

Wrangler

NEWS

Kyrene Corridor Edition

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Winter Wonderland

Kyrene School District staffers took a break to wrap new toys and games for the annual Winter Wonderland event that benefits homeless Kyrene families. Among Santa's helpers were, from left, Bonny Dolinsek, Jen Hargreaves, Diane Churilla, Amanda Hamm and Sheryl Mann.

Wrangler News photo by David Stone

Grass roots organizers generating support for Kyrene schools override

By Jeremy Banks

Stand for Children, a grass roots child-advocacy organization, has its eyes set on helping community members in the Kyrene School District develop their voice.

Olga Vives, a district organizer for Stand for Children, has been a community advocate for most of her adult life. The organization's goal of improving and promoting education was an attraction and made her want to get involved.

"They were launching this initiative in Arizona. I really looked at what the kids needed in Arizona, in public education," she said.

Stand for Children, founded in 1996, helps develop community leaders and education awareness. The organization has chapters in Oregon, Washington state, Massachusetts, Colorado and Tennessee.

"We only go to states where we can see that improvements are needed and we can accomplish reform, that the goals are attainable and that people, our members that join us into these grass roots teams, are able to see that, with their involvement, that they can change public education in Arizona."

Arizona ranks 46th in fourth grade reading, 43rd in fourth grade math, 42nd in eighth grade

reading, 38th in eighth grade math and 36th in publicly funded pre-K access.

"Arizona lags behind most national standards," Vives said. "We want to make sure the kids in Arizona are able to compete and go to college and get careers and be able to be successful in life."

At this time, Stand for Children has three teams in place in the Kyrene School District. The teams are located at Kyrene de la Cielo, Corona del Sol High School and Aprende Middle School. Vives said she's hoping to form more teams in coming weeks.

Vives said the organization identifies team leaders, parents and others who are interested in issues. They then form teams made up of group leaders and members. She initially contacted the Kyrene School District and spoke with district superintendent Dr. David Schauer.

"We explained what we wanted to do in the district. He was very supportive," Vives said.

She was given contacts for parents and community members.

"I started calling them and they started giving me other names of people. I sat down with many parents and talked to them about this and they were very excited," Vives said. "It's been a very



Stand for Children organizer Olga Vives: Making a difference.
— Wrangler News photo

— BONDS, Page 6

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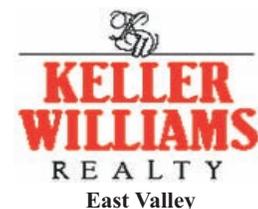
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Good news for last-minute shoppers Still time to ensure gifts' on-time arrival — if you hurry

By Jeremy Banks

With the holiday season fast approaching, timing and attention to detail can make a big difference.

Walt Guy, owner of the UPS Stores in south Tempe at 315 W. Elliot Road, Suite 107, and 7650 S. McClintock, Suite 103, said he would advise anyone planning to send packages for the holidays to be an early bird.

That failing, however, there are some last-minute options.

"If all else fails, if you're too busy or you forgot something, you still have options to get it there before Christmas," Guy said. "And those choices are second-day air, third-day air and overnight. Those are the three final options. We can actually ship the week of Christmas and you can still get it there as long as Mother Nature is cooperative and your destination city is not experiencing a winter storm.

Air delivery, Guy said, is the most efficient and safest way to ship packages.

"Air is the best way. It's also the most expensive way. Air gets special priority, special handling because of the high cost involved.

With both ground and air delivery, the package can be tracked all the way to its destination and it is insured at a minimum of \$100. There is an option to add insurance based on the value of what is being shipped.

Guy said that, when sending packages, the store will make sure everything is packaged properly. However, if some choose to do it themselves, he said contents should not arrive broken or damaged if you follow a few fundamental tips. Use a sturdy shipping box that is in good shape, so that it is able to withstand drops while traveling.

For items which are not soft goods, such as clothing or stuffed animals, make sure there are two to three inches of packing "peanuts" between the items and the box. Delicate items, such as glass and ceramics, should be individually bubble-wrapped with two to three inches of packing peanuts



UPS Store's Walt Guy: No time to spare

— Wrangler News photo

between the item and the box.

Electronic equipment should be bubble wrapped and surrounded by peanuts. All shipping companies, Guy said, recommend against using paper wrap and string on packages. If needed, Guy said, the stores have boxes and packing materials available.

There is a new service this year that

The UPS Store is offering.

"If people are too busy or if they don't have time, or the package is too big to bring to the store, I will pick it up for them," Guy said.

"I will go to their house, pick it up, bring it back here and process it for them so that all they really need to do is come in and pay. In some cases we can do the whole transaction over the phone.

"If there's a big order (about five to six packages) I'll do it for free. If it's a small order there will be a modest charge."

Hazardous materials, guns and ammunition are among items that cannot be sent.

Guy said delivery can be a huge help but timing is everything.

"To save money and make sure that they don't have to worry about it, the sooner they get their packages ready for shipping, the better off they'll be," he said.

Information: 480-889-0060 or 480-777-2777.

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Bonds

From Page 2

positive experience.”

Stand for Children, Vives said, allows community members to identify concerns and take action.

“The organization’s vision is to organize parents, teachers, administrators and members of the community who are interested in making improvements in our public school,” Vives said.

“And we organize them into taking action towards the goals that they decided are important to improve the schools.

“STAND’s role in this is to give leaders the training, make sure they know about educational issues that pertain to their district.

“We support their effort. We help them strategize. We’re not the organizers. We give them the tools to organize.”

School funding is an important issue among community members, Vives said.

On March 9, voters will be asked to continue the current override, which has been repeatedly renewed by voters since 1983. Only one incremental increase has been requested during that time; voter approval on March 9 would simply continue the existing override, which provides \$12.4 million in district operating funds.

“There is a concern in Kyrene, and I hear this from parents and other people, that we really need to make sure the support is there in order to maintain the quality in Kyrene,” Vives said.

“We really need to make sure that they support the funds and that the legislators understand that we are very interested in maintaining that and improving that,” she said.

“If they keep reducing the budget for the schools, that would affect all the districts, including Kyrene.”

Vives said with Stand for Children leaders and members in place, making a difference will be easier, just as has occurred in other states.

“(Our effort) represents hard work, but it results in change. Those parents that are involved with Stand for Children...become leaders in the community,” Vives said.

Based on previous experience organizing chapters, Vives is optimistic.

“This model works. It’s showing results, and this is what we’re hoping we do in Arizona, too.”



Merry Christmas!

Kyrene Corridor Rotarians sorted through presents the club donated to a deserving family picked by the Boys and Girls Club of the East Valley. The gifts ranged from wish-list presents from the recipients’ young son to basic household items such as laundry detergent and cleaning products. The club plans to hold more such community projects in coming months, including campaigns that involve reading to children and providing services to those who are wheelchair-bound. Area residents can participate in the club’s various projects throughout the year. Information is available by calling President Kyle Maki at 480-966-0837.

— Wrangler News photo

Secret to gelato success: Enlist the whole family

By Slim Smith

When Enzo and Lisa Scarcella opened their gelato shop in Tempe in the last weeks of September, you had to wonder about the timing.

Opening a new business as the country struggles to emerge from its worst economic crisis since the Great Depression seemed a risky proposition.

So, too, was opening a gelato shop in an area where — in about a two-mile stretch — two such shops have closed over the past couple of months.

In fact, Enzo’s Gelato and Coffee Bar, located in the Harmon Plaza on the southwest corner of Rural and Ray, operates at the same location of one of those defunct shops.

The Scarcellas’ strategy to buck those odds and succeed? Nepotism.

“I think the reason those other shops had to close was that there expenses were just too high,” says Enzo Scarcella. “You have to keep expenses down to make it now.”

Whatever other obstacles the Scarcellas may face, payroll won’t be one of them.

Enzo and Lisa are the only regular

employees, although they do get some help from their daughters, Chiara and Ilaria, both students at Corona del Sol High School.

“This is very much a family enterprise,” says Lisa Scarcella. “It’s something we do together as a family and we want our shop to be all about creating a family atmosphere. In Italy, the gelato shops are gathering places; it’s a part of the culture and something we want to recreate here.”

Although this is their first foray into owning a business, the Scarcellas’ background certainly seems to have prepared them for the venture.

The Scarcellas met in Florence, Italy, where both were students. Lisa, left Chicago to study art history in Florence while Enzo, who grew up on his family’s citrus farm in Calabria, came to Florence to study economics.

It had long been Enzo’s dream to open a gelato shop. There are more than 37,000 gelato shops in Italy, where the Italian ice cream occupies a unique status.

Enzo and Lisa married in 1989 and moved from Italy to Tempe in 2001.

Even then, the Scarcellas’ dream of opening a gelato shop was bubbling.

The timing didn’t seem right then.

“We moved here in August 2001,” Lisa said. “Well, you know what happened soon after that. Our kids’ first day of school was 9/11. It was such as scary time. We had just moved here. The shock of it all was just too much. We decided we had better wait.”

Now, eight years later, the Scarcellas are living their dream. Lisa opens the shop in the morning. Enzo takes over in the afternoon and closes the shop. Two of their daughters (the Scarcellas’ oldest daughter, Federica, is studying law in France), help out after school.

Gelato has been making inroads in the United States during the past 20 years. The average American consumes almost six gallons of ice cream products a year. Almost 10 percent of that total is now gelato.

Americans are discovering that gelato is a healthier alternative to ice cream. Gelato contains less than half the fat of regular ice cream because its main ingredient is whole milk rather than cream.

Not that it tastes “healthy,” though.

“You don’t get the feeling that you are eating something low-fat,” said

— GELATO, Page 23

Alternative to suspension keeps kids in classroom

But funding will go away without community support

By Don Kirkland

When Michelle Hirsch walked into Mr. Robert Harding's classroom at Pueblo Middle School, the 15 kids seated attentively at their desks might have been "A" students in an accelerated honors program. They weren't.

These were kids who had been kicked out of regular classrooms around the district and who had elected, with an OK from their parents, to spend their suspensions in a class designed to fix the problems that brought them into Harding's domain.

Whether they've been suspended for a few days or a few weeks, these "problem" kids get a carefully crafted mix of academic and behavioral help, designed to reinforce their ability to function successfully in a conventional classroom environment.

So far, say district officials, the concept is working. Only about 10 percent of the kids who complete the program are re-suspended after returning to their regular schools.

"I was really impressed with these kids," says Hirsch, a Kyrene school board member on a mission to observe the program in action.

"They weren't slouched down in their seats, they didn't show an 'attitude;' they were really engaged in what Mr. Harding was telling them."

What Harding tells these kids, all of whom have been excluded from regular classrooms because of inappropriate behavior, isn't a packaged, one-size-fits-all pitch. It's a highly individualized curriculum deftly configured by Harding and the program's other four teachers to address each child's specific needs.

Overseeing the teachers' work is Diane Peters, a former assistant principal at Kyrene Middle School who came out of retirement to head an initiative known as KASP, for Kyrene Alternative to Suspension Program.

The program was launched in 2004, helped along by a \$180,000 grant that paid for all but \$20,000 of its operational funds, which ended up being allocated by the Kyrene district. Yet, despite the program's success, it may have to be discontinued next year because the grant money has dried up and the district can't afford to go it alone.

"This would be a real tragedy," said Hirsch. "This (program) has provided a way for the district to catch some of the kids who otherwise would fall through the cracks. It gives them coping skills. It minimizes the dropout rate."

Although students who have been suspended tend to be branded as problem children, the truth is that many are simply acting out as a result of difficulty at home, economic problems, death of a parent or other conditions that are beyond the child's control, says Hirsch.

"The program can't fix these kinds of issues, but it can teach the child how to do a better job of coping," she said.

In such cases, Hirsch says, the fix can be



Kyrene school board member Michelle Hirsch, right, joined teacher Robert Harding and district administrator Patty Weegar for a discussion with kids enrolled in Kyrene's innovative alternate-to-suspension program at Pueblo Middle School.

— Wrangler News photo by Alex Zener

relatively simple. "It may be something as easy as remembering to put their homework in their backpack."

Indeed, there are cases in which the road to improvement may not be so simple to navigate. A

The program can't fix problems at home, but it can teach the child how to do a better job of coping.

student who is suspended for threatening a teacher may have a number of issues that need to be addressed, which illustrates the value of a targeted action plan adopted for each participating child.

Although the program has been widely accepted by Kyrene parents, some still won't let their child participate, Hirsch says.

"Sometimes the parents are defensive and feel that their child shouldn't be in a program with kids whose behavior may be worse than theirs," she said. And sometimes they don't want the child to be away from his or her regular school for three weeks—the length of the program even if the suspension is for only a few days.

If funds are not forthcoming next year, the program won't generate discussion because it won't be available.

Kelly Alexander, the Kyrene district's administrator in charge of the program, says one hope is that parents and other community members will help offset the reduced funding by donating to the non-profit Kyrene Education Association.

For information about the program or how to make a donation, call 480-783-2431.

Fitness event promises fun for whole family

Kyrene de La Paloma will hold its second annual Family Fitness 5K and 1-Mile Dove Dash on Jan. 9 in Chandler.

The event was founded to encourage families to start the year being active and spending time together. Every person who finishes either event will receive a medal.

The course is a flat course with lots of volunteers to encourage and cheer participants along the way.

The course also features mile markers even half-mile and water and aid stations are regular intervals, with refreshments at the end of the race.

Merchandise awards will be given to the top three male and female finishers in both events and many other treats will be distributed during the awards ceremony.

For registration information, visit www.palomapta.org/Fundraisers.html

Budget crisis threatens major impact on high school sports

'Tough and getting tougher' to meet the needs of Corona del Sol's athletic programs

— Dan Nero

By Slim Smith

You can't blame Dan Nero if he feels a bit like a Santa Claus without a workshop these days. In his role as assistant principal and athletic director at Corona del Sol High School, Nero has been inundated with the wish lists of coaches from virtually all of the Aztecs' athletic programs as the economy struggles to get back on its feet.

And, unlike Santa Claus, Nero doesn't have a bottomless bag from which he can fill those requests.

"Tough and getting tougher," is the way Nero describes his efforts to meet the needs of the school's athletic programs.

"We have less and less money to do the things we need to do," Nero says.

While virtually every program has specific needs that funding does not cover, Aztecs' baseball coach Dave Webb faces a unique challenge. His mission: Keep Corona's two baseball fields from deteriorating to sandlot status.

"It's the one thing with being an outdoor sport," says Webb, whose team is coming off a state championship.

"Our facility has to be constantly cared for. Every year, we need grass seed and fertilizer. Plus, a company that resurfaces baseball fields came by and told us that we needed 40 to 50 tons of dirt on our fields. We got eight tons last year."

Webb estimates the cost of maintaining the field runs close to \$5,000 per year. It goes beyond aesthetics, of course. A poorly

maintained field can be a health risk.

The cost of maintaining the fields isn't the only necessary items not covered by the budget. Baseballs, equipment, uniforms are also in lean supply.

While no one disputes the need for such items, the school is hard-pressed to find money for them.

During more than 30 years as a teacher, administrator and athletic director, Nero understands that extra-curricular activities, while important, must not compete with the academics.

"As an old math teacher, I realize that we have to take care of the academic side first. Everything else must follow. That makes for a tough situation. Sports and activities are important, but the reality is that everything goes on the table now."

Nero said the support of the city, community and the school district administrators has left Corona in better shape than many of schools in the area. Even so, Nero said, the crisis is beginning to approach critical mass.

"Fortunately, we haven't been forced to cut programs," Nero said.

— CRISIS, Page 10



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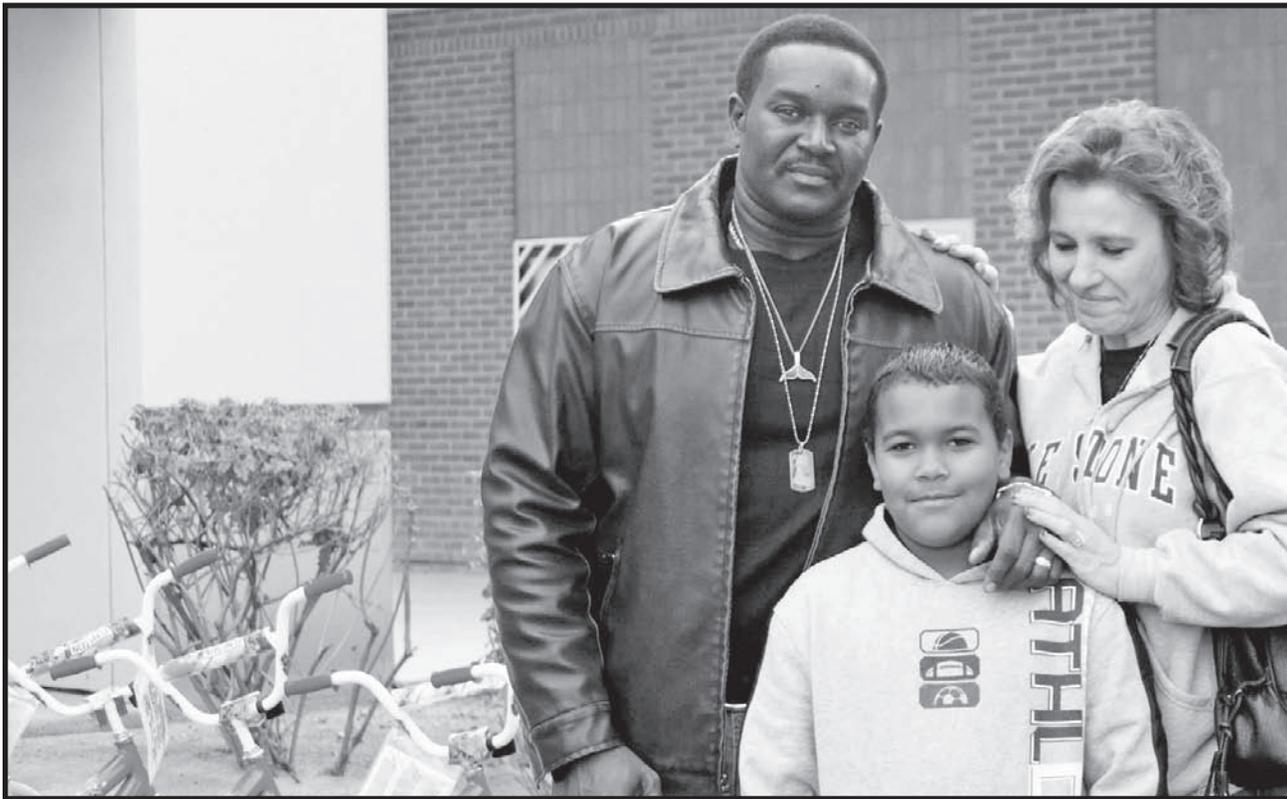
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Needy and underprivileged Kyrene Corridor kids will find a big surprise under the Christmas tree this year, thanks to Erika Stewart's months-long determination to knit and sell handmade pot holders. At \$10 each, 200 of the handy kitchen aids generated \$2,000 in revenue, which in turn was used to purchase 50 new bikes. Erika, who volunteered to stuff holiday stockings at the Kyrene School District's annual Winter Wonderland, got some help from husband Charles and grandson Michael Washington.

— Photo contributed by Glenn Richins

Crisis

From Page 8

"But it may come to that at some point. Right now, we're taking a hard look at all of our programs in terms of maybe shortening the seasons for some of the programs, especially on the freshman and junior varsity level.

"We haven't reached that point yet, but it's definitely on the horizon unless things change."

As school budgets decline, extra-curricular programs are turning more and more to their community. But the same economic realities that affect the state also impact families.

Joni Spradling, a member of Corona's baseball booster club, says one way the community can help fund extra-curricular programs is by taking advantage of a state tax credit that allows a family to earmark up to \$400 for school programs.

The money can be earmarked for a specific sports or activity, whether it is baseball or band, basketball or choir.

"I think it's a great way to support the extra-curricular programs," Spradling said.

"If more people knew about the tax credit, it could make a difference. With the way things are, every little bit helps."

The tax credits can be used to support not only sports programs, but any of the school's extracurricular programs, all of whom are facing similar economic struggles.

All donations must be made before Dec. 31 to receive credit on your 2009 return. For more information, visit <https://www.tuhsd.k12.az.us>



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Four file papers for City Council seats to be decided next year

Four candidates have announced their intention to seek election to three open seats on the Tempe City Council.

The primary is scheduled Tuesday, March 9; the general will be Tuesday, May 18.

Confirmed candidates are Robin Arredondo-Savage, Shana Ellis, Mark Ortiz and Onnie Shekerjian. Ellis is Tempe's current vice mayor. Arredondo-Savage is a Tempe Union High School District board member. Ortiz is employed by locksmith and lawn-care companies. Shekerjian is a current councilmember.

The candidates were required to submit at least 789 but no more than 1,578 nomination-petition signatures from registered Tempe voters by the Dec. 9 deadline; petitions of the applicants were determined to contain the required number of signatures and be substantial in form with nomination requirements, according to Tempe City Clerk Jan Hort.

Beginning Jan. 7 and ending May 6, city channel Tempe 11 will broadcast "open mic" appearances by City Council candidates. Each candidate will have five minutes to speak prior to

each scheduled City Council meeting.

Those taped remarks are played back on the channel, which is viewable in Tempe on Cox Cable Channel 11, or online at www.tempe.gov/tempe11.

From Feb. 16 through March 5, early voting in person will be available at the Tempe Public Library, 3500 S. Rural Road, and the ASU Safety Escort Office, 330 E. University Drive, Tempe. The voting locations are open Monday-Thursday from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. and Friday from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Registered voters may request early ballots in order to vote by mail. Voters also can place themselves on a permanent early-voting list by contacting the Maricopa County Elections Department.

For more information, or to register to vote, visit the Tempe City Clerk's Web page at www.tempe.gov/clerk and click on the "Election Information" link.

Other voter information is available by calling the Maricopa County Elections Department at 602-506-1511.

Voter registration for the primary ends Feb. 8.

Tempe Y hosting Bloodmobile; donors receive a free ticket to next year's Phoenix Open

Want a voucher for a free ticket to next year's Waste Management (formerly FBR) Phoenix Open?

It's what you'll get when you donate blood any time from 2 to

7 p.m. Monday, Jan. 18, when the United Blood Services Bloodmobile is stationed at Tempe Family YMCA.

The Thunderbirds, who are sponsoring the campaign, have offered to help fill the need for blood supplies during the coming year.

Donor vouchers can be redeemed at the gate for a one-day pass to the TPC Scottsdale from Feb. 22 - 28.

To make an appointment, call 1-877-448-GIVE (4483) or visit www.UnitedBloodServicesAZ.org (click on "Donate Blood" and enter your ZIP Code).

Sixteen-year-olds are now eligible to give blood, provided they meet height and weight requirements.

The Tempe Y is at 7070 S. Rural Road.

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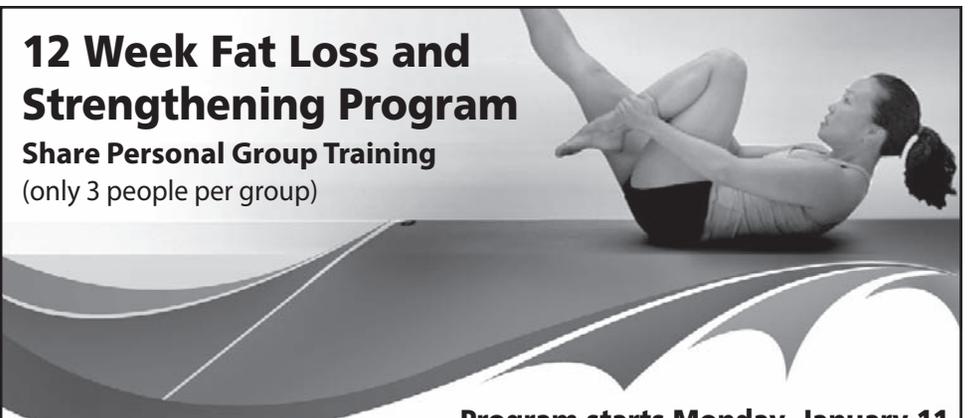
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Gone Skiing

A reminder that our Wrangler News offices will be closed from Friday, Dec. 18, until Monday, Dec. 28, for our annual winter break.

We'll see you next year. Happy Holidays!

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"Improvement occurs once we realize a desire to change."

ASU men's gymnastics team schedules clinic for children

Sessions feature some of nation's top instructors

Aspire Kids Sports Center in west Chandler will host the ASU mens gymnastics team's annual holiday clinic Saturday, Dec. 19.

The clinic is open to boys ages 6 and up regardless of gymnastics ability; full day (fee \$70, including lunch) and half-day (\$45) sessions are available.

Instructors include Scott Barclay, head coach of the ASU men's gymnastics team and owner of Aspire Kids Sports Center with 27 years of coaching experience; Dan Hayden,

1984 Olympic Team alternate and former World Championship Team member with 29 years of coaching experience; Mike Naddour, former USA Team Coach for the Junior Men's program and owner of USA Youth Fitness Center; Rob Survick, ASU assistant coach; and Rob Kjar, president of Arizona Judges Association with 11 years of coaching experience.

Information/registration: 480-820-3774.



MEETING OF THE CHANDLER AIRPORT COMMISSION



The 7-member Commission makes recommendations to the City Council regarding airport operations, physical growth, economic development, and proposed land use relating to leases and fixed base operations.

Meetings are open to the public and are held the 2nd Wednesday of every month at 7 p.m. at the airport terminal, 2380 S. Stinson Way

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Saturday, Jan. 23

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Sharing the Spirit of Christmas

Members of the Corona del Sol choir participated in the Salvation Army's Christmas Angels project by performing at Arizona Mills Mall. In addition to entertaining shoppers, choir members purchased their own gifts for distribution to needy children.

— Wrangler News photo by Alex Zener

Corona Briefs

by Alex Zener

Corona del Sol Choir donations

Corona's Choir gave back more than their outstanding musical talent this holiday season during a performance at Arizona Mills Mall in Tempe. All the student members bought Christmas Angels for families in need this holiday season.

The Christmas Angel program is coordinated by the Salvation Army in malls throughout the Valley. Children in need identify items they would like for Christmas. Volunteers add the gift wishes to an angel that is then hung on a Christmas tree in the mall.

Shoppers can choose to purchase a gift wish and leave it at a booth located next to

the tree. The gifts are then wrapped and delivered to the lucky child before Christmas.

Corona's choir is under the direction of **Greg Herbert**, who also has been guest conductor of the Arizona Junior High School All-State Honor Choir and the Greater Phoenix Honor Choir. He also will be a guest conductor at the upcoming Southeastern Arizona Regional Honor Choir Feb. 19-20.

Celebration of Innovation Award

Corona del Sol student **Rahul Mitra** received an individual award at the Governor's Celebration of Innovation held last month. Mitra received one of the four awards given to future

— BRIEFS, Page 14


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Briefs

From Page 13

innovators at local high schools. The program is sponsored by the Arizona Department of Commerce and the Arizona Technology Council.

Arizona State Fair Photography Winners

Corona students entered 39 photographs in the Arizona State Fair competition last month.

This competition is for all students in the state. Corona students won an unprecedented 35 awards for their photographs.

Corona students also received more of the highly coveted, and sparingly given, rosette awards this year than ever before.

Students whose photographs received recognition include **Sarah Boege, Kelsey Boone, Kelly Campbell, Doren Taylor, Reychel Estrada, Elizabeth Long, Rebecca Maxwell, Erin Pomerantz, Joanna Rea, Jennifer White, Camila Acchiardo, Rachael Koscica, Mario Mendez** and **Rachel Peck**.

AIA State Chess Championships

Corona student **Lihong Tang** finished ninth in the AIA Arizona State Chess Individual Championships held last month at Corona.

Tang, a skilled chess player, lost only twice during the championships, both times to the eventual champion and runner-up.

Trevor Whitaker finished third in the alternate section.



Welcome to the neighborhood

A new Massage Heights location opened with fanfare and a ribbon cutting, cheered on by members of the Tempe Chamber of Commerce. Overseeing the event was Christine Dura, who will also manage operation of the franchise's newest site at 8058 S. Priest Drive, Suite 101, Tempe. Holiday gift packages are currently available. Information: 480-785-2582.

— Photo courtesy Tempe Chamber of Commerce

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Jan. 26 start for Chandler HOA class

Residents signing up for Chandler's new Advanced HOA Academy will learn from the experts about building successful, sustainable homeowner associations.

The six evening classes begin Tuesday, Jan. 26 and will run every Thursday thereafter through March 2. Classes will be held from 6-8:30 p.m. at the McCullough-Price House, 300 S. Chandler Village Drive.

Classes are facilitated in an interactive, hands-on setting to allow optimum learning and practical application. The curriculum will include training on how to effectively address challenges that affect those who live in an HOA.

Class topics include Advanced Community Association Finance, Parliamentary Procedure, Reserves, Writing RFPs and Evaluating Bid Proposals, Neighborhood Communications and HOA Insurance.

Classes are free for Chandler residents, however space is limited to 30 participants. Those who attend at least five classes will receive a certificate of completion and be recognized at a future Chandler City Council meeting. To register, contact the Neighborhood Programs Division at 480-782-4348.

Wrangler News is distributed every other Saturday throughout the year to 22,500 homes and rack locations in the Tempe 85284, 85283 and Chandler 85226 zip codes

Wrangler News

'The Valley's Best Community Newspaper'
Phoenix magazine, August 2007

Publisher: Kyle Maki • **Contributing Writers:** Alex Zener, Jeremy Banks, Slim Smith, Mark Moorehead, M.V. Moorhead, Emily Jacobson

- **Staff Photographer:** David Stone
- **Distribution Manager:** Hazel DeLareto

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Chandler Regional among best places to work

Chandler Regional Medical Center has been named one of the Valley's best large places to work, a selection made annually by *Phoenix Business Journal* and BestCompaniesAZ, co-founders of the rankings.

Chandler Regional, a member of Catholic Healthcare West, placed fifth among companies comprising more than 250 employees but less than 3,000.

Established in 2003, the list recognizes Valley companies which, through a third-party employee survey, rank their respective companies as being a best place to work.

A portion of the survey explores the various aspects of employee life, including workplace environment,

leadership direction, culture and management practices.

Only the top 30 companies from around the Valley who submitted entries were selected to receive the award.

For a sixth consecutive year, Chandler Regional was acknowledged for developing a unique corporate culture and work environment that promotes both personal and professional growth for its employees.

"It's truly an honor to be recognized," said Patty White, CRMC president and CEO. "We appreciate the inherent value in all of our employees, and know that we wouldn't be the organization we are today if it weren't for their commitment and dedication."

Winners were announced Dec. 10.

New Eagle Scout: Brandon Haws

Brandon Haws, 14, of west Chandler, has been awarded the rank of Eagle Scout. He is a freshman at Corona del Sol High School, where he is also an honor student and member of the swim team.



Alex Zener

Son of Robert and Karen Haws, he is a member of Troop 595 under Scoutmaster Greg Atkin.

For his Eagle project, Brandon partnered with the city of Chandler to repaint the fire lane curbing at West Chandler Aquatic Center.

Brandon coordinated more than 35 volunteers, representing 125 volunteer hours in completing his project.

He has earned 23 merit badges in his three years as a Boy Scout. He loved attending Camp Geronimo, hiking to Havasupai and all the outdoor activities. He is the assistant senior patrol leader of his troop.

—Contributed by Robert and Karen Haws

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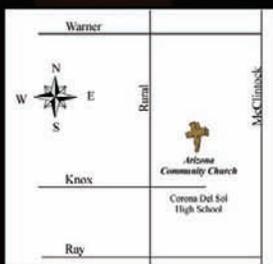
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TUHSD offices will open Dec. 31 for tax-credit donations

Tempe Union High School District Offices will be open from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. Thursday, Dec. 31, to collect last-minute donations.

Contributors will be treated to refreshments while they drop off their tax credit donation forms, available on the district website at www.tuhsd.k12.az.us. TUHSD staff will be available to answer questions.

The Arizona Tax Credit Program allows Arizona taxpayers, whether or not they have children in school, to donate up to \$400 to a school of their choice in support of extracurricular programs such as after-school clubs, sports, arts and music programs.

An individual filing a tax return may contribute up to \$200; for married couples filing jointly the maximum is \$400.

A tax credit is a dollar-for-dollar reduction in the actual tax owed, as opposed to a tax deduction, which reduces total taxable income from which the tax owed is calculated.

District offices are at 500 W. Guadalupe Road, Tempe.

Landscapers trading time so kids can have toys

Christmas is almost here, and a local landscaping company is offering to give back to the community by donating its time during December to provide toys for children in need.

Kyrene Corridor-based Grass Guys has launched a "mowing for toys" campaign in which crews will mow a friend's, neighbor's, or family member's lawn in exchange for toys.

Saturday, Dec. 19, is the final day of the offer, although it will be extended to Sunday, Dec. 20, if demand indicates a need, according to owners Derek

Miller and Dirk Haupt.

For residents who'd like take advantage of the offer as a gift for someone else, and donate the toys themselves, the company will mow any Kyrene Corridor lawn — with permission, of course.

All toys will be donated to local charities by Monday, Dec. 21.

The goal is to get enough toys for 100 or more children.

Information: 480-644-0101.

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Jan. 1 signup for sports enrichment program

After-school sports enrichment classes are scheduled to begin when the Kyrene School District returns from winter break.

Offerings at the nearest Kyrene school are listed at www.kyrene.org/eservices.

Although classes are held on Kyrene campuses, registration is available to students Valley-wide.

Online registration begins at noon Jan. 1.

Classes include Golf, Tumble Town, After Cool Fitness, Kidz for Life: Cool to be Healthy, Full Court Tennis, Fast Trac Tennis, Athletes in Training, Survivorcise, Hip Hop Dance and Exercise, Soccer Club and Fencing.

Kyrene after-school classes ready for fall

Kyrene de La Paloma will hold its second annual Family Fitness 5K and 1-Mile Dove Dash on Jan. 9 in Chandler.

The event was founded to encourage families to start the year being active and spending time together. Every person who finishes either event will receive a medal.

The course is a flat course with lots of volunteers to encourage and cheer participants along the way. The course also features mile markers even half-mile and water and aid stations are regular intervals, with refreshments at the end of the race.

Merchandise awards will be given to the top three male and female finishers in both events and many other treats will be distributed during the awards ceremony.

For registration information, visit www.palomapta.org/Fundraisers.html.

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Bustamonte resigns as Chandler Chamber CEO

Jerry Bustamonte, president/CEO of the Chandler Chamber of Commerce, has resigned his position effective immediately.

Bustamonte, who has held the post since May 2008, cited personal reasons for his decision.

"It is with a heavy heart that I choose to resign... With my family still in Tucson and the time away from home having taken its toll, I've decided that it's best that I return to Tucson to spend more time with my wife and four children.

"I wish to thank the Board of Directors for allowing me the opportunity to serve the chamber and the wonderful membership and chamber staff for their support.

"It has been a privilege serving Chandler's business community."

In the immediate interim, Cathy Beard, a member of the chamber's executive committee, will oversee operations of the organization until a permanent successor to Bustamonte is hired.



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Car collides with school bus on way to Pueblo

A school bus carrying 35 students to Pueblo Middle School collided with a car making a U-turn on Driftwood south of Chandler Boulevard between Rural and Kyrene roads just before 8 a.m. Dec. 16.

No students were injured, however the driver of the car, a 23-year-old female, was taken to a nearby hospital for treatment of what police

reported were non-life threatening injuries.

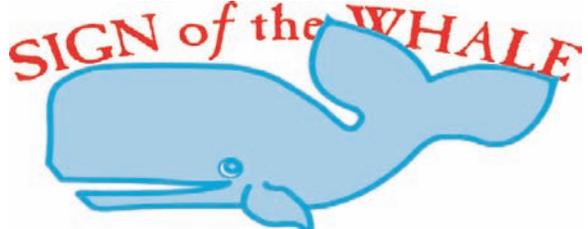
During their investigation, Chandler police determined that the female was driving on a suspended license, for which officers said she will be cited.

She also will be charged with a moving violation, according to David Ramer of the Chandler Police Department.



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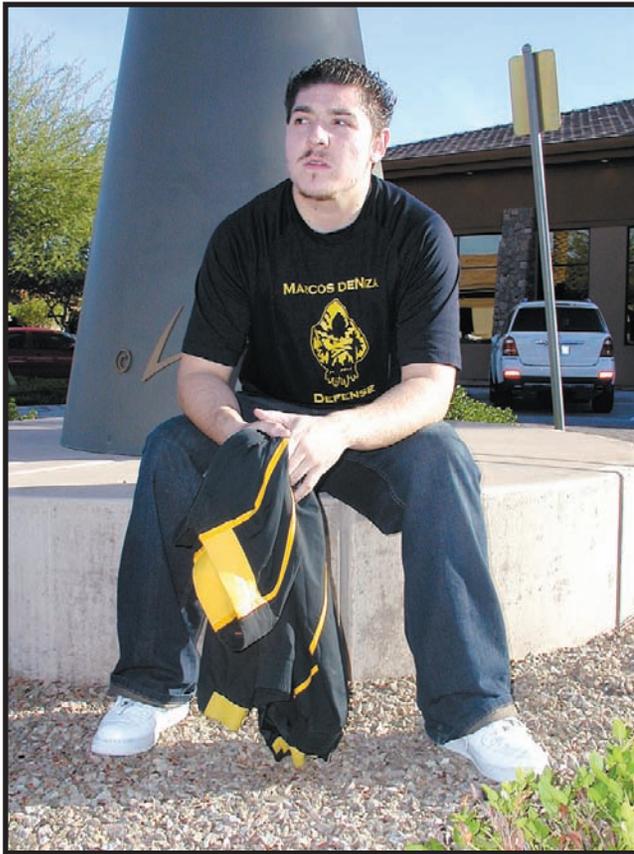
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Eduardo Rodriguez reflects over the real worth of a year marked by personal and team victories.

— Wrangler News photo by Kyle Maki

Feelings of accomplishment overshadow Padres' loss of championship football title

By Slim Smith

In the final minutes of the Arizona 5A Division II Championship, when it was painfully clear that Marco de Niza's hopes of the school's first football title would not be fulfilled, senior tackle Eduardo Rodriguez felt the crushing blow of disappointment.

The Padres fell to Scottsdale Chaparral by a 34-21 margin at Sun Devil Stadium on Dec. 11, leaving Rodriguez to ponder the fickle nature of destiny.

"It's hard to understand, really," Rodriguez said a few days later. "We practiced hard and our coaches really did a great job of preparing us for the game. Chaparral is a great team and I'm not taking anything away from them, but we didn't play up to our potential. We just didn't show up with our best."

In the days that have followed that loss, senior players like Rodriguez have found that the disappointment has yielded to another emotion, one of accomplishment.

"I can look back now and say we did something that no other Marcos de Niza team has ever done," Rodriguez said.

"We made it to the state championship. It really was a Cinderella story, even if it didn't end exactly the way we wanted it to end."

"I just looked up in the stands and thought to myself, 'So this is how it feels.'"

— Eduardo Rodriguez

Although the Padres had their share of star players, the 2009 team was perhaps best personified by players such as Rodriguez. At a shade over six feet tall and weighing just 220 pounds, Rodriguez is far from the ideal size for a defensive tackle. What he lacks in stature is compensated for by toughness and drive. And it would be that trait more than any other than helped Marcos to make its improbable run to

— PADRES, Page 21

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Padres

From Page 20

the championship game.

In fact, few gave Marcos a chance to reach the title game, not with powerhouse Glendale Centennial standing in the Padres' way. Given that, it could be argued that the Padres' ultimate moment came in the penultimate game of the season.

Centennial, the three-time defending state champions, came into the game against Marcos as a prohibitive favorite, riding a 39-game winning streak and a No. 4 national ranking by USA Today.

In a game perfectly suited to a defensive tackle such as Rodriguez, the Padres dumped the Coyotes 16-14 in a tough, gritty defensive battle played on Dec. 4 at Phoenix North Canyon High School.

And almost from the moment the game ended, the Padres players found themselves swept up in a wave of emotion that extended well beyond the Marcos de Niza campus.

"It was crazy at school the next Monday, but really, it started even before we got back to school. It was everywhere you went. I was wearing a

Marcos T-shirt the next day and people were coming up and saying, "Yeah, Marcos!" It was really cool."

Now that he's had some time to reflect on the highs and lows of the past two weeks, Rodriguez says a few things continue to come to the surface.

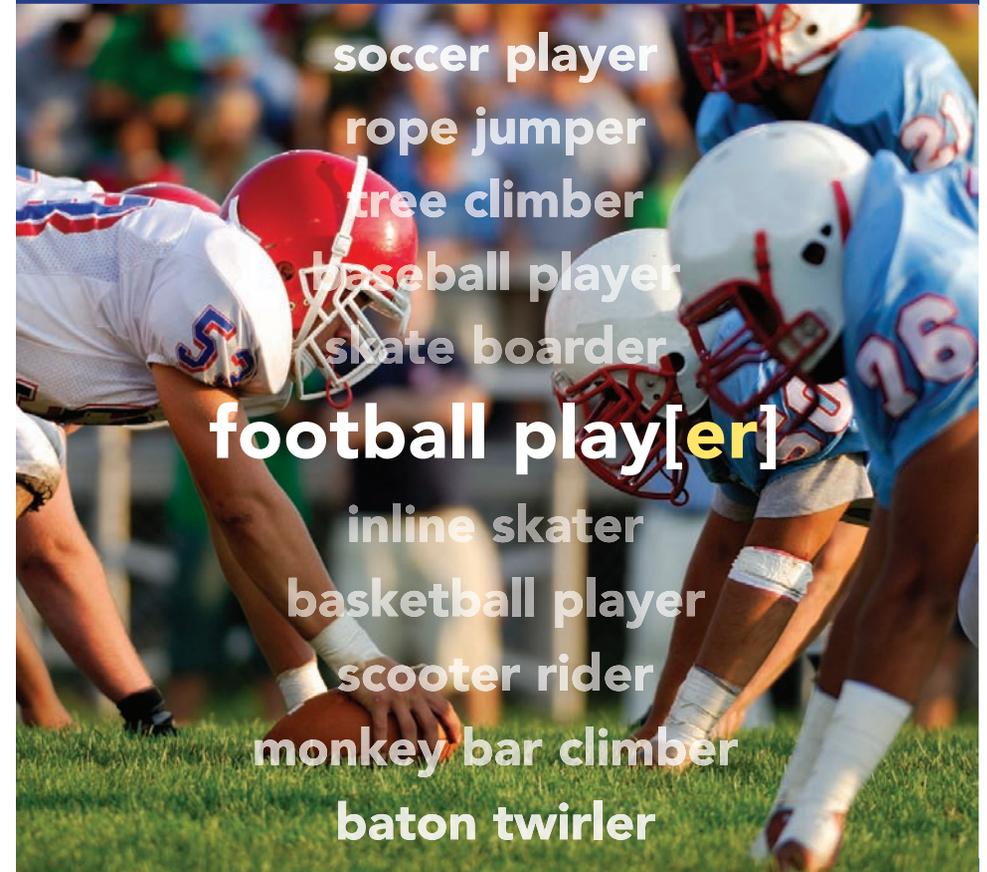
"I think the best thing about it was being with this band of brothers," he said. "When we were freshmen four years ago, we all said that we were going to the state championship game before we left. Going into this season, there was just this connection with the seniors. Nobody had to even say it: We knew what our goal was."

So, on that chilly Dec. 11 evening, when the Padres left the locker room to take the field at Sun Devil Stadium, Rodriguez took a moment to look around and try to soak it all in.

"I just looked up in the stands," he said, "and thought to myself, 'So this is how it feels.' I had been to Sun Devil Stadium before, but I was always in the stands watching the players on the field. Now, it was just the other way. I was out there with my brothers, looking up at the stands and it seemed like the whole community was up there, standing and cheering.

"It was a real moment. I don't think I'll ever forget that feeling."

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Marcos de Niza to partner with ASU's Carey school as area's first business magnet

Kyrene Corridor parents and students are about to get an impressive new choice when it comes to selecting a high school.

Starting immediately after the holiday break, Marcos de Niza High School will partner with the W. P. Carey School of Business at Arizona State University to become the first business magnet high school in the area.

"We wanted to do something special to make our school even more appealing to area students," says Marcos Principal Frank Mirizio.

"Over the summer, we did research showing that the number-one declared major in universities across the country is business. Since we have the internationally renowned W. P. Carey School of Business right in our backyard, this partnership was ideal."

Under the new plan, the high school will now include a Marcos Business Academy, Carey School officials already are consulting with teachers to help develop the curriculum.

Students will focus on core business fields, such as marketing and management. They'll have access to seminars, guest speakers and student mentors from the Carey school.

"The students will be put on a path that gives them a great head start for business school in college," said Tim Desch, assistant dean for undergraduate admissions at Carey.

"In addition to their other business-oriented high school courses, they will actually take a semester of macroeconomics on campus at ASU. By the time they're ready for college, they will have met college students, taken college classes and have a real advantage in adapting to college life."

Business magnet schools and programs have been introduced across the country in places as diverse as

downtown Los Angeles; Nashville; and Bridgeport, Conn.

Magnet schools are public schools with specialized programs designed to draw students from across normal school boundaries.

Gelato

From Page 6

Chris Southerland, who stopped by to enjoy a gelato doused in a shot of espresso. "It's definitely different than ice cream, a different flavor. You get the feeling that you're eating something more natural."

Enzo's features 18 different gelato flavors. In addition, the shop also features Italian pastries – Enzo does all the baking – along with croissants and a variety of coffee drinks. There is also a breakfast and lunch menu.

Lisa says that even in a tough economy, there is a market for their business.

"I know people are tightening their belts and watching how they spend their money," she says. "But even in that situation, maybe especially in that situation, you still need to be able to have a treat now and then. That's what we're here for. We want this to be a place where people can come, spend time together, sit around and enjoy a gelato."

"We're a family business and we want to cater to families in our community."

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Sam Kirgis, right, helped a student from Crocket Elementary School work on a gingerbread house when Corona del Sol High School's Student Council delivered 70 presents to underprivileged children Dec. 10.

— Photo by Frankie Dicesare





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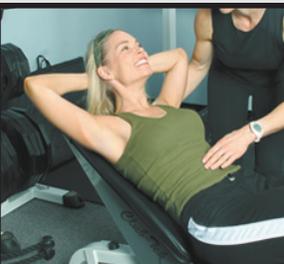
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Market St. south of Williams Field

Meet your neighbor: Maria Benson Their goal: finding right furnishings at right price

By Geri Koeppel

Everyone should love where they live: It's the philosophy behind Nyla Simone Home, a chic furniture and accessories store tucked away in the Emerald Design Center on Warner Road in south Tempe.

Owners Maria Benson and Katherine Alford opened the shop in September 2007 after having trouble finding stores offering the products and service they were looking for. The friends, who admired each other's taste in design, started doing projects in their own homes.

Word spread, and they soon had a budding design business. Neither has formal training in the field, but Benson's father, Arthur L. Bailey, has designed and manufactured furniture for almost four decades.

He makes custom pieces specifically for clients' body types and to fit odd spaces. His customers have included athletes

such as Julius Erving and Heinz Ward, celebrities such as Ted Turner, Jane Fonda and Elton John, and "a host of CEOs," Benson said.

In an effort to work with everyone's budget, Nyla Simone – named after Benson's three-year-old niece, Nyla, and seven-year-old daughter Simone – sells an affordable line of furniture made in southern California and a mid-range line from a manufacturer in North Carolina in addition to Bailey's high-end custom, American-made pieces. Accessories range from \$20 glass vases to ultra-plush dry-clean-only sheet sets.

Benson urges people to combine high-end and low-end items to get the most bang for their buck. For example, a customer might order a custom sectional, but could buy inexpensive toss pillows to dress it up.

"We try to show people style

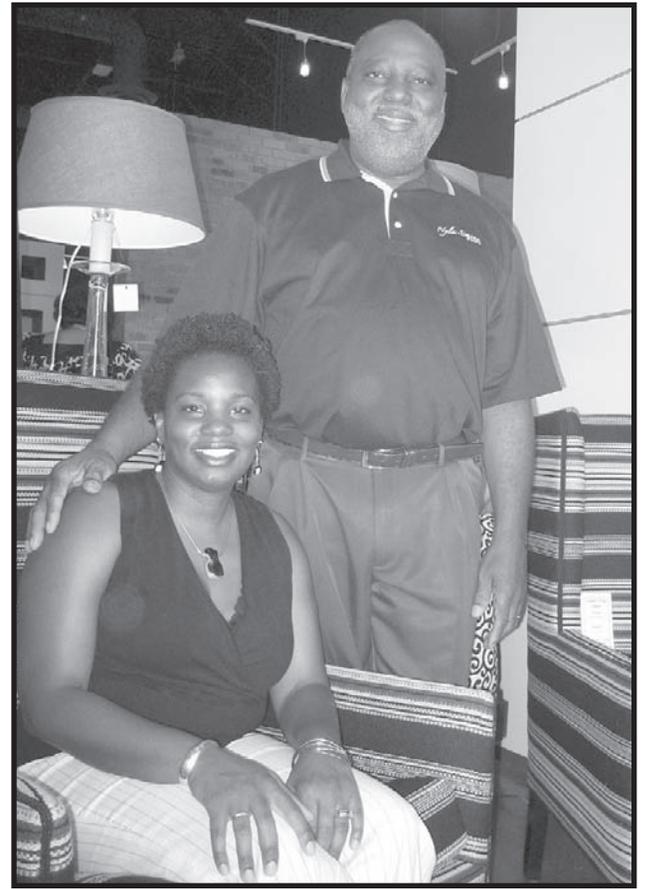
transcends budget," Benson said.

Though Benson virtually grew up in her Dad's factories and wanted to follow in the family business, he dissuaded her, saying that manufacturing is "not for girls." Instead, Benson – who said she always knew she "liked making things" – earned bachelor's and master's degrees in industrial engineering and ended up in a plant anyway, working for Ford Motor Co. in Detroit before moving to Phoenix in 1997.

Alford has a background in software and database analysis, but she's always had an appreciation for aesthetics.

The two have an eye for contemporary, quality pieces with clean, unfussy lines but plenty of "pop."

Eye-catching beds are one of their hallmarks; they also do custom draperies and pillows. A design area at the back is stocked with about 1,500 fabric swatches,



Maria Benson, Dad Arthur L. Bailey joined forces to produce and market contemporary, eye-catching pieces.

— Wrangler News photo by Tracy Doren

— FURNISHINGS, Page 26

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Furnishings

From Page 25

most milled in the U.S.

The showroom is set up as room vignettes so clients can envision items as they'd appear in a home. Benson and Alford offer design consulting services and in-store workshops (the next one is Aug. 7 and 8; her father will discuss finding furniture to fit your body size and type), and they sell to the design trade in addition to retail.

Benson said the store's customers "want a distinctive look and quality furniture." They don't want their rooms to look like a page out of a mass-market catalog, nor do they want what she calls "disposable furniture."

Most of them have "more of an urban sophistication," Benson said.

Tameka Fox is one such customer.

"This is our first home, and we didn't want to just fill it up with furniture," she said. "We wanted to make wise decisions and purchase products that would last.

"This is a big project," she added. "We wanted to make sure what we put in it is right, and it's right from the beginning."

Nyla Simone Home

Where: 1705 W. Ruby Drive, Ste. 105, Tempe.

Hours: 10 a.m.-6 p.m. Monday-Saturday; 12-5 p.m. Sunday. **Information:** 480-422-6178 or www.nylasimonehome.com.

Film Faze . . . with M.V. Moorhead

'Avatar' thrilling, but nonetheless disappointing

Though the young Australian Sam Worthington technically holds the title, the real star of Avatar is Pandora, the world on which it mostly takes place. In his first fiction feature since Titanic, James Cameron has created his own exotic globe of dense yet luminous fairy-tale forests teeming with strange creatures and mystical secrets.

He's also brought humans there, and with them, alas, dramatic clichés.

The indigenous humanoids on Pandora, an earthlike moon in orbit of a colossal planet, are the Na'vi, a race of tall, svelte, blue-skinned people with catlike eyes, noses, ears and tails.

The Na'vi are Noble Savages in the mythic tradition, a generally peaceable warrior culture that lives in harmony with the environment.

They're even equipped with an organ that plugs them into direct symbiotic connection with the horselike galloping creatures and dragonlike flying creatures on whose backs they ride.

The tribe has had the poor luck, however, to live in an enormous tree situated over a rich vein of the mineral that the human colonists are on the planet to mine—Cameron has rather cheekily named it "Unobtainium." As a result, the military-industrial complex sends a spy to win the Na'vi's trust, and this is the title character.

In the Hindu tradition, an Avatar is a deity in a physical body; in this film it's a Na'vi clone remotely controlled by the mind of a human.

The Avatar of the title is Jake Scully (Worthington), a Marine who's been crippled from the waist down and relishes the freedom of his new Na'vi bod.

Jake is theoretically there to assist two other Avatars (Sigourney Weaver and Joel David Moore) in research and to help negotiate terms with the natives.

But he's secretly there to gain military intelligence for the rabid Colonel Quaritch (Stephen Lang), on behalf of his corporate master (Giovanni Ribisi).

Bet you can't guess what happens: Once Jake spends

some time with the Na'vi and gets to know them, he starts to wonder if he's playing for the right team. Getting close to the rather fetching young Na'vi (Zoe Saldana) who's assigned to train him in the tribe's ways doesn't impede this change of heart.

Avatar has been much anticipated, in part because of its supposedly revolutionary CGI special effects, and indeed it's undeniable that on a visual level, it's a thrilling spectacle.

The flora and fauna and landscapes of Pandora stir and delight the imagination.

I loved the plants that look like Dale Chihuly's glass sculptures and snap shut at the touch, the great thundering herd animals with the hammerhead-shark faces, and the big predator that looked like a giant Doberman from hell. The visit to the dragon rookery and Jake's first solo flight are classically executed sci-fi flourishes, and so are many other sequences.

Yet for all Cameron's exuberance, Avatar doesn't quite satisfy. It lasts for more than two and a half hours, and while at any given moment there's something interesting onscreen to watch, the movie still feels overblown.

It could probably be cut by 40 minutes or so without losing a major plot point or a cool scene.

Furthermore, the special effects aren't as seamless as we might hope. While the "Pandoran" settings are splendidly evoked, the Na'vi themselves, though alluring in conception, aren't always rock-solidly convincing; at times they suggest video-game graphics.

But the most disappointing aspect of Avatar is Cameron's uninspired sense of drama.

His parable-like plot about exploitation of versus harmony with nature is perfectly virtuous and admirable, but it's also one-dimensional and unsurprising.

Cameron's formidable talents have created a Brave New World, but he's used it to tell a Stale Old Story.

Avatar opened Friday, Dec. 18, at most Kyrene Corridor big-screen theaters.



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Thank you!

Want to get in shape after the holidays? Join the 5 a.m. crowd

By Jeremy Banks

Months ago, trainers at ProFitness, at 7420 S. Rural Road, sat together, thinking of a way to help the community get into great shape at an affordable cost.

What they came up with was the 5AM Bootcamp. It's a way for individuals to get a full workout at an economical price.

"Because of the down economy, we've set up a very low-cost way for people to get in shape in a group setting," said ProFitness trainer Vin Vallejo.

The camp cost is \$99 per a month and it runs each week. Vallejo said the workout, which started in March, has been well-received.

"We have 37 people that show up every morning, and Saturdays as well. That's 54 people total involved with it," Vallejo said. "The services we offer are completely unique. Every single day is completely different and challenging. We do it for all fitness levels."

The workout covers several areas, working out the entire body.

"It's a three-in-one. We do weights, cardio and also kickboxing, outdoors, indoors, everything possible," Vallejo said. "Anything you can think of, we do—core conditioning to (mixed martial arts) training."

ProFitness initially launched a weight-loss competition, with the option for a bootcamp. "The popularity of the bootcamp just carried on so much to where people wanted to keep it going, and we did," Vallejo said.

They began with modest expectations, but were soon surprised with the turnout.

"The first day was 13 people; the second day was 24 people and we really expected 12 and in the low teens," Vallejo said. "All of a sudden we were in the 20s. And all of a sudden we're having to adjust and strategize and plan on expanding."

"We had a great response from some of the members of the community."

Word spread fast and enthusiasm increased.

"At first I thought '5 a.m.? Are you kidding me?'," said client Scott Agnew. "However, once I started getting up and getting there, it got easier and I found myself wanting to

go work out and not dreading it. When we were done at 6 a.m., I felt great," said Agnew.

Besides feeling good at the end of the session, the 5 a.m. starting time didn't seem so bad after all.

"I typically hate going to the gym and working out. Bootcamp has provided me some unique outlet to get my exercise in early, to have fun and be able to visit my friends, too. It's a great way to start the day. By 6 a.m. we're done. It's like a morning happy hour."

Christy Liem, another client, said the workout is fast-paced and ever-changing.

"It's great to be at a smaller facility with the supervision of talented trainers. Each brings something different, and they really mix the workouts up so we don't get bored," she said. "They are really good about giving personal attention when needed. I have had great results in a short amount of time."

Vallejo said the best part of the bootcamp is helping people make progress and reach their goals.

"The excitement for us is seeing people's ability to do more and more and more. They become more fit, and we can see the effects of the weight loss, as well," he said. "We are actually professionals, not just a big gym that's all about numbers. We're actually more dedicated to the person and getting them to their goal."

Vallejo said having trainers and being in a social setting can provide more motivation for getting fit.

"You're going to get more motivation and accountability, and you're going to get a lot different ways to actually work out," he said.

"Some of that is going to focus on speed, strength, weight loss and rehab. You're going to get all aspects possible of fitness itself and developing good, healthy habits."



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CrossWood Indoor Golf names winners; holiday hours listed

Bruce Brown, Jamie Kuusisto, Joshua Hynson and Nedra Zamborsky won two tickets to the Suns vs Spurs game Dec. 15 in a contest sponsored by CrossWoods Indoor Golf.

As part of the center's holiday bonus program, buyers of any \$30 gift certificate receive a \$5 CrossWoods Cash Card through Dec. 24.

CrossWoods' winter hours start Dec. 21: Monday-Thursday, 9 a.m.-11 p.m.; Friday and Saturday, 9-11; Sunday, Noon-8.

CrossWoods will be closed Christmas Day.

Information: 480-961-4653.

Location: 6170 W. Chandler Blvd., Chandler.



Corona del Sol's new head wrestling coach Jim Martinez, a former collegiate, Olympic and world championship wrestler, has three senior state champions and four state place-finishing wrestlers returning from last year's state championship team.

— Photo by Brant Clinard/azkid.zenfolio.com/

Aztec wrestlers welcome Jim Martinez as their new mentor

Returning state champs boost new coach's hopes

By Alex Zener

The Aztecs, with an experienced and accomplished wrestler as their new head coach and seven wrestlers with state championship experience on their team, are focused on not only defending their 5A-I state championship title but improving their individual state finishes over last year's results.

Corona ended Mesa High's three-year domination of state wrestling championships last season with a 26-25 win in the finals.

New head coach **Jim Martinez**, a former collegiate, Olympic and world championship wrestler, has three senior state champions and four state place-finishing wrestlers returning from last year's talented state championship team.

Returning state champs are **Ryan Miller** (145, now wrestling 152), **Derek Felton** (160, now 171) and heavyweight **Mike Howard**.

In addition, state placers **Blake Ortiz** (160), **Sam Fulton** (189), **Ryan Cox** (140) and **Brad Spadafore** (135) bring experience and depth to the Aztec squad.

Martinez, who took over for retired coach **Dave Vibber**, brings a wealth of experience to Corona's wrestling squad. His list of accomplishments include Minnesota state champion, two-time NCAA Division I third place finishes, five-time National Greco-Roman Champion, National AAU Freestyle Champion, 1984 Olympic Bronze Medalist Greco-Roman Wrestling and 1985 Bronze Medalist World Championships Greco-Roman Wrestling.

"My successes at the high school, collegiate and international levels brings value to Corona's wrestling program because I am able to share world-class training, coaching and current wrestling techniques with my wrestlers," said Martinez.

Altogether Corona had approximately 30 members from last year's varsity, JV and freshman rosters return including senior **Chris Tee** (112), sophomore **Robert Butler** (119), sophomore **Ben Nelson** (130), senior **Kevin Thomas** (145) and **Jason Landrum**. New to the varsity team are freshmen **Kort Turner** (103) and **Patrick Buck** (125), and junior **Simon Allen** (215).

"**Simon** transferred to Corona from Horizon," said Martinez.

"He is working together with **Mike Howard** to help make both of them tougher in the upper weight brackets."

Corona's strength may be experience and depth but Martinez is quick to point out senior leadership and experience the younger wrestlers will receive from their own teammates.

"The strength of the team lies in the vast experiences of the senior leadership," said Martinez. "They give confidence to those who

have had limited opportunities on varsity. Having their knowledge and desire to succeed is infectious to the group. Some of the toughest matches they will have will take place in our own wrestling room."

What else makes Corona dangerous is the experience at the heavier weight classes. "Our team's strength is what we like to call "death row," said **Blake Ortiz**, who finished third at state last season. "Death row is the weight classes 152-285. This line-up contains some of our strongest wrestlers and is the best way for us to wrap up a match."

The Aztecs are expected to be a contender once again for the state title but that won't happen without a lot of hard work from all the wrestlers and the new coach.

"Obviously, we are working to repeat the performances of our returning state champions," said Martinez.

"We also want to build on the successes of the state place winners and improve on their place standings. We have others who have not placed and feel they are in a position to place at the state tournament this year."

Also in the hunt for the 5A-I championship title will be perennial favorites Mesa, Gilbert Highland, Gilbert Mesquite, Phoenix Desert Vista and Mesa Mountain View.

Not surprisingly, three of these, Highland, Mesquite and Mountain View, are in the newly aligned Central Region along with Corona.

I am very excited about this season," said Derek Felton who recently signed a letter of intent to wrestle at ASU.

"We have so much potential and could most likely end up being the best team in the state."

So far this season the Aztecs seem to be on track by defeating Desert Ridge 60-18 Dec. 2 and Gilbert (76-5) and Mesa (36-24) Dec. 9.

Then **Ryan Miller**, **Blake Ortiz**, **Derek Felton**, **Sam Fulton**, **Simon Allen** and **Mike Howard** each went 8-0 at the Warrior Classic Dec. 11-12. Overall the team defeated Pinnacle (69-0), Chaparral (72-6), Willow Canyon (72-6), North Canyon (49-12), Gilbert (73-6), Westwood (50-24) and Mesa (41-25).

The only loss came to Ironwood 31-33 resulting in an overall third place finish that might have been avoided if Corona did not have to forfeit the 130 pound weight class.

Up next the Aztecs will square off on the mats in regular season matches at the Moon Valley Invitational Dec. 18-19 before taking a break until Jan. 6 when the Aztecs will take on Mesa Mountain View at home. The Aztec Duels are scheduled Jan. 8-9.

More information about Corona's wrestling team can be found at the school's athletic website at http://web.me.com/dspadafore/Aztec_athletics/Wrestling/wrestling.html.

At Someburros . . . It's Party Time

By Geri Koepfel

The holidays bring more than good cheer and toys from Santa. They also usher in the season of parties, whether it's family in town, a company luncheon or friends getting together to watch a game or tailgate.

Catering can take some of the stress out of organizing a shindig. But anyone who's had experience with it knows it can come with its own headaches: Pricey quotes, confusing invoices, surprising add-ons.

But affordable, easy-to-use catering services are out there.

"People think catering – that's going to be way out of our budget, so we're going to have to do a potluck," said Jennilyn Costantini, 29, catering director for SomeBurros.



Not necessarily, she says: At Someburros, options start

as low as \$3.90 per person. "We try to do it so we have a price point for everybody," she said.

Everything from take-out party trays to full-service catering with linens, table decorations, glassware, silverware and servers is available. Self-service catering includes delivery, set-up, cleanup, chafing dishes and disposable plates, napkins and tableware.

The catering business grew in the past few years after the restaurant had already built its name and reputation.

Costantini's parents George and Mary Vasquez started SomeBurros on Mill Avenue and Baseline Road in 1986. Now, along with Costantini and siblings Tim and Amy Vasquez, run the popular four-restaurant chain, which also has a location in Chandler and two in Gilbert. Costantini, her husband Anthony, and brother Tim all attended Corona del Sol High School.

After graduating from college in 2002, Costantini managed the Stapley Road store for five years before turning her focus to catering. At other restaurants, managers might also handle catering orders, but her full-time responsibility is helping people who are planning events. This ensures things will go smoothly, she says

"The biggest compliment we get is that it's very stress-free," she said.

Julie Pellant of Chandler hired SomeBurros to cater her daughter's wedding in November 2007, and said everything about the experience was very professional.

"I knew I didn't have to worry about the food, the set-up, the presentation," she said. "People were coming up to me and saying how good everything looks."

But did it taste good as it looked?

"I have a Hispanic background," Pellant said, "and a number of my relatives said the food was so authentic." The price was within budget, too, she added.

"Just because it's Mexican food doesn't mean it can't be a formal event," Costantini said.

To help promote the catering arm of the business, Someburros this year is bringing back a contest that it held once before, in 2007, giving away full-service catering for 50 people.

They expect about 4,000 entries. Forms are available at the restaurants, and the drawing is Dec. 24.

Costantini said while the usual catering order is for about 100 to 150, they can handle thousands. And they can set up almost anywhere because they don't need a kitchen or electricity – the food is prepared at one of the restaurants, and they use small self-contained cans of methanol to heat the chafing dishes.

Some of the most popular items are the green chili beef burros, cheese enchiladas and pollo fundido (marinated chicken in a deep-fried tortilla topped with spicy cream cheese, cheddar and green onions). The margarita fountain is also a crowd-pleaser; staff set it up and the customer adds the liquor.

Some of the other events Costantini has catered include engagement parties, block parties, family reunions, fundraisers, office breakfasts and lunches, and banquets for Corona del Sol's baseball and volleyball teams.

Where: South of Chandler Fashion Center; Tempe on the southeast corner of Mill and Baseline; Gilbert at the southeast corner of Stapley and Baseline; and San Tan, Market Street south of Williams Field. **Hours:** 10:30 a.m.-10 p.m. daily. Catering by appointment (Please provide at least 24-hours notice).

Information: Tempe restaurant, 480-839-TACO (8226); catering inquiries, 480-201-TACO (8226); online at www.someburros.com.



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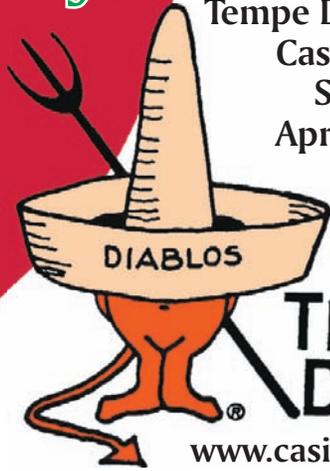
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