

These
stories
& more
inside



Advocating learning: Tempe woman named 'First Things First Champion for Young Children.'
Page 30



Birthday bash: Tempe is turning 150 and Wrangler News is asking readers and residents to help tell the story. **Page 8**



Road work ahead: Major construction project widening the Broadway Curve begins with goal of alleviating congestion. **Page 3**



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July 24 - August 6, 2021 • Volume 31, Number 14 • Covering Tempe & West Chandler for 30-plus years



Best friends will have a chance to get reacquainted when school restarts for area schools beginning Monday. Update and details starting on Page 3.

— Wrangler News photo

CHANDLER REGIONAL MEDICAL CENTER IS GROWING (AGAIN!) . . . Story & photos, Pgs 15 - 18

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Your go-to source for Tempe & West Chandler Neighborhood News

Broadway Curve rebuild under way; closures to interrupt traffic



Dozens of closures over the next few years are predicted to yield better traffic flow for the frequently clogged Broadway Curve, improving drive times for commuters when the project is completed. — Wrangler News file photo

By Lee Shappell
wranglernews.com

Gradation on the curve has started, and not just because it's back-to-school time.

A nearly four-year, 11-mile rebuilding and widening of Interstate 10, including the headache-inducing Broadway Curve in Tempe, was to begin Friday, July 23, with a weekend closure of westbound I-10 in the area as bulldozers and graders arrived.

"Drivers should prepare for weekend

closures of Interstate 10 and U.S. 60," said ADOT'S Alexandra Albert. "The reason is that over the weekends we'll be closing them down to remove rubberized asphalt on all of the travel lanes."

Westbound I-10 will be closed from 10 p.m. Friday to 4 a.m. Monday from Loop 202 north through West Chandler, South Tempe, Ahwatukee and Guadalupe to the 60. Westbound I-10 on-ramps at Loop 202, Chandler Boulevard, Ray, Warner and Elliot

— CURVE, Page 18

Coalition's 'One pill can kill' message on freeway billboards

Surge in drug overdose deaths fuels campaign

By Joyce Coronel
wranglernews.com

As thousands of kids across Tempe and West Chandler gear up for the start of the 2021/22 school year, the new program director for Tempe Coalition has a warning for them and their parents: Drugs kill.

"I care because kids in our community are dying. It's destroying families," Bernadette Coggins said. "I know families that have lost their kids. It could happen to anyone and I want to do my very best as a parent to be in the know and to know what to look for."

Coggins, the mother of three sons, served

— DRUGS, Page 24

Difficult times prompt creative hiring measures to fill school openings

By Lee Shappell
wranglernews.com

These are not the easiest of times to retain schoolteachers.

Arizona's state funding for education remains among the lowest in the country.

The pandemic created questions that caused some teachers to step away – whether for family issues, care for their young children, moving out-of-state for a spouse's job, or for their perceived own protection as a result of rules for COVID-19 vaccinations and wearing of masks in the classroom. Some of those concerns remain.

Yet against that background, the Kyrene and Tempe Elementary school districts, which serve South Tempe and West Chandler, expect to open the new school year in a couple of weeks at full staffing after scrambling to tweak their teacher

recruiting and retention techniques.

That means that students per classroom are not expected to grow in either district.

"We are very fortunate. We are going to open the school year fully staffed," said Lisa Gibson,

Kyrene's executive

director of talent management. "As a former principal, I know what it feels like when you don't have the staffing that you need, or you're out looking for a teacher in July. That feels very



Michael Minghine

stressful. We're ready to go. We are not going to have to collapse any classrooms.

"We look at this data every single year and try to figure out if there is something that we can do better to retain our teachers."

What teachers find when they get to their classrooms is another issue. Retention is a two-way street, and there is concern how many students will be back and how much knowledge students have retained after a difficult and disruptive 2020-21 school year, when schools were closed, then reopened, then closed again. Online distance learning isn't for everyone, and some homes did not have computers to even open that door for their kids.

"The Tempe Elementary School District took a very proactive approach to addressing potential

— SCHOOLS, Page 20

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Tempe Chamber CEO Gill resigns, will relocate to Michigan

Anne Gill is stepping down after five years leading the Tempe Chamber of Commerce as president and chief executive officer.

Gill said she plans to return to her home state of Michigan to enjoy time with her family and plan for her upcoming wedding to her childhood sweetheart.

The Tempe Chamber Board of Directors said it will immediately launch a search for Gill's successor.

"Looking back on the past five years, I am proud of the work we have done with the Tempe business community," Gill said.

"I have been fortunate to have worked with outstanding business and community leaders, as well as an exceptional Chamber team. I'll miss the people I work with every day, but I know that with our strong board and support from the community the Tempe Chamber will continue to innovate and meet the changing needs of the businesses it

serves."

Before coming to Tempe, Gill was executive director of the WellCare Foundation and president and CEO of the Ahwatukee Foothills Chamber of Commerce for five years.

She has more than 30 years of business-administration experience. She has served on the Arizona Chamber Executives Board of Directors as its legislative chair, the South Mountain



Anne Gill

Community College President's Community Advisory Council, co-chair of the Tempe Kyrene Business Advisory Council, and the Western Association of Chamber Executives.

She holds a B.A. in International Business from Eckerd College in St. Petersburg, Fla.

Gill led the Tempe Chamber's refocus on its mission to serve as the voice for business, a catalyst for economic growth and a champion for a strong community.

From the launch of the Business Academy to the introduction of the annual Sustainability Summit, Gill is credited with leaving a lasting impact on Tempe's business community.

During Gill's tenure, the Tempe Chamber,

representing more than 650 businesses, experienced significant growth that resulted in an increased net revenue of more than 350 percent. She was instrumental in implementing the Career Ready Tempe youth workforce program, a partnership with the Chamber Foundation and the city's Economic Development and Human Services Departments.

The program seeks to strengthen Tempe's future workforce, in turn strengthening the Chamber's connections with the business and education communities.

"I have been blessed to work with Anne over the last several years," said Raveen Arora, Tempe Chamber Board chair. "She has been the bedrock and face of the Chamber, a steward with vision, humility, patience and insight; a real leader, who, with her team, helped the Chamber navigate the turbulence of COVID-19 and the minefields of the pandemic. Anne leaves behind a void that will be hard to fill. Her leadership and legacy are enshrined in her team. The Board of Directors consider her a superstar. Stars always shine in the darkness. She has been our brightest light."

More information on the Tempe Chamber: tempechamber.org or 480-967-7897.



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MCC artist of national acclaim stumbled into career by accident

By Janie Magruder

As a child growing up in small-town Maryland, Malena Barnhart had little exposure to art or art instruction. She was into girly stickers and disposable cameras, created a stop-motion animation featuring her Barbie dolls, and later wrote and mailed out a teen fan magazine.

But Barnhart planned to be a writer or a lawyer because she enjoyed the push-and-pull of opposing concepts.

"It wasn't until I was in college that I kind of stumbled into art," the Tempe woman said. "I didn't realize it was idea based."

Now on faculty at Mesa Community College, Barnhart's commitment to critical thinking is among the reasons she recently received an MCC Outstanding Adjunct Faculty award.

The awards recognize faculty that promote inclusion and diversity, use technology to enhance student learning, and show encouragement, care and respect to students, staff and teaching peers.

Barnhart, who teaches digital photography and digital photographic imaging, also was lauded for emphasizing empathy in art creation. She joined the faculty in 2014, a year after earning a Master of Fine Arts in photography from ASU.

Barnhart was nominated by MCC adjunct faculty Ted Decker, a longtime advocate of visual arts and artists who co-founded the Phoenix Institute of Contemporary Art and is its director and curator. Decker teaches art history and professional practices courses, and received an MCC Outstanding Adjunct Faculty award in 2020.

"Malena does extensive research and has a plethora of ideas which manifest themselves in her artwork and in her vibrant practice," he said. "Her students talk about how wonderful a teacher she is. I admire her for being focused on her students and on student learning."

Additionally, Decker said, Barnhart is prominent in the student art community, often inviting students to collaborate on her own work, and she is a new breed of teacher.

"She's a wonderful person, she's energetic, innovative, and someone who cares about her students and their practice and growth," he said.

The award was unexpected, but so meaningful, Barnhart said, especially because Decker nominated her.

"He is one of several instructors I want



MCC interim president Lori Berquam, left, with awardee Malena Barnhart. — MCC photo

to model myself after because he's such a selfless person and does so many acts of kindness," she said.

Barnhart's work has been displayed in many solo and group exhibitions locally, nationally and internationally, and it has received numerous accolades.

"I used to think that art making was art making, but the big realization is that I'm falling into black holes (on the Internet), and that's part of my art practice," she said.

Barnhart uses in her art repurposed cultural materials, a variety of found items and footage including children's stickers, YouTube videos, party decorations and teen posters.

"I value the ability to make work that is angry, critical and not always pretty," she said.

Barnhart's work centers on the process of enculturation and its role in perpetuating harmful gender norms. Her website, malenabarnhart.com, features her videos, installations and 2-D works that question intended messages.

"We learn our culture from what we consume, whether one is consuming princess toys, video games or Pinterest wedding boards," she writes.

In addition to the award, MCC recently promoted her to residential faculty status. The great diversity of art students at the college — from age and backgrounds to education and experiences — makes it a rewarding place to teach, Barnhart said.

"The advantage is being in class with people who are different from you and think differently than you," she said.

"The interesting, intimate conversations we have in the classroom feed into my practice and make me a better person. It's so interesting to be in a room full of people nerding out about art and to talk about it for three hours."



Kyrene School District Welcomes You to the 2021-22 School Year!

The first day of school is Thursday, July 29.

Meet the Teacher Nights

Monday, July 26:

- Middle Schools
- Kyrene Traditional Academy grades 6-8

Tuesday, July 27:

- Elementary Schools
- Kyrene Digital Academy
- Kyrene Traditional Academy grades preK-5

Kyrene's annual "Meet the Teacher" events serve as the official kickoff of the new year, giving families an opportunity to meet teachers and get acquainted with individual schools. Each school will provide families with times and additional details.

Back-to-School Information

For information about family communications, supply lists, school lunches, school start/end times, health and safety strategies, before/after school activities and more, visit our website below.

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New Tempe Chamber Board members

Six new board members have taken positions with the Tempe Chamber of Commerce, including a new chairperson.

Chamber President and CEO Anne Gill introduced the group at a State of the Chamber and awards dinner June 25.

Said Gill: "We are grateful to have such a dedicated and community-focused group of individuals join the Tempe Chamber team. I look forward to working with our incoming Board of Directors as we work to rebuild our economy post pandemic."

New members include:

Nick Bastian, owner, The Nick Bastian Team at Realty Executives — Bastian is a longtime Tempean, community volunteer and Realtor with over 25 years' experience. He served as the immediate past president of the Board of Directors for the Tempe Community Action Agency and chairman of the annual Tempe Healing Field Event at Tempe Beach Park. He also is a member of the Arizona Association of Realtors.

Mike Bradley, CEO and principal, ECD Systems — Bradley has over 40 years of experience in the connected building technology industry. For 11 years, Bradley served on the Board of Directors for the National System Contractors Association and is a frequent speaker on marketing and management topics at industry conferences and events. He is also an advocate for local police and fire departments, and established TrueBlueTempe.org in 2020 to increase awareness and show support of the Tempe Police Department from the local business community.

Laura Briscoe, owner, Laura's Gour-

met Granola, LLC — Briscoe is a Tempe small-business owner and nominee for the 2021 Tempe Chamber Business Excellence Award. Formerly, Briscoe worked in the IT sales industry, during which time she guided changes to culinary professional and gourmet chefs in 2006. Briscoe says she looks forward to utilizing her platform to uplift the small-business community.

Lisa Cavazos, commercial SMB Manager, Cox Business — Cavazos has over 20 years' experience in sales as well as a background in the information technology and services industry. She has received numerous awards and recognitions, including #1 Altice USA Regional Sales Manager for the Southwest region. Cavazos says she is passionate about serving her community and being an exceptional leader to her team.

Bobby Zavala, senior director of admission, University of Dubuque — Prior to his role at the University of Dubuque, Zavala was a law enforcement officer for the Cochise County Sheriff's Office and is a United States Army veteran. He currently serves on the executive board for the Tempe YMCA, is chair of the Tempe Chamber Military Affairs Committee, and spends his free time giving back to the community through various non-profit organizations.

Also introduced at the event was Incoming Board Chair **Raveen Arora**, CEO and founder of Think Human-Global Initiative and The Dhaba India Plaza. He is also a professional chartered accountant with over 50 years of international management consulting experience and has served his community with many local organizations over the last several decades.

It's coming: Tempe's Sesquicentennial. Wrangler News wants your input

Guess who turns 150 this year? That might be a ripe old age, but the little settlement with a flour mill at the Salt River crossing doesn't need a walker!

In fact, many believe that Tempe, at a century and a half, is among the most vibrant of all metro Phoenix suburbs.

It certainly has a vibrant and colorful past that brought it to today.

You, or your family members, or your friends no doubt have memories and/or photos of Tempe days past.

Wrangler News and wranglernews.com will present a special section in late October commemorating Tempe's 150th



birthday, and we'd love to have your voice in it. If you have stories, memories or photos that you'd like to share please email them by Sept. 1 to joyce.coronel@wranglernews.com or to lee.shappell@wranglernews.com.

And, we'd also like to have your advertising in the section.

Please contact Joyce or Lee about supporting our special section and promoting your business — online and/or in print — to let the community know that you are all about the Tempe experience!



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Commentary . . . By Jennifer Adams

Tempe residents: What makes a community livable?

Let me ask you a question: What makes a community a more livable place?

Is it an easy commute or lots of fun events? How about pristine parks or plenty of shade? What about equality and social justice?

The answers to this pivotal question are held by each of you as Tempe residents. As a City Councilmember, my priorities and viewpoints can never replace yours.

That is why my colleague, Councilmember Lauren Kuby, and I are asking for you to tell us what makes any city or town a livable one.

We co-chair the Tempe City Council's Sustainable and Livable Communities Committee and we need your opinions to help shape the future work of our committee.

It is a deceptively simple task. There are at least as many answers to this one question as there are Tempe residents.

But we genuinely feel your input can help us spot common themes and decide on the most impactful pursuits to make Tempe even more livable. Please visit tempe.gov/forum to express your thoughts. Councilmember Kuby and I began meeting in February, after Mayor Corey Woods

created three City Council committees and assigned two Councilmembers to each.

Now, after a short summer break, our committee will be back in action with monthly meetings starting Wednesday, Aug. 25. You are invited to join each one in real time or view them when it is convenient for you.



Jennifer Adams

Our efforts are still relatively new, so it is not too late to get informed and involved.

We are in the beginning stages of gathering information through presentations from city staff and regional and statewide partners about issues like the

International Green Construction Code and the 2021 update to Tempe's Climate Action Plan.

We also intend to keep tackling animal-welfare

topics, including adding more dog parks as well as providing residents with resources to manage community cats through education and Trap-Neuter-Return (TNR). In addition, we have heard compelling information about Tucson's rainwater collection infrastructure and Maricopa County's plans for Bus Rapid Transit.

More information about our committee – and the City Council's two other committees – is at tempe.gov/CouncilCommittees.

There you will find instructions for joining the meetings, as well as agendas, minutes and background information. You can also call Council Aide Kristin Gwinn at 480-350-8916.

I am here for your feedback and questions anytime.

Reach out to me at jennifer_adams@tempe.gov or call 480-350-8835. You can also find me on Facebook at JenniferAdamsTempe.

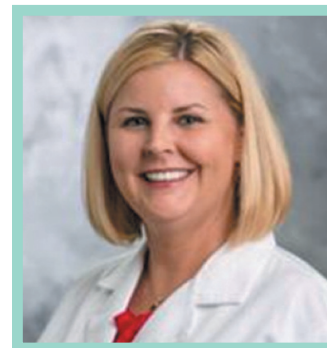
Jennifer Adams is a member of the Tempe City Council.

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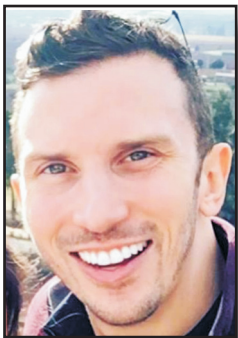
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SPORTS . . .

With Alex Zener

Fans eager to welcome an Aug. 6 restart of high school sports



Alex Zener

The first day of school for Tempe Union High School District schools is Monday, Aug. 2, and tryouts for fall sports including swimming, golf, cross country, badminton, girls volleyball and football will start Friday, Aug. 6.

Last season was a challenge for all sports teams, not only college and professional sports but high school athletic programs, which traditionally provide programs for a large number of young people to participate in that were hit hard.

High school sports have been a significant part of schools and communities across America for generations and COVID-19 precautions and restrictions hit home in many cities, including Tempe.

Football, a fan favorite and traditionally the most popular boys sport, was played last season under COVID-19 challenges and restrictions at both Marcos

de Niza and Corona, with only parents able to attend live and sit in the stands.

The rest of the fans tried to watch the games through live streaming but it was not the same. The energy and excitement were gone, plus it was hard to follow the action.

It was great the athletes got to play the sport they had worked so hard to prepare for but it was not the same without a stadium of fans yelling for their favorite team.

This fall the Arizona Interscholastic Association is optimistically anticipating that spectators will once again be allowed in the stands for fall sports including football.

According to the AIA, the 2021 football season is scheduled to begin Aug. 29 with the first varsity game being played Friday night, Sept. 3.

Corona is playing in the 6A East Valley Region with Dobson, Mesa, Skyline, Tucson and Westwood, while Marcos de Niza is in the 4A Desert Sky Region with American Leadership Academy, Benjamin Franklin,

Mesquite and Seton Catholic.

The Aztecs, who finished last season with an 8-1 record—losing only to Hamilton in the state playoffs—are scheduled to start the season with a home game against Mountain Pointe on Sept. 3.

Corona should return three players with experience rushing the ball last season, but will definitely miss the on-the-ground yardage of **Anyale Velazquez**, who was the Aztecs' leading rusher.

Velazquez, who carried the ball 156 times and rushed for 1,006 yards and 12 touchdowns, announced July 15 that he was transferring to Chandler for his senior year, even though he would have to sit out the first five games.

Corona seniors **Austin Tygart**, **RJ Saenz** and **Izaak Kubat**, who all had experience rushing the ball last season, will hopefully be able to step up and gain yardage rushing the ball.

The Aztecs will also need to replace quarterback **Quade Swearingen**, who completed 85 of

—SPORTS, Page 29



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For more information or learn how to get involved please contact Bernadette_Coggins@tempe.gov

Tempe Coalition is a grant-funded project of  a 501(C)3 nonprofit

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Beacon of change, tower of caring



Mark Slyter,
president and
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Dignity Health
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Medical
Centers.

W

hat is being viewed by many as one of the East Valley's most impressive hospital additions ever, a five-story patient care tower at Dignity Health Chandler Regional Medical Center, was unveiled to a pre-opening crowd on July 16.

Officials said the new Tower D, the hospital's second major expansion in less than a decade, was designed to respond to the growing community's increasing health care needs.

It is scheduled to open to patients early next month, with a promise of not only expanded patient care but the expectation of new jobs.

"This expansion project is very exciting for all of us at Chandler Regional, and for the community at large," said Mark Slyter, president and CEO of Dignity Health Chandler Regional and Mercy Gilbert Medical Centers.

"It is a direct result of the outstanding care our team provides. Their hard work and dedication are why people seek services at Chandler Regional and why the hospital has continued to undergo tremendous growth."

Tower D, which will serve as the hospital's main entrance, includes 96 additional patient care beds, bringing total bed count to 429.

The building includes four stories of patient-ready floors, plus a fifth floor for future occupancy and a basement that will house a new pharmacy, materials management department and loading dock.

Areas ready for occupancy now are:

- First floor: a new main hospital entrance and lobby, patient admitting, cardiac rehabilitation, ambulatory therapy unit, gift shop and chapel;
- Second floor: a surgery registration area, pre-operation and post-anesthesia care units and 24 thoracic patient rooms;
- Third floor: 36 intensive care unit patient rooms; and
- Fourth floor: 36 standard patient rooms.

In addition to the new five-level Tower D, the project also includes a new parking structure with additional surface parking to accommodate more than 1,100 vehicles and renovations to existing space that will allow for eight new surgical suites. Also included are the expansion of key outpatient services and operational departments.

According to officials, Chandler Regional opened in 1961 as a community-focused hospital with only 42 beds, but has steadily grown over the last five decades. In the summer of 2014, Chandler Regional opened Tower C, the first of its major expansions of the last decade, providing space for the hospital's Level One Trauma Center and 96 additional patient beds.

"We're excited to see what our team will accomplish as we settle into this next evolution of growth on our campus," noted Slyter.

"The new tower will not only bring a large number of new jobs to the East Valley, but it will allow us to further our commitment to provide the best care possible to our growing community."

Devenney Group Architects and McCarthy Building Companies served as the project's design build team. Others on the project included WSP, Stantec, RVi, Buehler Engineering, Cannon & Wendt Electrical Co., TDIndustries, The Berg Group, and Schuff Steel Management Company.



Photos by Billy Hardiman for Wrangler News

Dignity Health executives, along with representatives of McCarthy Building Companies and Devenney Group Architects, joined area officials, including Chandler Mayor Kevin Hartke, bottom left, for dedication ceremonies for new patient tower at Chandler Regional Medical Center; well-wishers toured the facility, assembling in a spacious lobby near the hospital's new main entrance. The recently completed five-story tower accommodates 96 new patient beds and other expanded current and future services.



Curve

From Page 3

roads will also be closed.

This is the first of at least eight weekend closures on I-10 or U.S. 60/Superstition Freeway this summer.

The second will be on eastbound I-10 from U.S. 60 south to Loop 202 from 10 p.m. Friday, July 30, through 4 a.m. Monday, Aug. 2.

At least 50 closures are forecast by ADOT on I-10 over the next 3 1/2 years, mostly nights and weekends.

A massive Arizona Department of Transportation public-information blitz got under way this week, as well, to educate drivers about what to expect with restrictions, closures and best alternate routes.

ADOT anticipates this first phase of work will continue through early September while crews remove rubberized asphalt. The driving surfaces will be restored after construction is completed in late 2024.

Upcoming weekend closures will be in segments of 1 to 7 miles, in one direction at a time.

The \$777 million I-10 Broadway Curve Improvement Project, a partnership among ADOT, Federal Highway Administration and Maricopa Association of Governments, begins just south of Ray Road on Interstate 10 and continues north

through West Chandler, South Tempe, Ahwatukee and Guadalupe, and then around the Broadway Curve and west to the I-10 split at Interstate 17 near Phoenix Sky Harbor International Airport.

The project, the first major freeway rebuild in the Valley, is funded in part by Maricopa Association of Government's Proposition 400, a half-cent sales tax that was approved by Maricopa County voters in 2004.

Start looking at alternate routes

Now, according to ADOT, is a good time to start looking at other ways to get to Sky Harbor or downtown Phoenix from South Tempe and West Chandler. A good alternate route is Loop 101 north to Loop 202 west.

Those heading to the West Valley and beyond should consider the new Loop 202/South Mountain Freeway.

With I-10 traffic congesting those alternate routes, ADOT advises drivers to add about 20 minutes to their trip to the airport and a half hour to downtown.

South Tempe and West Chandler residents also can expect a load of increased traffic on surface streets as drivers pull off of I-10 and scramble to avoid construction delays. ADOT said it will do its best to discourage this by posting preferred alternate routes.

Nearly 300,000 vehicles a day pass through the Broadway Curve. Among the current headaches on

the roughly half-mile, congested, curved stretch: Vehicles change lanes to the left quickly from westbound U.S. 60 to merge onto westbound I-10, and Sky Harbor-bound traffic on westbound 10 crosses lanes to the right quickly to merge onto State Route 143.

It often is like a half-mile rolling blender.

The project also includes:

- Adding a fourth general-purpose lane in each direction on I-10 from Ray Road north to U.S. 60 while retaining the HOV lane. Current overpasses at Ray, Warner, Elliot and Guadalupe roads are wide enough to accommodate the additional lanes below and will not need to be rebuilt.

- I-10 will be expanded to six general-purpose lanes and two HOV lanes in each direction from U.S. 60 through the Broadway Curve west to 24th Street. I-10 bridges over the Salt River will be modified to accommodate the additional lanes.

- State Route 143 will be expanded to three lanes over the bridge at University Drive, where it currently squeezes down to two lanes before resuming three lanes on the other side of the bridge.

- State Route 143, Broadway Road and 48th Street interchanges near the airport will be demolished and rebuilt. The new State Route 143 interchange will feature five bridges. Among the new ones are a dedicated HOV-lane bridge over

— CURVE, Page 29

Interactive Planning Map

Have you ever passed a vacant lot and wondered, "What are they going to build there?" Next time you do, try looking up the space on the City's Interactive Planning Map.

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Chief optimistic that hiring incentives will attract new Chandler PD recruits

Chandler has announced a hiring incentive to bolster its national recruitment of sworn officers, detention officers and dispatchers for its Police Department.

The incentive is \$5,000 for lateral sworn police officers, \$3,500 for police-officer recruits and \$2,000 for detention officers and dispatchers, according to the city. Candidates would receive half of the incentive upon being hired and the remaining half upon successful completion of a probationary period.

The hiring incentive is a proactive measure to attract qualified candidates to fill vacancies due to upcoming retirements and adding new positions. It supplements current recruiting efforts for sworn

and civilian positions in the Police Department.

It's not an easy job and it is not for everybody, Police Chief Sean Duggan said. He also lamented in April that the size of the force is the same as it was several years ago despite consistent growth in population.

The Chandler 2021-22 fiscal-year budget, which kicked in July 1, funds 12 new police positions plus 15 "overfill" positions, which allow recruits to be hired and trained while current officers continue serving the community.

"I can tell you this job is fundamentally different today than anything ... I experienced as a new officer," Duggan said. "There are societal issues, generational issues. It is exponentially more difficult to be a police officer today than it's ever

been in the history of the city. So the need for training has never been as important as it is now."

Against that backdrop, it is difficult to find qualified recruits who even want to do the job, Duggan told the Chandler City Council in a state-of-the-department presentation in April. Chandler is competing with other communities for a small pool of qualified candidates.

Chandler continues to be among the safest cities in the nation with traditional crime steadily declining to its lowest levels since the 1980s, in large part due to a Police Department with an extremely high employee retention rate and outstanding community support, Duggan said, noting that many officers are becoming eligible for retirement.



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Schools

From Page 3

issues, specifically focusing on social and emotional support for students and staff, addressing student learning loss and recovery, and addressing a potential loss of student enrollment,” said Michael Minghine, assistant superintendent of administrative services.

The reality for every public-school district in the age of school choice, with a proliferation of private and charter schools, is that it also must recruit and retain students. State funding is based on the number of fannies in the seats.



Lisa Gibson

“We are really looking for our kindergarten students to stay with Kyrene,” Kyrene’s Gibson said. “What I noticed over years, especially for kindergarten, is parents sometimes kind of wait until mid July to August to register their kids for school.

That is one of the areas that we are focusing on, to capture kindergarten students of those families that live in our community. When we can fill those kindergarten classrooms, we know we have those students for at least a year, and then they tend to stay in our school district. So we have a roundup to make sure those classroom are full.”

Kyrene employs roughly 1,000 teachers in its 26 schools, which were attended by roughly 16,000 students last school year.

“I guess when we’re thinking about recruiting and retention of teachers, we are really having to think outside the box now in ways to attract and retain people because life is different,” Gibson said.

For example, Kyrene recently made a recruiting commercial with Cox Communications, which created an uptick in applications, Gibson said, and not just for teaching positions. The district has about 1,000 support employees.

“Things were changing prior to the pandemic, but now after the pandemic, the way people get their information, receive their information, and what is important to them is different, so we have to change our practices. We can’t stay the same anymore,” she said.

“We are really doing that. We really want to meet their needs: What are people looking for that we have to offer them?”

First, everything was changed to a virtual hiring environment. Kyrene traditionally conducts job fairs in Januarys and Februarys, and they typically are large, in-person events.

“Even though I say that was a challenge, it also was helpful because sometimes our people travel to Las Vegas or California or way out east to interview candidates,” Gibson said. “We didn’t have to pay for those flights—just jump on a Zoom call and

interview that way. The other piece that was different this year was, because our budget was so tight, we didn’t really do a lot of hiring in our elementary positions. Our focus in recruiting and marketing was in our hard-to-fill positions, which are middle-school content areas, such as middle-school math, middle-school science. And then we also did a lot of recruiting for special-education positions, such as self-contained resources room or even a resource teacher.”

Drilling down on those areas was made possible because Kyrene retained what Gibson said was the highest year-over-year rate ever of teachers, more than 90 percent, “which is very interesting because it happened right during the pandemic.”

“One of our focuses has been: How do we retain employees?” she said.

“We want to make sure that our benefits are still good, that teachers have the support that they need, which is so important when you’re a new teacher, make sure we have enough professional growth.”

Kyrene is offering a stipend to all employees. For full-timers, it is \$1,000, \$500 in December and \$500 in May, to honor their work during the pandemic. Starting pay for a first-year teacher with a bachelor’s degree is just under \$45,700.

“And our benefits did not show a change this year,” she said. “There weren’t additional educutions or costs this year, so that was a bonus.

Tempe Elementary’s Minghine said the district used one-time funding from the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund through the CARES Act to address recruitment and retention challenges for the 2021-22 school year, allowing it to increase compensation for all district staff.

All returning Tempe Elementary employees received a 1 percent raise and a \$3,000 retention stipend. All employees new to the district get a \$3,000 recruitment stipend. Tempe Elem also increased the Proposition 301 allocation that the district receives from the state to \$4,500 from \$2,250 for qualified teachers.

Tempe Elem continues to offer a competitive salary as well as other stipend opportunities for staff working in hard-to-fill specialty position, according to Minghine.

“I am extremely proud of the hard work our Human Resources Department has done during this recruiting season,” Minghine said. “Currently, almost every one of our 23 schools are fully staffed with certified staff for the 2021-2022 school year. We anticipate having all of our vacancies filled by the first day of school.”

Tempe Elem used its artificial-intelligence platform on its jobs website to engage with candidates 24/7, and continued participating in

virtual job fairs in its recruiting efforts.

And, Minghine said, the district, which had roughly 12,000 students last year, relied on “word-of-mouth recruiting and utilizing our reputation as an amazing district. Our Tempe Elementary teachers are our best recruiters.”

The real concern for both districts is having enough qualified substitute teachers, and both have taken steps to bolster those numbers for the coming school year.

Tempe Elementary is increasing substitute-teacher compensation to \$140 per day from \$100 in an effort to attract and retain them. For a long-term substitute, it jumps to \$170 a day from \$120.

“A reduction in the number of available (in-person) substitute teachers became very apparent during the COVID-19 pandemic,” Minghine said.

“We also worked closely with our partner, Educational Services Inc., on marketing campaigns through job sites and social-media platforms to increase our sub pool.”

Kyrene is switching its substitute-teacher vendor to ESS, which has specialized in placing qualified substitute staff in daily and long-term positions in school districts for two decades.

“We are in the process of recruiting and hiring substitutes,” Gibson said.

“We are most likely going to meet our goal before the year starts. We do have a lot of substitutes who are going to be returning. What we do rely on are some of our retired teachers, who come back and sub for us. That is just so comforting to know that when a teacher is out, whether it’s long-term or more than a couple of days, we have someone who is familiar with Kyrene to assist those students and parents.”

In recruiting and retaining full-time teachers, substitutes and even students, both districts say their reputation and track record are invaluable when other districts offer something that Tempe Elementary and Kyrene can’t.

“We have neighboring districts that are not landlocked like ours that are growing and that really can offer more salary wise, or have some kind of signing bonus, or can match our salaries,” Gibson said.

“Unfortunately, we are not in a position to do that. I do try to remind people to think about the positive, as well. I do feel that our benefits are really good in Kyrene and that is what is attractive. It is competitive.

“I think we can always be competitive. There is a lot to offer in Kyrene, like our New Teacher Ambassador program. Teachers have the mentoring support that they need, which is so important when you’re a new teacher.

“We can always be competitive but we are landlocked and we don’t have the growth money.”



Michael Minghine

Film Fare . . . with M.V. Moorhead

Grimness of 'Black Widow' offset by acting, even a bit of jocularly

Introduced in Marvel's Tales of Suspense in 1964 as a Cold-War-era enemy for Iron Man, Soviet assassin Natasha Romanoff, aka Black Widow, was later allowed to defect, and eventually became a member of The Avengers. She's been played in the movies by Scarlett Johansson since 2010.

Technically a prequel to the Avengers flicks, Black Widow offers a backstory for the character. We see her enjoying an idyllic childhood in small town Ohio; we soon learn that her family is a sham spy cell.

Forced to flee, she and her younger sister Yelena end up in the "Red Room," training as brainwashed Russian agents. Years later, the grown-up Natasha teams up with Yelena and their "parents," to stop the cruelties of the Red Room.

Directed by Cate Shortland from a script by Eric Pearson, Black Widow is everything that Marvel movies usually are: well-made, absorbing, overlong, uneven. The main unevenness here is of tone, early on. It starts with screaming little girls hauled away from their families and shoved into horrible captivity, and it takes a while for the silly action and jocularly that follows to counter this grimness. Or

it took a while for me, anyway.

But once Natasha's freaky family reunion takes place, and everybody's speaking English with radio comedy Russian accents, the movie does start to get fun, and by the multiple climactic scenes I was invested. As usual, the acting is what makes it worthwhile. David Harbour and Rachel Weisz have a blast as the ebullient Dad and the haunted Mom, respectively, and Ray Winstone makes one of the more thoroughly despicable villains ever in a Marvel movie as the loathsome master of the Red Room.

Johansson is lithe and confident in the title role, but the movie is utterly purloined from her by Florence Pugh, sporting a delicious accent, as Yelena. Just as Pugh's Amy was the liveliest element of 2019's Little Women, she stands out in Black Widow as another upstart little sister.

Expanded from a children's book by Marla Frazee, 2017's The Boss Baby was a pretty laborious animated saga, but it had a hilarious character at its center: toddler Ted Templeton, who swaggered around in the persona of a corporate honcho.

The diminutive tycoon spoke in the peerless silky growl of Alec Baldwin, tossing off lines like "I need upsies" as if he were asking an administrative assistant for a cup of coffee.

In the sequel The Boss Baby: Family Business, Ted, now grown up, is transformed back into a baby, and his older brother Tim (James Marsden, replacing Tobey Maguire in the original) is transformed back into a little kid so they can infiltrate the school for overachieving kids that Tim's daughters attend. Tim's younger daughter (Amy Sedaris) is, it turns out, herself a boss baby.

In short, it's even more laborious than the first film; I wouldn't recommend unless you need to kill a slow afternoon with a six-year-old.

But if you go, you'll see gags referencing everything from Pulp Fiction to Norma Rae, and the movie still has Baldwin going for it, delivering quips like "I'm in the dum-dum holding tank!" with effortless authority.

He gets to square off with another great Hollywood voice, Jeff Goldblum, as the oily, passive-aggressive headmaster. Also, it has kind of a pretty song, called "Together We Stand."

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Autism charter school expands to provide for growing online need



A free, online K-12 charter school for students with autism and other learning issues begins classes on Tuesday, Aug. 3.

— Photo courtesy Arizona Autism Charter Schools

Tempe and West Chandler parents raising children with autism and other special needs are getting some good news as the start of schools nears.

Arizona Autism Charter Schools is expanding once again following state approval to become the state's first and only tuition-free, online autism charter school focused on students needing specialized services.

Despite concerns resulting from the pandemic, AZACS students are said to have excelled in virtual learning. As a result, say officials, some students and families requested virtual learning as their preferred method of education.

AZACS' expansion also provides an opportunity to educate and serve additional children and families, according to the announcement—perhaps in smaller towns or rural areas where a comprehensive, fully integrated kindergarten to 12th grade education may not be available.

Since opening its doors in 2014, AZACS has been Arizona's first and only tuition-free autism charter school. It is the only school of its kind in the Southwest region of the United States. Diana Diaz-Harrison, founder and executive director, says she created AZACS to help her son and other bright, capable special needs

students like him.

"We want Arizona families to know that Arizona Autism Charter School's K-8 Online School and Online High School now exist as an option.

"Many of our students have various appointments throughout the day, so if their family prefers they can now learn from home, while having the support of highly-qualified teachers, learning success coaches and case managers with a low student to teacher ratio," said Dana Van Deirse, the school's senior director of partnerships and online learning, formerly executive director of strategic partnerships for Arizona State University's Prep Digital.

Students will participate in virtual morning meetings, online curriculum and online sessions with their teachers, speech therapists and tutors. There will also be opportunities for social events, field trips and STEM activities on campus or out in the community throughout the year, according to Van Deirse. Families can enroll now for the 2021-2022 school year.

An online parent information session is scheduled at 4 p.m. Wednesday, July Information: dvandeirse@autismcharter.org or www.online2122.autismcharter.org. School starts Tuesday, Aug. 3.

Kids to benefit from Assistance League's 'Operation School Bell'

Thousands of needy schoolchildren will get a boost from a \$20,000 grant to Assistance League of East Valley for its signature program, Operation School Bell.

Through the program, the group provides new school clothes, shoes and hygiene kits to elementary school children in need in Tempe and Kyrene school districts, Chandler, Gilbert and Mesa. In the 2019-2020 school year, the organization provided a record 10,466 children with new clothing, uniforms, shoes, hygiene kits and other essential items.

"Assistance League of East Valley is changing the lives of our vulnerable youth in the East Valley by supplying school clothing and essential items needed to attend school," said Scott Jenkins, president of the Thunderbirds, a Phoenix-based charity that provided the funding.

Assistance League is an all-volunteer group that raises funds through its thrift shop at 2326 N. Alma School Road, Chandler, and through various events through the year. It is a chapter of a national nonprofit organization.

"The donation...makes a huge difference for the families of the students we clothe for school," said Joyce Godfrey, president of the area Assistance League group. "Many of these families were hit hard during the past year, either by having jobs that were low paying but essential or being laid off from service industry jobs. Having uniforms and other school items provided this coming year is a relief to them."

Our next edition of Wrangler News goes to press Tuesday, Aug. 3. If you have story ideas or news tips, reach out to us by calling 480-966-0837, or email us at editor@wranglernews.com. Space reservations for advertising will be accepted through Friday, Aug. 2. To advertise in Wrangler News, please call 480-966-0837.

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Drugs

From Page 3

eight years on the Kyrene Governing Board and spent more than a decade volunteering for Tempe Coalition. Last April, she was hired as the leader of the coalition, a grant-funded community organization that seeks to reduce underage drinking and substance abuse. Her interview with *Wrangler News* took place the same day the federal government released statistics revealing a staggering 29 percent increase in the number of overdose deaths in the U.S.

During 2020, some 93,000 people in the U.S.—the highest number ever recorded—died from drug overdoses, up from about 72,000 deaths the previous year. Not all of those who succumbed were underage, of course, but some were. And those young people and their families are the ones Tempe Coalition is focused on—families like the Mahans.

Deadly addiction

Terry and Annette Mahan's son Daniel developed an addiction to opioids that proved fatal. The former star football player at Chandler High School was receiving treatment but was home for the holidays in 2019 when his parents discovered him unresponsive on his bedroom floor. Paramedics were unable to revive him.

The loss of their son has propelled the Mahans into action to try and prevent similar tragedies in other families. They've joined forces with Tempe Coalition to take part in some of the training sessions and educational opportunities for members. Coggins says the Mahans will continue to share their story publicly.

"We know that one of the areas we'd like to focus is athletes," Coggins said. After a serious injury or surgery, athletes are sometimes given opiates for relief from severe pain. One drug that's been linked to overdose deaths is Fentanyl, a synthetic opioid that's 50 to 100 times stronger than morphine and about 50 times as potent as heroin. Fentanyl is also made in labs and used illegally.

In its illegal form, Fentanyl is sold as a "powder, dropped onto blotter paper, put in eye droppers and nasal sprays, or made into pills that look like other prescription opioids," according to the National Institutes of Health website. Synthetic opioids, including fentanyl, are now the most common drugs involved in drug overdose deaths in the U.S.

Stephanie Siete, a member of Tempe Coalition, has been involved in drug education for more than 20 years and has travelled the nation in her quest to inform and warn the public about drug abuse. She is a public information officer with



One of four billboards, this one on I-10 north of the Elliot Road off ramp, promoting Tempe Coalition's message on the opioid crisis.

— Wrangler News photo

Community Bridges.

"It's pretty sad people are learning the hard way how prevalent these drugs are," Siete said. She described the federal government's report on the surge in overdose deaths as "devastating."

"These are preventable deaths," Siete said. "Seventy percent of them are from opioids. People go into respiratory distress and stop breathing."

When users overdose on Fentanyl, their breathing slows or stops altogether, so oxygen doesn't reach the brain, leading to a condition known as hypoxia. Ultimately, that can lead to brain damage, coma and death.

One of Tempe Coalition's efforts is to train people in how to administer Narcan, an inhaled medication that's used for the emergency treatment of suspected opioid overdose. The training takes about two hours and participants get an in-depth look at how important it is to have Narcan on hand just in case.

"It's good for all of us to be trained and have that available," Coggins said. "You never know when you're going to make an impact."

Powerful messages

Tempe Coalition currently has two campaigns going, both focused on the opioid crisis. One has been dubbed "Shatter the Stigma AZ" and the other calls attention to the deadly threat of counterfeit pills. Four digital billboards on I-10, SR-143 and the Loop 101 near Tempe with powerful messages like "One Pill Can Kill," and "Opioids Don't Discriminate" help drive home Tempe Coalition's message of "how important it is for parents to be aware and how great the threat is to our youth,"

Coggins said.

"All these kids do not mean to die. They think they are taking a Xanax or a Percocet," Coggins said of the growing number of people who overdose via pills that have been contaminated with other substances like Fentanyl.

Tempe City Councilmember Joel Navarro, who also serves as a paramedic with the Phoenix Fire Department, is on Tempe Coalition's opioid prevention committee.

"We are noticing an increase of opioid use not only in our city but across the nation. There's still a lot more work we need to do in terms of getting the message out," Navarro said.

Tempe Coalition's work is not limited to opioid abuse, however. Members are also warning parents that the marijuana being sold on the streets now is much stronger than ever, with an even higher concentration of THC, the psychoactive component of cannabis.

"The bottom line is, we have a problem with marijuana in our community," Coggins said. "This is not the same marijuana that your parents smoked back in the day. Some of the methods and synthetics are close to 99 percent THC. Parents need to be aware and know the danger of SnapChat as a mode of how your teens are getting substances."

Coggins is encouraging the community to join Tempe Coalition in its battle against under-age drug abuse and alcohol use. "My goal is to bring awareness and recruit new members to have a voice at the table. It takes a village in raising a healthy community," Coggins said.

Information: tempecoalition.org

‘Job Monsoon’ blows fresh air into city’s labor shortage

By Noah Kutz
Wranglernews.com

Heavy rain and wind aren’t the only monsoon that’s come to town this year — in fact, the job market has sprung a monsoon of its own, thanks to the city of Tempe’s efforts to help business owners weather a troubling job shortfall.

According to planners, as many as 100 companies across the city are desperately searching for qualified staffers to fill their openings, and Tempe Mayor Corey Woods’ team says it’s geared to make sure that this “job monsoon” starts raining cash for applicants and employers alike.

Tempe and its partners will offer this first-of-its-kind job fair on Wednesday, July 28, with every employer in the city able to participate from their own business.

During the Tempe Job Monsoon, businesses across Tempe will put out green balloons and Job Monsoon signs showing they are hiring. Job seekers can walk into any of those businesses, fill out a resume, and likely get an interview (and maybe a job) on the spot. When the positions are filled, the sign and balloons come down. This unique job fair allows short-staffed businesses to spend time with customers and lets candidates see their potential work environment.

“Our community cares about our residents and our businesses,” says Tempe Mayor Corey Woods. “The Tempe Job Monsoon will help everyone thrive by connecting applicants with employment opportunities across the city.”

As people begin to feel more confident after the COVID-19 pandemic and they flood the tourism industry, many hotels and resorts have been forced to deny reservations due to their shortness of staff.

Says Tempe Tourism Office President and CEO Brian McCartin, “Our economy is on the verge of

fully recovering from the pandemic and we want to ensure that Tempe’s businesses are able to build back stronger and better. But for the hospitality industry, this cannot be fully realized until we get our work force back into the shops, restaurants, hotels and related businesses.”

Some small-business owners also struggle to hold onto their employees for longer than a few months. “We are now the oldest family-owned restaurant in the city of Tempe,” Says Julia Cox of Rosita’s Fine Mexican Food. “I have personally never seen anything so quick in turnover.”

Cox says that after four generations her family has owned and operated the local Mexican food chain, but something seems to have changed since the COVID-19 pandemic. “I don’t think people expect to actually work to do something when they come back now,” she says. “So actually having to do something and expecting them to fulfill the duties is really hard even though we make it as easy as we can for them.”

Cox also admits that, as a restaurant, the establishment serves as a “stepping stone” to other forms of employment for their people — especially in a college town like Tempe.

According to Mayor Woods, a certain disconnect could be rising between the kinds of employment that people want and the jobs that are actually available.

This, however, is why the Job Monsoon could make a great impact on the community. He says, “I think this is a real way to not only identify ways to get people existing jobs but also sometimes to prepare people for kind of the evolution of what some of these jobs are going to look like.”

For a list of participating businesses as well as other info, visit tempe.gov/JobMonsoon.



STORMING TEMPE Top: Local businesses in Tempe, like this Lotions & Potions store on Mill Avenue, display green balloons to announce their desire to hire new workers; bottom, left to right: Brian McCartin of Tempe Tourism Office; Jill Buschbacher of Tempe’s Economic Development Office; Zach Powell, Café Boa co-owner; Tempe Mayor Corey Woods; Michael Martin of Tempe Tourism Office; Anne Gill, recently retired president, Tempe Chamber; Julia Cox, Rosita’s, family member/owner; and Jessalyn Italiano, Café Boa co-owner.



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Sports

From Page 12

his 126 attempted passes to gain 1353 yards and scored 14 touchdowns.

Saenz threw a few passes last season but no starting quarterback has been named so far this season.

Corona lost seven receivers to graduation but should return two receivers in seniors **Peter Katsiris** and **Normar Sierra**, who each played caught a few passes last season.

Likewise on defense, the Aztecs graduated numerous seniors but retained quite a few juniors who played stellar defense their junior years including **Nate Cormier-Ward** and **Jeff Lambert**.

Cormier-Ward was recorded as having 23 solo tackles and 18 assisted tackles for a total of 41 tackles or an average of 4.6 tackles a game.

Lambert, who had an outstanding 34 solo tackles and 13 assisted tackles for a total of 47 or 5.2 tackles a game, has already received two D1 scholarship offers including one from Northern Arizona University.

Other returning defensive players include seniors **Theren White**, **Angel Dorame**, **Elijah Sayers**, **Elijah De La Cerna**, **Keegan Dunbar**, **Tyler Cole** and juniors **Tristan Shafer**, **Carston Kieffer** and **Bennett Matsler**.

The Aztecs will most likely return two kickers, one for kickoffs and one as a punter.

Keiffer kicked the ball as part of the special teams unit in all nine games. He kicked 54 kickoffs for a total of 2702 yards or 50.1 yards a kickoff.

Keiffer also hit 42 out of 42 or 100 percent of his point-after-kicks to score 42 points and hit three out of his seven field goal attempts to earn nine more points for a total of 51 points last season.

Senior **Alex Vecsey** was the only player, other than Swearingen, to punt the ball but he punted the ball 35 yards on average.

A lot of these questions about players will be answered at the annual summer football camp.

The Aztecs left July 19 for Camp Tontozona or ASU's Sun Devil football camp outside of Payson for

a week of bonding and special drills to improve their football skills in the cooler weather.

Camp Tontozona became available when ASU decided to forego using the camp for the second straight year due to COVID-19 precautions.

The Aztecs have been working hard all summer lifting weights and working on skill development anticipating this special football camp first used by former ASU coach Frank Kush in the later 1950's as a cooler training camp option than Tempe in the hot summer months.

When the season starts, Corona will play 10 regular season games in 2021 with the first four Freedom games before they play a team in their 6A East Valley Region.

The Aztecs have three home games including one against Mountain Pointe on Sept. 3. They play Notre Dame Prep on Sept. 10 and Red Mountain on Sept. 17.

The next two games are away games. First at Desert Vista on Sept. 23 and then at Skyline, a region game, on Oct. 8.

Corona will then have five more regular season games before the state championship playoff games start with the state championship finals falling on the weekend of Dec. 10-11.

Marcos de Niza's football season also starts with their first game Sept. 3. The Padres will have their first two games at home.

On Sept. 3 they are scheduled to play Apache Junction and then on Sept. 10 they will play Moon Valley. Both games are Freedom games.

With only four other teams in their region, the Padres play Freedom games until Oct. 15 when they have four region games in a row.

On Sept. 17, Marcos will play at cross-town rival McClintock before playing at home again against Coconino on Sept. 24.

The Padres, who went 4-4 last season, graduated their two leading rushers on the team in **Jayden Calderon**, who had 147 carries for 895 yards, and **Tracy Williams**, who had 65 carries for

495 yards.

They should return a few players who had some experience running with the ball in seniors **Jamir Smith**, **Nathan Sanchez**, **Brody Bybee**, **Isaiah Williams** and junior **Juan Lopez**.

Marcos will most likely need to find a quarterback because **Antonio Hernandez** graduated.

As far as pass receivers, Marcos did graduate their leading receiver, **Nico Updyke** who caught 34 passes to gain 499 yards and scored 9 touchdowns.

The Padres only show three receivers from last season who did not graduate and those include seniors **Joeyiss Williams**, Smith and Bybee.

Marcos should have quite a few returning defensive players who did well last season.

For instance, they should return **Isaiah Williams** who had a total of 67 tackles last season, his junior year, and junior **Mason Stromstad** who recorded 36 total tackles.

The Padres should also return kickoff kicker junior **Damian Gonzalez** who kicked the ball 39 times his sophomore season averaging over 45 yards a kick.

Gonzalez also hit 23 out of his 28 point-after-kicks or 80% last season.

Marcos will also need to replace **Jacob Irick**, the punt kicker, who graduated last May.

Some of these issues were either figured out at the Padres summer football camp the week of July 16 or after the season starts.

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These stories & more inside



June 19 - July 9, 2021 • Volume 21, Number 12



WET, WILD & COOL

With 100 photos and an audio interview, our eEdition is a great way to relive the summer fun. It's available for free on our website. Don't miss out on this special offer. Sign up today!

Cover of About A is a special photo gallery featuring photos from the 2021 Summer Camp. See Page 10-11.

Curve

From Page 18

westbound 10 onto northbound 143, a "flyover" bridge from southbound 143 onto southbound 10, and a collector-distributor-lane bridge from northbound 10 onto northbound 143.

- The project gets a downtown-Los Angeles freeway twist through the curve with the debut of collector-distributor lanes for westbound drivers entering or exiting I-10 at Baseline Road, U.S. 60,

Broadway Road and State Route 143 that separate local traffic from through traffic.

That is designed to reduce congestion on the high-speed through lanes and eliminate tight lane changes on the curve. Collector-distributor lanes are new to Arizona.

They are freeway lanes connected to the exits for drivers attempting to get on or off of I-10 at those interchanges, an attempt to get exiting traffic off the main lanes of I-10. Through traffic will remain on the main lanes.

- Alterations on U.S. 60 from Hardy Drive

approaching the I-10 interchange.

- Three pedestrian bridges over I-10 constructed south of Broadway.
- Wrong-way driver detectors with thermal cameras and flashing signs.

Pulice-FNF-Flatiron Joint Venture has been chosen as the preferred developer by representatives of ADOT, Phoenix, Tempe and Maricopa Association of Governments. Key members of the development team include Pulice Construction, Inc., FNF Construction, Inc., Flatiron Constructors, Inc., and T.Y. Lin International.

‘Champion for Children’ Tempe woman lauded for her work as child advocate

By Joyce Coronel

The first five years of a child’s life are crucial when it comes to development. A Tempe woman who understands that and has devoted much of her life to helping children and their parents has been honored for her efforts.

Ann Lynn DiDomenico was selected as the 2021 First Things First East Maricopa Region Champion for Young Children. First Things First, created when Arizona voters approved an additional tobacco tax of 80 cents per pack in 2006, is a public funding source for early childhood education.

DiDomenico was an elementary school teacher prior to getting involved with FTF. The award she received is given to local volunteers who give of their time and talents to champion the cause of early childhood education.

DiDomenico first became interested in early childhood development during college when she was an office assistant to the director of the campus preschool. Later, when she became the mother of three sons, she remembered the excitement of preschool students and their sense of wonder at learning.

“Throughout my career, I have always put the needs of children at the forefront of my work. I have been committed to literacy, early childhood development and parent education for many years,” DiDomenico said.

She’s been involved with FTF since its inception and created an early literacy program called Helping Us Grow. The HUG program benefits families in the Thew/Escalante community by providing children with books and parents with ideas, strategies and resources to assist them in being a supportive partner in their child’s reading development.

Education in those early, formative years is key, she emphasized.

“Education is really going to establish a child’s security in the future,” DiDomenico said. “Job



Ann Lynn DiDomenico was selected as the 2021 First Things First East Maricopa Region Champion for Young Children.
— Photo courtesy First Things First

security, employment, homeownership—all of those things. It’s hard for many people to grasp that they really start before a child is 5 years old.”

One of DiDomenico’s roles with FTF is parent education.

In working to assist parents, she noted they all love their children and want what’s best, “but I think many feel like they should come into being a parent knowing everything they need to know.” That’s when reality bumps up against the illusion. Parents are bombarded with information from social media, books, articles and other parents, making it tough to know what or whom to believe.

“It’s so hard to be a parent. So I think that those early years often are spent in a lot of trial error,” DiDomenico said.

Young children’s brains are wired for learning, she said, and parents need support, information and strategies to maximize that learning. And when people talk about young children misbehaving, DiDomenico offered a sage observation.

“It’s often because they’re not being engaged enough, they’re not being challenged enough and

they’re not being given the right kind of learning environment.”

In that vein, she’s been involved with helping to develop Tempe PRE, a free or half-tuition preschool program offered by the city of Tempe for income-eligible families who live in Tempe.

There’s also a full-tuition option for other families.

The program is for 3- and 4-year-olds and focuses on kindergarten readiness through a play-based curriculum. “The more we invest in creating stable, enriching environments early in a child’s life, the greater the personal and economic outcomes will be not only for the child, but for their family and for the community,” DiDomenico said.

Information: firstthingsfirst.org

Easy-to-read city budget guide available

Tempe's Budget in Brief report is now available at tempe.gov/budget, along with other budget-related documents.

This report gives residents a clear, concise snapshot of essential elements in the fiscal year 2021-2022 budget approved by the Tempe City Council. The fiscal year began on July 1.

Residents can use this report to see how the city spends money, where the money comes from, as well as to get an overview of the budget itself.

There is also information about the budget process and how residents can get involved. Making the document easier to understand is one of the best practices recommended by the Government Finance Officers Association.

It also helps the city reach its goals for transparency and disclosure of information.



Honor a military hero in your life with a banner in Tempe's Downtown

Downtown Tempe Authority and the City of Tempe are proud to celebrate and honor veterans and active-duty service members through the Elevate Our Heroes banner program.

Community members, businesses and organizations can sponsor personalized banners to honor a military member, living or deceased, local or not.

Each full-color banner will be displayed throughout November in Downtown Tempe.

Elevate Our Heroes is one of two programs in Arizona that allows community members to honor and

recognize military members in this way.

Each banner can be customized with a name, branch of service and official military photo of the service person.

Banners will be displayed on Downtown Tempe's iconic lamp posts in November 2021 and November 2022. After November 2022, banners will be returned to the sponsoring members or businesses as a keepsake.

The cost of each banner is \$100 if the order and payment are received by Sept. 1.

The price increases to \$125 after Sept. 2. The deadline for all orders and payments is Oct. 1.

Donations are also being accepted to support the program and help remove financial barriers for families who want to honor a hero.

To order a banner or donate, visit downtowntempe.com/Military.

Stay Ahead of the Curve!

The I-10 Broadway Curve Improvement Project, an Arizona Department of Transportation (ADOT) project on I-10, between I-17 and Loop 202 Santan/South Mountain Freeway, kicks off this summer.

It will include 11 miles of improvements that will enhance safety, reduce travel time and support local, regional and state economies.

Stay ahead of the curve by visiting i10BroadwayCurve.com and downloading the free mobile app "The Curve" on the App Store and Google Play.

Everyone who drives, lives or works in or around the project area can learn about closures and restrictions, real-time traffic information, detour routes and more.

Community recycling closing at Kiwanis

Due to excessive contamination, illegal dumping and the worldwide recycling market, which has lowered the value of recyclables, the community recycling center at Kiwanis Park is being phased out of operation. The remaining community recycling centers throughout the city will be monitored and evaluated to determine their future. There are recycling alternatives for residents who frequented the center at Kiwanis Park including:

- Ordering a second recycling container, if you have curbside recycling collection.
- Ordering a recycling roll-off container to host a neighborhood recycling day.
- Using the community recycling centers located at the Arizona Heritage Center, Jaycee Park, Hardy Police Substation and Tempe Public Library.
- Implementing recycling at your multi-unit complex. Tempe's commercial solid waste services offer customizable, affordable and recycling programs.

Visit tempe.gov/recycling or call Tempe 311 at 480-350-4311 with questions.



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How to Sell Your Home Without Becoming Homeless

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 & Patti

Scott and Patti Agnew



Michael Scott Patti Scotty

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"Scotty is very kind and caring person and his service was exactly who he is. He always communicated and responded right away. I felt like he was treating us as one of his family members. Thank you, Scotty, for selling our home successfully!"

--Tomomi T.

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