

WRANGLER NEWS

April 17 - 30, 2021
Volume 31, Number 8
*Covering Tempe & West Chandler
for 30-plus years*



Cover Photo

Sweet sounds

Jazz aficionados soak up tunes at Chandler's Downtown Jazz Festival. Photo essay by Billy Hardiman. **Pages 1, 20-21.**



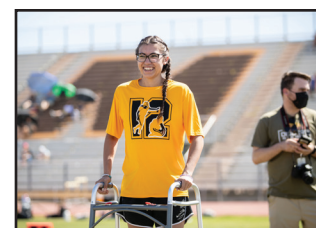
Space bound

Tempe woman sky high as Space X launch approaches. **Page 3.**



Finally together

Parents adopted a family and kids adopted a long-awaited new lifestyle. **Page 6.**



Kicks for Krysten

Marcos grad returns to home field following serious injury. **Page 16.**



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Your Home Page for Tempe & West Chandler Neighborhood News



Sian Proctor, a lover of all things space and a professor of geology at South Mountain Community College, was selected as a crewmember for Space X's Inspiration 4.

Tempe prof's art, poetry launch her onto first all-civilian SpaceX mission

Story & photo by Samuel Voas
wranglernews.com

Dr. Sian Proctor sits near a window in her Tempe home art studio and office. The wall behind her is an asymmetrical pastiche of space-theme drawings and watercolors.

The work has a dreamlike quality that borders on psychedelic. She calls it space art.

A collection of 20 or so postcard-size vignettes feature a candy-colored cosmonaut floating through stippled starscapes, peering down at polychrome planets.

In each scene, the character's face is obscured by her space helmet. But somehow, the identity of Proctor's spacewalking character is no mystery.

It's her.

One imagines that behind the rounded visor, the face of a two-dimensional Sian Proctor is beaming across the cartoon

cosmos with school-girl elation.

The expression is not hard to imagine. The 51-year-old South Mountain Community College professor grins with the infectious joy of a child as she talks about the inspiration behind her celestial art.

It's impossible not to smile back.

Since she was a little girl, Proctor has dreamed of going to space. Perhaps this should come as no surprise, given that her father was a NASA-contracted engineer who worked on the Apollo 11 mission, helping Neil Armstrong take that one small step. In fact, Proctor was born 8 1/2 months after the 1969 moon landing.

"So, I consider myself a moon-celebration baby," she said, grinning. "Space is kind of in my blood."

Now, decades later, that pencil-drawn childhood dream is set to become a reality, and all thanks to her art.

—ASTRONAUT, Page 18

Residents largely OK with council's move to keep masks

Face coverings still required in businesses, public places

By Lee Shappell
wranglernews.com

After Tempe City Council on April 8 affirmed that the city will continue to enforce its facemask mandate in all public places, effective immediately, public reaction generally was favorable.

Predictably, not everyone embraced the move, however.

A mayoral proclamation requiring face coverings had been in place in Tempe since June 18, 2020, after Gov. Doug Ducey allowed local governments to enact such measures.

However, on March 25, Ducey issued an

— MASKS, Page 10

Chandler's performance bonus wins a 'wow' reaction *Austere measures, staff's sacrifice credited for \$5 mil in funding*

By Lee Shappell
wranglernews.com

Chandler reached into its pocket and found \$5.53 million to reward city employees who'd gone without raises and were stretched thin



Lee Shappell

during the COVID-19 pandemic, a move that largely was applauded by city residents on various social-media sites.

"My reaction was a surprised 'wow face,'" said Chandler resident Katie Taylor, seemingly reflecting the sentiment across the city during her interview with Wrangler News. "I love that the city rewarded its employees for their sacrifice and hard work over the last year."

Every Chandler full-time employee who was with the city as of Dec. 31, 2020, and remained employed through March 27, will be receiving a one-time exceptional-performance award of \$3,000 this month and every part-time employee who was onboard during those dates will get \$1,500 as a reward for their efforts during the

— BONUS, Page 8

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Vaccination remains vital

Dignity doc: Now is no time to relax vigilance

By Joyce Coronel
wranglernews.com

More than 4 million doses of the vaccine that protects against COVID-19 have been administered to Arizonans since December and cases of the disease have been declining for the last 10 weeks, according to the Arizona Department of Health Services.

But now is not the time for complacency, health officials warn.

Dr. Omar Gonzalez, an epidemiologist with Dignity Health, is urging Arizonans 16 and older who haven't yet been vaccinated to do so now.

"We all are hoping deep down in our hearts," Gonzalez said. "The sooner we get the vaccine for the whole population, the better."

And while some who have received the second dose report nausea, fever, body aches, chills and other unpleasant side effects, Gonzalez maintains these issues are transitory in nature.

"Yes, it's true that many people experience higher side effects at the second dose, however those side effects are not severe" and can be treated with over-the-counter medications like Tylenol or ibuprofen, Gonzalez said. "Drink plenty of fluids. It lasts for a very short period of time.

"When people face a natural infection, definitely those symptoms are far worse and more dangerous and deadly."

Gonzalez practices what he preaches and received both doses of the vaccine himself.

"That day, I was on call so I did my dose in the morning. Two hours later I took my Tylenol/ibuprofen," Gonzalez said. "I did a couple of doses just in case—I didn't want to feel ill. Essentially it worked. I had the injection-site pain but it was really mild and nothing that kept me away from work."

As for those who still fear the vaccine, Gonzalez said he and others have worked hard to educate the public about the safety and



Dr. Omar Gonzalez, a Dignity Health epidemiologist, speaks out on the urgency of vaccination against the COVID-19 virus.

Photo courtesy Dignity Health

effectiveness of the vaccine.

"The fact that it was fast-tracked, that's why people become a little bit anxious about it, but it followed the scientific method, all the phase 1, 2 and 3 trials were conducted and completed," Gonzalez said.

All of that data was vetted by FDA and all their entities including the Advisory Committee for Immunization, according to Gonzalez. He also said the Arizona Task Force for COVID-19 Vaccine Safety and Efficacy conducted an independent evaluation of the vaccines that are currently available in Arizona.

"We reviewed all the data—we reviewed the clinical trial essentially—and we concluded that it is a safe vaccine and a vaccine that is efficacious... It is very important to get this vaccine."

Two different variants of COVID-19 have popped up in Arizona, causing some to question if a different vaccine will be necessary at some point. Gonzalez said 62 cases of the UK variant, B117, have been reported in Arizona. Four cases of the Brazilian strain have also been reported in the state. "No one seems to know

Profile . . . Anderson Conkle

With an Eagle eye and an artistic bent, teen earned dual rewards from his 8-foot mural

To Anderson Conkle, the path to becoming an Eagle Scout seemed more than just a bit daunting. Among the required projects to qualify for Eagle rank, Anderson decided to paint a 25-foot by 8-foot mural as part of a recently unveiled beautification plan at Desert Cross Church, which hosts Troop 379, of which he is a longtime member.

The first step, the 14-year-old recounted, was to recruit supplies for the project, in itself a slightly intimidating challenge. Not so much as it turned out, though. A number of the business owners he approached for help were surprisingly receptive, Anderson said.

One, Andrew Blatnick, the owner of AAA Paint and Supply, a Benjamin Moore store at Warner and McClintock, stood out among the other business people.

“Mr. Blatnick donated all of the primer and paint required for the mural, which totaled several hundred dollars,” said Anderson. “I am very grateful for the generosity to my project and the contributions to our local community.”

As to Blatnick, who said he is approached regularly for contributions, Anderson’s approach apparently surpassed the usual.

“It is always a tough choice to decide who to help when asked,” said Blatnick. “Anderson presented himself well and asked for help with his project, which in itself can be challenging to do. His project added color and character to Desert Cross Church, and Anderson did a



Anderson Conkle’s Eagle Scout project took shape at Desert Cross Lutheran Church, thanks to the generosity of AAA Paint & Supply. — Photo courtesy Anderson Conkle

very good job with the mural.

“It is always gratifying to be able to help the community that supports our stores in Tempe and we are impressed with the level of professionalism displayed by Anderson as well as his artistic abilities.”

Anderson, a freshman at Horizon Honors Secondary

School in Ahwatukee, said Desert Cross Church, of which his family is a member, seemed the perfect beneficiary of any philanthropic ventures he might undertake.

“The church is charter sponsor for the troop, so there’s a connection through that,” said Anderson, who approached the pastor and proposed a mural for the wall, “and they all really liked it.”

The next step involved several area businesses, including Blatnick’s store, followed by meetings with church members and, ultimately, time at a computer to digitally design what the finished project would look like.

And so the work began, aided by other troop members and volunteers within the community.

Now that it’s completed, Anderson reflects on what he learned in the process.

“I think it was a good experience in terms of leadership and organizing. I had done nothing of this scale before, so it was really a great opportunity to learn how to plan things and go to the stores (for contributions); how to be professional, to email people and get things coordinated.”

When and how will Anderson be inducted into Eagle Scout rank? “The general process is I have to put in a report and get letters of recommendation. And also there’s an Eagle (Scout) board that meets once month.”

That time, Anderson said, can’t come too soon. “I’m thinking it could go for May, hopefully by summer.”



Randy Goff
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Lacey and Michael Vega, parents of four biological children, are in the process of adopting three children who were removed from their mother's custody. — Photo by Samuel Voas

Kids neglected in foster care find a 'special place' with new home, new love

By Joyce Coronel

Three children who have endured the horrors of abuse and neglect have found fierce advocates and a loving home with Michael and Lacey Vega, members of First Baptist Church of Tempe.

Lacey, raised in poverty in South Carolina, said she moved across the country years ago to make an "entirely different life" for herself, keeping her distance from troubled family members. She's been endeavoring to gain custody of her cousin Samantha's children for years. A deaconess at First Baptist, Lacey said she grew up with Samantha.

Caught up in a lifestyle of drug abuse, Samantha's children were taken from her by the state of South Carolina and placed with an aunt—the same aunt who raised Samantha.

"I've always had a special place for Samantha in my heart," Lacey said. "She was never really taught how to parent or how to do life. So every time

she had a child, they wound up going to my aunt."

The aunt, it turns out, was abusive and neglectful, Lacey said. "Over the years Samantha, their mom, would call me and tell me when things would happen. It would just eat at us, but there was no way we could get them until it got just really out of control."

As the children got older, they began to speak of the trauma they were living at their aunt's house.

"When all of that happened, it was like Child Protective Services finally listened to us and we were able to get them," Lacey said. The three children came to live with the Vegas last year in the midst of the pandemic, joining a rather cramped household.

That's because the Vegas were already the parents of four biological children: Ethan, 14; Jasmine, 9; Ezzy, 7; and Nathaniel, 3. Also living in the smallish house was Lacey's mother.

"We had 10 people in 1,900 square

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Bonus

From Page 3

COVID-19 pandemic.

Chandler City Council unanimously approved those awards, totaling an estimated \$5.53 million, to 1,522 full-time employees on April 8 after the city fared better fiscally than expected through the pandemic.

Acting City Manager Josh Wright cited “city employees’ outstanding performance over the past year” in making the recommendation to the Council that the exceptional-performance pay be included in employees’ April 15 paychecks.

“We truly do have the very best people in Chandler. I’ve witnessed that every day in the four years that I’ve worked here,” Wright said.

“They are second to none. They have endured a very, very difficult year and they have thrived through it, and it’s so creative how they have provided great service to our community. I know this (award) means a tremendous amount to our employees.”

Wright pointed out that many employees took on additional responsibilities while covering jobs beyond their own when staffing vacancies occurred and went unfilled.

“This is an item that Council was very much behind,” Mayor Kevin Hartke said. “Council worked with our city staff to take strong measures to reduce city spending. This included a hiring freeze, a travel freeze and all sorts of other things, very austere measures over the past year, because we did not know the impact or the full result of what this pandemic was going to do.”

For the current fiscal year, a decision was made to hold pay increases for employees until the city could fully realize the impact that the pandemic would have on revenues and operations, Wright said.

Chandler, it turned out, performed better than the revised budget during the unprecedented time. During a typical year, the city anticipates vacancy savings of 1.5 percent of total personnel costs, according to

Wright. During fiscal year 2020-21, Chandler is estimating vacancy savings of more than 3.0 percent (\$5 million) in General Fund and more than 4 percent (\$8 million) in all funds due to the high number of vacant positions.

“We had several million dollars in savings because we ended up with about 120 positions in that hiring freeze that we did not fill,” Hartke said. “Out of those vacancy savings, we want to reinvest a significant amount of those dollars back into our employees.

“I do want to personally thank Team Chandler for its dedication during this past year, during this pandemic. It’s been extremely hard. ... And through these daunting challenges, Team Chandler rose to the occasion and worked tirelessly to ensure our residents’ quality of life and to achieve access to services were unaffected. I’m very proud of Team Chandler and the innovation displayed by staff to overcome challenges.”

Council member Rene Lopez added that many additional unpaid people, who aren’t on staff and won’t be receiving a bonus, helped keep the city on track through the past year.

“There is a vast number of volunteers in our citizenry that help out on our boards and commissions and provide us advice and guidance,” Lopez said. “Those individuals sacrifice their time with families and friends in order to help keep our city running. I do want to thank them for their contributions the past year, too.”

Please note: Our Deadline Dates Have Changed

Space reservation is Friday,
April 23 for our May 1 edition

Space reservation is Friday, May
7, for our May 15 edition

Space reservation is Friday, May
28, for our June 5 edition

Space reservation is Friday,
June 11 for our June 19 edition

Tempe honors high school grads who choose military over college

Not everyone who graduates from high school plans to attend college immediately after they graduate. Some enter the military, and the city of Tempe holds an annual event to honor Tempe Union High School District graduates for their spirit of service.

The annual ceremony, Tempe Community Salutes, takes place Monday, April 26, at Tempe Center for the Arts by invitation only.

"One of the things that came about 5-6 years ago was we noticed there are a lot of high school kids that go into the military right after high school," said Tempe Councilmember Robin Arredondo-Savage. "We want to say thank you before they even go and we want to ensure they know we are here for them. We want them to come home and back to Tempe and have a great quality of life."

Tempe Salutes was the first program of its kind in the state to

demonstrate support for high school seniors entering the military.

Each recruit will receive a commemorative 'First to Say Thank You' coin before they deploy. This will be the seventh year of Tempe Community Salutes, which was Arredondo-Savage's vision.

Ret. Col. Wanda Wright, USAF, director of the Arizona Department of Veterans Services, will speak at the gathering.

"She's awesome," Arredondo-Savage said. "She comes and speaks to the families and parents and says, 'hey, we appreciate you too and we know this is going to be hard.'"

"It's a big deal because we celebrate all the kids who are going off to college and all the great scholarships," Arredondo-Savage said. "And this (military service) is a big sacrifice for that individual and their families. I'm forever grateful for them."



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Masks

From Page 3

executive order prohibiting the mask mandates of local governments.

Tempe is among municipalities, along with Phoenix, Tucson, Pima County and Flagstaff, that chose to keep mask mandates in place, going against Ducey's latest executive order.

Then, on April 9, Ducey signed into law a measure that allows businesses not to enforce mask mandates. In HB 2770, "a business in this state is not required to enforce on its premises a mask mandate that is established by this state, a city, a town or county or any other jurisdiction of this state."

Ducey said that because the state never had a mandatory state-wide mask mandate, and its largest cities did not enforce one, it left the responsibility to local businesses.

"The state needs to be able to enforce long-standing workplace safety and infection-control standards unrelated to COVID-19," Ducey said. "I am signing this bill, ensuring that our small businesses will no longer be required to enforce mandates imposed on them by their cities who are choosing not to enforce it themselves."

It seemingly clouds the issue of whether or not masks are required in cities that ignored Ducey's March 25 executive order.

But perhaps not. The measure that he signed on April 9 becomes law three months after the current Legislative session ends, which pushes the effective date at least into July. By then, anyone who wants a COVID-19 vaccine will have had a chance to get one, and numbers could be so low that cities like Tempe that chose to ignore Ducey's executive order will have repealed their own mask mandates.

Until then, mandates like Tempe's remain in effect.

Tempe Communications and Media Relations Manager Nikki Ripley said that emails have come in to the Council, mostly thank-you messages for taking the action. She acknowledged that there also have been some messages of concern or opposition to the decision. On Facebook and Twitter, reactions to the city posts about the decision are overwhelmingly positive.

Among those who aren't excited about the Tempe Council's decision is Warner Ranch resident Tess Powers, 57, a travel consultant.

"That's why I got the vaccine," Powers said. "That and the mortality rate is still 2 percent. The whole idea of getting the vaccine out is so we can return to normal. Arizona has done a great job getting citizens vaccinated. That's something I initially wasn't going to do, to tell the truth, because it was kind of rushed in the making. Then people started getting vaccinated and side effects rare were rare."

“They’re bowing to the cancel culture of the left. I think the mask mandate was a good thing in the beginning, especially a year ago, because of how transmittable it was and obviously the mortality rate. For them to say now that we still need to mask and social distance, I’m tired of that narrative.”

Powers pointed out that small businesses, in particular, have been damaged during the pandemic.

“Lots of family-run businesses that have been around for a very long time lost everything and closed their doors,” Powers said. “These mandates continue to hurt them. I want to see my local community thrive.”

“If you are afraid, you have every right to stay home, or every right to mask up. But it’s time to let the rest of us live.”

The Tempe Council’s unanimous consensus was that the city’s mask mandate will be enforced again at all places of public accommodation in the city, including at all businesses, public transit and city facilities. The April 8 action during its Work Study Session took into consideration Tempe Charter authority, state law and Arizona Attorney General opinions.

Tempe Mayor Corey Woods asked that city staff develop ways to use data about vaccine rates and case counts to guide Tempe in when it might sunset the mask mandate.

“Given the discussion amongst the Tempe City Council, City Manager Andrew Tempe Mayor Ching will work with city staff and outside entities such as Arizona State University and the Arizona Department of Health Services to establish science-based, objective thresholds for Tempe so that we will have indicators about when to responsibly end our city mask mandate,” Woods said in a statement.

The mayor of the other city served by Wrangler News, Kevin Hartke of Chandler, has supported the governor’s order from the outset.

“The vaccine is out far and wide, many Arizonans are vaccinated, and COVID numbers are down,” Hartke said. “We’re ready to carefully lift restrictions and trust Arizonans to make responsible decisions. I’m grateful to the Governor for responding to local needs as we move

forward and fight the pandemic.”

In accordance with Ducey’s June 18, 2020, order, Tempe has followed an education-before-citation approach to non-compliance with its mask proclamation. Hundreds of educational phone calls and contacts were made by the city to businesses that were reported to have difficulties with enforcement of the ordinance.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention continues to recommend physical distancing and wearing face coverings as significant ways to reduce the risk of contracting the coronavirus.

In rolling back facemask mandates on March 25, Ducey said that several key data points contributed to his order:

- Mass distribution of the vaccine. More than 4 million doses of COVID-19 vaccine have been administered to more than 2 million people in Arizona, including 1,721,077 who have been fully vaccinated.
- Ten weeks of declining COVID-19 cases.
- Hospitalizations at the lowest level since late September/early October.
- Opening of vaccine appointments to all Arizonans 16 years and older.
- A recent evaluation by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention that ranks Arizona among the best states in the nation for getting the COVID-19 vaccine to vulnerable communities.

• President Joe Biden’s recent promise that every American will be able to be vaccinated by May 1.

“As we’ve said all along, distribution of the vaccine is our best path to getting back to normal, and I want to thank the millions of Arizonans who have rolled up their sleeves to make the distribution and uptake so successful,” Ducey said.

For questions, call Tempe 311 at 480-350-4311 on weekdays from 7 a.m. to 5 p.m.

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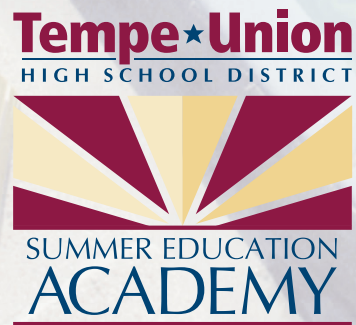
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Session 2 June 14 – June 30

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PreCalculus	MAT400A (CR)
World History	SST100A (CR)
Am/AZ History	SST200A (CR)
Government	SST300 (CR)
Economics	SST350 (CR)
Integrated Science	SCI100A(CR)
Biology	SCI200A (CR)
Spanish 1-2	WLD100A (CR)
Spanish 3-4	WLD200A (CR)
Phys Ed 1-2	PED100A (CR)
Phys Ed 3-8	PED110A (CR)
Health	PED500 (CR)
Basic Financial Math	
Basic Algebra	
Basic Geometry	
Basic Freshman English	
Basic Sophomore English	
Basic Junior English	
Basic Senior English	

Session II	
Freshman English	ENG100B (CR)
Sophomore English	ENG200B (CR)
Junior English	ENG300B (CR)
Senior English	ENG400B (CR)
Algebra 1	MAT100B (CR)
Geometry	MAT 200B (CR)
Algebra 2	MAT300B (CR)
College Math	MAT 450B (CR)
PreCalculus	MAT400B (CR)
World History	SST100B (CR)
Am/AZ History	SST200B (CR)
Government	SST300 (CR)
Economics	SST350 (CR)
Integrated Science	SCI100B (CR)
Biology	SCI200B (CR)
Spanish 1-2	WLD 100B (CR)
Spanish 3-4	WLD 200B (CR)
Phys Ed 1-2	PED100B(CR)
Phys Ed 3-8	PED110B (CR)
Health	PED500 (CR)
Basic Financial Math	
Basic Algebra	
Basic Geometry	
Basic Freshman English	
Basic Sophomore English	
Basic Junior English	
Basic Senior English	

Credit recovery courses do not meet NCAA requirements.

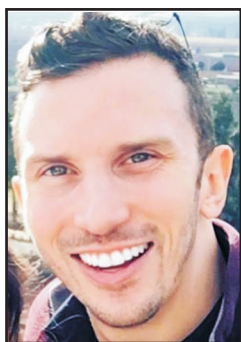


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SPORTS . . . with Alex Zener

Aztec boys volleyball pumped for new season

Arizona high school athletes who participate in spring sports have been able to compete in events for almost a month now and most are thankful to be back in action after the spring season was cancelled last March.



Alex Zener

One team happy to be able to participate again is Corona's boys volleyball team.

"Everyone in the program is very excited we are able to play volleyball this year after having the season cancelled on us last year," said Corona head volleyball coach **Geoff Horewitch**.

This season's team has only two seniors and several young players who are gaining experience and improving every game, especially with the help of four new assistant coaches.

In addition to three Corona volleyball alumni, **Chris Davis**, **Ryan Iskandar** and **Niko Zeiner**, the Aztecs have the knowledge and player-development skills of **Jaron Jones**, an All-American setter at Benedictine University in Mesa.

Jones, a Marcos de Niza graduate, was part of Benedictine's 2019 NAIA Men's Volleyball National Championship team."

"We are a very young team with lots of room to grow but every single kid on the team wants to get better and continue to work on the process," said Horewitch.

The younger players have had an

impact right away on offense and defense.

As far as offense goes, sophomore opposite hitter **Jon Seddon** is the current kill leader with 51 kills, but senior captain **Logan Beatty** is right behind him with 50 kills.

Both are averaging two kills a set.

"Jon comes from a family of volleyball players who has grown up with volleyball, while at the same time is relentless in his desire to improve his volleyball skill level," said Horewitch.

"He works really hard on the court, asks a lot of questions wanting to improve, and tried to show how to play the game versus just talking about it. Jon has a remarkably high ceiling in this sport."

"Logan, on the other hand, primarily played soccer growing up but has worked really hard to be the best volleyball player he can for the team," said Horewitch.

"He has played almost every position for us and, through his hard work, has become a big contributor to our team's success. In addition, his steady demeanor is a great benefit for our young players."

Additionally, Seddon and Beatty are followed by junior **Connor O'Brien** with 33 kills.

"Connor, who was our starting libero his freshman and sophomore years, has a new role this season as an outside hitter," said Horewitch.

"It's a role that he is starting to understand more fully and I think he will be able to exceed our expectations as a hitter."

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Sports

From Page 13

"Connor, with the most varsity experience on the team, loves the game of volleyball and is very diligent in trying to study and understand all aspects of the game," said Horewitch. "With his experience and volleyball knowledge, he is like an extra coach on the court helping our younger players understand their roles."

Sophomore **Toby Lim** has contributed 28 kills on offensive, while sophomore **Nate Magro** has 21 kills.

"Toby is a very athletic middle blocker that has a lot of potential," said Horewitch.

"During the club season he plays on one of the top teams in the state and is always pushing himself to be better. He has a lot of potential to be a big-time player for us."

Ongoing progress

"Nate has progressed so much from the raw talent he had his first day of practice last year to the improved overall volleyball skills he possesses today," said Horewitch.

"We are able to play him at any position on the front row. His passing has gotten so much better and he is now learning how to jump serve. We are really excited for his continued progression."

Cade Banks and his ability to set the ball is what results in the kills and points from Corona's hitters. In the 25 sets the Aztecs have played so far, Banks has 190 assists or 7.6 assists a set.

"Cade, only a sophomore, did not start playing volleyball until he was 15 years old, so setting is a relatively new skill but he has really been taking in the game and developing his hands and getting better all the time," said Horewitch.

"He is a quiet leader with his goal to always make the players around him better. He is a big believer in process or product and I think he is turning

into a fantastic setter."

The Aztec could have a service specialist in freshman **Luke Vlcek** who leads the team in service aces with 19 aces out of 114 attempts or a 16.7% ace percentage. He is credited with 65 points on his serving ability alone.

Other top service ace leaders on the team include Seddon with 10 aces, O'Brien with nine, junior **Jeremy Acedo** with nine and Banks with eight.

In addition, Vlcek, as the libero, plays a defensive role for the Aztecs. He leads the team in digs with 70 or 2.8 digs a set.

"Luke is unbelievable," said Horewitch. "He really understands the game and asks great questions to improve. He has a keen sense for the game and movement on the court. I anticipate he will be one of the top liberos in the state by his sophomore year."

Currently, four Aztecs are remarkably close to being second on the team in digging. Acedo has 49 digs, followed by Seddon with 48, O'Brien with 46, and Banks with 43.

"Jeremy Acedo has really improved since he came into Corona's volleyball program," said Horewitch.

"He started playing year-round with club ball in the off season which helped him to better understand the game. He has started to figure out how to get into position so he can dig up the good hitters."

Junior **Carter Nicolson** is not far behind with 35 digs or 2.1 digs a set playing in 17 sets.

"Carter is another one of those players who can play anywhere on the court at almost every position," said Horewitch. "He loves to learn and has really done well developing his overall game."

"Defensively, Carter, has shown much improvement in reading the game and has gotten some great touches on the ball because of it. He really enjoys playing the game and shows it when he's on the court."

The ability to stop the ball at the net is a defensive skill in that the other team is kept from getting a point. At

the same time, it is a way to earn points for your team if a ball hit by an opponent's hitter crosses the plane of the net, is stopped and then lands in bounds on the opponent's side of the court. It is called a block if a point is scored.

Nate Magro currently leads the team in overall blocks with 14, but sophomore **Michael DeHorney**, Seddon and Banks are close behind with 12 blocks each.

"Nate has filled in great for us at the middle blocker position," said Horewitch. "He has the ability to read where the set will go and how to move with a hitter to block the ball effectively."

"Michael is a Corona basketball player who we are excited to have as part of our volleyball program again this year. He is very coachable and is working

hard to learn the game."

"At 6-foot-6 he has a big presence at the net. The more volleyball he plays the better he is going to get."

Other players on the varsity boys volleyball team include senior **Abhi Sachdeva**, junior **Drew Nicolson** and freshmen **Micha White** and **Quinn Howard**.

"Abhi, as our other senior, is a great representative of the sport and Corona," said Horewitch. "He is quiet but lets his work ethic do his talking on the court."

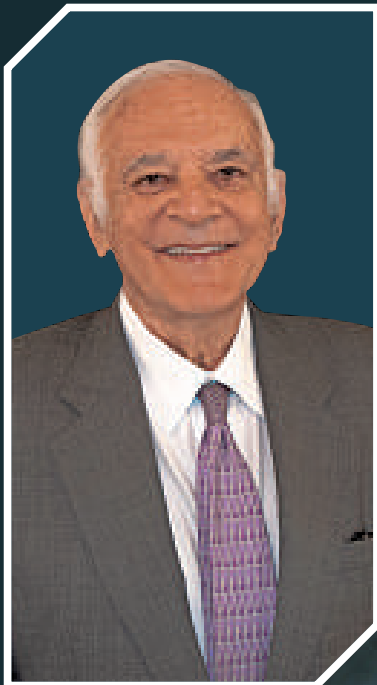
"Drew is a heck of an athlete who is a great footballer and wrestler. He is currently out with a knee injury but we are excited to get him healthy again soon."

The Aztecs are currently 3-4 with a match at Queen Creek scheduled for April 13 and then a home match scheduled against Desert Vista on April 14. The third scheduled match of the week was at Mountain Pointe on April 15.

Next, the Aztecs will be at home against Desert Ridge on April 20, at Highland on April 21 and at home against Queen Creek on April 22.

The following week Corona is set to play at Desert Vista on April 27 and at home against Mountain Pointe on April 29.

Several of the matches can be found on the NFHSnetwork.com Live Broadcast at www.nfshnetwork.com.



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A great story . . . and here's the kicker

Krysten Muir, a Marcos de Niza grad and the first female to score a point in an AIA football state championship game in 2015 and 2016, suffered a spinal cord injury in a car accident that left her partially paralyzed. Doctors couldn't guarantee she'd ever walk again, but Muir's tenacity and hard work have led to encouraging results. Mounting medical expenses drove former Arizona Cardinals player Alex Zendejas to organize 'Kicks for Krysten.' The day camp for kickers looking to up their game took place at Marcos where participants donated to Muir's gofundme campaign in lieu of paying an entrance fee. Among well-wishers were Krysten's parents, who've been rooting for her recovery.

— Photos by Billy Hardiman for Wrangler News





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Astronaut

From Page 3

In March, Proctor earned a seat on the crew of SpaceX's Inspiration 4, the first all-civilian space mission. The four-person team will embark from Florida's Kennedy Space Center as early as this September. Over the three-day mission, the civilian spacefarers will conduct scientific research as they orbit the Earth at more than 17,000 mph.

That's about 5 miles per second, or once around the planet every 92 minutes.

The cultural and historical significance of Inspiration 4 is not lost on Proctor.

“This is the door opening, so that it's not about being the best of the best only going to space anymore,” she said of the all-civilian mission. “It's about how do we open up space so that regular people who want to go to space have an opportunity to go.”

The Inspiration 4 mission aims to raise \$200 million for St. Jude Children's Research Hospital for cancer treatment. Already, it has amassed \$120 million for the cause.

Billionaire Jared Isaacman, founder and CEO of payment processing giant Shift4 Payments, organized the Inspiration 4 mission in conjunction with SpaceX. Isaacman will serve as the crew's captain aboard the Dragon spacecraft. The 38-year-old entrepreneur is the primary financier of the venture, though the exact dollar amount he has committed remains unknown even to Proctor.

Isaacman held a contest to choose his three crewmates. The criteria was based on Isaacman's 4 pillars of inspiration: Leadership, Hope, Generosity, Prosperity. Proctor set herself apart and beat about 200 applicants for the Prosperity seat.

“It was all about showing your entrepreneurial spirit,” she said. “So, I had to open up a Shift4 shop and it's called MySpace2Inspire, and that's where I sell my artwork.

“MySpace2Inspire is about getting people to think about their unique space, the space that they inhabit and their strengths and their passion and how you take that and use that to inspire those within your reach and beyond. ... I'm using my space to inspire those within my reach and beyond through art and poetry.”

With her shop, Proctor hopes to create what she calls a J.E.D.I.



Samuel Voas

**‘(I hope) to give
people hope and
inspiration for a
better world, a
better tomorrow’**

— Dr. Sian Proctor

space : a just, equitable, diverse and inclusive space for humanity moving forward.

Although her creativity and entrepreneurial spirit earned her a seat on Inspiration 4, she possesses an array of technical and professional skills that make her eminently qualified to be an astronaut.

Proctor is an experienced geoscientist, with a B.A. in Environmental Science, and a M.A. in Geology. She is a licensed pilot and is scuba certified. She has completed four missions

as an analog astronaut, living for extended periods in earthly habitats meant to simulate the conditions of the moon or Mars. Proctor's battery of technical qualifications were recognized by NASA in 2009, when she was a finalist in their astronaut selection process.

According to Proctor, the independent body that judged the Inspiration 4 contest was unaware of all that when it selected her.

“I have been, for my entire life, chasing space, trying to figure out, ‘Well, how can I become an astronaut?’” Proctor said.

If she ever got to space, she was sure it would be the traditional way, through training in science and aviation.

“But then in the end, what has gotten me there is my love of art and poetry,” she said.

Space art and poetry are not Proctor's only passions. She is a devoted educator with 20 years teaching geology at South Mountain Community College. Even as her focus shifts to mission preparation, Proctor remains dedicated to her students. She hopes to teach a lesson from space.

“I'm definitely going figure out how to bring students, not only my students at the Maricopa Community Colleges but also students around the world, and get them inspired,” she said.

Proctor is ecstatic about her imminent journey into the empyrean, but she remains committed to the well-being of the 8 billion people who will remain down here on our little blue rock.

“(I hope) to give people hope and inspiration for a better world, a better tomorrow,” the space artist said.

A three-dimensional Sian Proctor will be beaming down at us with that childlike joy. It's impossible not to smile back.

Adoption

From Page 6

feet and we couldn't go anywhere. It was bad," Lacey said.

Last July, the family moved to a significantly larger home where all seven children have room to grow. The Vegas have hired an attorney to plead their cause and allow 12-year-old Alex, 10-year-old Mari and 7-year-old Josh to join the family officially through adoption.

"Samantha and I worked together to get them out here and that's how it really all happened so quickly. I told her I would do it because I love them," Lacey said. Whenever she visited South Carolina, Lacey made it a point to check in on the children. "They were the ones I would go see because I knew their situation was bad."

About five years ago, Lacey and Michael tried to persuade the aunt to give up custody of the children. She refused. Lacey said the refusal was because the food stamps and other benefits the state provided for the children's care were an incentive. "It was money that kept them with her. It was very sad. She wouldn't let us have them."

Today, the children are running and playing with their newfound family. They've been receiving counseling and are making progress.

"It's working out great. They all have their little friendships already built," Lacey said.

Ethan and his cousin Alex are both high-functioning autistic. "They get along like two peas in a pod," Lacey said.

Mariana and Ezzy also get along well, she said. "They're both girly-girly so they play with dolls and have a lot of common interests."

Jasmine is a tomboy and Lacey said she and Josh like to ride bikes and play sports.

Then there's the youngest of the family.

"Everybody loves Nathaniel because he's the baby and he's just fun to be around."

Michael, Lacey's husband, said he never dreamed he would one day be the father of seven children. He's modest when asked about the adoption proceedings.

"I didn't plan on seven kids. I don't think either of us did," Michael said. "But we found ourselves seeing a lot of suffering and although we don't feel

we have much special to offer, it seems like it's better than the alternative. We're just the kind of people that are happy to share."

Roger Ball, pastor of First Baptist Church of Tempe, sees the situation a little differently.

"Michael and Lacey as parents lead the way as great examples of compassion for the weak and the responsibility of the stronger," Ball said. "To adopt three children takes much dedication with mercy.

"They not only love well by helping the weak but they teach their children to help carry the burdens of family life. Helping one another and caring each other's burdens are foundational life skills."

According to Arizona's Department of Children's Services, there were just under 14,000 children in Arizona's foster care system of December 2020. Roughly 47 percent of them were being cared for by what's known as kinship families. These are extended family members such as grandparents, aunts, uncles and cousins who agree to foster children after they have been removed by the state from their parents' home.

Teresa Doud, who works with Catholic Charities Joining Hearts adoption program, spoke to Wrangler News about what happens when a child is removed from a parent's custody by the Department of Child Safety.

"Once these children go into DCS care, I know their first goal is to keep the children within the biological family setting if possible," Doud said. DCS staff will reach out to extended family members to see if there is an interest in taking care of the children.

"If they can't find a relative, they go into just a regular foster care home." These are families in the community that want to foster and help children.

Until parental rights are severed, the state aims to reunify parents and children. "Whenever a child goes into care, the number one goal of DCS is always reunification," Doud said. "So it always starts with them trying to work with the birth parent on doing whatever they need to do."

Whether that entails drug rehab or parenting classes, social workers create a plan for the parents to follow.

"They have to be able to work the plan and prove that they're making progress and that the children will be safe in their home again," Doud said.

For parents trapped in drug addiction, like Lacey's cousin Samantha, it's a daunting task.

"Addiction is a really ugly creature and it's hard for these people to turn their lives around," Doud said. "They might have to go to rehab four or five times before they finally are able and DCS doesn't give them five years to figure it out."

When it becomes clear that a parent is not going to follow the plan, the state then moves to sever rights.

In the Vega family's case, they are asking the court to sever Samantha's rights.

"We can't even find her so that's going to be really simple," Lacey said. The children have three different biological fathers, and the Vegas are seeking to terminate their rights as well. Attorneys filed those petitions in recent weeks.

Since the Vegas are not an official foster family but constitute instead what is known as kinship, they do not qualify for any help from the state in paying the steep legal costs of adoption. The family turned to their church community and neighbors for help.

First Baptist Church of Tempe held a large yard sale that netted \$4,300 toward the Vegas' fundraising goal. Originally they were shooting for \$10,000, but in a counseling session, Ball told them it was too low.

"He said, 'your goal needs to be \$20,000 and we'll help you raise it.' So we came up with this yard sale idea and it was awesome. It was also the hardest job I've ever done in my life," Lacey said.

Raising seven children probably qualifies for that distinction, too.

The Vegas make it a priority to eat dinner together every night. They say they grew especially close during the COVID-19 shutdown.

"We talk about anything they want to talk about, anything and everything about life. We're very open with our kids and we've advised them that they will be going to college, the military or trade schools. It will be one of those things and there are no other options," Lacey said.

"We just try to do good," Michael said. "We don't have a lot of means, but we try to do the best we can with what we have. This was something we could definitely help out with. It was within our means and there was a great need."

"Our community needs more examples of sacrifice like the Vegas. Love, responsibility and sacrifice are needed in every family," Ball said.

To donate to the Vegas GoFundMe account: gofund.me/538d943a

Vaccine

From Page 4

with certainty, 100 percent," he said regarding the question of whether another vaccine might need to be developed. "What I can tell you is that the immunity that we get from this vaccine also wakes up what we call the T-cell immunity which can persist for months and months if not for years. There is a thought that it may not be necessary [to have] more vaccinations but we still don't know."

In the meantime, the objective of vaccinating as



Joyce Coronel

many people as possible is what health officials are shooting for. Avoiding another surge in COVID-19 is crucial because "with every surge that we have, there's a chance to introduce more variants.

On top of that, the different pharmaceutical companies that are currently working with the vaccines are also working with a plan just in case there is an evolving variant that can damage the vaccine's

efficacy. It's a work in progress," Gonzalez said. Many

have bandied about the idea of herd immunity but Gonzalez said that in order for that to happen, 70 percent of patients in the population would have to develop an antibody response.

"So far, in Arizona, we haven't reached that high level of people being infected naturally. That's why we need the vaccine."

At press time, according to the Arizona Department of Health Services, 17,105 Arizonans had died from COVID-19 out of a case total of 850,846. More than 9.4 million COVID-19 tests have been administered in the state.



A fun afternoon, and all that jazz

Chandler's annual Jazz Festival drew aficionados from all over the city for three days of soulful tunes by accomplished musicians who strummed, beat and blew their way through melodies that set toes to tapping.



— Photos by Billy Hardiman
for Wrangler News



Tempe seeking applicants for city boards, commissions

Nearly 30 Tempe boards and commissions that serve in an advisory role to the Tempe City Council are now open for applications.

Focus of the groups' study and discussion includes the arts, parks, development, disabilities and judicial appointments.

While applications for city advisory groups are accepted at all times, openings are due soon for the Development Review Commission, Joint Review Committee and Judicial Advisory Board. The Council will consider appointments at its Thursday, June 24

meeting.

Development Review Commission: Seeking Tempe residents with professional experience in planning, law, real estate and more. Alternate seats on the commission are available as well. Commission members serve three-year terms.

Joint Review Committee: Future openings for regular and alternate members. Committee members are appointed by the president of Arizona State University; by Tempe's mayor with approval of the City Council; or jointly by the mayor with

City Council and the ASU president's approval. Committee members serve three-year terms.

Judicial Advisory Board: Future openings for the public member position. Tempe residents who have not been a party to any matters pending before any division of the Tempe Municipal Court for the five years preceding their appointment are encouraged to apply. Board members serve three-year terms.

To be considered, applications must be received by Friday, May 14.

Information: Tempe City Clerk's Office.

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Chance to own a home 'amazing,' despite market variables

Wrangler News staff

While the supply of available homes remains at 77 percent below normal for this time of year and demand is 17 percent above normal, interest in the purchase of homes has been declining faster than supply over the last 30 days.

This is the observation of Randy Goff, president of Chandler Mortgage, who with his wife Erika Lucas-Goff, have been monitoring the Tempe/West Chandler real estate market for 30 years.

"It's not noticeable when one is in the midst of a contract negotiation today because sellers rarely notice when they're getting, for example, only 15 offers instead of 25," said Goff.

In his monthly newsletter, Goff compared last

December's demand at 35 percent above normal. At this rate, he noted, "demand could be at a normal level in a couple months and below normal by June."

This, he noted, will not cause prices to decline because there are still a miniscule number of competing listings in the MLS. However, he pointed out, it could mean that the second half of 2021 could look different from the first, especially if there's a temporary boost in new listings after the forbearance period ends and the foreclosure moratorium is lifted.

According to Goff, the average mortgage rate rose to 3.02 percent this month based on numbers provided by the Federal Home Loan Mortgage Corporation, known as Freddie Mac, a public government-sponsored enterprise, headquartered in Tysons Corner, Virginia.

Even though the current rate is still considered an excellent one, it understandably weakens the purchasing power for some buyers and reduces the affordability measure for Tempe, West Chandler and Greater Phoenix overall, Goff added.

"When a family making the median income can afford less than 60 percent of what's selling, demand is typically expected to suffer." However, he added, buyers with median incomes coming from Los Angeles and San Francisco are accustomed to affording only 9-11 percent of what's selling in their home towns, so Greater Phoenix prices look amazing by comparison.

"In fact," said Goff, "for some the idea of being able to own a home at all is amazing."

Rover school a new test spot for kids' innovation

By Gabrielle Dunton

Walking near the Rover Elementary School library, you may see students looking inquisitively at a large individually lettered sign titled Makerspace above the school's previous computer lab room.

What's not widely known yet is that this room will be a gateway to hands-on learning opportunities by providing access to cutting-edge technology as well as a wide variety of tools to tinker with.

So, what exactly is a makerspace? To put it simply, it's a place where students can make things. It's where students are encouraged to design, experiment, build and invent as they make meaningful connections in subject areas like science, art and engineering. Makerspaces have been gaining popularity over recent years, popping up in schools around the nation and even across the world.

Last month, Rover Elementary teachers got a first look at the school's new makerspace. Principal Edward Goldstein introduced the wealth of learning opportunities that could take place in this new learning environment. Some of the exciting additions to the room include a 3-D printing machine, cardboard with child-friendly box cutters, sewing machines, science and engineering kits, and a variety of tools such as wrenches, screwdrivers and measuring tapes.

"We're just so excited that we have a space for kids to be engineers and problem-solvers, and really let loose with their creative thinking," said Goldstein.

Most of the items that are found in the makerspace have been donated by the community or purchased by the Rover Elementary PTA. One of the items donated from the community is a fully functional piano which will be used for an art and music project. General-music teacher Erin Crawford plans to have Rover third-grade students help to paint the piano.



Classroom teachers explore the new tool board and discuss future learning opportunities in Rover Elementary's Makerspace.

Photo by Gabrielle Dunton

"I've had the great opportunity of seeing painted pianos integrated in outdoor spaces and its impact on the community," said Crawford.

"Students will get to help decide on the color, the theme, and then paint it. After the project is completed, we plan to place it outside in the school garden for all kids to enjoy."

One of the major goals of a makerspace is to provide students with the tools and environment to collaborate. Principal Goldstein therefore took the opportunity to get the teachers engaged with the space by leading them through a team-building activity. The challenge was to build a boat that was strong enough to hold 20 pennies by using materials only found in makerspace.

While making their boats, second-grade teachers Julianne Ballon and Ellen Phillips were discussing ways in which students can leverage their creativity in the makerspace.

"I think this will be a great way for our students to have a designated place where they are free to use their imagination," said Ballon.

Most agreed: They can't wait to see what exciting projects emerge.

Gabrielle Dunton is a strategic communications coordinator at Tempe Elementary School District.

Native plants on I-10's Broadway Curve being removed, maintained, replanted

Before reconstruction of Interstate 10 through the Broadway Curve in Tempe begins this summer, Arizona Department of Transportation is identifying native plants to preserve along the 11-mile project.

Crews are examining about 2,500 trees along I-10 from Interstate 17 to Loop 202 to identify state-protected plants, such as ocotillo, saguaro and barrel cactus, and native trees, including palo verde, mesquite and ironwood. Plants will be relocated into temporary nurseries so they can be transplanted when work is complete.

"Protecting the natural Arizona environment is an important part of our work," said Robert Samour, senior deputy state engineer and leader of ADOT's Major Projects Group. "There were more than 1,000 plants along the South Mountain Freeway that we maintained for more than three years and replanted after construction to preserve the plants and the beautiful landscape."

The plants will be removed to make way for construction of freeway lanes and other improvements.

The Valley's first urban-freeway reconstruction, to be complete by late 2024, includes:

- Widening I-10 to six general-purpose lanes and two HOV lanes east from 24th Street to U.S. 60/Superstition Freeway.
- Building collector-distributor roads around the curve from Baseline Road to 40th Street to separate local traffic from through traffic on I-10.
- Adding a general-purpose lane on I-10 south from U.S. 60 to Ray Road while keeping the HOV lane.
- Modifying I-10 connections at State Route 143, Broadway Road and U.S. 60 to improve traffic flow and safety.
- Adding two bridges for pedestrians and bicyclists over I-10 between Baseline and Broadway roads and improving the Sun Circle Trail crossing at Guadalupe Road.

More information: azdot.gov/i10BroadwayCurve.



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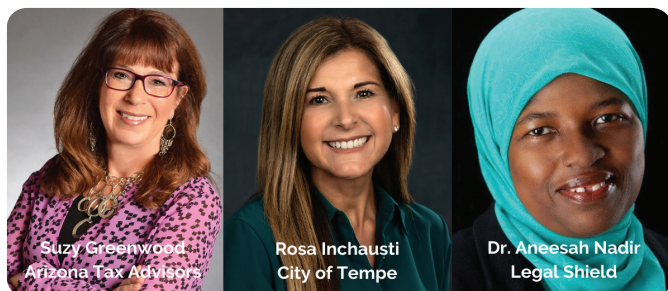


2021 Business Woman of the Year Finalists Announced

The Tempe Chamber of Commerce is pleased to announce three finalists for the 26th annual Business Woman of the Year Award. The award recognizes an individual's excellence in their chosen field and demonstrated leadership within the community. The award honors those who serve as a positive role model to others and are active in community and Tempe Chamber programs.

The recipient of the 2021 Business Woman of the Year award will be announced during the [Tempe Chamber's Leadership Conference](#).

Congratulations to our finalists:



Suzy Greenwood
Arizona Tax Advisors

Rosa Inchausti
City of Tempe

Dr. Aneesah Nadir
Legal Shield

26th Annual Leadership Conference Registration Now Open



The Tempe Chamber of Commerce Women in Business Council is proud to present the 2021 Leadership Conference: Leading by Example, presented by Tempe St. Luke's Hospital. The conference will be held on Friday, May 14, 2021 at 9 am as a live studio broadcast.

The conference will be held on Friday, May 14, 2021 at 9 am as a live studio broadcast. The program includes a progressive trivia contest, an online silent auction, a panel discussion on what it means to lead by example, and the announcement of the 2021 Business Woman of the Year recipient. [Register today!](#)

2021 Leadership Conference sponsored by



FUEL Young Professionals is Growing!

Are you an East Valley professional looking for professional development opportunities? Do you enjoy connecting with other like-minded individuals? Consider joining FUEL Young Professionals!

FUEL's mission is to empower young professionals as stewards of the business community while enhancing personal networks to foster Tempe's current and future business leaders. Committee meetings take place the third Wednesday of each month at 3 pm and is free to participate. Learn more:

<https://tempechamber.org/blog/tempe-chamber-relaunches-fuel-young-professionals-committee>



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Discover new opportunities at www.tempechamber.org



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MCC now site for COVID-19 vaccines

Those 18 years of age and older who live and work in Maricopa County and are still in need of a vaccine against COVID-19 will be able to receive one at Mesa Community College. The school is located at 1833 W. Southern Ave. in Mesa and vaccines are given 8 a.m. – 8 p.m.

The Moderna vaccine will be provided by Embry Health, which is offering a number of vaccination clinics in Arizona.

Those interested in getting the vaccine at MCC should make an appointment and arrive with a face mask, driver's license, insurance card and documentation of eligibility.

Information: mccmoderna1 or call 480-376-2170

Valley Metro changes coming April 26

Valley Metro has announced a cluster of changes starting Monday, April 26, that will include bus route modifications, extensions and frequency adjustments. Planned modifications affecting area commuters include Tempe Route 520, for which the North Tempe Express will be eliminated. Riders can use Route 521 Central Tempe Express or Route 522 South Tempe Express as alternatives.

Frequency adjustments are scheduled for Route 108 Elliot Rd/48th Street.

Additional information: valleymetro.org/maps-schedules/service-changes/april-2021.

Diablos host 'Ignite the Night' fundraiser

The Tempe Diablos, community leaders who volunteer their time, money and resources to improve city neighborhoods, will host their third-annual Ignite the Night fundraiser at 5 p.m. on Saturday, April 24, with silent and live auctions, a luxury raffle and the chance to learn about programs that help Tempe neighborhoods.

Due to COVID-19, the event will be livestreamed so guests can watch and donate from the comfort and safety of their own home.

Proceeds from Ignite the Night raise money for Tempe charities, including Best Buddies, Down Syndrome Network of Arizona, the city, Child Crisis Arizona and Treasures 4 Teachers.

"This event is an excellent opportunity for us to not only thank community members for supporting our work, but also get them involved in giving back to our incredible beneficiaries," said Arnold Mejia, event chair.

"While we still can't party in person together, we want to offer Valley residents the opportunity to learn about the Diablos in a fun and rewarding way."

Sponsorship packages are available.

More information, including how to watch the program: TempeDiablos.org.

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How are things going for new entrepreneur? Pretty smooth

Wanting a change from routine, he's now much happier 'doing his own thing'

By Samuel Voas
wranglernews.com

Bryce Rudat always imagined he'd own a bar one day. In his early 20s, he tried to buy one of the local haunts in his hometown of Lincoln, Nebraska.

But in a strange twist of fate, UFC legend Chuck Liddell made an offer on the place at the same time — a lower offer, according to Rudat. Still, the owners sold it to the famous fighter instead. In the intervening years, the enterprising Rudat made a run at several other promising establishments. Though he managed to avoid any more backward bidding wars with renowned mixed martial artists, he was never able to reach deal.

But today, 39-year-old Rudat finally has his bar. Just not the kind he may have imagined in his early 20s. He opened Bar Smoothie in October of 2020. The shop is located at the northeast corner of Mill and Southern in Tempe.

Patrons will never want for options, as the menu features an assortment 20 smoothies and shakes, displayed across a trio of large flat-screen television that hang in the lobby. The tropical color palate of the interior is bright and welcoming. The centerpiece of the store is the large bar. The wooden bar top is stained and sealed for a clean, glassy finish.

Rudat built it himself using mostly discarded materials. In fact, he remodeled the entire space by himself using this strategy.

"I did it all myself just to save as much money as possible starting it up. I'd never built a bar before and I was like, 'Well let's see how this goes!'" laughs Rudat. "There was a lot of trial and error on it. A lot. I had a mental breakdown on it a little bit."

His struggles are understandable. He had no prior experience with construction or contracting work. Before opening Bar Smoothie, Rudat worked for 12 years as a bartender and bar manager. He figured it



Bryce Rudat: In an early 'retirement,' he makes a smooth move.

—Photo by Samuel Voas for Wrangler News

was time to retire from barkeeping when it hit him one day:

"I'm tired of working for people. I hate it. I don't even like working for myself sometimes."

After his discontented revelation, he actually made an offer to buy the bar he was managing at the time, a craft cocktail bar in Mesa called Brass Tap. However, due to the asking price of the ownership, he figured he'd just start his own business.

As Rudat brainstormed the type of business he'd like to start, he thought of Juice Stop — a successful chain of smoothie bars one of his friends founded back in Lincoln. Initially, he explored the idea of franchising a Juice Stop in Tempe. So he called his friend, the Juice Stop owner, and asked him what he thought of the idea.

Rudat was surprised by the response he received.

"Dude, that's a great idea. Don't do it. Don't do Juice Stop. Do your own thing," said the Juice Stop mogul. The friend made it clear that such an arrangement could not work for logistical reasons, but encouraged Rudat to start his own smoothie business. The friend even invited Rudat to model

it after the Juice Stop empire of Lincoln, Nebraska, going so far as to say:

"Go ahead, use all my recipes."

Propelled by the encouragement of his hometown buddy, Rudat secured a loan and began looking at locations for his fledgling smoothie enterprise. And while he appreciated his friend's blessing to borrow the Juice Stop formulas, Rudat opted to devise his own menu. Although that might sound like a delicious day at the office, Rudat insists that the month long task of creating his menu took its toll.

"I went through a lot of product — ate a lot of smoothie. Had to question myself at the end of the day like, 'do I really want to do this? This is like 30 smoothies I've had today,'" says Rudat.

Rudat is only a few months into his career as a business owner. But things are going well for Bar Smoothie. He says his sales have increased each week for the last two months straight. He is already looking at possible locations in the East Valley for a second Bar Smoothie.

He is happy that he is seeing early success, especially considering he opened his business in the midst of a global pandemic. He hopes that someday down the road, when he his business has been firmly established, he will have a chance to share the lessons he has learned in starting a small business. He wants to help other aspiring business owners avoid some of the pitfalls he encountered.

"Every day I reflect on the stupidity that was me doing this all alone," reflects Rudat. "Now I just think every day, 'I want to be there for other small business (owners).' 'Cause I got roped into some stupid contracts, man. Look at terms and conditions on everything. Don't just check the damn box. 'Cause you never know what you're getting into. Once I have more free time, I'm definitely going to join any mentorship program for small businesses. I'm gonna be there."

Bar Smoothie is at 3137 S Mill Ave.

Young civil rights activist working for a more livable Tempe

A \$1,000 scholarship may not have huge impact on Maya Steinberg's advocacy and cultural awareness efforts, but it is certain to bolster her determination to succeed.

Maya, a senior at Tempe High School, is the winner of the first Dolores Huerta Advocacy and Social Justice Award, supported by Chicanos Por La Causa for her advocacy efforts to make Tempe a more equitable place.

Huerta is a civil rights activist and community organizer who has fought for labor rights and social justice for more than 50 years. In 1962, she and César Chávez founded the United Farm Workers union.

Huerta played a critical role in many of the union's accomplishments, such as collective bargaining, for four decades and is credited with the rallying cry *Sí se puede*.

According to Tempe public information officer Kris Baxter, Maya participated in policy advocacy through local elections; promoted cultural understanding and awareness; advocated for accessible health care; and more.

According to the nominators:

- (Maya's) passion for advocacy strengthened during the COVID-19 pandemic when she recognized that many vulnerable communities would have trouble accessing learning materials.

- She created an online book club to strengthen literacy while students were out of the classroom. The club catered to Black, Indigenous, people of color and low-income students during COVID-19 school closures.

- Maya was circumspect in talking about her efforts.

"Although the early part of my story is focused on the realization that not everyone is treated fairly, I expect the latter chapters to be inundated with what I do to combat that. Inspired by my experiences as a Mexican-American woman, I plan on majoring in Women's Studies and Spanish where I will gain the resources needed to fight oppression and social injustices," Maya said.

"Pursuing this passion, I intend to devote my life to activism...challenging the systematic inequalities that women face in areas of employment, health and safety, and education.

"Similarly to Dolores Huerta, by working to combat opportunity gaps and areas of inequalities, I hope to help foster a more just and equitable society."



Tempe keeps its mask mandate

On April 8, the Tempe City Council re-affirmed that the City of Tempe will continue to enforce its mask mandate in all public places.

A Mayoral proclamation requiring face coverings has been in place in Tempe since June 18, 2020, after the Governor



allowed local governments to enact such measures.

Since Gov. Doug Ducey's March 25 Executive Order prohibiting the mask mandates of local governments, Tempe had been evaluating impacts and next

steps. The City Council discussed the issue, taking into consideration Tempe Charter authority, state law and Attorney General opinions. The Council's unanimous consensus was that, effective immediately, Tempe's mask mandate will be enforced again at all places of public accommodation in the city, including at all businesses, public transit and city facilities.

Mayor Corey Woods asked that city staff develop ways to use existing data about vaccine rates and case counts as objective thresholds to guide when Tempe may choose to sunset its mask mandate in the future.

In accordance with the Governor's requirements, Tempe has followed an education-before-citation approach to non-compliance with its proclamation. For questions, call Tempe 311 at 480-350-4311 on weekdays from 7 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Businesses can get downloadable, printable signs about mask requirements at tempe.gov/BusinessDownloads. Tempe maintains COVID-19 information at tempe.gov/coronavirus.

Tempe, Girl Scouts launch first-in-Arizona city patch program



The City of Tempe and the Girl Scouts-Arizona Cactus-Pine Council have partnered on a new patch program and are looking for the perfect Tempe patch design. Any Tempe student in grades K-12 can submit a creative design idea for Tempe's very own Girl Scout patch. Design submissions should reflect a Tempe place, a Tempe value, or use the name Tempe.

The winning design will become the official icon of the new partnership between the City of Tempe and Girl Scouts. When the patch program launches later this year, Girl Scouts who live in Arizona will be able to select

from an array of activities to learn about and experience city history, operations and famous sites – and earn a Tempe patch to proudly display on their vests or sashes. The program will be the first city-specific patch program in Arizona.

The partnership with Girl Scouts-Arizona Cactus-Pine Council was initiated by Tempe City Councilmember Doreen Garlid, a Girl Scout alum and former Girl Scout leader.

All patch design submissions must be submitted by 5 p.m. April 26. A committee will narrow down the entries and the final patch design will be selected via an online survey from May 3-17.

Stay up-to-date at tempe.gov/patch.

Three chances to virtually meet with Councilmembers

Your Tempe City Councilmembers are always ready to answer questions and listen to your concerns. Here are three opportunities, in date order, for when you can virtually meet up with them:

Join Councilmember Lauren Kuby for a special Earth Day community meet-up at 6 p.m. on Wednesday, April 21. Tempe Urban Forester Richard Adkins will talk about how residents can prepare and protect their trees in the coming heat of summer. Kendon Jung, Chair of the Sustainability Commission, will discuss the commission's priorities. Tempe Sustainability Director Braden Kay will be on

hand to answer questions about Tempe's Climate Action Plan. Visit tempe.gov/kuby for the link and instructions to join.

Join Vice Mayor Randy Keating and Councilmember Robin Arredondo-Savage for Roundtable with Randy and Robin at noon on Wednesday, April 28. They will take a look at all the great things you can do outside in Tempe and you'll have an opportunity to ask questions about anything related to Tempe. Send your questions in advance to tim_gomez@tempe.gov or post them to the Facebook event. This virtual meet-up will be a

Facebook Live event hosted from the Tempe History Museum.

Join Councilmember Jennifer Adams for Join Jennifer at 6 p.m. on Tuesday, May 4. Topics will include Fire Station 2, with Fire Medical Rescue Chief Greg Ruiz, and updates on parks projects in 85282, specifically Petersen and Meyer parks. While topics will most interest those living in 85282, everyone is welcome to bring their ideas and issues forward. Visit tempe.gov/adams for the link and instructions to join. For information on all Councilmembers, visit tempe.gov/elected.

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Pools — Extreme Media Blasting; we clean pool tile, fountains & water features by removing calcium build-up, restoring surfaces to like-new; 480-233-6561 7/21

Remodeling — JAK Construction Inc. – Specializing in all phases of construction. Rain gutters, Downspouts, Aluminum and Vinyl siding, AZ rooms, replacement windows & doors, overhang trims/eaves. We love small jobs! Call (480) 820-8711. Licensed, bonded and insured. ROC #112275. 5/21

Remodeling — Infinity Remodel specializing in Tempe home remodels, repairs and so much more! We are your one-stop shop for all your home improvement needs. Free estimates. Licensed. Bonded. Insured. ROC #228281 480-999-1385. 5/21

Sprinklers — Aqua Masters—Specializing in System Check-Ups, Valves, Heads, Timers, Leak Detection, Wire Locating & Troubleshooting, Brown Spots & Low Pressure Problems; 30+Years' Experience Quality Service 480-478-0073 www.AquamastersAz.com 6/21

Storage—Elliot Kyrene Storage: Rent affordable, secure, climate-controlled storage units in Tempe 85284; all units on ground level and individually alarmed; onsite manager, 480-418-6946, elliottkyrenestorage.com 6/21

Wrangler News is distributed every other Saturday throughout the year to 20,000 homes & rack locations in Tempe & Chandler

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— Phoenix magazine



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Press Option 1 for your call to be directed

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."

CALL US TO LEARN HOW WE CAN HELP YOU PROMOTE YOUR TEMPE AND WEST CHANDLER ENDEAVORS

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Does Aunt Jane want to see her favorite grandkid in Wrangler News? Here's where to find an extra copy . . .



Here's a partial list of the public places and community-minded merchants and where you can pick up a current issue. If it's a Tempe or West Chandler business, take a moment to look around, say hello and tell them thanks for being part of our efforts to bring neighbors — and neighborhoods — closer together. Thanks! *CALL 480-966-0845, option 1. for a full, updated listing*

Wrangler News office,
2145 E Warner Road
(Across from GoDaddy).
24-hour outside rack.

Kyrene School District,
lobby, Kyrene & Warner,
Tempe

Crackers, homestyle breakfast
& lunch, outside rack, 1285
W. Elliot Road, Tempe

Tempe Union HS District,
lobby, Guadalupe east of
Kyrene

Tempe City Hall, lobby,
downtown Tempe

Mill Avenue rack, east
side, just north of Rula Bula,
Tempe

Tempe Elementary School
District, Rural north of
Southern, Lobby

Tempe Public Library,
Connections Cafe, Rural
south of Southern, Tempe

Pier 54/The Lakes, On the
Water, 5394 S. Lakeshore
Drive, Tempe

Marcos de Niza HS,
Main Office, Guadalupe &
Lakeshore

Bogeys Sports Bar &
Grill, rack near front door,
Guadalupe & Rural, Tempe

Tempe Smile Design,
periodical rack, reception
area, Guadalupe &
McClintock next to Rubio's

Steves Espresso, French press
coffee & more, periodical
rack to left of front door,
1801 E. Baseline at
McClintock, east side

Freeway Chevrolet, Always
friendly, always great deals,
Customer Lounge, 1150
N. 54th St., Chandler

Casa de Juana, The best
Mexican cuisine around, on
decorated bench, lobby,
1805 E. Elliot, Pollack
Tempe Cinema complex

Dairy Queen, top of
rack, Home of the famous
Blizzard, left of entry, Rural
& Elliot, northwest corner

Sunset Library, 4930 W.
Ray, Rural & Ray, Chandler

Arizona Central Credit
Union, rack at front
entrance, 1805 W.
Chandler Blvd., Chandler

Chandler City Hall, lobby,
175 S. Arizona Ave.

Chandler Chamber of
Commerce, 2nd Floor, 25
S. Arizona Pl., Chandler
Corona del Sol HS, Main
Office, 1001 E. Knox
Road, Tempe

Arizona Community
Church, All are welcome,
receptionist, 9325 S. Rural
Road at Knox

Great Harvest Bread, Like
mom used to make, inside
rack, Warner & McClintock,
southeast corner

Seattle Espresso, inside
table, 1840 E. Warner
Road, McClintock Fountains
Center

A note to our neighborhood businesses . . .

Would you like to add your location to the places where people can conveniently pick up extra copies of Wrangler News? We provide small, countertop-sized racks for easy placement anywhere that works best for you. It's a way to show your support for the community AND bring in visitors who may not have been there before. Just email editor@wranglernews.com and we'll add you to our dropoff schedule AND to our newspaper listing in every issue. Just one more way to get your business in the eyes of even more people and show your support for our hometown paper.

Commentary . . .

Spring is city budget season: Tempe makes it easy to get info, give input

By Tempe City Councilmember Jennifer Adams



Did you know that it is not just springtime in the City of Tempe? It is also budget season!

While that may not sound as pleasant, Tempe makes it easy to engage with us and get information on your city budget. And there is still plenty of time for you to do both.

As you may know, I am always watching our city budget closely and involve myself in making sure that we are delivering on our promises to you. What I really want you to know is

that the two most important elements of developing our city budget each year are data and your input.

Let me explain the data first:

The City Council has five strategic priorities and our budget efforts are centered around achieving these aims. Our priorities, which you can view at tempe.gov/elected, are: Safe & Secure Communities; Strong Community Connections; Quality of Life; Sustainable Growth & Development; and Financial Stability & Vitality.

But how will we know if we are living these priorities as a city? That is where our performance measures come in. These are the individual, smaller goals that all align with one or more of our priorities. You can go to performance.tempe.gov any time and see how we are doing on these performance measures. Every year in formulating the city budget, we choose several performance measures that we want to focus more on and invest more in during the next fiscal year.

Each year, we ask Tempe residents how satisfied they are with just about every city service and public facility. We truly use this data to know what areas

may need more attention. Survey results are always available at tempe.gov/survey.

Now for the other major element of developing the city budget – you. The more you know and the more you engage with us about how we are spending your money, the more the city budget reflects our residents and neighborhoods. Visit tempe.gov/budget to get caught up on what has been happening the last several months, including the feedback provided in an online survey earlier this spring. You will see the remaining City Council public hearings that are part of the budget process and you are welcome to watch and participate in any of those. All of this work is leading up to the new fiscal year, which begins July 1.

Crafting a responsible \$800 million city budget is no small feat. We use data, we need your input and we could not do it without the extremely hard work of our city staff. If you have any questions or input about how the city spends its money, please reach out to me by calling 480-350-8835, emailing jennifer_adams@tempe.gov or visiting JenniferAdamsTempe on Facebook.

LA CASA DE JUANA



DELIVERS A KNOCKOUT WITH ITS FRESH AUTHENTIC AND MOUTHWATERING FOOD

If you think you have been to a Mexican restaurant lately you probably need to reconsider and visit La Casa de Juana.

The fare is authentic Mexican, and when we say authentic, we mean it! Upon entering, you'll be dazzled by the colorful décor, beautiful tables and chairs, Mexican painted murals, colorful banners hanging from the ceiling and beautiful art.

Warm orange and yellow tones echoing throughout the eatery will make this your favorite Mexican restaurant. Give La Casa De Juana a try and enjoy great food, awesome salsa, great service and amazing ambience. Don't forget happy hour from 2 p.m. to 6 p.m. every day with \$2 beer (domestic and imports) and \$3 margaritas.

This place is a must. The flavorful salsa, the delicious margaritas, the extraordinary and well-priced food will definitely keep you coming back.

Check out our menu or order online at juanashouse.com

1805 E Elliot Road, Tempe • Pollack Cinemas Center • 480-820-0837



Patti Agnew - Realtor

“Call Us First”
480-797-2892



Scott Agnew - Operating Principal



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.

Please call our cell or text us for a quick response at 480-797-2892.

Scott and Patti Agnew

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for a Record
Price in 2021!**

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money to buy before you
sell, too.**

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email agnew@kw.com to get
a Guaranteed Offer on your
South Tempe home and the
money upfront to buy your
next home now before you
sell to skip the hassle.**

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