

WRANGLER NEWS

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Covering Tempe & West Chandler for 30-plus years



Wrangler News photo by Joyce Coronel



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Cover Story

Signaling a war vs. teen suicide

For Alexis Araiza and others, the fight to stem a growing tide of pain for young people takes to the streets. **Page 12**

#WOMENS
HISTORY
MONTH

Sharing their talents
We celebrate all that women bring to our community, lives. **Page 24**



Chalking up some love

Parents, students and others turned out to support TUHSD teachers. **Page 15**



Welcome back, kids

A year of home confinement ends as schools reopen. **Page 3**

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PAGE 3

Your Home Page for Tempe & West Chandler Neighborhood News

Back to School . . . FINALLY!



Students at Waggoner Elementary and other schools are back on campus after nearly a year of at-home learning. More photos p. 20.

— Photo by Billy Hardiman for Wrangler News

No soaring of optimism — yet — with relaxed COVID rules *Area eateries see little benefit from Gov. Ducey's modified distancing order*

By Joyce Coronel

Gov. Doug Ducey's executive order that rescinded pandemic-inspired capacity restrictions on restaurants and bars, might, in the minds of some, produce a corresponding spike in hope—and revenue—for local businesses.

Not so much, say three such entrepreneurs in Tempe. Part of the reason, the business owners indicated, is that in spite of lifting capacity

restrictions, social distancing requirements remain in place.

George Walston manages his family's business, Great Harvest Bread Co., in Tempe. He says that, so far, Ducey's order hasn't had much of an impact.

"We're kind of indifferent to the governor's order," Walston said. "With the requirements of the masks and the social distancing, we're still not able to open our lobby back to the capacity it was

pre-COVID, regardless of the 100 percent capacity allotment now."

The bakery, which also doubles as a breakfast and lunch spot, was able to seat 20 patrons inside the establishment prior to the pandemic. Since then, physical distancing requirements have forced that number to drop by more than half.

— ORDER, Page 8

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ENGAGE. EMPOWER. INSPIRE.

Want to be a police officer? Chandler taking part in April 3 job fair hoping to interest recruits during tough times

Amid a nationwide decrease in new recruits, and with a growing number of police officers leaving the field before retirement, Arizona and other states are finding themselves with a workforce crisis that experts say could leave communities vulnerable.

To help address the problem, a Scottsdale-based private security company is partnering with area police departments, as well as Arizona State University, the Maricopa County Sheriff's Office and others, to host what is being called a Pathway to Law Enforcement Career Fair.

The event, conducted by Windom Security, will be 11 a.m.-3 p.m. Saturday, April 3, at 5.11 Tactical, 2036 E. Thomas Road, Phoenix.

The timing, says Detective George F. Arias of the Professional Standards section at Chandler PD, is particularly good right now—and the welcome mat is out for applicants.

As the event nears, Arias says individuals from all walks of life are being invited to attend and to consider what he calls a rewarding and honorable career in law enforcement.

"If an individual wishes to make a difference and provide a safe community where people can live, work and thrive, there is no better way to do so than serving as a police officer..."

Indeed, Arias notes, the road to such a career follows an intensive, step-by-step process.

"We make every effort to recruit qualified, diverse applicants, which has allowed us to build and maintain a strong relationship with our community."

While a certain amount of daily tedium is inevitable, jobs in law enforcement are obviously never routine.

"Every day in the life of a police officer can be different, and often challenging," said Arias. "You are the front line and the first to respond when called upon by members of the community you serve."

"It takes a person of integrity, honor and diligence to be a police officer. An officer must be someone who is always willing to do the right

thing, on or off duty, which means the path to entering law enforcement is not easy."

As mentioned earlier, Arias said Chandler works hard to select only the most qualified candidates to join its ranks. And, despite the rigors applicants face in passing muster, the department still wants to generate interest. Said Arias: "We strongly encourage all potential applicants who want a rewarding career to apply."

To successfully meet the requirements, an applicant must be 21 years old by the time of academy graduation, then pass a physical fitness and written tests, typically on the same day. An extremely rigorous investigation of the applicant's background will follow, Arias noted, during which all details of the applicant's life will be reviewed, including employment, military service, finances, prior police contacts, and drug use.

After a follow-up review is completed, an investigator will conduct an extensive one-on-one interview with the applicant, usually followed by a polygraph, psychological exam, drug screen, and final interview with the chief of police.

Time of completion from the date of exam to the first day of the academy can be anywhere from three to six months.

Once hired, Arias said, new officers become eligible for a compensation package that includes a starting pay rate of \$26.47 per hour, medical benefits, matching deferred compensation, specialty assignment pay, and enrollment in the Public Safety Personnel Retirement System, with potential credit for prior military and police experience.

Specialty assignments such as crimes against persons, property crimes, SWAT and the department's drone operator program offer opportunities for officers to develop their skills and serve their community in a variety of ways, Arias said.

For any unable to attend the April 3 fair, he says, more information is available at chandlerpd.com/careers. The department's current lateral and recruit process opened March 15.



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McClintock gamers among top in U.S. to win state-of-art esports labs

Competitive gaming may not have achieved the career-goal status of law or medicine, but it definitely appears a growing number of young people are honing their skills in this field of exploding growth.

A group of gamers at McClintock High School not only has gained national notice for their efforts but are among their peers 25 schools nationwide that will receive state-of-the-art labs featuring high-spec gaming systems.

New York-based High School Esports League, said to be North America's largest and longest-running competitive gaming organization for high school students, named McClintock among the winning schools earlier this month.

Esports, the playing of video games competitively, is the up and coming sporting community and the Arizona Interscholastic Association, the governing body of high school sports and activities in the state, now sanctions esports and conducts state championships in it just as it does for other sports.

Further, colleges are fielding teams and offering scholarships in esports, just as they do in football, basketball or baseball.

Intercollegiate esports is booming. It is a club activity at Arizona State and Grand Canyon universities. ASU club members are in the process of seeking full program status under intercollegiate athletics. At Benedictine University in Mesa, esports is

part of the regular sports program.

According to a press release from HSEL, a company team will travel cross-country to each of the schools to begin their setup of the free esports labs.

The initiative is sponsored by Intel, the Army National Guard and ASUS, a manufacturer of gaming routers.

The McClintock visit is scheduled for Wednesday, March 24.

According to a statement from CJ Melendez, public relations director for UberStrategist, competitive gaming as a career path for young adults is more viable than ever and, similar to traditional sports, future star players make a name for themselves starting at the high school level.

As part of HSEL's STEM-certified programs, scholarships and tournament platform, the organization says, high schools are able to gain the knowledge and resources needed to positively impact students through competitive gaming.

The programs also are designed to foster academic success, teach college- and career-ready skills, and build social skills vital to success for young athletes.

To date, according to HSEL, the group has 3,400 partnered schools and 100,000 participating students. HSEL's programs include college scholarships, diversity, equity and inclusion teachings, gaming concepts curriculum and fundraising assistance.

\$4 million OK'd to help Chandler residents in need

West Chandler residents in need, along with their citywide neighbors, got a bit of good news from city councilmembers following their Feb. 25 meeting, aimed at offsetting some of the financial challenges they've faced during recent months.

Among actions involving a total of 32 agenda items, the Chandler City Council approved:

- A resolution to authorize the reallocation of \$3 million of AZCares grant funds be returned to the fund's financial reserves for future distribution.
- The reallocation of a remaining \$1.1 million of the \$4.1 million AZCares funds allocated last December, as follows:
 - \$200,000 to AZCEND for rent, utility, mortgage and move-in assistance, to complement the ERAP funds mentioned above;

- \$450,000 to the Salvation Army Chandler Corps for rent, utility, mortgage and move-in assistance, as well as a second year of weather-related respite services previously supported for one year through AZCares grant funds;

- \$340,000 AZCares funds to Save the Family to support Rapid Rehousing for Chandler families with children for a second year; and

- \$125,000 AZCares grant funds to the Neighborhood Resources Department for hotel stays and client services for people experiencing homelessness.

The Council also approved a resolution to authorize and approve a third amendment to an intergovernmental agreement with Maricopa County to provide temporary housing at hotel rooms for at-risk individuals and families experiencing homelessness.

This amendment extends the agreement to March 31 this year and adds additional funding of \$79,580 for a new total amount not to exceed \$238,740.



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Order

From Page 3

"Currently we have seating for 6-8 inside," Walston said. Seating on the patio has stayed about the same as it was prior to COVID-19, with diners fairly spread apart.

"Until the need to social distance goes away, it's nice and all to say you can have as many people as you can have, but they still have to be 6 feet apart. That's the biggest limiting factor as to how many people you can squeeze into a restaurant."

The family is not immune to the health effects of the virus either. Walston's parents, who bake the bread and other goodies, came down with COVID-19 at one point and two other bakers got it as well.

"We were closed for just over a week," Walston said.

A 'premature' decision

Over at Bogey's Grill, owner Elaine McCombie offered similar observations.

"Honestly, it didn't make any difference whatsoever," McCombie said. "Because of the social distancing of still staying 6 feet apart, we can't put more tables in. We're encouraging people to eat outside more than anything else because it's a good thing to do."

Prior to the governor's order, things were already looking up at Bogey's.

"It's been about a month now that business really picked up," McCombie said. "So it's just been getting a little bit busier each week. Maybe the next five percent or something, but I don't know if that had anything to do with the governor's order or if it's just the weather."

With spring break and spring training games, more people seem to be walking through the door, McCombie said.

She thinks Ducey may have acted prematurely by rescinding the capacity restrictions on bars and restaurants.

"My gut is it kind of scares me, to be honest with you."

McCombie pointed to reports that bars in Old Town Scottsdale had patrons shoulder-to-shoulder following Ducey's lifting the restrictions.

"I think he overshot that one. I think he should have waited a couple more months."

A couple of months back, two of her bartenders came down with the virus, she says, forcing Bogey's to close for a day and half while the business underwent a deep cleaning and the rest of the staff was tested. "Everybody came back negative," she added.

Patio seating request

Eduardo Chavez, owner of La Casa de Juana, offered similar sentiments. He said his business has increased but he doesn't think it's related to the governor's order.

"No. It's just the time of the year," Chavez says. "It's a little bit more but it's still up and down."

Right now, he's hoping the property manager of the plaza will approve his request for outdoor seating.

Unlike nearby Vincetorio's the increased seating won't extend into the parking lot.

"This will be on the sidewalk near the entrance," Chavez said. What will help the most, he noted, would be Tempe Pollack Cinemas reopening.

The theater closed last March due to the pandemic. Digital signs facing McClintock and Elliot announce, with a Terminator background photo, "We'll be back."

There hasn't been a formal announcement—yet—about a date on which the theater can reopen, but Chavez is sure the increased foot traffic from movie patrons at the plaza will also boost his business.

"We're planning to update some things on the menu in the next 30 days but the patio will be the main thing," he said.

Tempe Chamber outlook

As to the overall view of what the business economy holds for this year, Anne Gill, president/CEO of the Tempe Chamber, remains optimistic.

"Throughout the pandemic, our priority has been, and continues to be, our members, and the recovery of Tempe's business community," she said.

"At this point, we have not heard specifically from our restaurant members on this question. However, we are encouraged by the fact that more than 2 million Arizonans have been vaccinated. As this number continues to grow, I have every expectation that our economy will experience a significant rebound in the third and fourth quarters of this year and in the years to come."

Grueling hot, yes, but Tempe still ranks among U.S. best

Some cities, like Tempe, have appealing climates and numerous opportunities for outdoor jobs. In these cities, mail carriers, landscapers, roofers—you name it—indicate they don't mind working outside in the sun.

LawnStarter, a national franchise with a location in Tempe, took stock of the outdoor employment landscape to produce what it calls its 2021 Best Cities for Outdoor Jobs report.

Company officials say they compared the 200 largest employment markets in the U.S. across 26 key factors, from outdoor job opportunities to cost of living to average daily temperature.

Tempe ranks No. 6 on its "best of" list.

Here's how Tempe stacked up, followed by some highlights and lowlights from the report, with 1 being

the best:

- Outdoor job opportunities per 100,000 residents - 14th
- Labor-force participation rate - 2nd
- Minimum wage - 63rd
- Income tax rate - 64th
- Length of average workday - 13th
- Work-related severe injuries per 100,000 employed residents - 23rd
- Average daily temperature - 9th

Highlights and lowlights

- Out and About in the Southwest: Arizona dominated the ranking, with four cities in the top 10. While not topping the charts in any single category, Tempe and other Arizona cities earned high marks in opportunity metrics, such as labor force participation, and in safety metrics, such as health insurance coverage.



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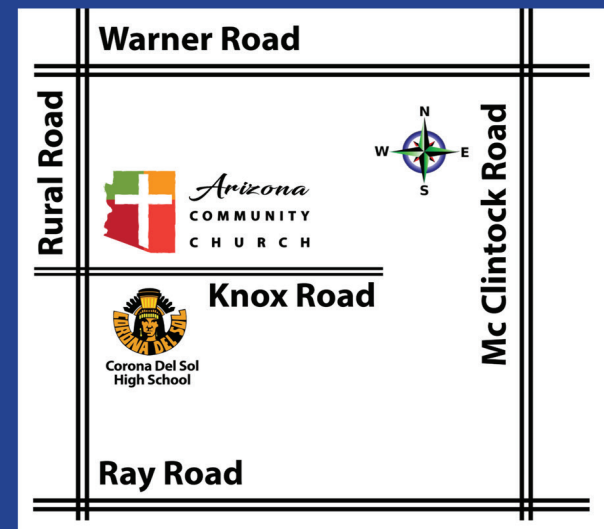
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Bike ride enables W.Chandlerites to get out, get moving

Planners of an upcoming family bike ride in Chandler say West Chandler residents and their citywide neighbors have an added bonus to sign up for the event by Wednesday, March 21: a goodie-bag with an event T-shirt, water bottle and other items from event sponsors.

The 2021 event returns April 10-18 with an invitation for the community to get out and get moving on Chandler bike paths, trails and streets for fun and healthy exercise.

As with the 2020 event, this year's expanded nine-day ride event encourages participants to enjoy one or more two-wheeler ventures and the ability to

share their experience with the community through personal social media accounts and the event page on Facebook.

Said Mayor Kevin Hartke:

"We may not be able to gather in large groups like we have in previous years, but we can still bond as an community on social media and share our Chandler spirit and pride with friends and neighbors.

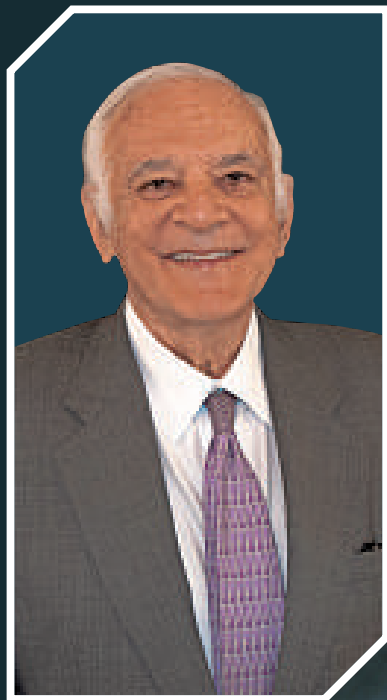
"You can ride solo or share a bike ride with others, and I encourage everyone to be safe by wearing a bike helmet, checking your tires and other equipment and following physical distancing guidelines with other riders."

To be part of the shared community experience, participants are asked to register online at chandleraz.gov/familybikeride and commit to at least one ride at any convenient time April 10-18.

The family ride is presented by the city's Transportation Policy Division, with support from various city departments.

Registration is open now. Supplies are limited, so register early and choose one of the goodie-bag distribution locations and dates.

Information: Nancy Jackson, 480-782-3442; nancy.jackson@chandleraz.gov; or the website chandleraz.gov/familybikeride.



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Young voices grow louder to help the 'Silents'

By Joyce Coronel

Three young people stood behind a table in front of McKay's True Value and U-Haul, speaking to shoppers exiting the West Chandler store.

Squinting up at the plentiful spring sun, with the words "Stand for the Silent" emblazoned on their blue polo shirts, the visitors drew passersby into conversation—a conversation they hoped would raise awareness about bullying and child suicide.

Greg Howell is one of Stand for the Silent's representatives. "It hits home for me personally," he said. "I was a very individualistic, reserved kid—a little different." It was often difficult to deal with peers who didn't understand him, he said. Teenage angst didn't help.

"People are telling you, it's the end of the world. So it's so hard to step outside of that and realize, you know, life's not going to end if that girl doesn't like you."

Brittany Gallegos can relate, too. She also was bullied and is working for Stand for the Silent because of experiences in her formative years. She said she was bounced around from home to home, landing in nine different states.

"I grew up in it, like, really bad. I grew up getting bullied, went into foster care, not having stuff—parents just not being very in my life, so having nothing," Gallegos said. "Everyone looking at me like I'm the outcast, like someone who's just there, 'she doesn't have parents, she doesn't go to father-daughter dances' and stuff like that."

Gallegos has been on her own since she was 17 and put herself through college. "My goal is to open up my own non-profit for child abuse (victims) and foster care-neglect victims, and to be able to be a foster care parent and guide them on the fundamentals that I'm learning here."

Alexis Araiza, who also stood at the table handing out literature, said the issue hit home for him, too. He lost a soccer teammate to suicide when he was in high school.

"I just think about the ones I've lost," Araiza said. "If I could have prevented their death, it would mean a lot to me."

Araiza's friend died by suicide after a relationship with a girlfriend fell apart. He was 17.

"We're just trying to raise awareness," he said.

So what exactly is Stand for the Silent? Wrangler News spoke with Kirk Smalley, president and co-founder of the organization.

Smalley is not an Armani-suit-wearing smooth talker mixing it up with Fortune-500 corporate backers. He was working construction back in 2010, and in his online videos, he's dressed in a T-shirt, blue jeans and baseball cap. His Oklahoma twang and plain-spoken ways hit home. You can hear snuffles in the background as the audience, rapt, takes in Smalley's presentation.

In the phone call with a Wrangler News reporter, he explained that his wife worked at the school their 11-year-old son Ty once attended.

"Ty was bullied for over two years in school and, one day, he finally had enough. He fought back," Smalley said. The school suspended Ty and called his mother to the office to take him home.

"When she came home that evening, she found that he had killed himself on the bedroom floor," Kirk said.

The couple never saw it coming.

"We decided we couldn't live in a world like that where babies were taking their own lives because of the actions of others, so we started an organization called Stand for the Silent," Kirk said.

Pre-pandemic, he was traveling 300 days a year, visiting schools and speaking to anyone who would listen. The presentations are free to schools. Smalley

says the organization survives off donations.

"In the last four years, I've spoken at 1,597 schools to a little over 1.6 million kids," Smalley said. And though he's addressed gatherings in Phoenix and Prescott, he's not yet been invited to Tempe or West Chandler to share the heart-crushing story of what happened to his family—and thousands of other families whose children have died by suicide.

The fundraising teams, like the one that recently stood outside McKay's, help raise awareness of an issue that's becoming increasingly difficult to ignore.

"Raising awareness is more important to us actually than the funding—letting people know what's going on in our schools and with our kids."

A spate of teen suicides in the East Valley back in 2017 worried parents and school administrators. In 2013, an eighth-grade student at Aprende Middle School died by suicide.

Erin Helm, director of communications and marketing for the Kyrene School District, emphasized the district's commitment to student safety and well-being. "Equity and inclusion are priorities in Kyrene, and part of building an inclusive culture is having zero tolerance for cruelty, hate or any other form of bullying," Helm said. The district governing board has an anti-bullying policy that lines up with the Arizona School Boards Association. The policy defines bullying, cyber-bullying, harassment and intimidation and says such behaviors "will not be tolerated."

Kyrene schools, Helm added, "regularly reinforce this message with students through lessons and activities."

The Anti-Defamation League named six Kyrene schools "No Place for Hate" schools last spring—more than any other district in Arizona. Cielo in Chandler, plus Waggoner, Kyrene Middle School and Manitas in Tempe, were among them.

Information: standforthesilent.org

MCC honors Black Americans for progress, impact

For Mona Scott Figueroa, 2021 offers not only the chance for a widely inclusive look at the world of Black Americans but a way to honor those who have helped achieve progress in an extraordinarily challenging environment.

In celebration of Black History Month, MCC has organized a year-long observance, Black History 2021—A Year of Recognition, during which it will honor the achievements of Black people past and present by hosting events featuring their history and culture.

"This Year of Recognition explores the impact Black Americans have made in areas such as our local community, entrepreneurship, education, film and arts, politics and law, and much more," said Figueroa, Ed.D., a member of the American Indian Studies and Sociology faculty at Mesa Community

College.

She also serves as Phi Theta Kappa adviser and Black History Year Committee member.

As to her overview of progress that has been made so far this year, Figueroa says she is thankful for an opportunity to relate some of the successes. "We are sharing the accomplishments of our Black colleagues who excel in their area of expertise and have advanced diversity, equity and inclusion at MCC."

Scott-Figueroa is Táchii'nii born for Naahilí (African Americans). Her maternal grandfather is 'Ashjiihi and her paternal grandfather is Naahilí. She is from Birdsprings on the Navajo Nation.

Her teaching and research background include Indigenous epistemologies, as well as Ainequalities and power with an emphasis on race and ethnicity. She draws heavily from life experiences growing up

in South Central Los Angeles, in Birdsprings, and in Winslow, Arizona.

The special program further acknowledges and teaches others about historical and modern injustices," said Tricia White, director of the MCC Office of Institutional Effectiveness and Black History Year Committee member.

"We hope, by continuing the momentum launched in February during Black History Month, to engage with our students and our community to identify ways we can move forward, together," she said.

Until the observance concludes at the end of December, Tempe and West Chandler residents are being encouraged to participate in various events and programs, and to review the resources and features found online at mesacc.edu/black-history-year.

SPORTS . . . with Alex Zener

Aztec seniors honored in soccer finale

Corona del Sol won its last home soccer game on March 2 against Boulder Creek, 4-1, where four different players scored goals for Corona.

Seniors **Alex Barria** and **Reyes Carbajal** each scored one goal while junior **Diego Aplicano** and freshman **Vaughn Harris** scored one each.

Three Corona sophomores were also involved in the scoring. **Aran Garza**, **Brandon Olivares** and **Andrew Davies-Boerner** were each credited with an assist.

Although the Aztecs did not make it into the state playoffs this season, after compiling a 3-8-1 season record, they still used their last game of the regular season to honor their senior players, despite COVID restrictions.

Honored by teammates for their contribution on and off the field included seniors **Reyes Carbajal**, **Moises Escobedo**, **Sean Amjadi**, **Alex Barria**, and **Logan Beatty**.

Carbajal, in the midfielder position, played in all 11 regular season matches scoring five goals, the

second most on the team, along with two assists and 12 points.

Escobedo, also a midfielder, played in 10 of the 11 matches, ended his senior season tied with Davies-Boerner for the most assists, five each.

Barria played in all 11 matches scoring two goals and four points over the season while Beatty played in eight matches scoring one goal and two points.

Corona girls soccer

Corona won four of their last six matches but still ended the regular season ranked No. 17, with a 4-5-2 regular season record, maybe because the scheduled game at home against Westview on March 1 never materialized.

With a No. 17 ranking, the Aztecs just missed out being one of the top 16 teams to qualify for the state championship playoffs. It was the first time Corona had not played in a post season match since 2012.

Winning the last three regular season matches,

5-0 against Chandler on Feb. 23, 1-0 against Valley Christian on Feb. 25, and 1-0 against Boulder Creek on March 2, may have given the seniors a positive ending to what had to have been a difficult season due to the COVID-19 restrictions.

The team's nine seniors, who contributed on and off the field to the team's overall success and were honored at the last home game included defender **Anissa Rios**, defender **Abby Benedict**, forward **Liliana Guillen**, forward **Emily Sammon**, defender **Ashley Hill**, forward **Yazmin Elzy**, midfielder **Paige Riley**, forward **Amaya Antonio** and defender **Jasper Schineller**.

Antonio, who played in all 11 matches during the regular season, was the leading scorer on the team with five goals and 11 points credited to her on the stat sheet.

Guillen scored two goals and added four points over the season while Hill scored one goal.

Other members of the 2020-21 team included five junior players: goalkeeper **Rosalia Oyzerovich**;

— SPORTS, Page 14



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Corona soccer players Aran Garza (3), Nico White (9), Moises Escobedo (10) and Brandon Olivares (in back) fight for control of the ball.

— Photo courtesy Kris Cartwright, kriscartwright.smugmug.com

Sports

From Page 13

forward **Cassidi O'Connor**; defender **Ashley Lutes**; midfielder **Paige Sever**; and defender **Ally Wachtel**.

Sophomore players included goalkeeper **Isabelle Bateman**, midfielder **Samantha Camino**, defender **Aja Lister**, defender **Erin Karlin**, and midfielder **Madelyn Depew**.

Freshman members on the team included midfielder **Giana Garza**, defender **Celine Sarian**, forward **Kyarra Aparicio**, midfielder **Kiera Campbell** and midfielder **Marina Carson**.

Fall 2021 football alignments

The AIA Executive Board announced the 11-man football alignments for the fall of 2021 on March 15. Corona is still part of the 6A Division in the East Valley Conference along with Dobson, Mesa, Skyline, Tucson and Westwood.

Marcos de Niza remains in 4A as part of the Desert Sky Conference with American Leadership Academy-Queen Creek, Benjamin Franklin, Mesquite and Seton Catholic Prep.

Spring Sport COVID-19 restrictions reduced

Due to the improvement in the COVID-19 scenario in Arizona over the past few weeks, the AIA Executive Board reduced some of the facemask restrictions for the winter sports state playoff tournaments and the spring

sporting events.

The AIA Executive Board voted to allow athletes and officials who are actively participating in a game or contest to remove their masks but they must wear a mask when not actively playing or participating.

For example, a softball or baseball athlete does not need to wear a mask when on the playing field or when up for bat or on base. Otherwise, masks must be worn by all players in the dugout.

This change affects Spirit Line, as well but students, coaches, officials and any other personnel actively involved in a game or contest. Masks must be worn by everyone when not actively playing or in the arena of competition.

The board also voted to allow individual schools, designated as the home school, to determine spectators. Anyone who attends a high school sporting event is required to wear a face covering the entire time they are in attendance.

The acceptable mask is a cloth mask, disposable non-surgical mask, or gaiter. Mesh masks do not meet this requirement. No exceptions.

Winter sports championship tournament results

Corona's boys basketball team won three of their last four regular season games to move up in the rankings to No. 16 allowing the Aztecs to slide into the last spot in the 6A championship playoff brackets thus qualifying to play at least one game in the post season.

— SPORTS, Page 23

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'Spreading the love'

By Samuel Voas

wranglernews.com

Last month, a contingent of agitated parents purchased a billboard along southbound I-10 near Elliot Road that read:

"Tempe Union High School District is FAILING Our Kids! Open Our Schools!"

In response, Amanda Steele, parent of a Tempe Union student, organized a district-wide demonstration of support for Tempe Union educators and staff.

On the evening of Sunday, March 14, gatherings were held at all seven Tempe Union campuses. With students, parents and members of the community clad in homemade T-shirts and bearing buckets of chalk, all knelt on the pavement to scribble colorful messages of gratitude for Tempe teachers.

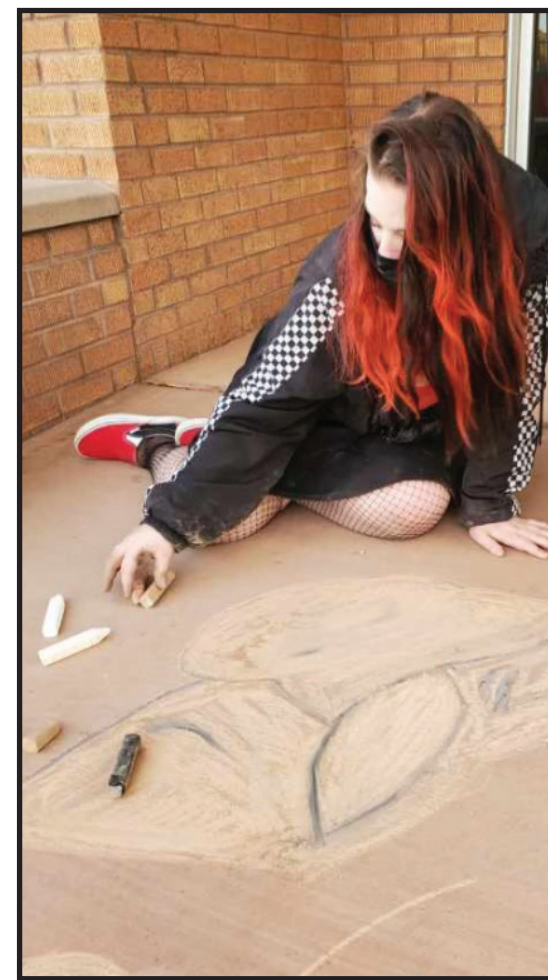
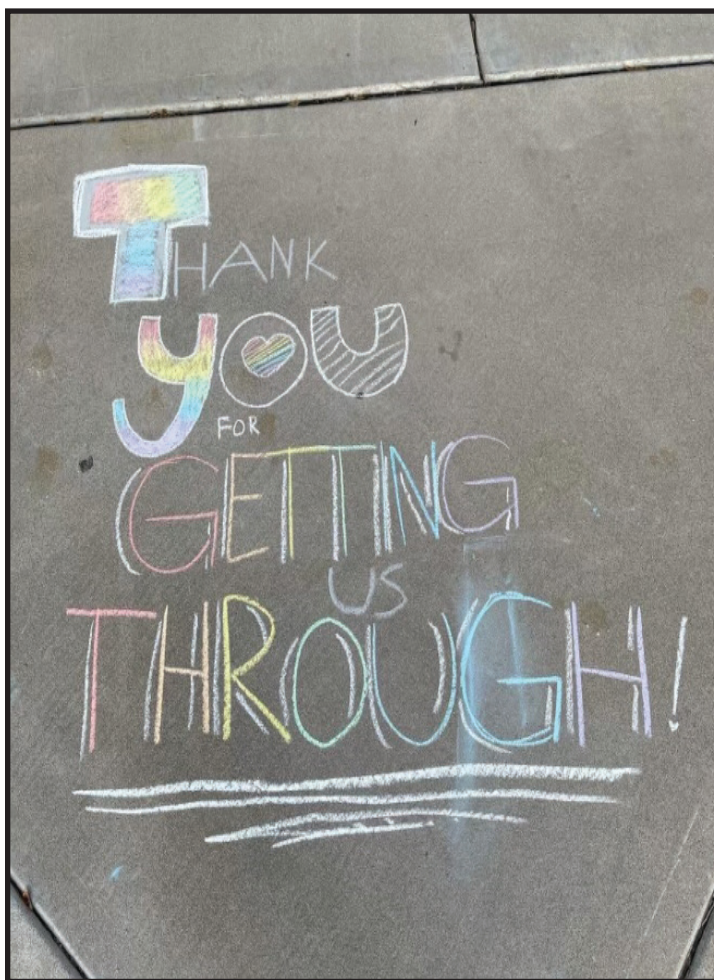
Several prominent public figures came to show their support, including Tempe Mayor Corey Woods, Rep. Mitzi Epstein, and Sen. Sean Bowie, both of LD 18.

Addressing the disparaging billboard, Steele said, "I felt that that was not the appreciation and respect that the district and educators deserved after the year of trauma that all of us have faced.

"It has been a year of challenge and we wanted to really spread love and share the passion and commitment that they're showing our families and students, with them."



— Wrangler News photo by Samuel Voas



— Photos courtesy Amanda Steele

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APRIL 4

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**Children Grades 1-6 in Kid City
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Teens at 9:30 AM and 11:00 AM in Worship Center.

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Pandemic more than triples demand on mortuaries

Delays in storage of remains, receipt of death certificates create a logjam



By Samuel Voas
wranglernews.com

The consensus is that the pandemic has been bad for small businesses. But in the case of 44-year-old Dominic Kepner, that trope simply does not apply.

Kepner is a funeral director at the storied Bueler Mortuary of downtown Chandler, founded in 1952.

According to him the pandemic represented the busiest period in their nearly 70-year history, with a clientele that reached the 40 mark. In an average month, Kepner says, Bueler Mortuary serves around 30 clients. Forty is a busy month, and in January number of clients was nearly 100, over half of which were COVID-related.

"I've been doing this 25, 26 years and December, January, February are probably the worst months there've ever been in my career," Kepner said. During these months, the Bueler staff "pretty much lived at the funeral home."

The wave of COVID deaths this winter created unprecedented challenges for Bueler Mortuary's three-person staff. Among these was the simple issue of space.

"We were pretty maxed out to the point where I don't think we could have handled another call, storage-wise, space-wise."

Bodies awaiting cremation are stored in special containers, according to Kepner. Ordinarily,

these containers are placed on rolling platforms until they are transported to the crematory. Amid the raging pandemic, it was not long before all of these rolling devices were in use. But as bodies continued to arrive en masse, Kepner and his team had to get creative.

They began storing cremation containers on five-gallon buckets. "You know, just out of respect, I didn't want to place the cremation container on the ground," Kepner said. He notes that other mortuaries faced the same problem. "I know other places were using sawhorses."

Bueler Mortuary's storage problem was compounded by some hospitals' slower-than-usual processing of death certificates, Kepner said.

Legally, doctors have 72 hours to deliver a signed death certificate. But at the height of the pandemic, as hospitals experienced a dramatic increase in the number of patients, doctors were taking as long as a week to process the required paperwork.

Funeral homes like Bueler cannot proceed with a cremation, or any funerary services, Kepner said, until they receive a signed death certificate for the deceased. Until the documents are received, the mortuary is forced to store the body.

While hospital delays left Kepner in a professional predicament, he points out that mortuaries were not the only victims of the death certificate logjam.

"If they don't do their part, the

families are the ones who are paying the consequences. Because they can't have a service or have cremation take place until the doctor signs that document."

Even after receiving the delayed death certificates, Bueler Mortuary was faced with another impediment.

"Our crematory got backed up. They were far behind on cremations because they got bombarded, as well," Kepner said.

Bueler Mortuary does not have a crematory of its own. It contracts its cremations to Paradise Memorial Crematory, which is run by Scottsdale-based Messenger Mortuaries.

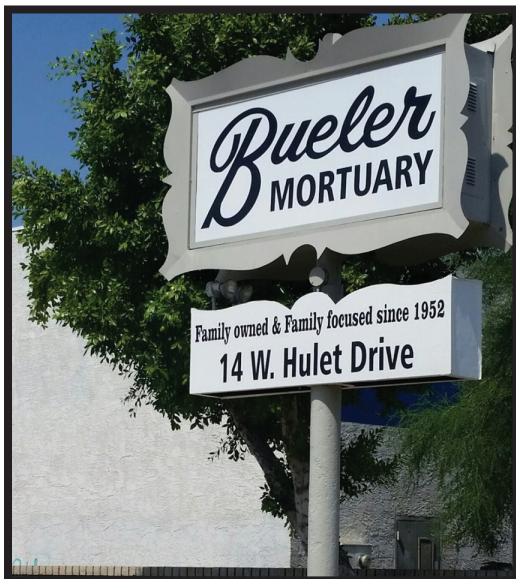
According to Messenger CEO Sabrina Messenger, Paradise is one of the largest crematories in Arizona. They are contracted to perform cremations for a number of local funeral homes.

The Paradise Memorial staff worked seven days a week to keep up with the sheer volume of COVID deaths, she said.

After an overwhelming winter, things have calmed down at Bueler, Kepner noted. In fact, March has been a slow month, he said.

"I don't think any of our cases this month have been COVID."

As Bueler Mortuary returns to business that's more routine in volume, Kepner looks back on the winter with what seems a surreal kind of recall. "It was challenging, you know. Sometimes I wonder how we got through it," Kepner said.



Passover message: A path to freedom, renewal after the shackles of plague



At Passover, Jews EAT a story – the great story at the center of our people: We were enslaved; now we are free.

Throughout the meal, the foods and drinks we consume evoke ideas, feelings, and memories about liberation.

They prompt us to radical empathy, and to stand, actively, alongside the oppressed.

The story is profoundly ancient, yet always new. That's why we tell it again and again.

Last year, our seder dinners were especially poignant.

They were the first major event we held in lockdown, separated from the ones we love. We felt – many of us for the very first time – what "plague" really means.

We imagined, as we never had before, how long the dark night our ancestors spent huddled in their homes as the Angel of Death passed by them. The story felt personal as rarely before.

As the Ten Plagues are recounted, we spill a drop of wine from our cup. Our joy is diminished

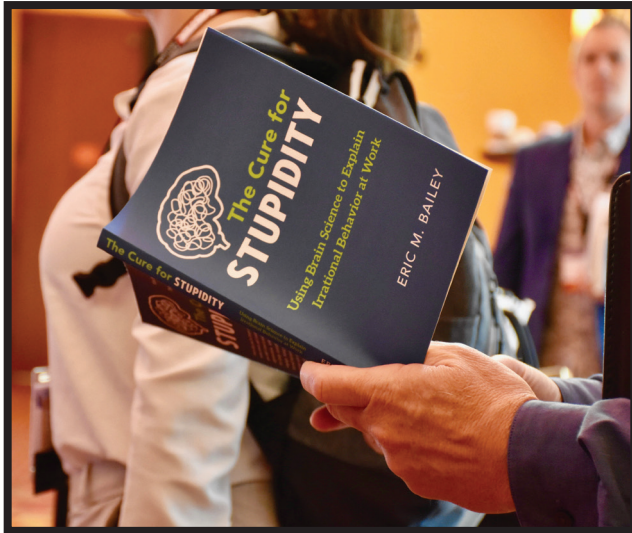
when others suffer. This year, I'll be thinking of the many losses that have accompanied COVID – missed income, opportunities, celebrations, friendships, hugs, and so much else.

A plague is more than death.

This Passover, we lift our eyes to new possibilities: stepping out of our homes and being together fully, feeling safe from the shackles of illness, fear, and restriction. We have been confined; soon we may all become free.

May this be a season of renewal for us all, as we venture forth together.

— Rabbi Dean Shapiro, Temple Emmanuel, Tempe



Finally, couple uncovers a way to cure stupidity

By Lee Shappell
 wranglernews.com

There's an old joke about a patient who visits the doctor and says to him, "Doc, it hurts when I do this." And the physician responds, "Don't do that."

Similarly, attempting to cure stupidity in the world can be a frustrating, eternal quest. If you let it.

So, don't do that, advises a West Chandler man, who has made it his business to address perceived moronic behavior -- and there seems to be no shortage of that in these politically charged, pandemic-stressed times.

Don't judge. Don't presume. Take a step back, draw a deep breath and try to see another point of view, Eric Bailey recommends.

And what is stupid, really? As we've seen in recent times, "stupid" is something about which people may disagree.

"Everyone at some point in their life will think of someone as an idiot or stupid," Bailey said. "That sentence, 'You're an idiot,' completely shuts down communication. It shuts down connection. If you need to find ways to reconnect with one another, putting that judgement out there between us is going to prevent us from actually connecting."

Bailey, 38, and his wife, Jamie, 37, who live in the Ray Road/McClintock Drive area of West Chandler, operate Bailey Strategic Innovation Group, which has morphed into a consulting agency that primarily does conferences and workshops for organizations, government entities, retreats, strategic planning and leadership development for more than 200 clients around the world. They deliver authentic takes on life by using brain science to address irrational behavior and drawing from their own relationship to help people improve theirs so they can have a civil conversation with those with whom they disagree, or vice versa.

He has written a book, *The Cure for Stupidity*, an exploration of real life in relationships and parenting. Together, they recently started a podcast, also named *The Cure for Stupidity*, which is available on Apple Spotify and Google podcasts. Video versions are accessible on YouTube, Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn.

They do not take individual appointments. "It's a lot of fun," Bailey said. "One of the things we see a lot is how easy it is to for people to see someone else as stupid or an idiot. We try to show people how to see beyond that and how to see the human on the other side."

Among the Baileys' clients are Association for Change Management Professionals-Europe, Zell, Google, U.S. Air Force, Los Angeles County, St. Louis and Phoenix Police Department.

This is a guy who has helped likely NFL Hall-of-Famer Larry Fitzgerald pet a rhinoceros, taught dozens of young children to ski, changed the strategic course of cities across the country, jumped out of an airplane with his wife, flown an F-16 and chatted with LL Cool J on the campus of Harvard University. He is a voracious reader of psychological research.

"What we find is that every single organization is dealing with the same things," Bailey said. "Every single person we coach, from executives to front-line staff, is dealing with exactly the same things, about communication, understanding and empathy."

Bailey's experiences have taught him that no matter what life puts in your path, there are lessons to be learned or stories to be told. Among them is that "stupidity" comes from the natural tendency to judge another person, he said.

"All of this work is based in psychology and brain science," said Bailey, who holds a master's degree in Leadership and Organizational Development from Saint Louis University. "We try to help people realize that if they remove that natural tendency to judge, then those around us aren't as quote-unquote stupid any longer, they're just seeing the world from a different point of view."

"In everything that's happening with politics and division, everyone tends to sit in place and point to the other side and say, 'How are you this stupid?' If we took the time to look at the other side and find the rationality of their position all of a sudden, it's, 'Oh, you're not stupid, you're just seeing things in a way other than the way I see them.'"

According to Jaime Bailey, reflecting inward and seeing things from an alternate perspective is a good basis for finding common ground "as opposed to us vs. them."

"In marriage, in friendships, with your parents, in the workplace with your manager or employees, it's so easy to take an us vs. them perspective as opposed to understanding and figuring out the best way together," she said.

As Eric Bailey points out, it's easy to say, "Don't be judgmental," but how do you get somebody to do it?

"I encourage people to ask themselves: What do I truly want out of this?" he said. "Do I want to strengthen a relationship or do I want to win? Do

I want to understand them better or am I trying to prove how smart I am? When you ask yourself that, it changes the way the brain functions from a more animalistic fight-or-flight to a more human curiosity.

"Then the follow-up question is: If that's what you truly want, then how would you behave? If you want to strengthen a relationship then you would show up differently in this conversation. You would stop trying to force your opinion and start trying to learn more."

The most important question in these difficult conversations, Bailey said, is: Why are you so passionate about your position?

"That's a very important question because, one, it acknowledges that we are on different positions but, two, it acknowledges strong emotion," he said. "So, we're not actually talking about why did you vote for this guy, but why are you so passionate about your position? It sort of gets at something underneath that is based on strong emotion."

The COVID-19 pandemic also has influenced human behavior as a result of the stress, according to Bailey.

"Many are dealing with bouts of depression," he said. "Uncertainty tends to do that. The same part of the brain is stimulated when we have uncertainty, and when we face change, and when we experience physical pain. When you think about that, it makes sense why we are having such a hard time."

There is trauma research called Toxic Positivity or Toxic Optimism, which suggests that if people always are looking for an optimistic outcome and then are frequently let down because it is not attained that they can develop despair.

"Think how we entered this COVID time," Bailey said. "Last February, we were all saying too bad for China. In March, we were saying, oh, too bad for New York and Seattle. That will never happen here. By late March, we were like OK, we can shut down for a week. Then in April, we can shut down for a month. It's just a month and then we can go back to normal."

"We kept pushing this finish line -- to the end of May, then into July, then to now. Each time we missed it, many started to develop despair. You hear people say it will go back to normal soon. That starts to build this toxic optimism, where we're continually let down when it doesn't happen the way we hope it will."

But COVID-19, uncivil political discourse and most issues within relationships can be dealt with effectively, Bailey said.

"I keep thinking about a scene in *Apollo 13*," he said. "The ship is not going to reach the moon. Ground control is afraid we're going to lose the astronauts. All of the people in Houston are sitting around a table trying to figure out how we are going to do this. How are we going to get a square peg in a round hole and save them?"

"Then someone walks up and dumps a box full of essentially garbage on the table and says, 'This is what we have to work with. How are we going to get them home?' That's what I think 2020 was. We got a box of garbage dumped on us, and we've got to do our best with it."



Hooray, we're back!

After most of the past year spent at home learning online, students returned to schools in Tempe and West Chandler, including Kyrene's Waggoner Elementary.

Wearing brightly colored masks, students were greeted by Kyrene Superintendent Laura Toenjes and Kyrene Governing Board President Kevin Walsh.

Adding a note of fun to the occasion was the school mascot, the Wildcat, who gave kids an elbow bump as they made their way to classrooms, passing colorful chalk drawings along the cement pathways that stretch between buildings on campus.

— Photos by
Billy Hardiman
for Wrangler News





Mark your calendar for April 17: State of the Neighborhoods and Awards

By Jennifer Adams

Spring is here and, along with the beautiful weather, that means it is time to salute the neighbors who make Tempe what it is.

The 2021 State of the Neighborhoods and Awards is Saturday, April 17, at 9 a.m. – grab your coffee, sit out on the patio and join us live on Facebook or on Tempe 11 on Cox 11 or online.

South Tempe has represented the city well in years past at the annual awards ceremony. Going back to 1995, there have been winners from neighborhood associations like Estate La Colina, Corona del Sol, Raintree and Alta Mira, and from homeowners associations like Buena Vista Ranchos, Warner Ranch Landing II, Calle de Caballos and Alisanos. In 2019,

Judy Tapscott of Alta Mira took home our top award, the Chuck Malpede Neighbor of the Year.

This year's State of the Neighborhoods and Awards promises to be no less exciting, with residents from all over Tempe being recognized for contributing to their neighborhoods and the community as a whole.

Every neighborhood has people and places deserving of recognition and every April we celebrate residents, properties and businesses that make your



neighborhood special. We will recognize honorees in these award categories: Neighbor of the Year; Alley Upkeep; Arts & Culture; Sustainability; Water Wise Landscape; and the inaugural Dolores Huerta scholarship.

Mayor Corey Woods will host the event for the first time and his State of the

Neighborhoods address will provide an update about city initiatives and progress. Mayor Woods and the Tempe City Council will present the awards.

Each year, the members of the Neighborhood Advisory Commission and staff from the city's Neighborhood Services division work hard to bring you this uplifting event. I do not want to spoil any

surprises, but just for you Wrangler News readers, I would say you want to look out for 2021 winners from your area.

For me, the 2021 awards will be even more special because I know just how much neighbors from all over Tempe have pulled together during the pandemic. We have seen residents organize distanced music nights, donate food to those in need, help each other when family members were sick, check on vulnerable neighbors and collaborate on ways to keep the kids active. As if we needed any more proof that Tempe is full of close neighborhoods and close neighbors, COVID-19 truly amplified the strength of those relationships.

I look forward to celebrating everyone – both those who win awards and those who are making their neighborhoods better in big ways and small ways every single day. Join me and visit tempe.gov/StateoftheNeighborhoods for the details about how to take part in the virtual event.

As always, you can reach out to me with any ideas, questions or feedback. Reach me by calling 480-350-8835, emailing jennifer_adams@tempe.gov or visiting [JenniferAdamsTempe](https://www.facebook.com/JenniferAdamsTempe) on Facebook.

Jennifer Adams is a member of the Tempe City Council.



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Tempe adds city facilities to newest 'open' list

Gyms and fitness centers at the city of Tempe's Kiwanis, Escalante and North Tempe locations are now open.

Kiwanis Pool will also reopen for lap swim and water fitness sessions, with swim lessons scheduled to start in April.

Capacity limitations remain in place at all facilities and in all classes to allow for physical distancing. Face coverings are still required inside city facilities and temperature checks may be taken.

Face coverings are also required outdoors if you are unable to maintain 6 feet of distance from people outside

your household.

Remaining closed until further notice are Westside Multi-Generational Center, Tempe City Hall, Tempe History Museum, Edna Vihel Arts Center, Pyle Adult Recreation Center, Tempe Center for the Arts and all city senior centers.

Tempe Public Library is open with limited services.

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Sports

From Page 14

In their last three regular season games, the Aztecs defeated Desert Ridge, 50-41, on Feb. 26, defeated Highland, 76-71, on March 2, and defeated Cibola, 61-36, on senior night, March 4 to become the No. 16 seed in the 6A state championships.

Unfortunately, the Aztecs squared off on March 11 in the first round of the playoffs against the No. 1 seed, Sunnyslope, who entered the tournament with a 15-1 record. Corona lost, 73-58, in a hard-fought battle to the Vikings on March 11 and were eliminated from the tournament.

Marcos de Niza basketball

The Padres won five out of their last eight regular season games to end up with a 9-9 overall record.

The last game of the season, the Padres defeated American Leadership Academy out of Queen Creek in a tight 47-43 game at home on senior night, March 2.

The top scorers from Marcos were two younger players the Padres will hopefully have in their program for a few more years.

Sophomore **Jamaal Young** hit seven of his 12



Corona's Amaya Antonio, No. 18, who leads her team in scoring, fights for control of the soccer ball.

— Photo courtesy Kris Cartwright, kriscartwright.smugmug.com

shot attempts to shoot 58 percent and lead all players with 17 points.

Freshman **Anthony Seumanu** scored 11 points, seven of those from the charity stripe, along with four rebounds and three assists.

The third leading scorer against the Patriots was senior **Nehemiah Washington** who scored nine

points to go along with six rebounds and three steals.

Senior **Jase Langley** had eight rebounds, three assists and one steal in that last game of his high school career.

Unfortunately, with no Play-In Tournament this year due to COVID-19 restrictions, a 9-9 regular season record was not good enough to give the Padres a top 16 ranking which was needed to qualify for a seeding in the Division 4A State Basketball Championship Tournament.

Marcos, instead, ended the regular season ranked No. 21 out of the 44 teams in the 4A division where only 16 out of those 44 qualified to play in the Division 4A State Basketball Championship Tournament which started March 10.

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A Wrangler News salute to Women

WOMEN

PR lady's specialty: Making clients look like rock stars

By Lee Shappell

Beneath the surface, she has an underlying hard-driven edge. But she's just so darn nice about it.

Get past her charming smile, frequent out-loud laugh and congenial personality, and Anne McAuley Lopez can be both tough and assertive. In fact, she likes to think she's both, but she's not sure. "But I think my writing is," she says.

That she has survived a trying personal journey and stayed in business for 10 years in this day and age lends supporting evidence.

She recently celebrated a decade of spreading her words to boost businesses across West Chandler and South Tempe through her business, Agency Content Writer. She helps companies prosper with her content strategy, website copywriting, freelance writing, working with digital-marketing agencies and blogs.

She writes for a variety of industries, most notably financial and real estate, understanding the importance of research, search-engine optimization and target-market-focused writing.

"As an agency content writer, my goal is to make you look like a rock star to your clients," McAuley Lopez said.

Then, five years ago, as her business was taking off, she was diagnosed with chronic myeloid leukemia, a slowly progressing and uncommon type of blood-cell cancer. Many people don't develop CML symptoms until later stages and the diagnosis is made only through routine blood work.

"I'm as close as we get to remission," McAuley Lopez said. "We've got everything really well managed. I tell my husband this isn't going to be what kills me."

McAuley Lopez, 47, doesn't pronounce herself a cancer survivor. Not yet. She takes a chemotherapy pill every day.

"I like to say I'm a 'cancer warrior,'" she said. "They found it through basic bloodwork, a physical. I tell people to go get a physical. CML isn't curable although they're getting close to what would be an effective cure."

She cut back on work initially, finding enough strength to power through part time.

"The first nine months were pretty hard. I had muted side effects. I didn't lose hair, but my hair thinned. I'd get nausea on and off. Bone pain, not to the extreme that patients of other cancers might experience, but pretty debilitating.

"It's been an interesting ride. I was nervous to tell people what was going on. As I've talked to people, I've realized there a lot who have chronic conditions, also. My body needs to rest sometimes, and that's OK. Give yourself grace for that."

The leukemia has been undetectable for 2½ years, she said, and she is writing a book about her journey, to be published this fall. It has been good, she said, that she could immerse herself in her passion of writing, attempting to exceed her client's expectations while meeting deadlines.

"I try my best to deliver good content," McAuley Lopez said. "When I was growing up (in Stratford, Conn.), I had an English teacher for three years who taught us so many things; that was super helpful. I think of her every week. I've been writing my whole life. I don't remember not loving it. I don't remember not wanting to write when we were in school.



"They'd ask, 'Wanna do a poster board or an essay?' I always said essay. Kids looked at me funny. I can do a five-paragraph essay faster and easier than finding stuff to glue to a poster board – which I hated anyway. It was not my thing."

But words and storytelling were. Despite earning her undergraduate degree in economics from the University of Connecticut, she found her way to words after working in the financial industry in New York for a couple of years.

After her mom died of breast cancer, her aunt and uncle, who'd recently moved to the Valley, invited her out to unwind.

"My aunt said, 'I'm gonna give you a ticket, just come out, sit by the pool, pet the dog, the beer's in the fridge,'" she said. "I fell in love with Arizona. It was the peace I needed, the environment I needed with the sunshine while I tried to figure out who I wanted to be."

She would follow her passion to that.

As a small-business writer for hire, McAuley Lopez has discovered the pros and cons of working on her own.

"Every client is your boss, which no one tells you," she said.

"Over the years, I've developed a pretty simple process, and that is to talk to people about their business. Why do you do what you do? What is your story? Why did you start the business? What do you hope to get out of our work together?"

Often, her clients have taken the first crack at writing their own website or marketing content.

"Typically when I work with folks it's the second or third time around for their content, where they say they've got a marketing budget now, they've seen growth but want more growth," McAuley Lopez said. "They understand that digital marketing is the place to be but need help getting on that path. They call me to help fill in the blanks on the team, and then I come in and do writing for them."

Some businesses or writers are gun shy about financial-services writing because of compliance issues.

"I've worked with financial-services companies on and off basically my whole career in writing," she said.

The secret to great search-engine-optimized content? Research and having a good writer who puts it all together, she says.

"People want relevant content," McAuley Lopez said. "If you want an auto mechanic in West Chandler in 85226, that's what you want. You don't want a horrible website. Give them content that makes sense and answers questions that they're asking. Is it driving website visits? That's the reward."

For an effective blog, answer only one question, she says.

"Get your audience interested enough to pick up a phone and call your business," she said. "Have a call to action at the end. A mistake is folks try to say too much or answer too many questions in one article."

And her secret to keeping her business afloat for 10 years coming out of a recession, working through her health issues and now the COVID-19 pandemic?

"Not burning bridges and consistency," McAuley Lopez said. "One mistake of small businesses is not following through and not keeping in touch with people. It's so simple. It's not that hard. Then make sure you deliver what you say you'll deliver, and when. First is network, second is don't burn bridges."

A novel view of women's authorship, by one who's been there, done that

By Joyce Coronel

Growing up in Australia, Margaret Spence never dreamed she would one day be a published author living in a place called Tempe, Arizona.

At least the steady sunshine remained a constant.

With a master's degree in journalism, Spence worked for a magazine and later as a public relations professional, always making her living as a wordsmith.

When she moved to Tempe 10 years ago, she joined a writers' group. That's when she turned to writing novels.

"I started to realize that I could actually write fiction which I always felt committed internally to write," Spence said.

So how does a trained journalist go from writing fact to fiction?

"I gave a talk just last week to the Society of Southwest Authors and it was on how to research your novel using journalistic techniques," Spence said. In journalism, she noted, it's all about the who, what, when and where.

"You don't need to necessarily know why, especially if it's a murder or something like that. You just report it. But in fiction, we're always interested in the motivation of the characters."

Well, at least in what's known as "women's fiction," Spence clarified. "I don't write thrillers or true-crime. I write character-driven fiction."

Spence's 2017 novel, *Lipstick on the Strawberry*, deals with a caterer who reunites with a first love. Her latest tome, *Joyous Lies*, showcases a 25-year-old botanist raised on a California commune by her 70-ish hippie grandmother, a one-time Vietnam-war protestor.

"So there's a wide range of age groups who might be interested in this. The young one is interested in plants and believes that plants communicate, which actually they do."

Spence readily admits she's no scientist but said she read up on the topic of plant communication. "It's just astonishing what plants are doing."

Joyous Lies delves into the difficulties of life on a commune and the challenge of living off the land with no money and no equipment or tools.

"How do they do that? And how do they bring up their children? What compromises were made and who got hurt?" Spence asks rhetorically.

Spence said she admires the literary work of Jane Austen. "She's my favorite!"

In fact, Spence said she joined the Jane Austen Society of North America last year. "It was to get some calm in this frightful situation we were all in last year with the pandemic and the election which was endless. Nothing seemed to matter except that and COVID. I was just emotionally whipped."

But she also follows modern novelists like award-winning Barbara Samuel, a Colorado writer who writes in the spirit of Kristin Hannah and Maeve Binchy.

"She writes about the natural world, which I love to write about too, so that's a big interest for me, her work," Spence said.

And to those aspiring writers out there who



dream of having their own books published, Spence offers words of encouragement tempered by a strong dose of reality.

"It's very hard. It's very tough. First of all, you have to keep on writing," Spence said.

"That's really important—keep doing it. It's very discouraging because you can send your

work out to hundreds of agents and you can get nothing. But that doesn't mean it's not a good book."

Joining writers' groups and getting honest feedback are one way for writers to hone their storytelling skills and develop a novel that catches the eye of a publisher.

"After that, when your book is ready and you've rewritten it many times, try to get a professional editor, either a developmental editor if you need that, or a copy editor before it's ready to go out to an agent."

Spence herself belongs to a number of writers groups, she said. When all is said and done, the only way a book ever gets written is actually quite simple.

"Sit in that chair and write then get out there and try and network."

Information: margaretannspence.com

Dessert baker tries her best to sugar-coat hard times

By Lee Shappell

Right about now, the "water of life" for Tracy Dempsey would be the ka-CHING! of the cash register in her dessert bakery and adjacent wine shop near downtown Tempe.

Times have been better.

She is among the small-business owners who have taken a financial hit during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Nimble and resourceful, she refuses to let it bring her business down. Dempsey personifies Women's History Month as she adjusts, adapts and does what is necessary to keep her business afloat.

It is easy to blow right past the nondescript building that houses the two shops at 1323-1325 W. University Drive, near Priest. It has no prominent

signage. It's a few blocks off Tempe's high foot-traffic main drag on Mill Avenue.

"The building is a challenge," she said.

The upside: There's always a little bit of heaven in her bakery, TDO, for Tracy Dempsey Originals, which features desserts, pastries, soups, breakfasts and lunch boxes, along with a weekly special.

And there always are plenty of bottles of fine wine next door at ODV, the name being her little inside joke as a former French teacher. The initials sound like the French "eau de vie," or "water of life."

What goes better while binge-watching "Schitt's Creek" during the pandemic than a splendid bottle of "the water of life"?

"We thought we were pretty clever," she said.

"Wine is the other water of life, isn't it?"

"Our wine sales actually are higher than ever."

As she was coming up in the Valley culinary scene, her desserts dazzled patrons at many of the finest restaurants.

Pat Christofolo, now owner of The Farm at South Mountain, let her make pâté and "special things" for her Santa Barbara Catering Co. She would land gigs at family-owned Italian Terrace Bistro, The Cottonwoods, the old Marriott Mountain Shadows with an assist from chef Paul O'Connor, and Cowboy Ciao, Restaurant Hapa and Gregory's World Bistro. Her reputation was growing, and chefs at each new stop were comfortable letting her experiment with "fun, creative" desserts.

Her big break was landing the pastry-chef position at Lon's at the Hermosa Inn.

Her lengthy list of contacts convinced her that she could go independent and contract with fine restaurants Valley-wide to create and deliver her creations.



She latched onto the building on University nine years ago because it had the commercial kitchen she needed and wasn't far from freeways, which aided deliveries. The space next door was a perfect storage room.

"Business was good," Dempsey said. "We were coming out of the Great

Recession, real estate prices had dropped and a lot of restaurants were opening. I suddenly had upwards of 10 clients and every one was unique, so we were making unique desserts for each of them to complement their cuisine."

She had eight employees in the kitchen and a delivery driver.

"We were really growing because restaurants didn't want to hire pastry chefs back at first," she said.

And then, they did. They no longer needed an independent contractor.

— CONTINUED on Page 26

“We were on a tight margin and when business started to fall it got really hard.”

Could she adapt? You have to know who you’re dealing with to appreciate that.

Dempsey, 54, has been adapting her whole life. She grew up in California, moved to Arkansas while her father, a petroleum geologist, completed an advanced degree, and then went with her parents to Singapore, Indonesia and London. They thought it would be best for her to return to the states to attend college, so back to Arkansas she went, where her grandparents lived.

“I taught intro French to freshmen and sophomores at the university as a teaching assistant while I was going to school,” she said. “At the end of the semester, I would always throw a party and made cream puffs and crepes. I just loved doing it. It was my way showing I care.”

She went to Oklahoma for her masters and then was off to France to learn more about the language, food and wine while he completed his masters.

They came to the Valley in 1994, ostensibly on an 18-month assignment that Chuck, then a meteorologist with the National Severe Storms Laboratory, had with SRP.

He wound up taking a job with SRP. She taught in the American English & Cultural program for international students at ASU. Before long, the culinary arts program at Scottsdale Community College beckoned.

“Cooking is a passion I’ve had since I was a little kid, working like crazy in my little Betty Crocker Easy Bake Oven with the light bulb in it,” Dempsey said. “My family all were really great bakers and cooks. Food always was a very important part of our celebrations. I always had a side business, baking things and selling them on the side during college. Hospitality always was super important to me.

“I was in the first group in their new facility at SCC. I turned 31. I wasn’t the oldest, but I was getting pretty close to being the oldest.”

Managing all of those changes prepared her well for her business.

As her commercial work dried up, she totally changed her model, creating the retail shop. A couple of years later, Chuck got his liquor license and ODV was born. He owns the license, she manages the shop.

When the pandemic hit and Arizona all but shut down, she turned TDO into a Community Supported Agriculture center. She teamed with farmers and artisans to sell their goods.

“We were like a small grocery store. We were getting a bunch of chickens,” she said. “That’s the only way we survived at first.”

Now, even as more people are receiving the COVID-19 vaccine, she is not yet ready to return to normal business operation for the protection of what remains of her staff, now down to three, as well as the welfare of her customers. She offers curbside pickup only at TDO and no more than three people at a time, by appointment, in the wine shop, which specializes in Arizona products and has a wine club.

She’s doing everything by email. She posts her menu for the coming week each Saturday on her

website, tracydempseyoriginals.com, and asks that orders be in by 11 a.m. the day before pickup.

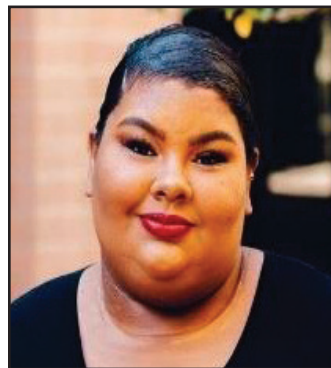
For Saturday, March 20, among her offerings are beignets and coffee.

“It’s spring equinox. We’ve got to celebrate with something,” she said. “Hopefully, the day will come soon when we can open again completely and our pastry case is filled again. Fingers crossed.”

Two-fisted marketing strategy, one energized woman

As a strategy being seen increasingly these days, two Tempe business organizations have blended their marketing jobs into a single combined position, according to a joint announcement.

Downtown Tempe Authority and the Tempe Chamber of Commerce say they have hired Jazmine



Reyes, formerly the downtown group’s solo creative-marketing manager, as their shared marketing coordinator.

According to a press release announcing the move, Reyes’ contract role is designed to allow both organizations to maximize their overall

resources, referring to the move as “just one of the ways Tempe-based non-profits are pivoting in this unprecedented time.”

At DTA, Reyes oversaw various social media accounts, strategized marketing campaigns and produced Festival of the Arts and Fantasy of Lights events, among others.

Previously, she developed internal communications projects and worked with underserved communities.

Reyes graduated from Arizona State University’s W. P. Carey School of Business and received an MBA in marketing from Northcentral University.

Her newly combined role will include elements of the Chamber’s marketing program including website management, content creation, newsletter campaign management and events.

Said DTA CEO Kate Borders:

“The larger Tempe community will reap these benefits of our shared resources. With a passion to uplift the Tempe business community, it is Jazmine’s goal (to) help businesses get through these tough times and take part in cultivating an even stronger community.”

Building renamed to include woman who aided low-income, elderly

In 1966, Lupe Esquer and Barbara Norton, two community-minded women, saw a need in Tempe to assist elderly and low-income residents experiencing hardships.

Little did they know that their desire to help their neighbors would result in the Tempe Community Action Agency, which has aided thousands of low-income and elderly people for more than a half-century and has built a network of 1,600 volunteers.

Annually, TCAA serves more than 28,000 people.

In her honor, TCAA has renamed its building the Esquer and Ramsey Center to include the Esquer name.

The building at 2146 E. Apache Blvd. in Tempe initially was named the Norton and Ramsey Center in honor of long-time volunteers and activists Jenny Norton, whose mother helped found TCAA along with Esquer, and her husband, Bob Ramsey. The renaming honors TCAA’s true history and its origins.

“With this new dedication to my mother’s dear friend Lupe, my pride only swells,” said Jenny Norton. “I am beyond grateful that the TCAA and the



City of Tempe have enabled this moment for Lupe Esquer.”

Due to COVID-19, the work of Esquer and Norton is needed now more than ever.

“Barbara and Lupe’s legacy are brought to life every day at TCAA as we strive to improve quality of life in Tempe and bring

opportunity to marginalized populations served by the agency,” said Deborah Arteaga, TCAA executive director.

Tempe Community Action Agency began as Operation Grassroots in 1966. Early programs included a food-buying co-op, tortilla factory, neighborhood credit union, post office and community garden.

Today, TCAA is Tempe’s largest social-service organization. The site hosts the agency’s Community Action Program, food pantry, Neighbors Helping Neighbors Program and Financial Success Center.

TCAA continues to operate nutrition programs for older adults in Tempe and Scottsdale, including the home-delivered meal service, infant and family-health services through Health Start and the Oasis Drop-In Center and I-HELP shelter for the homeless.

TCAA also manages the Escalante and Clark Park Community Gardens.

Information: tempeaction.org.

2021 State of the Neighborhoods

Save the date for the 2021 State of the Neighborhoods Awards and Workshops on Saturday, April 17.

Gather virtually with the City Council, Boards and Commission representatives and fellow community members to celebrate the importance of connecting and community building, now more than ever.

Honorees will be recognized in several award categories including Neighbor of the Year, Property Beautification, Alley Upkeep, Sustainability, Water Conservation and Arts and Culture.

New this year will be the first presentation of the Dolores Huerta Award, in honor of the American labor leader and civil rights activist.

Plan to tune in and show these amazing Tempeans appreciation for all that they do to make Tempe more inviting, beautiful and connected!

This event will begin at 9 a.m.

Visit tempe.gov/StateoftheNeighborhoods for more event details.



Nominate Tempe's next bicycle hero

Do you know a person or organization that not only celebrates bicycling, but also makes life better for Tempe's two-wheeled community? Nominate them to be Tempe's next Bike Hero! Nominations are open until March 31. Visit tempe.gov/BikeHero.

DATEBOOK

Connecting with Kuby

Join Councilmember Lauren Kuby for the next installment of her regular conversation series. This virtual, Earth Day edition will happen Wednesday, April 21, at 6 p.m. Topics will include a Climate Action Plan update and a discussion about all things sustainability.

For information about how to join, visit tempe.gov/kuby.

Tempe begins study of solid waste rates

The 2021 Solid Waste Rate

Study is now underway. Tempe's solid waste program provides the community with a clean, healthy and sustainable environment that promotes economic development and improves quality of life. The rate study provides an opportunity to ensure that the costs of solid waste services are recovered through the rates, fees and charges paid by customers using these services. The city is asking for your input during the process and there are several ways to provide your comments, input and feedback. Your input is important and helps the city make better, more informed decisions.

For more information, visit tempe.gov/UtilityRateStudy.

Zero Waste Day is April 24

Residents can donate unwanted items to local organizations for reuse, recycling or repurposing. Items accepted include paper for secure shredding, building materials, tires, clothing and household items, scrap metal, bikes and household hazardous waste.

You must live in Tempe or Guadalupe and provide proof of residency.

The event is happening Saturday, April 24, from 7 a.m. to 1 p.m. at the Tempe Fire Training Center, 1340 E. University Drive.

For the full list of items accepted, visit tempe.gov/ZeroWaste.

Apply for Tempe PRE preschool today

Is your family looking for a high-quality preschool? Applications are open for Tempe PRE, the city's full-day preschool program.

All students must be age 3 or 4 by July 31 and fully potty-trained to be eligible for preschool. Free, half-tuition and full-tuition options are available depending on eligibility.

Due to the high number of applications for financial assistance, the city will choose applicants by lottery. These families will receive notifications beginning in April.

Families paying full tuition will be selected in the order applications

are received.

Tempe PRE serves approximately 200 children at seven neighborhood schools in the Tempe Elementary School District.

The program focuses on small class sizes, a play-based curriculum and early childhood education-certified teaching staff. Extended care is available at select school sites before and after school.

For the 2021-22 school year, Tempe PRE will follow school district guidance related to the implementation of any necessary health and safety precautions.



For information about applying, visit tempe.gov/TempePRE. To contact staff: pre-k@tempe.gov.

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For Sale

Piano for sale: 1948 Baldwin baby grand piano. Soundboard in excellent condition, finish in good condition, professionally tuned and cleaned February 2021. \$5,000 OBO. Buyer and seller split moving costs. Contact (480) 510-2689.

'88 Pontiac Fiero: 2-door coupe, custom wheels, rear spoiler, flip up headlights, white color, black-gray interior. Engine runs, fuel system needs repair. Asking \$270. 480-635-6871. 5/21

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Great Harvest Bread Co is looking for both customer service and baking team members. Pay is DOE. Call 480-777-1141 or stop in and fill out an application 1730 E. Warner Rd., Tempe

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We welcome your stories, photos — and ideas! Feel free to call with article suggestions. We accept manuscripts and photographs from area residents about topics of interest to our community. Sorry, we do not accept paid "advertorials."

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Emerging Issues Forum: Sustainability Summit

Tune in live on Friday, April 2nd at 9:00 am to learn how your business can take meaningful action towards addressing climate change.



This interactive live broadcast event will include a keynote address from Chuck Chaitovitz, Vice President, Environmental Affairs and Sustainability from the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, a panel of experts to discuss the City of Tempe Climate Action Plan 2.0 and business success stories in sustainability areas such as energy efficiency, efficient transportation programs and more.

[Learn more at tempechamber.org/events.](https://www.tempechamber.org/events)

Emerging Issues Forum is Sponsored by 

3rd Annual Red, White & Blue Awards

The Tempe Chamber Military Affairs Committee is proud to announce the third Annual Red, White & Blue Awards Ceremony. This live broadcast event will take place on Wednesday, April 14 at 9:00 am. This award ceremony will recognize several stellar members of our local Military community through scholarships and special recognition awards.

Awards will include:

- Kyle Brayer Veteran in Public Safety Award- Recipient: Sergeant, Alfredo "Freddy" Jimenez.
- 944th Fighter Wing "Graydon Williams Award"
- Navy Operational Support "BUC Joel E. Baldwin Memorial Award"
- The Trip Grace Memorial Award

Scholarships include:

- The Merle Fister Veteran Scholarship- Recipient: US Marine Corps Veteran, Gil Ruiz
- ASU ROTC Scholarship - Army
- ASU ROTC Scholarship - Navy
- ASU ROTC Scholarship - Air Force

[Learn more at tempechamber.org/events.](https://www.tempechamber.org/events)



Business Excellence Award Nominations

We are still accepting nominations for the 2021 Business Excellence Awards. This award identifies and recognizes companies whose practices in business and employee development, community involvement, and customer service exemplify excellence. The recipient will be announced at the 2021 State of the Chamber on June 25, 2021, at 9:00 am, which will be a live, studio broadcast.

Three finalists will be selected in two categories: one for Small Businesses with 25 employees or less and Large Businesses with 26 employees or more. Nominate a business by April 9, 2021.

www.jotform.com/TempeChamberAZ/BEA2021Nominate



The Chamber is connection.

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Build strong business relationships at www.tempechamber.org.

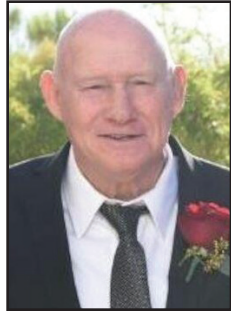


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Obituaries

Curtis John Cook

Curtis John Cook, 72, passed away February 10, 2021. Curtis was born in Lamar, CO. The son of Gerald Lee Cook and Leah Elinor (Davis) Cook. Brother, Don Cook of Lamar, CO. He is survived by his wife of 41 years, Lillian Ross Cook. His son Casey Cook and wife Beth Cook of Maumee, OH. Daughter Leah Kearney and husband Kolby Kearney of Phoenix, AZ. Daughter Kathryn Cook and Son James Cook of Phoenix, AZ. Four grandchildren Coira Cook, Cecilia Cook, Ava Kearney and James Harelson. Sister-in-Law Susan Galpin-Tyree of Scottsdale, AZ. Extended family in CO and many friends.



Curtis attended Casa Grande High School. He went on to attend Mesa Community College, then enlisted into the USMC (70-73). He was awarded Platoon Honorman and Blues Award, National Defense Medal, Rifle Expert Badge and Good

Conduct Medal. After serving in the USMC Curtis completed his Bachelor of Arts in Education and a Master of Education at ASU. He was also on the ASU wrestling team.

Curtis taught biology, chemistry and art and coached football, wrestling and track & field at Casa Grande High School, Tempe High School and Mountain Pointe High School. He received the Diablo Faculty Excellence Award for Science (1983) as well as the Award for Excellence in Science from the Tempe Union High School District (1991). After his retirement he volunteered at both Desert Vista High School and Mountain Pointe High School in Track & Field and wrestling at Altadena Middle School.

Curtis will be interred with military honors at the Arizona Veterans Memorial Cemetery. A celebration of life will be held at a future date.

Catherine Welch Meibert

Catherine Welch Meibert, 88, died February 9th in Tempe, Arizona. A native of Miami, Arizona, she was the daughter of Arthur and Ann (Curtis) Welch and granddaughter of Arizona pioneer lawman Barney Welch.

She received both Bachelor's and Master's degrees from Arizona State University where she was named one of the 12 Outstanding Senior Women in her undergraduate year.

Her 38 year career as an English and journalism teacher was spent in Arizona and California. In Arizona she served at Tolleson High School, Xavier College Preparatory High School, and 25 years at South Mountain High School. She retired from public school teaching to become Assistant Principal at Seton Catholic High School in Chandler. Catherine was named to Who's Who Among America's Teachers and to Who's Who in the West.

In addition to her teaching career, she served as a general assignment reporter and as religion editor for the Arizona Republic. She was a member and president of the board of East Valley Catholic Charities.

Survivors include her son David, Reno, NV, granddaughters Stephanie, Susanville, CA, Emily, Reno, a grandson Logan of Idaho, cousin Dan Curtis of Albuquerque, NM, a niece, four nephews and 12 great great nephews and nieces. She was preceded in death by her son Kenneth of Gold River, CA and her brother Dan Welch (Marge), of Buckeye.

A funeral Mass will be celebrated at Holy Spirit Catholic Church, 1800 E. Libra Dr., Tempe. The date and time will be announced. Burial will be at Mt. Olivet Cemetery, Fort Worth, Texas.

For information about placement of obituary notices in Wrangler News, email editor@wranglernews.com or call Joyce Coronel at 480-966-0837 any time 9-5 Monday through Friday.

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A Letter from Scott and Patti

Dear South Tempe Neighbor,

We're writing you because there are only 30 homes for sale in the 85284 and 85283 Zip codes. It's a shockingly low number since last year there were about 315 homes for sale! Would you have any interest in selling your home? Our phone is ringing off the hook with buyers willing to pay over asking price for a home in South Tempe. Your sale would be quick, simple, and very profitable right now. With a brief Zoom or Facetime call, we can look at your home and tell you what it's worth today for free. It's a more accurate price this way than what you'll find online. It will take 15 minutes. I'm certain you'll be pleasantly surprised at its value. You're also likely thinking... "That's great, but I don't want the hassle of dealing with showings and how do I time the sale to buy my next home in this market?" We have a lender who will give you the money upfront to make an all-cash, noncontingent offer on your new home today (this will also help you win the home you love in this competitive market). Then, we'll sell your home once you've moved out. You get a Flexible close date, your home sold for full market value, and plenty of time to find your next home.

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