



The Tempe Lakes, built in the late 1960s to capture the prestigious Mission Viejo lifestyle, celebrated its 50th anniversary with a gala community-wide parade and party. Pgs.



Photographer Billy Hardiman followed Yusef Sabri, a McClintock H.S. and ASU graduate, now with Intel, on a fascinating journey around his home only blocks from the U.S. Capitol. Pgs. 13-16

From sheep herder to Shepherd of souls ...

Life takes a
new direction
for church
deacon

Story & photos
by Tony Gutiérrez

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Herding a new flock at West Chandler's St. Andrew parish

By Tony Gutiérrez

A man who often goes by the nickname “Ram” has spent most of his life literally separating sheep from goats.

But now, as one of the seven newest deacons ordained in the Roman Catholic Diocese of Phoenix, the Rev. Mr. Ramsey Echeverria has a new calling: Deacon Echeverria has been serving at St. Andrew the Apostle Catholic Parish in Chandler since his ordination Nov. 5.

The new deacon also celebrated his first Baptism Nov. 27, for his granddaughter, Stevie Kate Echeverria.

Deacon Ram comes from a long line of ranchers. His grandfather, a Basque Spaniard, moved to California, then to Arizona, where he built up his own herd. Six boys from the next generation continued the family business, ranching in Arizona, Texas and Colorado — at 89, the deacon’s father still heads the ranch, while he does much of the “grunt work.” Although they haven’t ranched sheep on a large-scale for 15 years, the family still runs cattle.

“It was getting harder and harder to run sheep down here, because all the dairies had moved down here, and they came in and started taking up all the alfalfa. That’s how it got me into farming because I started having

to grow my own hay to feed my sheep,” said Deacon Echeverria. “We’ve been running cattle for as long as I can remember. I have maybe 40 or 50 head of sheep, but we’ve got 500 cows.”

The Echeverria family grew up in Casa Grande, where they attended St. Anthony of Padua Catholic Parish. There, the future deacon served as an altar boy and attended the attached parochial school. When the school wasn’t equipped to help him with a learning disability, he transferred to a public school, souring him on the Catholic Church.

“I thought to myself, ‘Well, the Catholic Church thinks I’m stupid,’ so I held a grudge against them for a while,” he admits.

He and his high school sweetheart, Monique, married in a civil ceremony outside of the Catholic Church in 1987. Weddings where at least one party is a baptized Catholic that happen without the Church’s approval are not considered valid.

“We were raising kids. I was busy with the sheep. We were like two ships passing in the night, and we were just feeling lost, losing our purpose,” he recalled. “So, she started going back to church.”

At his mother-in-law’s urging, he joined her in a Bible study class at St. Timothy Catholic Parish in Mesa.

“What was awesome about it is when we went to the Bible, they talked a lot about sheep and sheep herders and shepherds. Well, I’m a shepherd. I could relate to many of those stories and what was God was talking about, separating sheep from goats, being nomads and following the sheep wherever they went,” he recalled about the class.

“When I was growing up, we ran sheep on the farms in the wintertime because it was too cold up north, and in the summertime, we would go with the sheep and live up north in Seligman for the summer, so it was back and forth,” added Deacon Echeverria. “So, I could relate a lot to some of those stories in the Bible about why God calls Himself the Good Shepherd. It really brought that alive to me.”

The future deacon and his wife began attending St. Andrew in the late 1990s, and they had their marriage convalidated — meaning it not only received a blessing from the Church, but Ram and Monique made a new act of consent following the requirements

for marriage as laid out by the Catholic Church.

Deacon Ram’s parents — who had been lukewarm Catholics — also began attending St. Andrew. His mother involved herself in the church’s environment ministry. Before she passed away in 2010, she encouraged her son to consider the diaconate.

“I was like, ‘You’re crazy. Deacon? Me? If they knew what I did ...,’” he recalled. “But the sheep business came to an end. I had to sell, and that door was closed, and God opened up the diaconate.”

In the Diocese of Phoenix, candidates are required to complete a two-year course from the Kino Catechetical Institute before being accepted into a five-year program. They also attend a monthly weekend retreat and 15 one-hour classes per semester and participate in 40-60 hours of practical service.

“It’s a combination of book learning and practical hands-on experience,” said the Rev. Mr. Doug Bogart, Associate Director of Education and Formation for the diocese’s Diaconate Office. “Deacons are ordained clergy for the Catholic Church who have committed their lives to follow Jesus as a servant to all. That is what a deacon has committed his life to, in a self-donating and self-serving way.”

During Deacon Echeverria’s formation, he also started working for St. Andrew part-time as the co-coordinator of marriage ministry, where he helps couples that are preparing for marriage in the Catholic Church. He enjoys being able to hear from couples and share with them the benefit of his experience.

I’m not an expert, but just relating with the couples, making them feel at ease,” he said. “This isn’t a process that’s going to put everyone under our thumb and wave your finger at them. It’s about meeting where they’re at and going from there because we can always improve in our faith life.”

Ram and Monique find that their past of getting married outside of the Church and later having their marriage convalidated helps couples relate to them easier.

“I felt like the couples were so much more welcoming and so open to it. We weren’t standing there preaching to them,” said

— CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

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Monique, who assisted at a marriage retreat.

"We have done marriage without God, and now with God as a sacrament, and we can tell them these are the differences, because we've been there."

Throughout the process, Monique said she's seen her husband grow in confidence. Initially, he felt out of place because his classmates included attorneys and engineers.

"The respect he had for his fellow brothers, they had the same amount of respect — if not more — for him, because he could tell a story, being in the sheep industry for 35 years.

"He has a different kind of knowledge than they have. He maybe doesn't sit at a computer and do those things, but he has real life experience," she said.

Monique recalled her husband counseling somebody over the phone and asking how he knew what to say.

"He's like, 'I don't know, babe. That was the Holy Spirit working through me,'" she said.

"He listens to people, and he really counts on the Holy Spirit to help him with his answers, and it's amazing what sometimes I see and hear and what I've witnessed."

In addition to serving in a parish, newly ordained deacons also serve in a non-parish capacity for three years.

Deacon Ram is currently serving with the Society of St. Vincent de Paul and the Aid to Women Center in Tempe.

"I really love getting to know the people out there that are suffering and hurting. I like to hear their stories and just to treat them as they ought to be treated, as human beings," he reflected of his time with St. Vincent de Paul.

"It's amazing when you have somebody to actually care, [and] getting to know them and treating them with respect and dignity, whereas people go by them every day and just kind of ignore them."

Unlike priests, deacons may be

married in the Catholic Church. They serve in worship functions such as performing baptisms, weddings and funerals, and they can proclaim the Gospel and preach homilies. They typically also have jobs in the secular world — even those who have church-related occupations, like Deacon Echeverria, do so independent of their diaconate.

"People look at deacons as what they can do. The reality is what's even more important is what a deacon is, which is the sacramental manifestation of Jesus as the Servant. They do that because of who they are," explained Deacon Bogart.

"The biggest thing about [Deacon] Ram is his uniqueness as a man of the soil. He's very connected to life in a real way. He's got a great sense of humor," added Deacon Bogart.

"He deeply loves people, loves spending time with people and serving them in whatever way."

The Rev. Teilo M. Lwande, AJ, pastor of St. Andrew, has known Deacon Echeverria since January 2016, when the former was serving as parochial vicar. The priest served as a mentor throughout the process.

"I have seen Deacon Ramsey blossom through his initial formation. He embraced his vocation to the full by letting God guide him all the way," said Father Lwande.

He encourages Catholics who've left the Church — as he had once — to find out for themselves the "why's" of the faith.

"I've seen some people here that they're not joyful. To believe in God and know what He's done for us and the gifts He's given us, you should be joyful," he said.

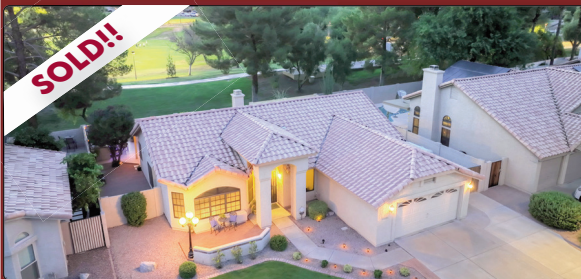
"The Church, it's not about rules. It's about love. People need to know that that the Catholic Church is all about their good. Just as Christ says, we have to die for each other."

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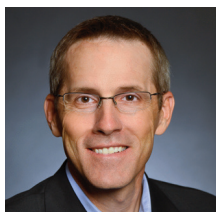
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Pollack Chabad Center to host popular rock group on Dec. 22

By Rabbi Mendy Dietsch

Times change. Not so long ago, celebrating Chanukah meant some latkes, a few spins of the dreidel, some songs and of course, the menorah, a jelly doughnut or two and some gelt, if lucky.

Now, Kyrene Corridor and other Valley families get to experience one of the most sought after music acts, 8th Day.

8th Day has been featured on rock radio stations across the U.S. and have been top sellers on the alternative rock, world music, reggae and Jewish music charts for the last decade.



The band has played hundreds of sold-out concerts across the globe, with stops in Australia, Europe, Israel, Asia, South Africa, Canada, the Caribbean Islands and the U.S. Their hit music video for "Ya'alili" has over 7 million views on YouTube and helped drive 8th Day to the top of the music charts.

They followed that up with more fan favorites like "Celebrate," "Miracle of Light" and now their hit video "Lucky".

The band got its start in Southern California, where the Marcus brothers grew up in a musical, Orthodox Jewish home.

Their first shows were for small local community events, and performing for friends and family. As their music started to attain recognition they joined up with well known local musicians; popular rock drummer Rosy Rosenquist, Grammy nominated bassist Philip Bynoe, Klezmer aficionado Leo Chelyapov and began touring in earnest in 2007.

8th Day's fresh and unique sound is complimented by their poetic lyrics and spirited vocal harmonies. What started as a fun family project, has now become a global phenomenon as their fan base continues to grow all over the world.

Tickets for the 8th Day Family Chanukah Concert are available for the show on Thursday, Dec. 22, the fifth night of Chanukah.

Doors open at 6 p.m., and the show begins at 6:30 at Pollack Chabad Center for Jewish Life, 875 N. McClintock Drive, in West Chandler.

For more information and to purchase tickets, go to www.chabadcenter.com/8thday or contact Chabad of the East Valley, 480-855-4333.

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Newly launched 'Choose Chandler' initiative encourages shopping locally — and early

It's been called the most wonderful time of the year and, as a friendly reminder, the city of Chandler encourages residents to support the nearby business community by shopping local and early.

Launched by the city's Economic Development Division, the #ChooseChandler initiative is about choosing Chandler businesses first, says one of the observance's planners.

To help celebrate the holidays while encouraging shopping local, the city's Tourism Division (Visit Chandler) is launching "12 Days of Giveaways," featuring prizes from 12 unique Chandler businesses and one grand prize.

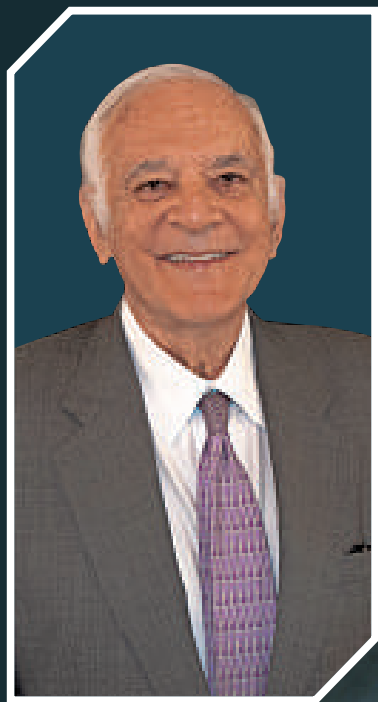
The contest will be launched on Small Business Saturday, Nov. 26, with a new giveaway every other day through Dec. 20. To enter to win, follow the @VisitChandler social media account on Instagram and be refer to the giveaway instructions on each post.

Also, says Stephanie Romero, a public information officer for Chandler, as

West Chandler and other area residents prepare to shop for loved ones and friends, they're reminded to check out a Choose Chandler local holiday gift guide at visitchandler.com/blog/post/local-chandler-holiday-gift-guide.

An extra appeal to the program, says Romero, is that each time someone makes a purchase at a local business, the transaction is not just helping that individual business but recirculating \$43 of every \$100 back into the local economy.

This, says Romero, helps stimulate jobs, improve community infrastructure and provide services to maintain the city's quality of life.



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Tempe Prep named a Top 40 national debate school

Tempe Prep is among those recognized as a Top 40 National Debate School of Honor at the 2022 National Speech and Debate Tournament, the single largest academic competition in the world.

With over 8,500 students competing this past summer in Louisville, Kentucky, the award was given to the high school teams with the best performances at each year's national tournament.

Tempe Prep seniors Connor Clark and Theresa O'Connor qualified to the tournament in March by placing in the top three of their respective events at the Arizona District Tournament.

Connor qualified in Lincoln-Douglas debate, a one-on-one debate focused on philosophical questions and broad topics. Theresa qualified in informative speaking, a 10-minute prepared speech focused on informing the audience on a student-chosen topic.

At the national event, Connor debated the topic, "Resolved: Radicalism is preferable to incrementalism to achieve social justice."

Winning every round while on the affirmation, he finished the tournament with a record of 7-3-2, placing 12th in the category and earning the

11th Best Speaker award. His success at the not only earned Tempe Prep the distinction of Top 40 National Debate School of Honor, but also automatically qualified him for the 2023 National Tournament, where he will be competing again in Lincoln-Douglas Debate.

Said Connor:

"I'm thankful for all the support the Tempe Prep community has given me, and can't wait to bring even more Tempe Prep competitors with me to Nationals next year."

Following Tempe Prep's success at Nationals this summer, the team has grown this fall with many new middle school and high school students competing in the many Speech and Debate events.

As the team grows, the group plans on building upon its trend of success—a goal that is already off to a promising start with several impressive results from the first three tournaments of this school year.

At a preliminary competition:

- Sixth-grader Joshua Dorbin placed fifth in Middle School Congressional Debate

- Seventh-grader Nicandra Acosta placed eighth in Middle-school Congressional Debate

- Junior Taylor Conley advanced to House Finals

- Senior Connor Clark, junior Dayanara Gamez, and freshman Carlos Ovando advanced to Senate Finals

At another competitive event:

- Freshman Carlos Ovando was the first-place Champion in Novice LD

- Junior Dayanara Gamez placed second in Congressional Debate, fourth in Impromptu Speaking, and advanced to quarterfinals in Varsity LD

- Senior Connor Clark advanced to quarterfinals in Varsity LD

Additionally, at another event at McClintock High School:

- Senior Connor Clark placed second in Varsity LD

- Junior Dayanara Gamez placed third in Congressional Debate and advanced to semifinals in Extemporaneous Speaking and quarterfinals in Varsity LD

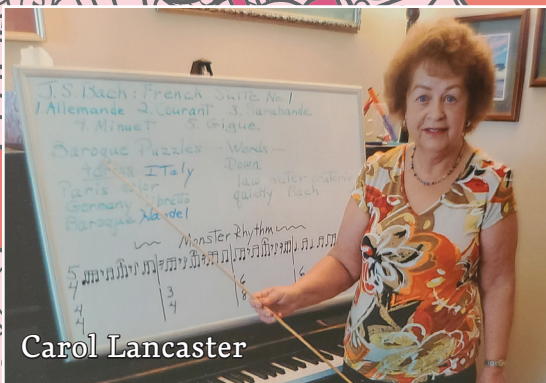
- Freshman Carlos Ovando placed third in Novice LD

- Senior Theresa O'Connor advanced to semifinals in Original Oratory

Karin Moffitt, director of college counseling, dual enrollment and AP exam coordinator/U.S. Congressional Honor Society adviser, said:

"It will surely be an exciting season as the Tempe Prep Speech and Debate team continues to earn top spots at both local and national tournaments alike."

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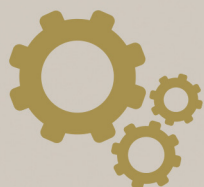
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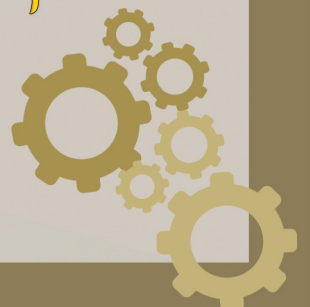
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More on Pages 14-15

Growing up in the Middle East laid a foundation for this young executive's job in D.C. with one of the world's top firms

By Don Kirkland

For those who knew Yusef Sabri during his days as an engineering student at ASU or his stint as a manager at a South Tempe office-supply store or, actually, at almost anything he's undertaken during the last 10 years, there's never been a question that he was headed for success.

In fact, the promise of him someday achieving impressive career goals was pretty much a foregone conclusion.

And not surprisingly so.

Now at the ripe age of 27, Sabri has merged his engineering know-how with what seem to be ingrained management and people skills, resulting in his advancement by world-acclaimed chip behemoth Intel a year ago to an enviable client-relations position—read: high-end sales—in Washington, D.C.

And, confirms Sabri, nothing breeds job satisfaction like being where the action takes place, building personal, one-on-one relationships with some of the nation's top decision-makers.

"A lot of people who work (in jobs like this) do so remotely, but I have an apartment within walking distance of the Capitol. I can see it out my balcony window." Most important, though, is the ability that kind of proximity gives Sabri to interact directly with clients.

"Nothing beats meeting a person, shaking their hand, observing their body language, joining them for lunch or dinner," he says. "You

can call it sales, but it's really just a good kind of business development. Helping the client solve problems and taking advantage of ways our worldwide experience can help them get the right chips for whatever opportunities they're trying to explore.

"To me, that's the ultimate advantage." And, he adds, it's been made possible by being with a good company and a great boss. "They've let me function in a way that fits with who I am; not every job encourages that."

Although his interactions with clients take place as planned get-togethers, Sabri says a surprising number of new relationships result from casual meetings—even on the streets near his apartment while he's walking his dogs, a white husky, Dakota, and a lab mix, Porsche.

"There's a local mini-market about the same distance from the Capitol as my home, and you just run into people who have the same interests you do. Amazing how those informal conversations can turn into longer-lasting connections," Sabri says.

Getting to know his way around D.C., in fact, has been one of the most pleasurable parts of his leisure time, even though acclimating to new environments was a big part of his formative years.

Born in Anaheim, Calif., Sabri moved abroad with his parents, a brother and a sister, after the parents heard about the advantages of life in the Middle East. During those years, his father held high-level jobs with Toyota and Chrysler, and the family settled into a new world—not only geographically but culturally. Out of social necessity, Yusef learned to write Arabic and speak it fluently, and

became immersed in the ways of new friends, new cultures.

While his upbringing in an altogether different geographical setting gave him a much larger worldview, he said it also exposed him to some of the traditional cultural norms that were interwoven into daily life. It was also during those days that Sabri says he learned a different set of life priorities by which others of his age seemed to function—not just having a good time but following the rules handed down by previous generations.

By the time the family returned stateside, a number of what he considers vital life lessons had been instilled in him—priorities for achieving success.

"Know what you want to do. Put yourself out there. Talk to people who have more experience than you. Prepare ahead of time. Work as hard as you can." These are among the traits that Sabri thinks helped separate him from the other candidates who had more extensive experience and were competing for the same position he now holds.

While he enjoys telling people he meets near his apartment about his work, Sabri says he has to remember that saying he's part of Intel often prompts them to ask, "CIA, DIA, Homeland Security?... "intel" being the common slang word applied to intelligence operators wherever they are.

He's learned to expect it, acknowledging that he runs into a quizzical passersby almost every day, likely even an occasional customer for one of his company's super-high-tech chips.

"If that happens, they always seem glad to see me," he laughs.



View from Sabri's apartment toward the Capitol; an outing with the dogs; connecting remotely from a nearby hangout.



A somber remembrance of those who gave their lives; photographer Hardiman steps from behind the lens to enjoy the sights.

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DIVERSIONS

Film Fare

By M.V. Moorhead

At the beginning of *The Fabelmans*, little Sammy Fabelman is taken to his first movie in New Jersey in 1952. A cautious, slightly fretful 7-year-old, Sammy (Mateo Zoryon Francis-DeFord) is not sure if he's up for the experience; he's heard the people onscreen are gigantic, and the idea worries him. So his adoring parents attempt to reassure him, from opposite sides: his practical-minded, scientific dad Bert (Paul Dano) explains how film works technically, while his whimsical pixie of a mom Mitzi (Michelle Williams) explains that movies are beautiful dreams.

The dream in question turns out to be DeMille's *The Greatest Show on Earth*, and the big train wreck scene hits Sammy's psyche like...well, like a speeding train. He tries to re-create it with the Lionel train set he gets for Hannukah, and later he films his re-creations with a home movie camera.

As you probably know, this is Steven Spielberg's autobiographical coming-of-age movie, scripted by Tony Kushner from a synopsis they worked up together, and made by the usual gang: filmed by Janusz Kaminski with a score by John Williams. The episodes that follow depict the family's life as Bert, a computer genius, chases work in the budding industry from New Jersey to Arizona, where Sammy makes war epics, to northern California, where he encounters anti-Semitic bullies.

Mitzi, who gave up a career as a concert pianist to be a wife and mom, shows signs of restlessness and depression, except when she's interacting with Bert's best friend Bennie (Seth Rogen), or when she impulsively buys a monkey, who she names Bennie. All of these strands are filtered through the growth of the relationship between Sam (Gabrielle LaBelle as an older kid) and the art and craft of moviemaking.

Even though he's one of the most commercially successful popular artists in the world, I think that Spielberg has, in a sense, been critically underappreciated for decades. After the initial, unprecedented splash he made with *Jaws*, *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*, *E.T.* and *Raiders of the Lost Ark*, he went through a slump in the late '80s and early '90s and cranked out some real bums; cloying, heavy-handed, trying-too-hard



stuff like *Hook* and *Always* that made him seem like a phony.

I'm not sure that many critics noticed the way he rediscovered and deepened and sharpened his style with the films he's made in recent years, even when their scripts have sometimes been uneven. Works that range with seemingly equal ease from crisp yet almost invisible technique like *The Post* to Hitchcockian panache like *Bridge of Spies* to flashy showmanship like *West Side Story* suggest an artist who has matured, and who might have something interesting to say about his own life.

And so he does, by turning his gaze outward. Sammy is likable enough, but he's not a rich or idiosyncratic protagonist. What's important is his point of view on Bert and Mitzi. Spielberg here dramatizes the anger and terror, the sense of betrayal, that can result when you begin to see your parents--as Sammy does through his footage of them, while editing home movies--not as stock figures in your story but as complex characters in their own.

And Dano and Williams create vivid, warm portraits of imperfect but unconditionally loving people. So does Rogen, and so does Judd Hirsch in a showcase role as a crazy visionary uncle who tells Sammy hard prophetic truths. So do Jeannie Berlin and Robin Bartlett as the Grandmas, and so do the excellent kids who play the younger sisters. So for that matter, does the monkey.

Not everything in *The Fabelmans* comes off. There's maybe a scene or two more than is needed of Williams sadly playing sad piano, and the stuff with the bullies, who look like they stepped out of Nazi poster art, feels psychologically confused and uneasy. A scene in which Sammy has a fraught encounter with a bully he's tried to flatter through moviemaking is potentially interesting for what it hints at about the director's willingness to use his art calculatingly, but it thrashes around and fails, somehow, to come into dramatic focus.

On the other hand, the scenes involving Sammy's early romantic encounters are livened up by the hilarious Chloe East as Monica, his both religiously ecstatic and sexually avid girlfriend, who sees Jesus as one more teen heartthrob. While chaste in the typical Spielbergian manner, they offer a peek at the character's, and the director's, bemused reaction to Christianity.

The movie closes with a depiction of Spielberg's familiar anecdote about his first brush with Hollywood greatness. It allows him to end the film with a self-deprecating "meta" joke that also slyly reminds us that what we've just seen, however honestly intended, is nonetheless a carefully curated official story.

The Fabelmans is rated PG-13 and plays at theaters Valleywide.



SPORTS

Aztecs ride Ackerly through 2022 season

Sports Notebook
by Alex Zener

After losing to the No. 1 ranked team, Casteel, 31-14, the last game of the season, the Aztecs football team made it into the AIA 6A State Championship playoffs as the No. 3 seed losing to No. 14 Mesa, 24-21, even with the return of their star quarterback, junior Connor Ackerly, who was injured and had not played since being sacked in the second quarter of the Cesar Chavez game on Oct. 28.

Ackerly, who was a prolific passer this season completing 66 percent of his passes averaging 246 yards and over two touchdowns a game with a total of 22 touchdowns in nine games, had already completed five of his eight passes for 150 yards and two touchdowns when he was injured in the Cesar Chavez game with more than six minutes left in the second quarter.

Ackerly's longest pass in that game was 85 yards to junior Crew Swearingen for a touchdown to put the Aztecs up 14-7.

Swearingen, the backup quarterback, took over when a limping Ackerly was helped off the field.

On his first play from scrimmage, though, Swearingen handed the ball off to senior running back Jonathan Kubat who ran 48 yards for a touchdown giving the Aztecs a 21-7 lead. They never looked back defeating the Champions, 42-28.

Losing Ackerly to injury for the last two and one-half games of the regular season not only impacted the state playoffs and the quarterback position, but the Aztecs also lost Swearingen's productivity as a receiver and running back. He caught 22 passes and scored five touchdowns before taking over as quarterback.

In the second game without Ackerly, the Aztecs held on to defeat Desert Ridge, 20-17, on Nov. 4, but the last game of the regular season on Nov. 10, against No. 1 ranked Casteel was a different ball game.

The Colts started the game strong going up 10-0 in the first quarter, but the Aztecs came back

strong in the beginning of the second quarter with a 56-yard rushing touchdown by quarterback Crew Swearingen and a point after kick by Carston Kieffer to come within three points at 10-7.

Corona's defense kept the Colts from scoring the rest of the second quarter, but Casteel received the kickoff at the beginning of the third quarter rapidly scoring two touchdowns to go up 24-7.

The fourth quarter did not start well for the Aztecs when Castell picked off a Corona pass for a pick six to lead by an almost insurmountable 24 points at 31-7.

The Aztecs were able to score in the fourth quarter when Kubat ran into the endzone for a touchdown. Kieffer's point after kick ended the game 31-14.

The Aztecs, with an 8-2 regular season record, received the No. 3 seed for the 6A State Championship playoffs where they lost, 24-21, in a game they should have won against the No. 14 seed Mesa in the first round on Nov. 18.

Corona kicked off to Mesa who went up 7-0 on their first possession halfway through the first quarter.

The Aztecs, with quarterback Ackerly back on the field, came within 10 yards of scoring but turned over the ball on downs with three minutes to go in the first quarter instead of attempting a field goal.

Mesa turned the ball over on downs their next possession and the Aztecs moved all the way down to field scoring on a 12-yard rushing touchdown by Kubat. After Kieffer's successful point-after kick, the score was tied 7-7 with seven minutes to go in the first half.

Each team turned the ball over, but the Jackrabbits took advantage of a Corona penalty to score a 47-yard field goal just before the half to go up 10-7.

Corona got the ball to start the third quarter and were as close as Mesa's 28-yard line before Mesa

intercepted a pass to eventually score their second touchdown and go up 17-7 with two minutes to go in the third quarter.

After the Aztecs second unnecessary roughness penalty, the Jackrabbits recovered their own onside kick and went on to score another touchdown and go up 24-7.

Corona rallied in the fourth quarter and was able to score a 15-yard rushing touchdown by Kubat early in the fourth quarter to come within two scores, 24-14.

With three minutes to go in the game, Corona scored a passing touchdown from Ackerley to junior Zuri Glenn to come within a field goal, 24-21.

The Aztecs recovered their own onside kick and was able to get as far as Mesa's 35-yard line with one minute to go but facing a fourth down. Corona missed the field goal, so Mesa took over on downs and ran out the clock to win 24-21.

Ackerley passed for 275 yards with senior Bennett Matsler catching nine passes for 111 of those yards, but the Aztecs were missing their leading receiver, sophomore Raiden Vines-Bright who in nine games had caught 42 passes for a total of 761 yards and nine touchdowns.

The Aztecs ended the 2022 season with an 8-3 overall record and 4-0 in the 6A Central region honoring their 20 seniors at the last home game, Oct. 28, against Cesar Chavez.

Among the senior honorees, who had an impact on offense, were running back Jonathan Kubat who scored 11 touchdowns carrying the ball 154 times for 922 yards.

Running back Jovin Gomez carried the ball 48 times for a total of 134 yards and four touchdowns, in addition to three receptions, in the 10 games he played.

Senior wide receiver Bennett Matsler caught 27 passes for 377 yards and three touchdowns playing in eight games.

Owen Janssen only played in two games but caught six passes for 123 yards and one touchdown while kicker Carston Kieffer kicked off 55 times for

a total of 3474 yards in addition to hitting 55 point-after kicks and scoring one rushing touchdown for a total of 61 points.

Playing defense, free safety Aalijah Burn lead the team in both solo tackles, with 23, and total tackles, with 71 while middle linebacker Ryne Cook was next with 13 solo and 62 total tackles.

Jovin Gomez not only played offense but defense with 11 solo tackles and 46 total tackles while offensive linebacker Tristan Shafer had 11 solo and 42 total tackles.

Defensive tackle Matthew Orthmann had 38 total tackles, defensive end Jedidiah Maurer had 33 total tackles and cornerback Marcel McKay had 11 solo and 35 total tackles playing in seven games.

The Aztecs would not have been so successful this season without the help of their senior defensive tackles Keona Peat, Trey Fanene, and Jake Carbajal in addition to wide receiver Myles Larsen, middle linebacker Slater Rubio, cornerback Jacobo Castillo, cornerback Isaiah Cayce, tackle Bobby Whetstine, and tackle Skylar Interpreter.

Cross Country

Corona del Sol's boys and girls cross-country teams both finished sixth at the AIA Sectional 5,000 Meters Div I Southeast meet on Nov. 2 at Crossroads Park and each team competed against over 30 schools at the AIA Div I State Cross Country Championship on Nov. 12 at Cave Creek Golf Course.

Corona had three seniors finish in the top 20 out of the 102 runners at the Southeast Sectional with senior Tyler Tisinger crossing the finish line in 8th place with a time of 17:00.5.

Senior Gabriel Gonzales came in 10th with a time of 17:07.2 and senior Andrew Davies-Boerner was 20th.

The last four finishers for the Aztecs were sophomore Henry Yazzie, junior Stephen Brown, senior Diego Frausto, and junior Evan Edwards.

The state championship course appeared to be a more difficult course because the timing across the

board is much slower for all runners.

The Aztec boys team had seven runners finish the 5,000-meter race at the state championships with Gonzales the top finisher coming in 45th out of 157 runners with a time of 17:24.7.

Next was Tisinger, followed by Brown, junior Sean Waters, Yazzie, Andrew Davies-Boerner and senior Grant Murad.

The top finisher for the Aztecs girls team at the Southeast Sectional was junior Paige Davies-Boerner in 11th position out of 87 runners with a time of 21:19.1.

Corona's next three finishers were all freshman: Addison Stewart in 28th place; Anya Halton, 34th; and Aubrianna Horton in 36th.

Corona's last two runners to cross the finish line were sophomore Hailey Roth and freshman Gracie Murad.

Corona's girls team, likewise, had seven runners finish the state championship race with sophomore Sloan Guess the first Aztec to cross the finish line in 33rd place out of 149 runners with a time of 20:52.1.

Stewart was next for Corona finishing in 53rd place with a time of 21:40.4 followed by Halton and Horton. Next was junior Theresa Zurga, Roth, and junior Mia Brannon.

Marcos de Niza had five racers finish the Mens 5,000 Meters Div II East sectional meet on

Senior Luke Sieveking was the top finisher for the Padres coming in 36th out of 103 runners with a time of 19:08.2.

Junior Michael Richardson was the second Padre to cross the finish line to take 70th place with a time of 21:09.0 while junior Jayden Copeland was the 92nd runner to finish. He was followed by senior Jesus Angulo, 98th, and sophomore Luis Montufar was 100th.

The Padres had three runners compete in the Womens 5,000 Meters Div II East sectional meet with freshman Isabella Brown-Cho as the top finisher in 81st place with fellow teammate freshman Ashlynn Sieveking, 82nd and sophomore Sophia Smith in 84th place.



Barro leads first successful season

Story and photos by Andrew Lwowski

Corona del Sol made its presence known in 2022 under its first year with coach Jake Barro as the helm. The Aztecs competed with some of the top programs in 6A while ending the season 8-3. Corona was in the discussion as an Open Division team, but ultimately finished as the 3 seed in the 6A playoff bracket.

The Aztecs started and ended its season with the Mesa Jackrabbits. The Aztecs beat the Jackrabbits week one of the regular season, 24-10. Corona faced the 14 seeded Jackrabbits for the opening round, but this time, it just wasn't Corona's night. The Aztecs were upset in a heartbreaker, 24-21.

"They came right at us," Barro said. "Sometimes in football you just bet beat, and this is one of those nights. They were a real similar team to week one, but they got better – we got better too – but its just one of those games."

The Aztecs boosted a special group on offense, led by quarterback Connor Ackerley and running back Jonathan Kubat. The explosive plays were sparked by the new play calling of Barro and

executed to perfection by his offense.

However, as part of the game, injuries caught up with the Aztecs as their sight for the 6A title was cut short. Barro made a statement during his first year as coach for Corona, asserting dominance over rivals and competing with the best of the best.

Now, he looks to grow from his first season.

"We learned a lot this year," Barro said.

"We need to be a little bit better strength and conditioning wise, little more mentally tough, more discipline, and that's what we can build. The base is there. The talent is there. You take the things to improve on and the positives to build on and I really think we can turn this into the best place to play football."



The Padres had that historic season end of as they fell to Thunderbird of Phoenix in the opening round of the 4A playoffs. Marcos de Niza, the 3 seed, couldn't close out its season how it had hoped, but the season was a victory the Padre program and community should be proud of. The Padres won their region, Desert Sky, for the first time in program history as well as being the only team in the 4A conference with at least nine wins. Coach Anthony Figueroa said his special seniors helped direct the program in the right direction, and with many stars returning for 2023, the Padres have a lot to look forward to.— Wrangler News photo

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Tempe Coalition hosted its annual event to raise awareness and prevent drug and alcohol abuse for students in the Tempe Union and Kyrene school districts. Community members from surrounding neighborhoods, faculty and parents attended, while one student from each high school, and middle schools, were nominated for setting an example within the community. Coaches, school resource officers and teachers nominated one student from each school. Some award winners faced incredible setbacks in life were praised for not letting that deter them from bringing a smile to class everyday. Others were nominated for their communal impact through volunteering.

— Wrangler News photos by Andrew Lwowski

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Tempe Lakes shows off its quality of life durability during 50-year celebration

By Don Kirkland

If ever an award was proposed to describe the longest surviving buzzword for a local neighborhood, the “posh” Tempe Lakes would have been the hands-down winner. In fact, even though the community is celebrating its 50th anniversary, the “poshness” referred to time and again since the late 1960s seems to have maintained its relevance—old, we suppose by some standards, but with a prestige that has never lost its prowess of identity.

Now, for more than a year, volunteer planners have been laying plans for a celebration that could adequately pay tribute to a community that has been referred to in media reports and by knowledgeable Valley observers as having one of the state’s most desirable, and still sought after, lifestyles.

Christine Baldanza, herself a longtime resident who has been the paid HOA director for the last 15 years, notes this year’s celebration not only salutes the community’s historical relevance but the palpable appeal of its original Southern California vibe for which it was envisioned.

Originally, the idea of a lakefront-oriented community tapping into the popular Mission Viejo style of construction was introduced by developer Arnold Dahlberg, who pursued the concept to fruition during a two-year period starting in the late 1960s. As the community began to take form, word got out, and such early residents as John McCain and other notables began to populate the upscale homes, many based on 1970s prices in the low- to mid-\$30,000 range.

As more homes became occupied,

word of the people-friendly environment, lush green landscaping, heated Junior Olympics-size pool, and enviable clubhouse offering a multitude of activities began to spread. It was also in those early days, 45 years ago, that Dan Arredondo, through his impressive swim-coaching reputation, began to assemble teams that continue to capture competitions Valley-wide—now, however, guided by his likewise recognizable son Rocky.

Other signs of both continuity and progress remain.

In a rapid-fire compilation of what’s going on at The Lakes these days, Baldanza lists new pickleball and racquetball courts, modern-day cardio and weight equipment—plus, plus, plus.

There also are a number of community groups, including a women’s club that dates back many years, and events such as annual Easter egg hunts, a Halloween Boo-Bash and Spring Fling, both with live bands, a concert in the park and lots more.

As to livability, Baldanza says The Lakes remains a melting pot, of course, for multi-generational involvement, with new families moving in regularly, in some cases next door to residents who have been there virtually since Day One.

Now, as always, the Lakes Homeowners Assn. is self-managed, with a fulltime staff including Baldanza, clubhouse assistants, landscapers and maintenance workers. With 1,200 homes—single-family and condominium-style, the HOA remains financially stable and works hard to ensure that the community retains the same image it always has: family friendly, multi-generationally diverse and, of course, as posh as ever.





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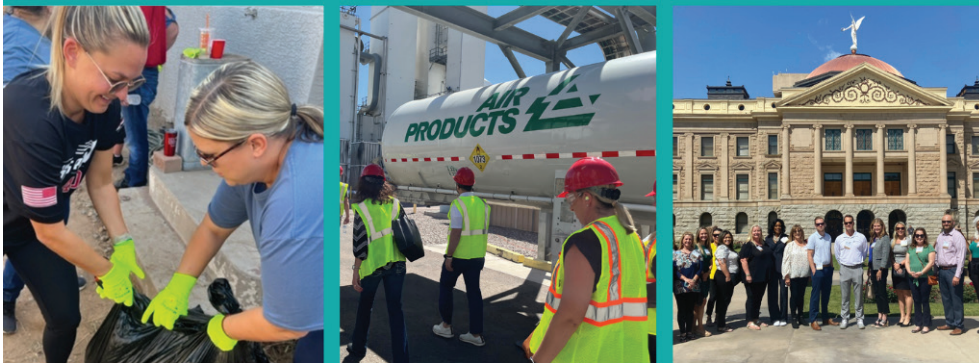


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