pepper makes him sneeze.

After the story, the reader leads an interactive presentation explaining some of the rules of fire safety which are so basic to adults that we may take it for granted that kids understand them. Among the ideas that are stressed are the importance of not stopping to save toys, pets or anything else, or even to call 9-1-1 until you have evacuated this house, and of having a prearranged meeting place like a tree outside to which all the family knows to go.

That familiar saying “Stop, drop and roll” is discussed, as is the lesser-known but equally important “Fall and crawl” or “Get low and go,” referring to getting close to floor to crawl out under the smoke. We also try to ensure that children know not to hide during a fire, and not to run away from the intimidating figure of a firefighter in his or her gear. And of course we don’t neglect the most basic of all: Don’t play with matches.

Perhaps more than any other single lesson, we try to impart a simple two-word rule of thumb, which applies to grown-ups as well as children: If you’re ever in a burning house or a burning building, GET OUT. If kids leave the Hall of Flame having learned nothing more than that—and having had some fun—we feel we’ve done something worthwhile with our day.

The Hall of Flame Museum of Firefighting is at 6101 E. Van Buren, and is open Tuesday through Saturday, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. (closed to the public Sundays and Mondays). Tours and field trips are by appointment. For details go to hallofflame.org or call 602-275-3473.

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BUSINESS

A legacy of commitment: Rick Utter hands reins to son Keith

Story & photo by Barbi Walker-Walsh

In an era where following in your father's footsteps is less common than it once was, Tempe businessman Rick Utter is passing the torch to his son Keith.

After 34 years of service to American Family Insurance and its customers, Rick is retiring, leaving his legacy of commitment and service to his 33-year-old son.

"They started this agency before I was even born," Keith said.

"So I grew up in the business, you know, seeing how hard they've worked."

Growing up and witnessing the relationships his father built over the past 30-plus years inspired Keith.

"It's a relationship business," Rick said of the insurance industry. In fact, a colleague of Rick's got him into the industry back in '89 when he was working as a probation officer.

Adding that some of the best agents end up being referrals.

Now, the referral relationship has been passed on to Keith. Keith occupies the big corner office, with windows that look out onto the foliage and let the sunshine in, while Dad is now in Keith's old office.

Smaller and windowless, but with a fridge and coffee maker, Rick is happy for the switch, he said with a laugh, that he can hide out in there.

Even though Keith wishes his parents would just go sit on a beach somewhere, he really does like working together. They have a good relationship, and both say it's all been a positive experience.

Rick said that working together as a family (Keith's mom and wife also work in the office)

"It's been fun having him here."



Sometimes a parent brings a kid into the business, but when the young adult realizes all the hard work—that all they saw from the outside was the fun part—they're no longer interested in taking over, Rick said.

Rightfully so, building a successful business of any kind is hard work. Building and maintaining a career based on relationships in one's community with people you've known for decades is especially hard work.

Which is why the transition for Keith and Rick is so essential. Keith already has sales experience, and when his dad said he was ready to retire, it seemed like the right time for Keith to take over. As Rick toys with how often he'll come into the office, he still has his foot in the door and wants his customers to know it's still the same Utter team.

For now, the plan is to keep on much of what they've been doing, both Utter men said. They've built such a great foundation here, and he doesn't want to mess that up, Keith said. But with a new generation comes newfound energy, and Keith is eager to go out and find new business, too.

"You know, we're looking forward to putting our own little spin on it, whatever that looks like."

Funding OK'd for resource officers at 2 Kyrene schools

The Chandler City Council has approved agreements with the Kyrene School Districts to provide school resource officers at all public high schools and middle schools in Chandler through June 2026.

The agreements, approved during the City Council's Dec. 7 meeting, fund a combined total of 12 school resource officer positions to serve at assigned districts, which also include Chandler Unified and Mesa.

Grants from the Arizona Department of Education School Safety Program cover nearly all the personnel costs for the positions.

Any remaining personnel costs are split equally between the city and school districts.

Two officers will be dedicated to Kyrene and assigned to Aprende and Pueblo middle schools. Nine officers will be dedicated to Chandler Unified School District.

One officer will be dedicated to Mesa Public Schools and assigned to Summit Academy.

School resource officers are sworn members of the Chandler Police Department who perform police duties and provide a law enforcement officer presence on school campuses. Officers also assist administrators, teachers and students with school safety, security and law enforcement education.

Workforce aid now available in Tempe

Tempe is expanding its free workforce development services to help businesses fill positions. The program will work directly with employers to explore what talent they need in the pipeline, what jobs they need to fill now and what more is needed to help bolster the local labor pool.

The service is designed to lay the groundwork for a stronger economy.

"Tempe is committed to helping the local business community fill any gaps in their talent pipeline," said Tim Burch, director of community health and human services.

"Through this position, Tempe will be able to continue attracting high-quality businesses and ensuring their success, which shows a commitment to supporting our residents and workforce."



Mayor Corey Woods and Chamber President Colin Diaz greeted guests. Arizona Theater Company actor opened with national anthem.

— Wrangler News photos by Andrew Lwowski

Tempe mayor outlines city's growth, future 'Big things' in store as Tempe sees an even brighter future

Tempe Mayor Corey Woods gave his fourth State of the City address today to a room of nearly 700 people at the Omni Tempe Hotel at ASU.

It was the 25th anniversary of the annual event hosted by the Tempe Chamber of Commerce.

Tempe's strength as a city, its leadership on national issues and future opportunities were focal points of the speech.

Said Woods:

"During the last year, our city has thrived in important ways. That's not just my opinion. Tempe ranks among the nation's best cities when it comes

to meeting residents' expectations.

In 2023, more than eight out of 10 Tempeans reported being satisfied with city services. That, he said, represents a figure 32 percent higher than the national average. "In fact," he added, "it's among the top 10 percent of all surveyed cities in America."

Other highlights included:

- Tempe's success in reducing homelessness through its services and programs by more than 30%;
- Increased funding for arts and early education programs;

- 3,500 new housing units added to Tempe's inventory and 13,500 units either recently opened or under review;

- A new Real Time operations center due to open in February to help provide greater public safety; and

- A November bond initiative intended to improve Tempe's streets.

"We have built a strong city and we will make it even stronger," Woods said. "We have big things ahead of us. All that remains is the doing. Personally, I cannot wait to get started."



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Mayor Corey Woods Celebrated City Achievements with the Tempe Business Community



Tempe Mayor Corey Woods delivered his fourth State of the City Address to an audience of nearly 700 at the Omni Tempe Hotel at ASU, marking the 25th anniversary of the event hosted by the Tempe Chamber of Commerce. The speech focused on Tempe's strength as a city, its leadership on national issues, and future opportunities. Mayor Woods highlighted the city's thriving performance, with Tempe ranking among the nation's best in meeting residents' expectations, boasting an 80% satisfaction rate with city services, which is 32% higher than the national average and places it in the top 10% of surveyed cities in America.

Key achievements in the address include a 30% reduction in homelessness through city services, increased funding for arts and early education programs, the addition of 3,500 new housing units, and a total of 13,500 units either recently opened or under review. The upcoming opening of the Real Time Operations Center in February for

enhanced public safety and a November bond initiative aimed at improving Tempe's streets were also highlighted as significant milestones. *(Pictured: President & CEO Colin Diaz (left) and Mayor Corey Woods (right) photo by Pablo Robles, Media Compass*

2024 Economic Outlook to Provide Glimpse of the Economic future of the East Valley

The 2024 Economic Outlook on January 26th at Grace Community Church will give business leaders and members of the community a look into the economic future of Arizona and the East Valley. Packed with thought-provoking information and data you won't find elsewhere, be the first to get updates on Tempe's current and future projects.



Attending will help guide your decision-making with exclusive insights prompting the ability to make informed decisions for the year. Our experts will provide current information and analysis on the business climate, economic performance, emerging trends and attitudes towards future growth.

Panels & presentations will cover workforce development, local and regional economic development and panel discussions on the hospitality & tourism industry as well as access to capital and funding trends. Save the date, registration opens Friday, December 15th at www.tempechamber.org - contact david@tempechamber.org for sponsorship opportunities.

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