



# WRANGLER NEWS

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Inspiration 4, the first all-civilian mission to orbit Earth, blasts off with Tempe educator Sian Proctor as pilot. Page 11



It started as a joke but soon wrestling had a hold on Marcos de Niza High junior Haile Hernandez. Page 22



**Ukraine insider: A close-up view from afar**

**Conversations with her grandparents offer a sobering perspective • Page 14**

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## 'GETTING RID OF BARRIERS'

### First Lady touts inclusive new job training during Chandler Intel visit

By Lee Shappell

Wrangler News Executive Editor

First Lady Jill Biden toured the Intel Ocotillo Campus along the Price Corridor on Monday, where she touted the semiconductor giant's growth as well as its investment in a partnership with the Maricopa Community Colleges to train workers with the skills needed in the industry.

Intel is Chandler's largest employer, drawing heavily from West Chandler and South Tempe. Last year, it announced a \$20 billion initiative, the largest private investment ever in Arizona, to build two more semiconductor plants on its sprawling 700-acre campus that will bring 3,000 new high-wage jobs.

Intel also announced a partnership with the community college district to create "Quick Start," a program that strengthens the workforce by preparing students for a career as a semiconductor technician.

Quick Start is a series of 10 four-hour classes, with day and evening options. Students earn a certificate and three hours of college credit toward an associate

degree, as well as a tuition stipend of \$270, which covers the class for Arizona residents.

Students then may interview with Intel for full-time positions with benefits.

"We're so excited for the investments that Intel is making in manufacturing like those we're seeing today," Biden said. "I also want to recognize the many other partners across Arizona, including Maricopa County Community College District, who are supporting students and making this state stronger each day.

"It means investing in industries of the future, the kind of jobs that make our supply chain stronger, lowering prices and keeping our country safe. . . . These investments are changing lives, and every person that benefits from this program and others like it, who is better off today than they were a year ago, passes that benefit along."



First Lady Jill Biden March 7 at Intel. – Intel photo

— FIRST LADY, Page 5

### City attorney to depart; will assist in transition

Tempe city attorney Judi Baumann is stepping down after 14 years with the city, including nearly nine as city attorney.



Judi Baumann

Deputy City Attorney Sonia Blain will be interim city attorney. Baumann will remain with the city through early May to assist with the transition.

"It has been my professional honor to serve the City of Tempe," Baumann said. "And, on a more

personal note, I am grateful to have had the opportunity to work alongside outstanding colleagues in Tempe."

According to the Tempe City Charter, City Council has the authority to appoint four positions within the city organization: city manager, city attorney, city clerk and presiding judge of the Municipal Court.

The Council will begin a search process for Baumann's successor.

"On behalf of the City Council, I sincerely thank Judi for her dedicated service to the city of Tempe and wish her the very best in her future endeavors," Mayor Corey Woods said. "She is a consummate professional who has greatly contributed to our community through her legal expertise."

### Mobile voting earns thumbs-up in Chandler pilot City is first in Arizona to try out new technology

By Nicole Greason

Special for Wrangler News

Will Chandler ever have mobile voting in elections?

With current voting options being assailed by Republican leaders in the Arizona Legislature – most notably early balloting via mail – it seems like a long shot at the moment. It certainly will not be implemented by the Aug. 2 Chandler primary election for mayor and council seats.

Still, the city moved forward with a recent evaluation of a mobile-voting system, and early evaluations were favorable.

Chandler learned several important lessons from its mock election using blockchain technology for mobile voting.

"We accomplished what we set out to accomplish. We learned how it would work

administratively, how it would work for city elections and how it would work for our citizens," said Dana DeLong, Chandler city clerk.

"I think the pilot went really well."

In August 2021, the city contracted with Voatz, Inc. to conduct the Mobile Voting Pilot Program. Voatz uses an app with smartphone security, remote identity verification, biometrics and blockchain to secure voter information and votes. Blockchain technology stores information securely and electronically in a digital format.

The mock election was conducted directly following the city's Nov. 2, 2021, Special Bond Election and lasted three weeks. Votes from the mock election were tabulated in early December.

— MOBILE VOTING, Page 6

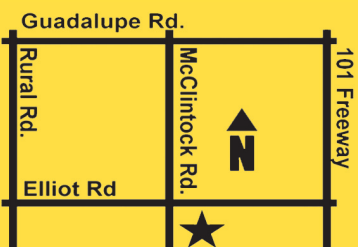
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## First Lady

From Page 3

The First Lady was joined by Angela Hanks, U.S. Labor Department assistant secretary of the Employment & Training Administration. They met with Intel officials to discuss the launch of Quick Start in May at Mesa Community College. The program will expand to Chandler-Gilbert and Estrella community colleges this summer.

“The industrial technology for the semiconductor industry program accelerates the attainment of industry credentials for our students, opening doors for promising in-demand careers supporting our state and national economy,” said Lori Berquam, interim president at MCC. “The program offers our current and future students an incredible opportunity to develop knowledge and skills.”

Zivit Katz-Tsameret, Intel vice president of manufacturing and operations, said a focus of Quick Start is to present new career possibilities to women, veterans and underrepresented minorities in the manufacturing industry.

The First Lady announced that the first class of Quick Start in May will be all female students.

“It means getting rid of the barriers that have kept



Intel's Fab 42 plant opened in 2020 on its Ocotillo Campus in Chandler. The campus is getting two more chip manufacturing plants. – Intel Photo

women out of careers in engineering and manufacturing, and other STEM fields,” Biden said.

The need to ramp up manufacturing of semiconductors at U.S. plants became painfully obvious last year during supply-chain shortages that created a ripple effect through numerous industries, most notably automobile manufacturing, and caused prices to spike.

President Joe Biden reinforced that point during his State of the Union, where Intel CEO Pat Gelsinger was Jill Biden's guest.

Those interested in Quick Start must complete a short assessment to gauge learning readiness prior to enrolling in the program.

Information and to access the online assessment: [maricopa.edu/semico](http://maricopa.edu/semico).

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## Mobile voting

From Page 3

The pilot program allowed two types of Chandler residents, registered voters as well as 13-to-17-year-olds, to download the Voatz app onto their mobile phones and vote on five bond questions and two questions gauging voters' interest in mobile voting in the future. A provisional ballot was configured for non-city residents – including city employees – in the pilot.

Remote voters downloaded the Voatz app on their phones and voted their mock election ballot after successfully completing ID verification.

The Voatz platform produces a corresponding machine-readable paper ballot for every electronic submission. At the end of the voting period, city election officials could access the password-protected digital ballot lockbox via a web portal, print the ballots and tabulate them.

According to a Dec. 10, 2021 city clerk's report to the mayor and council, the objectives of the mock election were to gauge community preference for mobile voting in future elections; provide voters an innovative way to vote and allow city staff to gain experience with a mobile voting app, including voter verification, audit reporting and analyzing the feasibility of using mobile voting in future city elections.

DeLong said 203 voters participated in the pilot.

The five bond questions on the mock election ballot passed by nearly the same percentage as they did in the real election.

On the question of whether they would use blockchain technology to cast ballots if given the option in future Chandler city elections, 187 said yes and 14 said no.

When asked to choose their preferred method for casting a ballot if provided more options in future elections, voters in the mock election put casting a ballot by blockchain technology at the top of their list, followed by mailing in a

ballot via the U.S. Postal Service, dropping off a ballot at a voting center and voting through an in-person ballot.

In a post-mock election survey, some respondents said that while mobile voting with blockchain technology was convenient, they still had questions about its security.

**'I feel fortunate we were able to go through this and be the first in Arizona to try it. It was a great experience for us to be in the first wave of trying this form of technology for an election.'**

—Chandler City Clerk Dana DeLong

Chandler will have time to consider the usability and security of mobile voting with blockchain technology. The city contracts with Maricopa County to run its elections. The county currently does not use blockchain for elections.

However, according to DeLong, the mock election was a fruitful exercise in learning about the use of blockchain technology in elections for a city that bills itself as a technology innovator.

DeLong said blockchain technology offers a "very seamless" way to administer an election that "from my perspective seemed very secure."

"If the county ever decided to use this technology, we would be ready to move forward," she said. "We would know how it works and how to talk about it with voters."

Mobile voting with blockchain technology would not completely replace other voting methods, such as mail-in ballots and in-person voting at polling places, DeLong said, calling it "another tool for elections."

"I feel fortunate we were able to go through this and be the first in Arizona to try it," she said. "It was a great experience for us to be in the first wave of trying this form of technology for an election."

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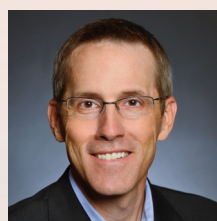
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# OPINIONS

## Power of connections makes Maricopa County the leader in talent attraction

By Jack Sellers

I'm a big believer in the power of connections. Connecting with your family and your community helps maintain social and mental health. Connecting also is crucial to building a healthy, robust workforce in a global economy. The networking and partnerships we have built in Maricopa County are why we have earned the top spot in the country for talent attraction for the second year in a row.

One effective method of connecting that we use in District 1 is through our partnerships at Sister Cities International. The worldwide organization was established after World War II to

rebuild diplomatic relationships through cultural and educational exchanges. It has evolved into a great tool for collaboration and economic development.

As vice president of Arizona Sister Cities, and president of the Chandler



Jack Sellers

Sister Cities, I've been actively involved with the organization for many years and firmly believe in the importance of these relationships.

Our Sister City relationship with Tullamore, Ireland, provided many local contacts for employees from Intel's Ireland facility who trained in Chandler.

The connection with our other Sister City, Tainan, Taiwan, started as a cultural exchange through Little League Baseball and has evolved into much more.

It's a continuation of a productive friendship with Dr. William Lai, vice president of Taiwan. When Dr. Lai was mayor of Tainan and I was a member of the Arizona Transportation Board, I played a significant role in getting a reciprocal driver's-license agreement between Arizona and Taiwan.

It's also a continuation of a vibrant working relationship among Chandler, Gilbert, Mesa, Phoenix and the city of Taipei. The Arizona/Taiwan connection has resulted in a significant economic impact on our region.

Among the biggest economic wins was from the Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Company. TSMC purchased about 1,130 acres of undeveloped land in north Phoenix to build its multibillion-dollar semiconductor factory. Construction on the first phase is expected to be completed by 2024. It is the company's first U.S. factory in two decades and will be one of a handful of production sites outside of Taiwan. It will generate 1,600 new jobs in Maricopa County.

TSMC's development helps establish this region as a leader in advanced manufacturing and semiconductor industries. It also secures American jobs for work that is increasingly going overseas. This is the second major recent win for Arizona in this field. The first

was Intel's \$20 billion expansion in Chandler.

Sunlit Chemical also broke ground on a north Phoenix factory, the first U.S. manufacturing facility to supply the Valley's growing chipmaking industry, including TSMC. It will commit \$100 million in two phases to develop the 900,000-square-foot facility on 17 acres at Seventh Avenue and Alameda Road.

As a member of the Greater Phoenix Economic Council's International Leadership Council, I'm pleased these relationships resulted in a signed agreement between GPEC and the Taiwan-USA Industrial Cooperation Promotion Office. This will attract and grow businesses in Maricopa County.

Leaders of the Arizona Commerce Authority, Bureau of Foreign Trade and Ministry of Economic Affairs in Taiwan also formalized a partnership to promote economic growth between Arizona and Taiwan.

Opportunities offered by these foreign investments should give us confidence about our ability to compete and thrive in a global economy. They also should reinforce the importance of staying connected.

*Jack Sellers of Chandler represents District 1 on the Maricopa County Board of Supervisors.*

## We hear you . . .

### Thanks for helping me see area in new light

Editor:

Thank you for still existing! Your articles on the candidates for the current Tempe City Council election have enabled me to make informed decisions when I vote.

Your stories help me see my neighborhood in a different light, and provide an angle that no other source provides.

While I do appreciate the driveway paper — newsprint is so handy for so many things, I really like the online version ([wranglernews.com](http://wranglernews.com)) and find your articles so useful that I would consider paying for a sub-

scription (*Wrangler News* is distributed for free).

Please keep up the good work!

**Patricia Barfield, Tempe**

### Renewable energy would end volatility, oil politics

Editor:

The climate crisis, rising gas prices, national security: What can we do?

Reducing our dependence on fossil fuels can have a major impact on the health, stability and security of our nation. It can protect the climate from greenhouse gases, stabilize the energy market and protect our nation from hostile countries.

Who is to blame for higher gas prices, inflation and the lack of sanctions on Russian oil? It is our dependence on fossil fuels. This weakens the security of both the U.S. and the world and exacerbates the climate crisis.

Until we can pass clean-energy policies that incentivize renewable energy, we will continue to experience a volatile oil and gas supply, a weakened national security and a climate crisis.

For a clean and safe future we must insist our elected officials pass clean renewable-energy policies. We must reduce our dependence on fossil fuels. It is the only solution for a safe and livable world.

**Maggie Kraft, Tempe**



## Commentary

# Thanks to long-range initiatives and planning, Chandler's water supply is diverse and secure

By René Lopez

The value of building permits in Chandler has exceeded \$1 billion each of the past two years. Construction of these industrial, office and residential developments is supporting job growth among current businesses and new companies. Growth like this leads to a common question among residents: Do we have enough water?

The short answer is yes. Chandler has access to multiple water sources and, for decades, we have invested in diverse water supplies, infrastructure and conservation as part of long-range water planning and management strategies.

Our water comes from three primary sources. Rain and snowmelt produce surface water from the Colorado, Salt and Verde rivers. Chandler has more than 30 wells to access groundwater from aquifers deep beneath our community. An extensive reclaimed system enables treated water to be used for landscaping, agricultural and industrial uses. It also replenishes

aquifers that store water for future use.

Chandler participates in regional water planning as an active member of the Arizona Municipal Water Users Association, of which I am a Board member. We regularly meet with the Arizona Department of Water Resources, Central Arizona Project, Salt River Project and other cities to discuss water supply, water sustainability and water-management issues.



René Lopez

Chandler has long recognized that we live in a desert. Through long-term planning, policy action and investments we have demonstrated renewable water supplies and infrastructure to meet existing and future demands for the next 100 years. The designation of a 100-year assured water supply by the Arizona Department of Water Resources covers Chandler's entire service area.

Water conservation has been a major focus of our long-term, water-management plan. The water-conservation program was established in 1990 with the goal of instilling a water-conservation ethic and permanently reducing water use. Today, we continue to implement innovative programs and practices that help us sustain our water supply. You can learn more about these programs, tips and tricks at [chandleraz.gov/water](http://chandleraz.gov/water).

These long-term planning and management strategies plus a commitment to water conservation and efficiency have made a positive impact. Access to a safe and secure water supply is a top priority of the City Council, and as an active AMWUA Board member, I will continue to advocate on Chandler's behalf to ensure that our needs of today and the future are met. Please feel free to reach out to me directly with any water-related concerns at [rene.lopez@chandleraz.gov](mailto:rene.lopez@chandleraz.gov).

*René Lopez is a member of Chandler City Council.*

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March 2022

## 2022 Neighborhood Celebration



This year's recognition event for neighbors and neighborhoods is a re-imagined celebration on Saturday, March 26, from 8:30-10:30 a.m., at Kiwanis Park Fiesta Ramadas, 5711 S. All-America Way. There will be an in-person awards celebration with music, games and refreshments. Visit [tempe.gov/Neighborhood-Celebration](http://tempe.gov/Neighborhood-Celebration).

## HAPPY BIKE MONTH, TEMPE

During April, discover the many benefits of biking in Tempe and celebrate Bike Month with these fun, bike-friendly events.

### **Nominate Tempe's next bicycle hero**

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



## Lifeguards needed

As city pools gear up for the season, we're looking for motivated students who want to help save lives while making some extra cash. Lifeguard recruitments are underway for Kiwanis, Escalante and McClintock pools. No experience is necessary and training is provided. Learn more: [tempe.gov/lifeguard](http://tempe.gov/lifeguard).

### **Bike to Work Day**

Bike to school or work on Wednesday, April 20, for Bike to Work Day.

Tempe will have six locations located in parks, between 6:15-8 a.m., where you can pick up a free T-shirt.

At 7:30 a.m., riders can also join Tempe City Councilmembers on a bike ride from Kiwanis Park to Daley Park.

### **Play Bike Month Bingo**

New this year! We are challenging you to pedal somewhere new or use your bike in a different way. Download our bingo card starting April 1. Once you check off all the boxes, you could win a prize.

Visit [tempe.gov/BikeMonth](http://tempe.gov/BikeMonth) to find more information on all of these happenings.

## Students invited to submit artwork for Law Day

The Tempe Municipal Court invites students in fourth, fifth and sixth grades to take part in the 20th annual Law Day 2022 art contest. Students can draw, paint, sketch or create a collage depicting the importance of the *Constitution in Times of Change*.

Creativity is a must! Students can work alone or in groups of two and the deadline to submit is April 11.

Visit [tempe.gov/court](http://tempe.gov/court) for all submission guidelines. Law Day is a national celebration created by the American Bar Association.

Every year a theme is chosen to educate students on the American legal system and how it contributes to our freedom.

The Tempe Municipal Court takes part in the celebration every year.

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# COMMUNITY

## THE HEART OF A LION

### Scratching, clawing to make a dream come true, Tempe educator blasts into orbit

By Janie Magruder

Special for Wrangler News

Space always has been in Dr. Sian Proctor's blood.

It was her fascination throughout her childhood, largely because her father, Ed, worked on the Apollo 11 mission from a NASA base on Guam, where she was born. His role in the mission that put the first man on the moon resulted in a note from astronaut Neil Armstrong that Proctor always held dear.

As a girl, she collected *Star Wars* comic books and memorabilia and *Indiana Jones* trading cards — items she carted around for decades, not knowing why.

Forty years later, she figured it out.

She stuffed them into her SpaceX duffle bag and carried them into space, along with art and poetry from her students and a Christa McAuliffe silver dollar, commemorating the first teacher in space, who died in the 1986 Challenger space-shuttle explosion. Also onboard with her was that precious autograph from the pioneering moonwalker, Armstrong.

Proctor, a Tempe educator, blasted into space on the first all-civilian SpaceX orbital mission, Inspiration 4, last September.

"Being bathed in Earth light is a big part of why you are transformed in space," she said. "That light is a thousand times more brilliant and beautiful than the moon. You are just bedazzled."

March is Women's History Month, and Proctor is the embodiment of the

observance. Not only did she make history as a member of the first private mission into space, but also as the first Black woman to enter space and the first to pilot a spacecraft.

"It was like being named to the Olympic team," said Proctor, who turns 52 this month. "I was selected, but now I had to prepare to go out and win the gold medal."

There was a learning curve, and she faced it like a Jedi Knight.

Understand that Proctor is not one to shy away from risk and adventure. She's a major in the Civil Air Patrol, a certified scuba diver, a bungee jumper and former captain of Arizona State University's women's ice-hockey team.

How she found her way to being strapped into the seat of a space capsule reflects her feisty side.

In 2009, Proctor was a finalist for the NASA astronaut class. She was not selected.

She wasn't finished. Armed with a bachelor's degree in environmental science, a master's in geology and a doctorate in science education, she trained as an analog astronaut, conducting spaceflight-simulations on Earth. Proctor did four missions.

Last spring, she entered a SpaceX commercial-spaceflight contest, writing and reciting a poem for a Twitter video. It in, she spoke about her life motto, Space2inspire, which she defines as "using my unique space to inspire those within my reach and beyond."

## Women's History Month



**Dr. Sian Proctor was the first Black woman to enter space and the first to pilot a spacecraft, aboard the first all-civilian mission into space.** -- Photos courtesy of Sian Proctor

And she discussed her mission to create a J.E.D.I. space — Just, Equitable, Diverse and Inclusive — for all of humanity.

"When I talk about J.E.D.I. space, it's not about outer space," Proctor said. "It's about the space you inhabit. It's how can you use that space better, and is a matter of what you say, your actions, your intentions. If we all made our space a J.E.D.I. space, think of what the world would be like."

The video produced 70,000 likes.

She won the contest. Her lifelong dream finally was coming true: She was going into space.

"As a seasoned Black woman, it meant the world to me," she said.

Her selection is chronicled in the Netflix series, *Countdown: Inspiration4 Mission to Space*.

"I'm striving for that J.E.D.I. space that I talked about in my poem, and to

be able to represent Black women was such an honor," she said.

\*\*\*

With an eye on the Sept. 15 launch from Kennedy Space Center in Florida, the geology professor/watercolorist/poet was laser-focused on staying fit, avoiding COVID-19, memorizing the Dragon spacecraft manual and training her mind as a systems engineer.

"It was a little nerve-wracking, because I had to learn how to think like and talk like and act like an engineer. But I'm a geologist," said Proctor, who taught geology and planetary science at South Mountain Community College for 20 years.

In the week leading to the launch, Proctor and her three crew members were given call signs. Hers was "Leo" — after Leonardo da Vinci, who, like Proc-

tor, was a painter, scientist and engineer.

Each crew member received one last phone call. Proctor wanted to speak to former First Lady Michelle Obama. SpaceX made it happen.

Proctor says that her takeaway from the conversation was “what it means to be a first . . . to be able to navigate all of that and do it with such grace and style.”

“I loved her book, *Becoming*. This (mission) was my *Becoming* moment.”

Finally, it was launch day. Proctor had prepared her entire life for the moment.

“My Dad would be so proud,” she said. “He’d probably also say, ‘See, I told you (that) you could do anything, you just have to work hard.’”

There was trepidation, too. After all, the spacecraft would be rocketing around Earth every 90 minutes for three days at 17,000 mph.

“But to me, as an explorer, if I did pass away, it would have been doing the ultimate thing I love the most,” she said. “And, I can’t see a better way to go.”

Inspiration 4’s ignition was “fantastic,” she said, and after a bit of fist-bumping, the crew settled down to work. They conducted research, measuring their bladders, arteries, even eyeballs with handheld ultrasound machines. And they spoke with young patients at St. Jude Children’s Research Hospital, for which the mission reportedly raised about \$200 million.

Proctor also taught an art lesson that was beamed back to Earth, using zero-gravity-capable colored pens and water-color paints to produce a beautiful rendition of the Dragon above Earth. She called the painting, “AfroGaia.”

Crew members slept in sleeping bags locked to their seats to counter weightlessness in the cabin, and ate like they were on a camping trip: cold pizza, BLT sandwiches and floating M&Ms.

There was one small emergency: A fire alarm sounded due to a waste-fan malfunction. There was no fire, and the crew diagnosed and resolved the issue quickly, she said.

The highlight of Proctor’s three amazing days in space was her first glimpse of Earth from the Dragon’s cupola. A full moon, about which love songs and werewolf lore abound, pales in comparison to a view of the Blue Planet, she said.

Proctor also was thrilled during the mission to get to speak with her favorite musician, U2’s Bono. He later sent her a note welcoming her back to Earth, along with the album, *The Space Between Us* by Scottish composer Craig Armstrong.

\* \* \*

A journey into space is life changing, said Proctor, who now directs the Global Futures Institute at ASU’s Tempe campus and is an astronaut ambassador for the Maricopa County Community College District.

“The ‘I4’ mission has given me access to people and opportunities I didn’t have before,” she said. “I now have more of a global platform to share my motto and mission.”

As Black History Month drew to a close in February, Proctor released her book, *Space2inspire: The Art of Inspiration*. She is an artist-in-residence with Subtractive, an art show in Los Angeles, and her space art can be purchased at Doctor Proctor’s Space2inspire ([myspace2inspire.com](http://myspace2inspire.com)).

She has co-organized an analog astronaut conference at the University of Arizona Biosphere 2 this spring, and is receiving, along with her crew, the Space Inspiration Award from Orlando-based Space for a Better World during a gala commemorating the 50th anniversary of Apollo 16.

What’s next for Dr. Sian Proctor? As a member of the board of directors of Astronomers Without Borders, she’s excited about astronomy outreach.

“Looking up at the night sky joins all of us,” she said.

Beyond that, ocean exploration sounds intriguing.

“I think I’m going to become an aquanaut,” she said.



TOP: Sian Proctor gets a view of Earth from orbit aboard the Falcon spacecraft. ABOVE LEFT: The SpaceX patch on Proctor’s uniform. ABOVE RIGHT: After the mission, Proctor took delivery of a Ford Mustang Mach-E, a nice ride that moves slower than the 17,000 mph of the Falcon space capsule.



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## Cover Story

# Invasion of Ukraine hits close to home for longtime Tempe legal professional, ASU grad



Ukraine native Ana Propopenko discusses her home country and relatives still there with Tempe attorney Glynn Gilcrease. – Wrangler News photo by Don Kirkland

Special for Wrangler News

As we watch in horror the atrocities by Vladimir Putin and his Russian army invading the democratic, independent country of Ukraine, it is important to remember that there are Ukrainians here in the Valley who have family and friends still in the war-torn nation.

Ana Propopenko, a Ukrainian, whose grandparents live in Kiyv, watches the courage and resilience of her home country as it fights and resists the onslaught.

Ana attended Arizona State University and worked many years for Tempe attorney Glynn Gilcrease, a contributor to *Wrangler News*. She holds degrees in business law and computer information systems.

Ana's grandmother and grandfather

live in Kiyv. She last spoke with Tetiyana, her grandmother, late last week. At that time, produce and medications still were available, but only in limited quantities.

Ana's grandfather has no plans on leaving their house. He was reared during post-World War II. They are staying in Kiyv.

"I believe that the story of conflict is much deeper than we believe," Propopenko said. "I love my home country and the people of Ukraine. At the same time, Ukraine had 30 years of independence to reconstruct their country and it hurt to see that after 30 years the country is in shambles."

To help the cause of all Ukrainians in their quest to retain freedom and democracy, go to [americanshelpingukr](http://americanshelpingukr)

## Tempe aid group for refugees braces for new wave



By Sally Mesarosh

Special for Wrangler News

Imagine being a refugee starting a new life in a new country. For 20 years, the Tempe-based Welcome to America Project has assisted refugee families relocating to the Valley through the U.S. State Department. Refugees are on a special visa and can ultimately become U.S. citizens.

Established in 2001 by Terence Manning's family, to honor his memory after he perished during the 9-1-1 terrorist attack on the World Trade Center, the organization has welcomed more than 15,000 refugees from more than 40 countries, helping them find community and flourish in a new world. In the coming year, they will assist more than 2,000 incoming Afghan refugees.

In view of recent events in Ukraine, Welcome to America may see refugees from that war-torn nation. The organization will be able to provide resources and connections, according to Kat Thoene, the new leader of Welcome to America.

"The Ukraine situation is still unfolding and there are so many unknowns at this time," Thoene said. "Will they return to their homes? Will they stay in neighboring countries?"

"It's interesting, as these tragedies unfold in Afghanistan and Ukraine. It gives us the opportunity to talk about the refugees that we help every day, from countries we don't hear about. It happens all the time."

Thoene is succeeding agency director Mike Sullivan.

Thoene, previous executive director

of Waste Not, a food-rescue organization, brings more than 20 years of non-profit fundraising and leadership to the organization.

"The project has been rooted in its mission: providing immediate needs, supplies and education to refugees," she said. "It not only stabilizes newly relocated families but creates a successful path that lasts a lifetime."

Thoene said that Tempe is a major part of the organization's success.

"Tempe has been our home for many years," she said. "We offer meaningful volunteer opportunities for our residents, who have rallied around us since the beginning."

Volunteers deliver household items, sort and organize donations, perform bike repairs and distribute used clothing, shoes, accessories and books in an atmosphere of kindness and friendship.

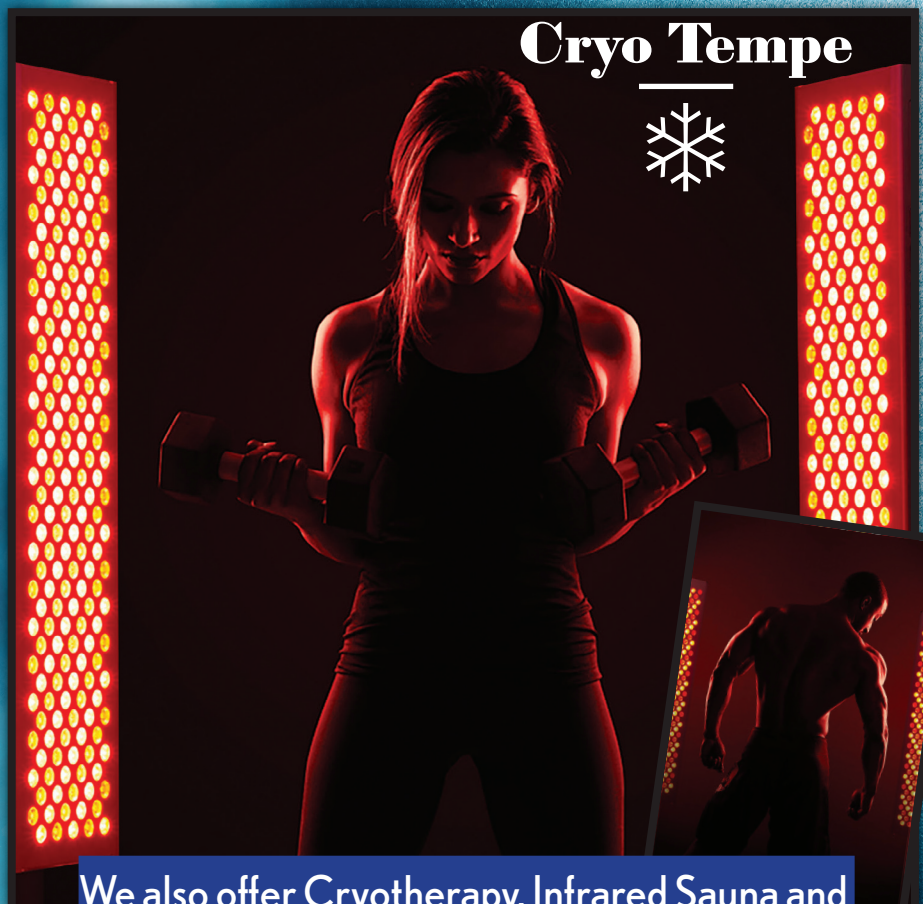
Thoene said her years of experience in volunteer management, community relations and other skills transfers very easily to her new position. The first things she will focus on is finding more space and funding while continuously strengthening the infrastructure.

"We have an unprecedented number of refugees needing assistance. There's a 130 percent increase," she said. "We need more space, more staff, offices and warehouse space. We've outgrown our facility, but we want to stay in Tempe. We are looking for new space."

Thoene recommends visiting their website at [wtap.org](http://wtap.org) to find ways to assist financially or through donations of time and products.

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## DIVERSIONS

### Film Fare

# 'The Batman:' It's dark in more ways than the obvious

By M.V. Moorhead  
*Wrangler News Film Critic*

Time for yet another retelling of the tale of the poor little rich boy, orphaned by criminals, who dresses up as a bat and deploys gadgetry to fight crime. We're assured this version, *The Batman*, is "dark." Not colorful and campy, like the '60s-era TV show; not whimsical, like the Tim Burton series of the '80s and '90s; not epic and Wagnerian, like the more recent series featuring the laryngitic Christian Bale. Strange how durable and flexible this silly myth has proven.

This one is, indeed, dark, both literally and thematically; dim and shadowy and focused on hidden corruption. Directed by Matt Reeves from a script he wrote with Peter Craig, *The Batman* is set early in the career of Bruce Wayne (Robert Pattinson) as the Caped Crusader. His costume, gizmos and vehicles seem like works in progress, and his Gotham police ally James Gordon (Jeffery Wright) is a Lieutenant, not yet the Commissioner.

Gordon and The Batman are looking for The Riddler (Paul Dano), who is bumping off prominent members of Gotham's law-enforcement community, and whose cryptic messages to our hero suggest that he's trying to drag some of the city's slimy secrets into the light. Gotham underworld figures like Carmine Falcone (John Turturro) and The Penguin (Colin Farrell, buried in

makeup) are involved, as is young Selina Kyle (Zoe Kravitz), who's investigating the disappearance of her girlfriend. The lithe, acrobatic Selina dresses in cat-like gear and has an apartment full of cats. She is, you might say, a cat woman.

There's a lot to like about the movie. Grieg Fraser's cinematography has a dank and gloomy beauty. And seeing The Batman recoil in fear when he comes to the edge of a tall building or miscalculate a descent and clip himself painfully against an overpass is a highly agreeable counter to the parkour-style effortlessness of so many contemporary action heroes.

The actors are strong, too. Pattinson is low-key, but he has the same sallow, Byronic glamour he's shown in other roles, and he's sympathetic, as is Wright, and Andy Serkis as a fretful Alfred. Turturro and Farrell bring a realistic feel to their mobster parts, and Peter Sarsgaard makes his shady D.A. squirming and weaselly but also pitiable.

The standouts are Dano and Kravitz. Dano's rather squalid take on the Riddler turns truly scary when he starts stretching his words out into deep, indignant bellows. He seems far less like a movie supervillain and more like the pathetic, yet more terrifying, attempts of real-life crazies to emulate a supervillain (as in Aurora, Colorado). Kravitz brings the movie a much-needed breath of brisk but breathable fresh air. She's



the audience surrogate in the film. Despite her feats of derring-do she comes across as more sensible and relatable than anyone else.

Against all of these merits, *The Batman* is too long. It's way too freakin' long.

It's nearly three hours of above-average moviemaking of its kind, but three hours is a heavy dose of shadows and fog. The brooding atmosphere suggests that we're in for devastating, morally challenging revelations, but what we get, while coherent, isn't especially surprising. And then, just as we seem to have gotten to the bottom of the case, the movie tacks on a blown-up-real-good disaster finale that feels jarringly

out of tune with the more intimate crime-story flavor of what has gone before.

I thought that superhero pictures were starting to cure themselves of their straining need to pile on climax after climax, seemingly in frantic fear that audiences will feel that they haven't been given enough for their money. *The Batman* is a step backward in this regard.

It occurred to me that *The Batman* feels, in atmosphere and pretensions, exactly like what was so sublimely spoofed by 2017's *The Lego Batman Movie*. It isn't every day that the target of a parody shows up five years after the parody itself.

## A NIGHT OWL'S PARADISE

### Upscale late-night restaurant coming to Tempe

By Cliff Summerhill

*Special for Wrangler News*

A late-night, upscale and intimate dining option that is popular in Old Town Scottsdale is replicating itself in Tempe, where a livelier vibe is anticipated in keeping with the campus community that is just steps away at Arizona State University.

Society by EVO, a full-service dining and drinks experience, will take over

the old GuacStar Kitchen and Cantina space at 920 E. University Drive at Rural Road, in the Cornerstone Shopping Center and serve up late night full-service dining and cocktails daily from 4 p.m. to 2 a.m.

"With the growth of Arizona State University and Tempe as a whole, we have been trying to be a part of the community," Nick Neuman, co-founder

— RESTAURANT, Page 18



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## Tet Festival in Tempe immerses community in Vietnamese culture

By Tony Gutiérrez

Special for Wrangler News

At first glance, Matthew Mortensen might seem out of place at the annual Vietnamese Tet Festival at Holy Spirit Catholic Church in Tempe, being a White man.

But Mortensen, wearing a blue áo dài — traditional Vietnamese tunic — with a decorative dragon, joined his fiancée in running one of the game booths that saw children of every culture participate.

“It’s a really good mix of Vietnamese, White and all sorts of cultures here,” Mortensen said.

Tet — or the Lunar New Year — originated in Vietnam as a celebration to do away with the old year and welcome the new. This year marks the Year of the Tiger. Traditionally, all debts must be paid, offenses are forgiven and hostilities are ceased.

“When we celebrate a new year, we always reflect back on the year that has just passed and thank God for all of God’s blessings that we receive in life,” said Holy Spirit pastor Monsignor Peter Dai Bui, himself wearing an áo dài over his clerical collar. “Then we



Holy Spirit Catholic Church pastor Monsignor Peter Dai Bui welcomes visitors to the annual Vietnamese Tet Festival at the South Tempe church. — Photos by Tony Gutiérrez/Special for Wrangler News

look forward to the new year, which is also a blessing from God, and this new year comes with so many opportunities to know and love God, and to build community, to work with one another (and) to grow personally in the community.”

While Mortensen said he appreciates the Vietnam-

ese food, he has fully immersed himself in the culture. Even though he still has trouble understanding the language, he goes to Mass with his fiancée, Francisca Bui. Holy Spirit currently offers Mass in English or Vietnamese.

“Not only are we uniting our two communities, be-

## Restaurant

From Page 16

of Society by EVO, said. “When the old GuacStar location became available, we jumped on it.”

Neuman and co-founders Randy Feldman, Dominic Scappaticci, and Lee Baron are creating the new Society by EVO to be cozy and intimate, but uniquely Tempe.

“Society by EVO will bring the same style of restaurant and bar as EVO in Old Town but created for Tempe,” Neuman said. “The vibe and energy will be lively and attract the ASU crowd along with professionals and local residents.”

Opening is anticipated sometime during March.

Being just a crosswalk away from ASU’s Tempe campus, Society by EVO will compete with the bars and restaurants on Mill Avenue and University Drive that are geared toward col-

lege students.

“Tempe will have a more updated style than our Scottsdale location,” Neuman said. “The music and style will be more focused on a slightly younger Tempe clientele.”

Neuman also describes the 4,650-square-foot location as more comfortable than upscale, with a focus on great cuisine and elevated service.

The new restaurant will bring well-known dishes over from its Scottsdale menu, including signature meatballs, focaccia and its famous butter-cake dessert. These will join new Mediterranean-style dishes created for the Tempe menu.

While there will be new cocktail and drink options, those are still being developed by the Society by EVO team.

Society by EVO Tempe is hiring for front and back of the house positions. Candidates wanting to apply can email resumes to [nickneuman@evoscottsdale.com](mailto:nickneuman@evoscottsdale.com). Visit [society-byevo.com](http://society-byevo.com) for more information and updates.



cause we have an English-speaking community and a Vietnamese-speaking community, but it's also to bring awareness of our culture, that Lunar New Year only happens once a year," Francisca Bui said. "A lot of our English-speaking community doesn't really know that this is what we do."

Francisca Bui is president — or adult leader — of the Vietnamese Eucharistic Youth Movement in Tempe, a youth ministry begun in Vietnam in 1929 that spread across the globe as Vietnamese refugees fled their homeland after the fall of Saigon in 1975. Bui, who was born in Phoenix, remembers participating in the movement when her father, Thomas, headed the ministry in Phoenix. When the Tempe chapter was established, she started volunteering and took over the ministry in July 2021. Part of her role is to help the youth connect with their Vietnamese heritage.

Seventh-graders Kayla Nguyen and Emily Nguyen (no relation) joined to be the head and tail, respectively, of the Yellow Dragon during a dance performance that was bookended by fireworks and a live concert.

"It's really fun, but it's also really nerve-wracking because you have to do a lot of stuff and move around a lot," said Kayla Nguyen, who attends Kyrene Tradi-

tional Academy in Chandler. "When we're older, we'll be like, 'Yeah, we did a dragon dance.'"

The girls, both 13, learned about the dance from a Bible-study teacher. Emily Nguyen, who attends Santan Junior High in Chandler, joked that she liked the idea of getting money in a red envelope by participating, another Tet tradition. Doing the dance helped her connect with her culture "because my ancestors did it," she said.

Chris Kieu, 37, who attends Our Lady of Mount Carmel Catholic Church in Tempe, said he remembered receiving those envelopes as a child when he was growing up in Vietnam.

"As a kid, we usually got these red envelopes with money in it. That's the one thing I looked forward to," he said. "Now, it's just to celebrate coming together — friends and families — to eat food and just have fun."

Ray and Rose Gamboa have been parishioners at Holy Spirit since 1979. Although they are members of the church's English-speaking community, coming from a Hispanic background, they see many similarities with the Vietnamese culture.

"You see the bond with the community, and they're just always there for each other," Rose Gamboa said.

The Gamboas brought their grandsons, 8-year-old

Leo Abel and his 6-year-old brother, Milo, who were excited about the fireworks. They occasionally attend Mass in Vietnamese, although they don't know the language.

"It's a great way to learn Vietnamese," Ray Gamboa said. "It's incredible just to watch the reverence of the way that the Vietnamese Masses are."

The Tet Festival was placed on hold last year because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Christian Nguyen, who is a member of the worship team at the parish, organized some friends to perform for the festival.

"After 2020, and most of 2021, people are itching for some sort of community-building thing," Christian Nguyen said. "This is the perfect opportunity to do that, and it's a fresh start for everybody, leaving the past behind."

Although Tet is not inherently a Catholic celebration, but rather an occasion recognized by all Vietnamese, there are ways to tie their Catholic Christian faith with the cultural meanings behind it, according to Francisca Bui. The celebration starts with a Mass to pray for Vietnam and for their ancestors.

"We pray for our homeland, our ancestors, those who have passed before us, and we also pray for our

—VIETNAMESE, Page 20

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A school girl dons a dragon costume as part of the annual Vietnamese Tet Festival at Holy Spirit Catholic Church in South Tempe

family, as well," she said. "Not only are we celebrating the New Year, we also take the time to remember those who have passed, our saints and our faith."

The history of Catholicism in Vietnam has been one of persecution, according to Msgr. Bui, recalling the Vietnamese Martyrs from the earliest missionary days to the Vietnam War. Msgr. Bui, himself, came with his family to the U.S. at age 5 to escape persecution.

"The faith of the Vietnamese community, the Catholic faith, has grown so strong that they are willing to shed their blood for their faith when they encounter persecution," he said. "In the very same way, here, that faith has been passed on from generation to generation. That's what we're also celebrating."

In the church hall, the dancers and musicians performed in front of two flags — the U.S. flag and the flag of the Republic of Vietnam, or South Vietnam.

"That is very significant for us because we Vietnamese who are in diaspora, we still believe that our country is not a Communist country, but a free country," Msgr. Bui said. "We want that, and we still dream of that and that's why we always have that South Viet-



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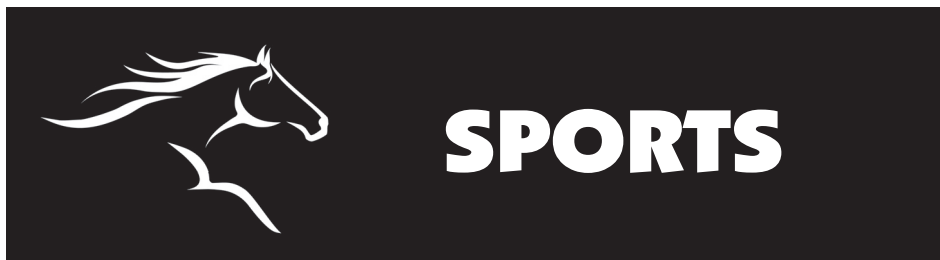
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## It's no joke: Wrestling has a hold on Marcos junior girl

Story & photo by Andrew Lwowski  
*Special for Wrangler News*

It started out as a joke from a teacher who gave Haille Hernandez a flier for the Marcos de Niza High wrestling team. It read, "You're aggressive, try wrestling."

Now, it's no joke. Haille has found a passion for the sport that drives her every day toward a state championship.

Haille was searching for homework during her freshman year when she came across the flier stashed in her backpack. She handed it to her dad, Antonio. He surprised her by signing her up.

"I wasn't expecting for him to actually sign me up," Haille said. "I was like, 'You really want me to do wrestling?' and I wasn't really excited about it."

That all changed.

"When I went to state my sophomore year, that was like a really eye-

opening experience, seeing like all the girls and what they do to put in the work," Haille said. "That put the fire in me. Seeing all those girls and seeing what they could do, I wanted to do that, too."

Now as a junior, Haille has competed in numerous tournaments and racked up multiple accolades. In the season that just ended, Haille won at the Greenway High girls Invitational, was second in the Payson High girls tournament and second in the girls state sectional tournament at 132 pounds. As a sophomore, she had won in the ACP Invitational tournament and placed fourth in the Moon Valley tournament. As Haille looks forward to her senior year, "I just want to win. I want to win it all. I want to get that (state) ring."

Haille has a strict regime of getting up at 4:50 a.m. during the week for a two-hour workout before class at 6:50. After school, she has two-hour team practice from 3:30 p.m. to 5:30 before



Marcos de Niza High girls wrestling dynamo Haille Hernandez and her father, Antonio Hernandez, have formed a bond during her workouts in the makeshift wrestling room in their garage.

heading home, eating and doing individual training on the wrestling mat in her garage.

About 8:15 p.m., Haille gets ready for bed to repeat the grind. In a piece she wrote about her journey, she says that the additional training has helped her prepare for competition.

While Haille wasn't excited about wrestling initially, her dad was.

"I had a child that wanted to participate in that sport and she thought it was nothing serious, but I knew it was something that kind of fit her personality," Antonio Hernandez said.

Hernandez says that wrestling has helped build the bond with Haille closer in a "weird sense."

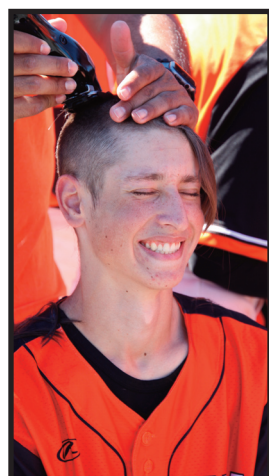
"We have different mindsets and tend to argue about training," Hernandez said, "but it has brought us together to get up for 5 a.m. workouts and

watching what she's learning and different techniques as she moves along. It's been a great transition for her, from the person she was before to seeing this whole different mindset as far as dieting and training and seeing the dedication she's put into it. It's been rewarding."

After high school Haille would love to attend King University in Tennessee after an Olympian who trained there caught her attention, but she says she would love to continue her wrestling and academic career anywhere that would give her the opportunity. She wants to study nutrition and health or physical education.

A goal of hers is to help build girls' wrestling.

"I want wrestling to be known as a girls sport and not be so male dominant."



## Aztec baseball players show sheer determination

*Text and photos by Andrew Lwowski, special for Wrangler News*

Each year, the Corona del Sol baseball program hosts a scrimmage between the freshman and junior varsity teams, a barbeque hosted by the sophomore parents, and a formal announcement of the three teams and coaching staff.

Every other year the players can elect to have their heads shaved to raise awareness for cancer, this season for "StandUpToCancer."

This event helps the teams and their respective families bond.

## Sports Notebook . . . with Alex Zener

# Aztec boys wrestlers tie for 5th at State

The Corona del Sol High boys wrestling team tied for fifth place in the Division I State Championships at Veterans Memorial Coliseum in Phoenix.

Among Aztecs wrestlers who qualified for state, two took third place, two others took fourth and another was fifth.

**Drew Peterson**, a senior, won the sectional tournament, and then also won his first two matches at state. Peterson finished strong, winning his last two rounds to take third-place and end his senior season 34-6.

Junior **Tyler Hamm**, who took second the sectionals at 120 pounds, won in the first round at state tournament in a fall, lost 6-5 in the second round and then fought through the loser's bracket to defeat his next four opponents in falls to take home the third-place medal. He finished the season 33-9.

Senior **Sasso Villasenor**, wrestling at 150, won his first two matches at state before losing in the third round. He won his first match on the loser's side of the bracket and finished fourth in the state, finishing 17-6 overall record.

Senior **Micah Castro** won his first two rounds easily, and then was bumped into the loser's bracket. He took home fourth place medal with a 39-8 record for the season.

**Anthony Garcia** won the sectional tourney at 190. He defeated his first opponent in a fall, lost his second match and then went on to win three matches to earn fifth place and finish his senior season 22-5.

Freshman **Evan Soliz**, third in the sectional tournament at 106 pounds, won his first match at state in a major decision but lost in his second. He eventually was eliminated and finished 38-7.

Junior **Aidan Lightfoot** qualified for state 126 pounds after his fourth place at sectionals, and freshman **Brayden**

**Johnson-Brown** qualified after taking second at sectionals at 132 pounds. Lightfoot and Johnson-Brown lost in the first and second rounds at state, ending their seasons 14-17 and 26-19, respectively.

Corona's 165-pound wrestler, **Jacob Robles**, qualified for state with his fourth place at sectionals. He lost in the first round at state, won in the second round but was eliminated in the third round, ending the season 21-16.

**Aidan Odom** qualified at 215 pounds by taking third at sectionals. He lost in the first two rounds at state but finished his season having qualified as a freshman and finishing the season 5-4.

### Marcos de Niza boys wrestling

Marcos de Niza had four wrestlers qualify for the DIII AIA boys state championships.

Junior **Luis Pichardo** was second at sectionals, won his first match at state and then lost in the second round. He fought through the loser's side and finished fourth at state, finishing the year at 46-8.

Freshman **Fabrizio Hernandez** took fourth at sectionals at 106 and then lost twice at state, ending 27-23.

Junior **Alex Navarette**, at 120, took third at sectionals and posted a 48-14 record.

Senior **Edward Jojola** won sectionals at 165, and ended his season 30-15.

### Corona girls soccer

The girls were ranked seventh in the state going into the 6A state championships, where No. 10 Red Mountain pulled a 3-2 upset in overtime. Corona finished 9-4.

Seniors honored at the last home game include **Rosalia Oyzerovich**, **Cas-**



Corona del Sol honored basketball seniors (from left) Peyton Beauer, Vin Hutcherson, Raymond Lam, Hunter Stratton, Quinn Thorne, Nikola Kostadinovski and Brandon Lee. — Photo by Linh Lee



Seniors on the Corona girls soccer team (from left) are Cassidi O'Connor (captain), Olivia Bradley, Ally Wachtel (captain), Rosie Oyzerovich (captain), Kira Caspers, Paige Sever and Ashley Lutes. — Photo by Scott Lundahl

**sidi O'Connor, Ashley Lutes, Paige Sever, Olivia Bradley, Ally Wachtel and Kira Caspers.**

Oyzerovich played in all 13 games as goalkeeper while O'Connor was the leading scorer with eight goals.

Lutes played in all 13 games, scoring one goal and one assist, and received the Aztec Award at the team banquet.

Sever also started all 13 games, as did Wachtel, who scored four goals and accumulated eight points. Wachtel was awarded Player's Player of the Year by teammates.

Bradley had two assists in 12 games.

Other awards at the banquet: Attacking Player of the Year to sophomore **Kiera Campbell**, (4 goals, 3 assists, 11 points in 13 games), junior **Aja Lister**, Defensive Player of the Year; and **Victoria Thurman** Joe Selleh Leadership Award.

Most Improved Player was sophomore **Marina Carson** (3 goals, 6 points in 13 games).

**Samantha Camion** was awarded Season MVP.

Wachtel made first team All Central Region. Lister, O'Connor, Campbell and Camino were second team All-Region. Honorable Mentions included Lutes, sophomore **Kyarra Aparcio**, Carson,

Bradley, Oyzerovich and freshman **Sadie Robertson.**

### Corona boys basketball

The Aztecs finished the regular season at No. 14 in the state.

"I am really proud of this group," said head coach **Neil MacDonald**. "They had many opportunities to quit, including transfers, injuries, illness and COVID, but they stuck together. We made a nice run at the end of the season winning seven of our last ten games with sweeps over Desert Ridge and Desert Vista.

"The win over No. 3 Mountain Pointe to end the regular season was big. I am really proud of this group. This team was the best defensive team I have had. They definitely raised the bar for those players returning."

The team honored their seniors at the last home game: **Brandon Lee, Quinn Thorne, Hunter Stratton, Raymond Lam, Nikola Kostadinovski, Vin Hutcherson** and **Peyton Beauer.**

"Quinn Thorne was the only player on the team to start every game this season," said MacDonald. "He carried us offensively and finished the season on a huge roll, averaging nearly 20 points a game in the last 10 games."

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## BUSINESS

### Amazon partners with community colleges for fully funded tuition for its employees

Amazon, which in December added 550 corporate and tech jobs in a 63,000-square-foot expansion in downtown Tempe, has entered a partnership with the Maricopa County Community College District to provide fully funded college tuition to their more than 750,000 hourly employees.

“As a long-standing partner of Amazon and the Career Choice program, we are excited to see this program expand to make more educational pathways accessible to Amazon associates,” said Dr. Steven R. Gonzales, interim MCCCDCD chancellor. “Employers like Amazon making an investment in their employees’ education is a critical component of driving educational attainment in our state.”

The partnership is part of Amazon’s

Career Choice Network, an upskilling program, that makes it easy for employees to advance their education. Since launching in 2012, Career Choice has provided education to more than 50,000 employees. Career Choice is among nine free skills-training and education programs that Amazon offers in its Upskilling 2025 pledge.

MCCCDCD became an official Amazon partner in 2014, and has successfully offered more than 20 training cohorts to Amazon associates, including accounting, computer-support specialist and HVAC technician. Employees have the option to take classes online, or in-person at any of the 10 Maricopa Community Colleges or onsite at Amazon.

“We’re committed to empowering our employees with easy access to the



Amazon is partnering to create skilled labor for 550 corporate and tech jobs in 2022 to be housed in a 63,000-square-foot expansion of its offices at 100 S. Mill Ave. in Tempe. —Amazon photo

education and training they need to grow their careers, whether that’s with us or elsewhere,” said Alicia Boler Davis, Amazon senior vice president of global customer fulfillment. “Whether someone is looking to build their English-proficiency skills, prepare for GED testing or earn their Bachelor’s degree, we’re working to meet our employees wherever they are on their educational journey.”

Career training is among Amazon’s industry-leading benefits to its team: It pays employees an average starting wage of \$18 per hour, more than double the federal minimum wage; provides comprehensive health benefits; paid time off, as many as 20 weeks of fully paid parental leave; and additional benefits for employees and their families.

### GM bringing hundreds of tech jobs to Price Corridor in quest for all-electric future



General Motors is hiring for several-hundred software-based positions at its Arizona Information Technology Innovation Center in Chandler.

More than 1,000 GM employees are based in its 170,000-square-foot facility at 2900 W. Geronimo Place along the Price Corridor.

The Arizona IT Innovation Center is

among four national GM technology hubs. Sister locations are Warren, Michigan; Austin, Texas; and Roswell, Georgia. These IT Innovation Centers tackle solutions and services that redefine GM’s products as the company moves toward an all-electric future. It is focused on advancing an all-electric future that is inclusive and accessible to all. At the heart of this strategy is the Ultium battery platform, which will power everything from mass-market to high-performance vehicles.

New roles based in Chandler include software developers, software developers in-test, data analysts, business analysts, product managers,

project/scrum managers and software architects.

“These jobs created by GM are high-wage, high-skill and provide tremendous employment opportunities for our residents,” Chandler Mayor Kevin Hartke said. “We appreciate GM’s significant investment in Chandler and look forward to being a partner in their continued growth.”

When it opened the site in 2014, GM selected Chandler in part for its strong local workforce. The company has found success recruiting from area universities.

Many of the new positions are entry level.

“As GM transforms from automaker to platform innovator, our IT Innovation Center in Chandler plays an integral

role for the future,” said Umesh Murthy, director at the Arizona IT Innovation Center. “On top of the region’s deep pool of talent, Chandler offers a wonderful quality-of-life and strong community to newcomers. Those who join GM here will have an opportunity to pursue their passions and contribute to GM’s purpose.”

GM aspires to be the most inclusive company in the world. In 2021, nearly one-third of all GM new hires in the U.S. were women. In all, 42 percent were from underrepresented groups. Where possible, GM’s Work Appropriately philosophy offers employees the flexibility to work where they can have the greatest impact on achieving their goals.

More information on new positions in Chandler: [careers.gm.com](https://careers.gm.com).

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## VIAMI signs office lease along Price Corridor as its global headquarters expected to grow to 230



Viavi has leased 15,000 square feet of space along the Price Corridor to expand its home office and operations. – Viavi photo

Viavi Solutions Inc., which helps customers harness the power of instruments, automation, intelligence and virtualization, has leased 15,000 square feet of office space along Chandler's Price Corridor.

The building, at 1445 S. Spectrum Blvd. in Allred Park Place, will complement a year-old VIAMI advanced manufacturing operation and corporate headquarters, which it moved from Silicon Valley in 2021 into a 104,000-square-foot industrial building at 3455 S. McQueen Road.

The two facilities of the global leader in network testing and optical technologies are separated by only a few miles.

Combined, the headquarters and manufacturing operations are expected to support 230 jobs.

"This new office is located in a beautiful, modern area and provides space for us to expand," said Petra Nagel, VIAMI senior vice president for human resources. "It has been a pleasure working with Chandler's Economic Development team as we build out our manufacturing and continue adding executive

leadership positions in Arizona."

VIAMI is a global provider of network test, monitoring and assurance solutions for communications service providers, enterprises, network-equipment manufacturers, government and avionics. It also is a leader in light-management solutions for 3D sensing, anti-counterfeiting, consumer electronics, industrial, automotive and defense applications. It has more than 3,600 employees across 22 countries.

"VIAMI is a world-class advanced manufacturer that is a great fit for Chandler's highly educated workforce," Chandler Mayor Kevin Hartke said. "We appreciate the company's investment and the high-paying jobs they are bringing to our community."

Since moving its headquarters to Chandler, VIAMI has actively contributed to the economic and technological communities in Arizona, including the establishment of a scholarship at the University of Arizona's Wyant College of Optical Sciences, creating opportunities for current and future professionals.



# SCHOOLS



Retired Kyrene School District Superintendent Ben Furlong addresses a crowd during festivities. — Kyrene photo

## Kyrene celebrates heritage at Ben Furlong Education Center

Fifty years ago, Dr. Ben Furlong arrived in Kyrene School District during a time of unprecedented growth.

While he was superintendent from 1972 to 1987, the district grew a whopping 1,100 percent.

Late last month, Furlong's service to Kyrene was celebrated by guests, community members, students, staff and district leaders at school district's education center that now bears his name.

"Once a part of Kyrene, always part of Kyrene," Kyrene Superintendent Laura Toenjes said. "That is certainly true for Dr. Ben Furlong, who is not only a legendary former Kyrene superintendent but also the keeper of so many of our Kyrene stories."

In 1984, Furlong published *The Story of Kyrene*, a book that documents the founding of the district and events that took place during his superintendency. Furlong has become the keeper of many Kyrene stories through his written and spoken words.

"Dr. Furlong's service helped make Kyrene the exceptional institution for learning that it is today," Toenjes said. "This District has a legacy of excellence that reaches back 133 years and, thanks to our community, our future is limit-

less."

Students on steel drums from Kyrene de las Manitas opened and closed the intimate ceremony, and Jazmine Bridgewater, a student at Aprende Middle School, shared how Kyrene district schools helped her find success in and out of the classroom.

"The Kyrene School District is an amazing place," Jazmine said. "Everyone is so nice and kind. I love my Kyrene school."

The Ben Furlong Education Center recently received a face lift. Updates included new lighting, landscaping and paint as well as a new front-entrance walkway. The celebration included a ceremonial ribbon-cutting to recognize the updates.

"Thanks to voter-approved bonds and overrides, we have been able to address the facility and infrastructure needs of our schools, and a small portion of Kyrene's bond dollars were used to finance the upkeep of our central office," Kyrene Governing Board president Kevin Walsh said. "We take great pride in all our facilities, and we want to provide a workplace our employees can be proud to step into every day."

View a video of Furlong explaining the history of Kyrene at [youtube.com/watch?v=R-UisUOVveE](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R-UisUOVveE)

# KYRENE MIDDLE SCHOOL INTERNATIONAL FESTIVAL

**FRIDAY, MARCH 18, 2022** **5:00-8:00 PM**

The KMS International Festival will showcase our International Baccalaureate students and programs, sharing language, music, food and traditions of various cultures with our community.

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### GAMES

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A traditional game of chance, loteria—the Spanish word for lottery—is often referred to as Mexican bingo, where illustrated cards depicting the Mexican aesthetic replace bingo balls. Hispanic communities have been playing this game for hundreds of years.

**MEDIA CENTER**  
5:30 AND 6:30

### PERFORMANCES

Performances will feature KMS Ensembles, Corona Del Sol Steel Pan Ensemble, and the Tausala Polynesian Performers representing the community through Polynesian dance.

- Ms. Wilma Baker - Tausala Polynesian Performers
- Mr. Duplessis, Mr. Werner, Ms. Holste - Corona Del Sol Steel Pan Ensemble
- Mr. Miller - KMS Band
- Mr. Contreras - KMS Orchestra/Mariachi
- Ms. Kimball - KMS Chorus
- Ms. Passmonick - KMS Theater

### STAGE 1

- KMS Theatre - 6:00
- KMS Chorus - 6:30
- Tausala Performers - 7:00

\*Bring a blanket or chair for watching performances.

### STAGE 2

- CDS Steel Pan Ensemble - 5:30
- KMS Orchestra - 6:15
- KMS Band - 6:45
- KMS Mariachi - 7:15

### RAFFLE

Throughout the evening you will have opportunities to purchase raffle tickets.

- Cash for ticket purchases
- Contact information on tickets
- Drawings at 7:30

\*You do not need to be present at the drawing to win. KMS will notify winners.

# Rover Elementary 'Lion King' performance 'electric'

By Robyn Martinez

Special for Wrangler News

Rover Elementary students recently staged a successful presentation of Disney's *The Lion King*.

Forty-seven students in fourth and fifth grade put on four shows, one for Rover students and staff and two evening shows for the public.

Principal Edward Goldstein called it "one of the most electric evenings ever" after the finale onstage at Marcos de Niza High.

Rover general music teacher Erin Crawford said that taking part in these performances is a great opportunity for students.

"After doing three musical productions at Rover, I've noticed that it is a confidence builder for many students," Crawford said.

"I've had conversations with a handful of students who say they would never have considered going onstage before joining the music theater program and now they

absolutely love performing."

Another added benefit is that it is a platform for new friendships and it gives fourth- and fifth-graders an opportunity to get to know each other.

"Our Rover thespians become a family," Crawford said.

From an academic standpoint, taking part in performances builds fluency.

Students do script read-throughs when they begin rehearsals. They work on fluency in speaking their lines from the script, and they always work on tone and inflection. From there, they memorize lines and continue to work on fluency as they deliver the speaking parts from memory.

From a music education standpoint, it provides a backbone for understanding the elements of music.

Students auditioned in October and rehearsed twice a week from November through the beginning of February.

— Photo by Erin Crawford



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— *Phoenix magazine*



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## Fuller Elementary students celebrate differences aimed at disability awareness

By Robyn Martinez

Special for Wrangler News

Fuller Elementary students are learning compassion for others during their annual Celebrating Differences Week, which is designed by special education resource teacher Wendi Socha.

The program heightens awareness not only of disabilities but also our similarities.

Students tried out disability-simulation stations and adaptive equipment, heard from guest speakers and took part in grade-level activities that prompted questions and discussion about what it is like to live with a disability.

"Celebrating Differences Week provides such an awesome life skill for students," Socha said. "It is a week for students to understand and learn that all people have differences, and we all have similarities. They are learning how important it is to ask questions and learn about each other, and to appreciate others for who they are."

Students met and asked questions of Kaitlyn Verfuert, a two-sport Paralympian, who has competed in four Paralympic games, most recently the Tokyo 2020 Paralympic Games, in wheelchair tennis and outrigger canoe.

Verfuert demonstrated Pickleball and how it is possible to play it in a wheelchair with friends who don't use one.

Students also wheeled around the basketball court in a wheelchair.

"My daughter was quite excited to share that a Paralympian came to school this week," said Beth Hagen, a Fuller parent. "My daughter loves to play tennis, and until this week has never seen anyone play tennis in a wheelchair. I'm pretty sure she never realized that was even a possibility. That realization alone makes Fuller Elementary's Celebrating Differences Week pretty darn special."

A former Tempe Elementary student, "Mr. Cal,"

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spoke with students about what it was like to grow up with cerebral palsy, and how it was difficult for him to balance and write. Thanks to the work and dedication of physical therapists and occupational therapists in school, he learned and thrived. He demonstrated how he still does lots of the things that students without disabilities do, he just does them differently.

"I have enjoyed this week, and the chance to talk about life and differences with other people and to find someone who might have something in common with you," said Salah Ahmed, a Fuller fifth-grade student. "It feels good to be able to talk with others, and for them to know my differences and to share their differences with me."

Socha says that in the Tempe Elementary School District students with special needs are included in general-education classrooms as much as possible and not just pulled out.

"I'm convinced that my child is having a better elementary-school experience by not just spending a week celebrating differences, but by sharing a classroom with stu-

dents with disabilities every single day," Hagen said. "By being in a classroom with students that learn and think in different ways, teachers are more likely to teach using a wider variety of learning styles. This not only benefits the students with disabilities, but every single student in the classroom."

Giving all students the opportunity to learn more about what it is like to have special needs gives them empathy and kindness, which is a mission of Tempe Elementary.

"Every single person is unique and special in their own way. If we can help our kids see that, not only through special weeks like this but every day, the more prepared they will be to help create a kinder world," Socha said.

Socha, who is on the board for East Valley Council for Exceptional Children, has helped create the simulation stations and kits that schools and organizations can check out.

Information about implementing Celebrating Differences at your school, or checking out a Celebrating Differences kit:



A student tries out a wheelchair with encouragement from two-sport Paralympian Kaitlyn Verfuert (right). – Tempe Elementary School District photo

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