

FEB 25 - MAR 10, 2023  
VOL 33, NO 4



# WRANGLER NEWS



## SIGNS OF THE TIMES

Chandler Mayor Kevin Hartke, perhaps fearing some of the 320-plus guests at his State of the City address might get lost in the maze of 2022 accomplishments he outlined, found a creative way to aim them in the right direction.

More State of the City, Pgs. 16-17

City of Chandler photo by Billy Hardiman



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# Sports district opponents scan 'fine print' of ballot proposal

So. Tempe bookstore owner  
among those airing concerns



Ron Tapscott, standing, right, encouraged audience members to demand that development be overseen by 'reputable' planners

Story and photo by Andrew Lwowski

**P**ro and con viewpoints on the Phoenix Coyotes hockey team's proposed relocation to an area near downtown Tempe are reaching a higher pitch than in previous weeks, resulting in groups staking out their positions through meetings, online discussion sites and high-profile public sessions.

Most recent of those was a meeting held at Arizona Community Church, organized by residents opposed to the project.

As background, the team is looking to relocate to downtown Tempe, taking up the northeast corner of Rio Salado and Priest and joined by an entertainment district that would allow for a new arena for the NHL team as well as restaurants, shopping and entertainment that are being described as a way to rejuvenate the landfill that currently holds the space.

Tempe City Council voted 7-0 to have a referendum for the \$2.1 billion development project, which is coming up on May 16.

In the meantime, Tempe 1st, a grass roots, all-volunteer, bipartisan coalition of Tempe residents,

opposes the propositions.

The Coyotes currently play in Arizona State University's Mullet Arena while they wait for city of Tempe Props 301, 302 and 303 to be acted upon by voters before moving forward.

The Coyotes, who previously had an arena in Glendale, were forced to relocate after they were threatened with being locked out of the city-owned arena for what were said to be late and missing tax payments.

If passed, Prop 301 would allow for the proposed 46-acre plot of land to change from "commercial" to "mixed-use," opening it for a professional sports franchise and entertainment.

Prop 302 would allow voters to either approve or reject the zoning request for the plotted land, and Prop 303 would allow voters to accept or reject the sale of the land to Bluebird Development, LLC.

All three would need to pass for any progress on development to continue.

At a Feb. 16 meeting at Arizona Community Church, members of Tempe 1st indicated they have been reviewing the fine print of the various measures, and are concerned with the effects of the new corporate development would have on both Tempe residents and ASU.

The biggest issue, according to Tempe 1st, is that Tempe would face deterioration to the area's quality of life. Downtown Tempe, specifically Rio Salado, they say, accommodates one of the busiest intersections in Tempe, with cars often taking shortcuts through nearby neighborhoods.

Alongside is the Loop 202 South Mountain Freeway, which only offers two exits through the immediate area.

Tempe officials have said that Tempe would be able to handle the increased traffic anticipated for the Coyotes' 41 home games and traveling fans during the season, but there are no plans to alleviate the pre-existing congestion.

With the potential influx of traffic through downtown, large corporate businesses that would follow also would be affected. Gayle Shanks of the Changing Hands bookstore said she faced this dilemma first hand and fears the same could result from the Coyotes' presence.

Shanks' store opened in 1974 on Fifth Street, she said, and then moved onto Mill Avenue in 1978. During the 1980s when she was negotiating for a larger space, she said, the developer rented the larger space to a large chain store.

— Continued on next page



“The developers downtown, with the blessing of the redevelopment director in Tempe (at that time), decided that a Borders (bookstore) was a good option for the downtown,” Shanks said. “A lot of chains (moved in) after (Tempe operated as) a very small business-oriented town for years and years,” she said.

When the chains moved in, the independent and locally owned businesses moved out, according to Shanks, and eventually so did the chains.

That left a lot of empty space, and had ASU not needed more room and ended up turning that into office occupancy, the downtown would’ve been a ghost town, she said.

Shanks noted that her personal experience has left her looking at downtown development “very differently” than some fellow Tempe residents.

As to other notable issues, some of the group attending the session said that additional housing has been proposed, but it would not fit the demographic of downtown Tempe’s younger residents.

Housing prices would skyrocket, they said, making the area unaffordable for college students and those who are working for minimum wage, which Shanks said would also affect South Tempe.

“I’m all for development,” Shanks added. “But I’m all for sustainable development.”

Sustainability was another key focus point of the Tempe 1st group.

Some told the group that Coyotes’ owner and businessman Alex Meruelo does not have a sound history of payments, citing Glendale among them, and Tucson, with the Coyotes farm system as another.

According to comments from audience members, Meruelo gained his billionaire status as a gambling mogul from Las Vegas, with an estimated net worth of \$14.5 billion.

However, it was noted, debt likely would cut into what financial resources he may have.

One audience member noted that, while Coyotes planners have said Tempe residents will pay no taxes for the privately funded entertainment district, it was reported that Tempe will implement a special taxation district to impose taxes on Tempe businesses.

Roughly \$700 million in Maricopa County taxes would be collected for public funding, it was suggested, and Meruelo would see a nearly 500% larger tax share than the city of Tempe.

Additionally, an 8- and 30-year Government

Property Lease Excise Tax worth \$495 million would be created, it was said, with the result that Tempe infrastructure would lose, adding stress on police and fire departments as well as public services.

Ron Tapscott, a Tempe resident for 22 years, said that Tempe needs development, but “we need reputable business people” doing development.

“The history of this gentleman (Meruelo) is very clearly a history of people not responsible for their bills and for their involvement in the community,” Tapscott said.

They’re inaccurate about the tax subsidies that are going in the project, Tapscott said.

“The GPLET is outstanding — a 30-year GPLET for this project — and they’re siphoning off a number of sales taxes and other taxes that go to residents and infrastructure.”

A point of agreement was that the plot of land being considered needs to be developed, but by someone who cares about Tempe.

Tempe 1st officials say the group will continue to host meetings until the vote in May.

In the meantime, those interested can learn more about the group’s position by visiting [Tempe1st.com](http://Tempe1st.com).

## Create the Tempe Entertainment District

By Neil Giuliano / More commentary Pg. 19

I’m a 48-year Tempe resident, a passionate advocate for economic opportunity, diversity and quality of life issues. For fourteen of those forty-eight years I served on city council; ten as mayor. I haven’t spoken out on city issues much since I left office in 2004, but now I am pleasantly compelled to do so.

Props 301, 302 and 303 will remove a 1950’s environmental liability, create a new multi-use development on the border of our city and bring jobs and income while fulfilling the private sector vision for the very west end of the Tempe Rio Salado project.

Every major project is complicated and challenging, and our current city leaders have created a very positive financial deal for Tempe taxpayers, with a partner willing to heavily invest in the long-term betterment of the city. We have the opportunity to turn what is now a landfill at Rio Salado and Priest into a \$2.1 billion, entirely privately-financed entertainment district with office, residential and retail uses. This is a transformative moment for our community. It would turn a graveyard of garbage and forever environmental headache into a clean, community-gathering space

and economic engine.

The development will be anchored by a state-of-the-art new multi-purpose arena, housing the Arizona Coyotes, providing a new state-of-the-art facility to stage concerts, all-star games, rodeos, youth sports and a range of other events. It’s exactly the size venue that our city deserves and needs to attract conferences and conventions to fill the new hotel rooms in downtown and on this site. And to correct the misinformation: the arena is not a major stadium or ballpark; it’s the size and scope that is right for Tempe.

But this ballot issue is about much more than an arena. The leadership of the city and project developers understand that their shared vision is to build a vibrant, dynamic people-focused place, anchored by a major sports franchise with residential, hotel office space, a range of retail opportunities and a thriving new “Restaurant Row”, which is something we really need for residents and visitors alike.

As a former elected official who balanced city budgets, I am very pleased all of the funds to finance this project are coming from private sources. There is zero general tax increase to Tempe residents. Zero. Not one dime of public money is at risk to develop a project that will create nearly 7,000 sustainable, good-paying jobs and bring a massive financial windfall for our city to help fund municipal services into the future: affordable housing, park improvements, public

safety, emergency medical response and more.

Many forget, in the wake of tremendous success, that we faced strong opposition to the development of Tempe Town Lake. It was called, “insane,” “a terrible idea” and dismissed as “never going to work.” Critics gripped the podium for hours at council meetings and explained how the project would ruin Tempe’s quality of life, no one would ever build anything next to the “fake lake”, you’re creating a “boondoggle” for the future.

Well, as we all know, the critics were wrong. There are cyclists and joggers, families strolling and a Tempe Performing Arts Center that charms thousands of eventgoers annually. We have lakefront office buildings filled with workers, and thousands now call the reclaimed area their home.

This new project is a similar once-in-a-generation opportunity. We can see it – because we’ve done it before with solid due diligence, the right deal and the right partners. It’s not just about professional hockey; it’s about making our wonderful city all that it can be for those who will follow us.

And so I encourage you, your Tempe friends and neighbors, to join me in supporting Props 301, 302 and 303. And to once again stand with city leaders who have put forth an inspiring vision with amazing benefits.

*Neil Giuliano was Tempe's four-term mayor, from 1994 to 2004.*

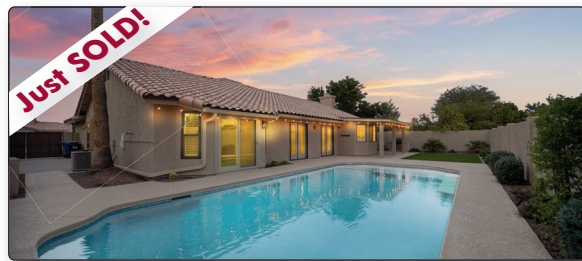


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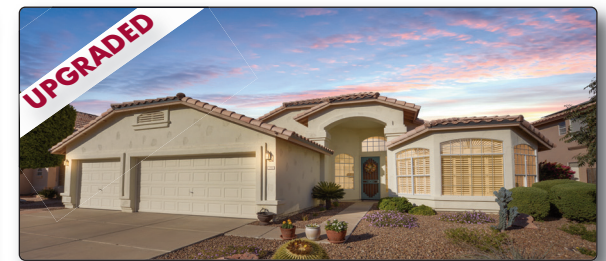
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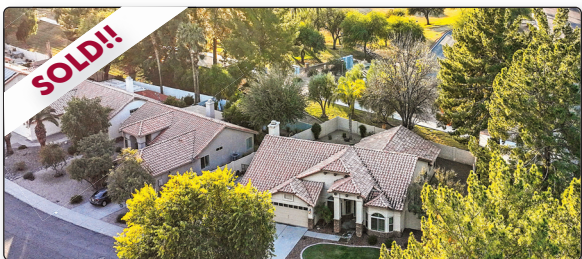
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## Brewery pair in high spirits for fun partnership Downtown Chandler to host bourbon, beer, BBQ fest

Story and photo by Andrew Lwowski

**T**wo of Downtown Chandler's biggest breweries are joining forces once again for a two-day Beer, Bourbon and Barbeque festival on March 3 from 4 to 11 p.m. and March 4 from noon to 11.

It will be the first year both companies will headline the event, featuring brews, top-tier barbeque and family fun.

The idea arose during Oktoberfest when the two owners first met in collaboration. San Tan Brewery's Jamie Hoffman and Pedal Haus' Chris Purcell, along with The Perch, were originally brought together by the Downtown Chandler Community Partnership in October 2022.

Eventually, through discussions, Hoffman and Purcell found two was the ideal number.

We thought, 'Let's give it a try,' Purcell said about Oktoberfest.

The positive experience led to the two coming together once again. "We were like, 'this is great, let's do this again,'" Purcell said with a laugh. "This was fun, this footprint really worked," added Hoffman.

Hoffman also noted that San Tan helped get a previous beer and barbeque festival, which is now run by 102.5 KNIX, off the ground years ago. But he is looking to bring the festival back to Downtown on a smaller scale.

With the experience from Oktoberfest, the two say they are excited to produce an even better event.

"The feedback we got from other businesses was, they were packed," Hoffman said. "Any time we can bring in--especially non-Chandler residents --to downtown to see what we have to offer is good.

"I mean, yes, of course we want to make money in the event, but I don't think that's the driving

force for doing these things. It's really about that exposure for not just us, but for Downtown Chandler."

The complementary styles of each brewery's beer lineup and menus are just another reason why the two work so well together, San Tan produces hoppy IPAs while Pedal Haus specializes in crisp lagers.

Both teams work well together and both have common goals and values, Purcell said, which makes the end product great for the community.

"This has the potential to be the point of difference to the bigger one (102.5 KNIX)," Hoffman said.

"We can make it about really good craft beer and craft cocktails and really good craft food.

"And I think that fits Downtown Chandler."



March 2023



## ▶ Tempe This Week: *the podcast*



### Tempe This Week podcast launches March 3

**T**he City of Tempe is launching its first-ever podcast. It is geared toward providing you everything you need to know about local news, bands, food, events and people.

Basically, we're creating Tempe know-it-alls, one episode at a time! Episodes will be short and a new one will be posted every Friday starting March 3.

Win a Tempe swag bag valued at more than \$300, including a stay at the new Omni ASU Tempe Hotel – visit [tempe.gov/TempeThisWeek](http://tempe.gov/TempeThisWeek) on March 3 to find out how!

## YOUR budget. YOUR input.

**Y**ou asked for more investment in sustainability and conservation programs. An additional \$1 million in funding was dedicated to programs that support the implementation of the city's Climate Action Plan.

**Y**ou asked for better roads and sidewalks. The city invested over \$76 million over the next several years for road improvements.

**Make your voice heard – let us know what matters most to you.**

Take the budget survey: spend a theoretical \$100 on Tempe programs and services through March 6.

Details at [tempe.gov/BudgetPlan](http://tempe.gov/BudgetPlan).

## New rules for short-term-rental owners go into effect during 1st week of March

Changes to short-term property regulations go into effect March 6. Among the new regulations are requirements for property owners to:

- Obtain a business license and pay an annual \$250 license fee.
- Notify all residential properties adjacent to, directly and diagonally

across the property of their emergency contact information.

- Conduct a sex offender background check on the person

booking the short-term rental. More information is at [tempe.gov/ShortTermRentals](http://tempe.gov/ShortTermRentals). Email [license@tempe.gov](mailto:license@tempe.gov) with questions.

## Apply today for Tempe PRE



### Looking for an affordable, full-day preschool?

Apply today for Tempe PRE, the city's high-quality preschool program open to families who live in Tempe and surrounding cities.

Free and paid tuition options are available depending on eligibility. Tempe PRE is located on school campuses in the Tempe Elementary School District and the school year will begin July 19.

The program accepts children ages 3 and 4 who are fully potty-trained.

Students must turn 3 by July 19 to be eligible.

Families whose children will turn 3 between July 20 - Aug. 31 may still apply now and wait for their applications to be processed after their child turns 3 and space becomes available.

Learn more: [tempe.gov/TempePRE](http://tempe.gov/TempePRE).

## Tempe, you're talented!

The Tempe Public Library is proud to present the first Tempe's Got Talent! Whether you are a musician, singer, dancer, poet, performing artist, ballerina, magician, ventriloquist, you name it – we want to see your talent.

All ages are welcome. Video auditions will be accepted Feb. 1 through March 15 at [tplprograms@tempe.gov](mailto:tplprograms@tempe.gov).

All entrants must have a Tempe library card.

The final competition will be held Saturday, April 22, from 1-3 p.m., at the Tempe History Museum. Learn more and view entry guidelines at [tempepubliclibrary.org](http://tempepubliclibrary.org).

[www.tempe.gov](http://www.tempe.gov)

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## COMMENTARY

### Tempe Entertainment District proposal ignores need for affordable housing

As long-time Tempe residents, we are in favor of appropriate development in Tempe that will benefit our community.

Because Tempe has a limited amount of undeveloped land, however, we should prioritize projects that both 1) meet the city's needs, and 2) are financially sound.

The proposed Tempe Entertainment District (TED) project meets neither requirement.

Tempe has a pressing need for increased affordable housing. While TED promises to build housing, it does not prioritize low-cost housing, is vague about how many multiple-family units will be built, and targets most of the proposed new housing to be constructed in phases three and four of the project, 15-20 years after the project's initiation.

Tempe needs affordable housing right now.

Equally important, the proposed project is not financially sound.

The developer, Alex Meruelo, ...has never completed a project of this size.

Tempe will offer Meruelo huge tax breaks and divert some of our city taxes to help him pay for the land purchase and landfill remediation.

TED will increase Tempe's expenses, concerning public safety and traffic, for years to come.

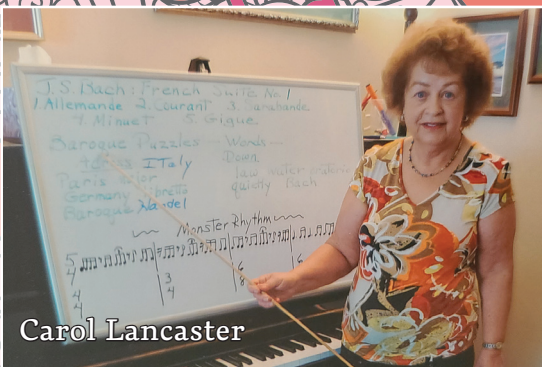
The "benefits" of TED – based on 30-year projections – are embarrassingly meager (e.g. \$50,000 to the Tempe Union High School Foundation and 3,000 square feet of free office space for the City of Tempe are two such examples). Much of the timing of TED is vague and includes zero consequences for not finishing the job.

Tempe residents shouldn't be left holding the bag for a development that requires the investment of our tax dollars, doesn't meet the needs of our city, and, given Meruelo's track record, is not guaranteed to pan out.

We will be voting NO on propositions 301, 302, and 303 and urge our Tempe neighbors to vote no as well.

— Harriet and Andrew Smith,  
Tempe

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### Voter registration for May 16 special election

The city of Tempe is holding a May 16 special election with three referenda propositions.

As a ballot-by-mail election, all eligible voters will be mailed a ballot beginning April 19.

An informational pamphlet will also be mailed to households of

registered voters within the city beginning April 11. The last day to register to vote in this election is April 17.

Check your voter registration status by visiting [BeBallotReady.Vote](https://BeBallotReady.Vote) or by calling 602-506-1511.

For more information on the election, visit [tempe.gov/election](https://tempe.gov/election) and [tempe.gov/TempeEntertainmentDistrict](https://tempe.gov/TempeEntertainmentDistrict).



# Ward Walston: Baker, family man extraordinaire — 1961-2023

By Don Kirkland

In a business like ours, especially one that's been around this long, the compendium of "favorites" becomes quite lengthy.

And, as far as Wrangler News is concerned, the names we've added to that list over the years have become a Who's Who of people we look forward to hearing from, confiding in and having nearly everyday contact with.

So it is enormously saddening to learn of, and report to our readers, the passing of Ward Walston, who headed the family of four—himself, his wife Leslie and sons George and Floyd—who became the seemingly made-for-TV family whose collaborative efforts made Great Harvest not only the go-to destination for hearty, fresh-

from-the-oven baked goods and breakfast/luncheon treats but a place where one could always find a cordial welcome, a friendly ear and a sense that the family farm of old was as close as the neighborhood grocery.

Ward passed away during the afternoon of Saturday, Feb. 18, at Banner Desert Hospital, following an heroic battle with cancer that moved to his brain at a speed more like a runaway freight train than a head cold that seemed to linger longer than it should.

Ward's road to the end started only a few months ago, with some bothersome health issues that we all assumed were at least partially attributable to the hours he spent overseeing the bakery's production of mouthwateringly delicious muffins, bread, cookies, sandwiches—all the kinds of delicacies that drew hundreds upon hundreds of customers back for more.

For Ward, baking was a routine that started every day before 2 a.m. and lasted until every roll, pastry and slice of bread had been loaded into the oversize ovens and ultimately placed onto big metal racks to await the day's arrival of hungry customers.

Born on a farm in Montana and eventually receiving a degree in electrical engineering, Ward moved to California where he met his wife-to-be, Leslie, and eventually fathering the couple's sons George and Floyd.

Their opportunity to form a family business came in 2008, when they took over—and for 15 years operated—one of the area's best loved places of business and customer enjoyment.

As of now the remaining family members are pondering what the future holds.

No date has yet been set for services, but will be announced when it is finally decided.



— Wrangler News photo by Don Kirkland



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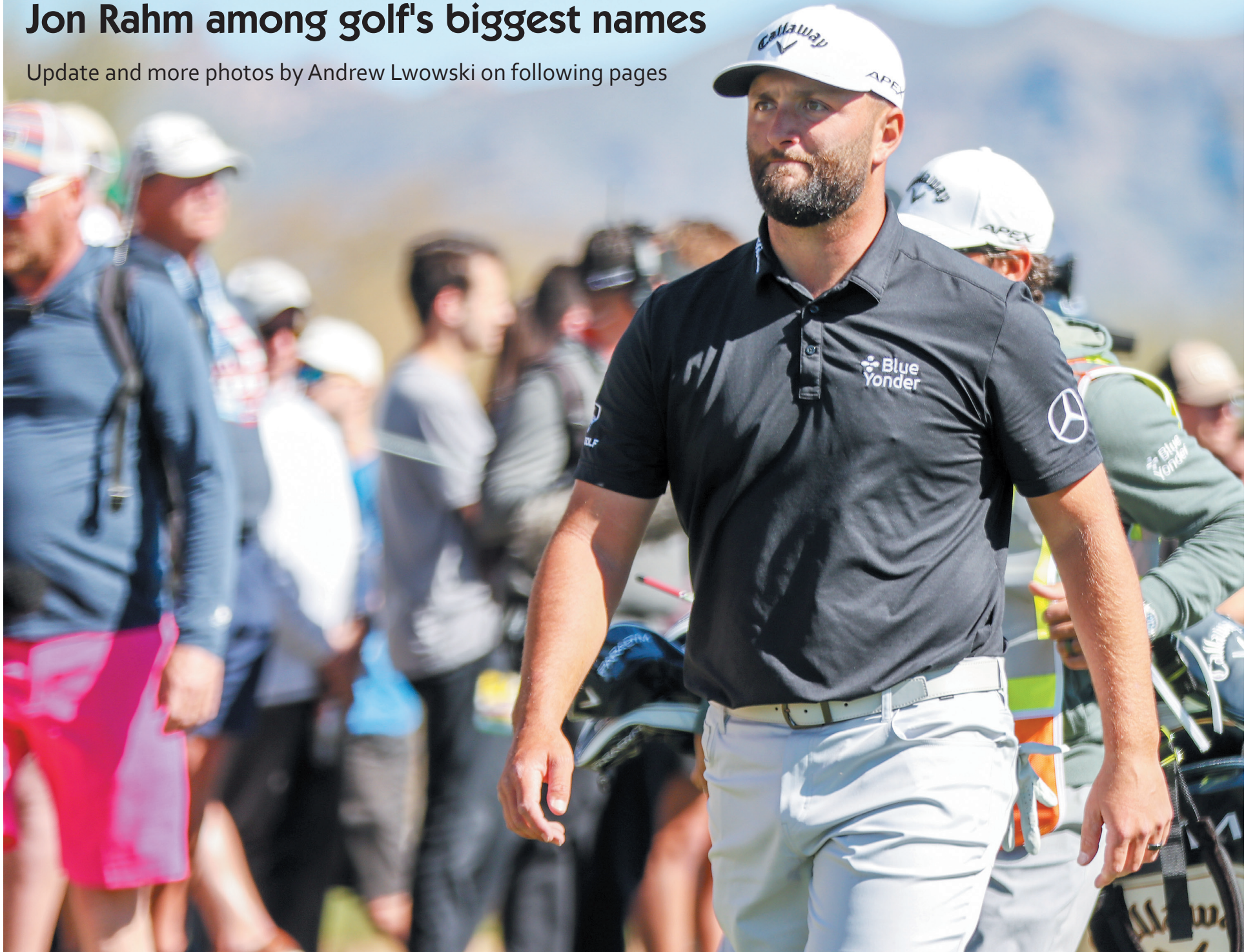




# FROM ASU TO WORLD #1

## Jon Rahm among golf's biggest names

Update and more photos by Andrew Lwowski on following pages





## HOMETOWN FAN FAVORITE ♦ ♦ ♦

... and Arizona State golf graduate Jon Rahm made his seventh start at TPC Scottsdale's Waste Management Phoenix Open Feb. 9 through 12. Often known as 'The People's Open' or 'The Greatest and Greenest Show on Grass,' it has built the reputation of being a major social gathering centered around golf's biggest names, including Rahm.

The 28-year-old and No. 1 in the Official World Golf Rankings duelled with Scottie Scheffler and Nick Taylor to earn his first victory at the Phoenix Open, but fell short on Sunday.

Rahm finished -3 in the final round, -14 overall, behind Scottie Scheffler, who became the first to repeat in Scottsdale since 2016-17. While Rahm came up short, he carried hundreds of rowdy and passionate fans with him over the course of the tournament.

Rahm reclaimed his World No. 1 status after his win at the Genesis Invitational on Feb. 19.

**Coverage and photos  
by Andrew Lwowski**









# Chandler's rise a multifaceted success story

## COVER STORY

City of Chandler photos by Billy Hardiman



**W**est Chandler residents joined their citywide neighbors as Mayor Kevin Hartke traced the city's past, present and future during an inspiring State of the City address Nov. 16 at Chandler Center for the Arts.

Noting that the city has grown since its establishment more than 100 years ago by relying on leaders "who have always thought outside the box," Hartke listed what he identified as major milestones.

Due recognition for their contributions, Hartke said, were a number of noteworthy business entrepreneurs and other future-focused planners. Among those he highlighted was Rogers Corp. for having paved the way in 1967 for a city that has become a technical and manufacturing hub.

Additionally, he said innovation has been key to many of the city's successes, among them the growth in stature of law enforcement, its leadership and its staff.

"Through the decades, few professions have had such a profound impact on the day-to-day quality of life for Chandler residents as police and fire," he said.

In that regard, Hartke related the city's origins, dating back to 1920 when what was then the Town of Chandler was only eight years old. It was the year the town marshal position was established—the only law enforcement officer, along with an 18-person volunteer fire department, followed in 1936 by "The Old Dodge," the first mechanized fire vehicle that still appears in occasional city parades.

By the 1960's, Hartke added, 14 police officers and a handful of paid firefighters constituted the city's commitment to protecting its citizenry.

Today, he pointed out, there are 362 authorized,

sworn positions and 177 civilian employees, with more than 50 new employees having been hired last year alone.

Other areas where change has been highly visible include the area of water services, which he said has been "a boiling point" in recent months.

Arizona is now in a Tier 2 drought, which could result in water challenges for some cities, he said, noting however that Chandler is ready for the challenge.

As to business growth, Hartke pointed to strategic vision by the city's leadership as having positioned the city well for future economic growth.

Among the notable contributors to those advancements during 2022, Hartke offered an impressive listing:

- Edwards, EMD Electronics, Advantest and Stryker will build new manufacturing facilities in Chandler;
- Yield Engineering Systems announced a new technology center in the Price Corridor; and
- Viavi expanded its presence, adding office space for its global headquarters.

The increase in economic vitality is also apparent in last year's tourism numbers, according to Hartke.

The city welcomed a record number of business and leisure travelers in 2022, with the Aloha transformed into a boutique motel, marking a successful redevelopment project, among others.

In all, said Hartke, there were 27 companies that located, expanded or chose to continue operating in Chandler in 2022.

And that, he said, results in more than 4,200 projected jobs in the coming years.

Education provided another benchmark.

One of Chandler's greatest strengths is its highly well-schooled population, with educational attainment levels continuing to increase. Evidence, he said, is seen in a growth of 42 percent of residents having bachelor's degrees to 47 percent.

Just within the past five years the city went from 42% of residents having a bachelor's degree to 47%, he advised.

Schools, as part of the discussion, were also responsible for contributing to the city's talent pipeline. The University of Arizona opened a new, 14,000-square-foot facility; Grand Canyon University announced that it will be expanding its footprint in Chandler; and Chandler-Gilbert Community College continues to grow its specialized job training programs.

"So as you can see," he said, "the vitality and of our city is strong."

Also listed among Hartke's salutes to community development and commitment to growth were:

- Southside Village, which received the city's first-ever designation as a Historic Conservation District.
- The city's commitment of more than \$8.2 million in rental assistance to help counter rent increases, along with work to connect dozens of households with emergency housing vouchers to prevent homelessness.

Last year, according to Hartke, the City Council and Neighborhood Advisory Committee launched what is being called the Envision program, hosting events in Chandler neighborhoods to connect residents to staff, as well as expos and job fairs, giving neighbors a direct line to ask questions and share feedback on important city issues.

On For Our City Day, more than 1,300 volunteers spent time cleaning, painting, and weeding yards. And the Golden Neighbors program provided home repair help, food and toiletries to seniors in our community.

Although business and education form a solid foundation for Chandler, Hartke referred to parks as a cornerstone of Chandler neighborhoods, connecting them to each other through recreation, sports and social gatherings.

To ensure that the same kind of commitment can continue into the future, the City Council authorized half a million dollars to will be used for park landscaping.

Finally, Hartke emphasized that Chandler has been a melting pot of cultures and ethnicities, from such successes as the integration of Chandler High School; the election of Coy Payne, the state of Arizona's first Black mayor in 1990; to its diversity today, where all cultures and backgrounds are celebrated.

In his summary of where Chandler was and where it will go in the future, Hartke summed up even more noteworthy moments, achievements and plans for the future.

In conclusion, he said, "Chandler was...is....and will always be a place full of diversity, equity and inclusion."





**It was an occasion commemorating Chandler's history and forecasting a promising future. And, of course, producing smiles all around.**

Councilman Mark Stewart welcomes guests, left; full Council, momentarily absent longtime member Matt Orlando, below.

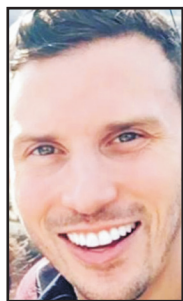
Preceding page: Local talent was on hand to brighten the evening even more





# Post-season appearance a milestone for Aztec girls basketball

Qualifying for Open Division of state playoffs



By Alex Zener

Corona's girls basketball team played in the post season for the first time in six years, thanks in part to the outstanding performance of 6-foot-6-inch Corona freshman post Callie Hinder.

Hinder, the Aztecs' leading scorer, leading rebounder and leading blocker, has had quite an impact on the team's success, providing Corona a 6-4 section record and overall 13-12 regular season record and a No. 14 ranking.

As the No. 14-ranked team, the Aztecs qualified to play in the Open Division of the state playoffs.

This year is the first time the AIA has added an Open Division, similar to football, in both girls and boys basketball.

In basketball, a team can lose in both the first and/or second round in the Open Division and then move to the regular state playoffs.

On Feb 7, the Aztecs lost in the first round of the Open Division, 32-69, against No. 4-ranked Xavier Prep.

That loss to Xavier Prep, in the first round, moved the Aztecs into the 2023 AIA Girls 6A Basketball State Championship brackets as the No. 10 seed to play Gilbert, the No. 7 seed, in the second round on Feb. 15.

Gilbert had a 16-8 lead at halftime after the Tigers play superb defense only allowing Hinder to score four points in the first half.

Hinder came out determined to make a difference in the second half, which she did, scoring 18 points for a total of 22 but unfortunately it was not enough.

Gilbert countered with a barrage of three-point shots. It seemed, at times, like the Tigers could not miss from behind the arc with four different players responsible for six treys in the third quarter alone.

The Aztecs put up a fight but ended up losing to the Tigers, 47-34, and, therefore, were eliminated from the playoffs.

The Aztecs honored their three senior players at the last home game on Feb. 2, which just happened to also be against Gilbert.

Point guard **Elizabeth Lopez** was honored

that last game. She played in 20 regular season games averaging 2.7 assists, 4.0 points, 1.8 steals and 3.2 rebounds a game during the regular season.

Shooting guard **Maddie Mitchell** as also honored. She played in all 25 regular season games averaging 9.3 points, 3.7 rebounds, 2.8 assists and 1.3 steals a game for the Aztecs.

Lastly, forward **Brielle Phelan**, who played in all 25 regular season games averaging 4.9 points, 5.9 rebounds, .9 assists and .6 steals a game was recognized.

Other members of the team who contributed to the Aztecs' success on and off the court include junior shooting guards **Ashlee Peters**, **Victoria Gomez** and **Isabella Montero**, junior guards **Amarie Garza** and **Deven Kircher**, junior power forward **Raeven Rohlsen**, junior forward **Madison Wasson**, and freshman small forward **Penelope Williams**.

Kircher played in 24 games during the regular season, averaging almost seven points, three rebounds and two steals a game, while Garza played in 23 games averaging over five points per game.

Williams averaged two rebounds a game playing in 22 games and Peters came off the bench to average over two rebounds and over one assist a game. Wasson played in 13 games, averaging one rebound per game.

Rohlsen, Gomez and Montero all saw action during the regular season.

Corona's boys basketball team played in the 6A Play-In Tournament on Feb. 10, as the No. 24 seed, after finishing the regular season ranked No. 24 with a 5-5 Central Region record, 7-9 in 6A conference and 9-16 overall record.

The Aztecs played a hard-fought close game against No. 19, Chandler, but lost 47-51 and was eliminated from the post-season.

Although the season was not as successful, from a win-and-loss perspective, as everyone involved in the program was anticipating at the beginning of the season, especially the senior



players, several positive aspects came out of the season.

“Regardless of the season outcome, our seniors and all of our players stuck together, learned from their experiences and grew as basketball players and young men representing their school and community in a positive way,” said head coach **Neil MacDonald**.

The Aztecs honored their six seniors at the last regular home season game on Feb. 3 where they defeated Queen Creek, 40-37.

“**Ollie Hinder** was a varsity starter the last three years and a big part of our program,” said **MacDonald**. “He showed great leadership as a captain this season plus his consistency, sense of humor and overall presence will be greatly missed.”

“We were so glad **Keona Peat** returned to our Aztec basketball program this season after missing all of his junior year with a serious injury,” said **MacDonald**.

“**Keona** brought toughness and a competitiveness that we needed on our team. It was such a pleasure seeing him able to be on the court again and finish what he started his first two years on our varsity team.”

“**Miles Smith** came off the bench last season but he went from little playing time as a junior to being a reliable starter and captain his senior season,” said **MacDonald**. “His energy, enthusiasm, and sense of humor made him a pleasure to have as part of our team and to coach.”

“**Zach Jones** had to miss last season due to a hip injury, but returned this season to give a solid contribution to the team off the bench,” said **MacDonald**. “He brought great energy to the program every day.”

“**Andrej Mesihovic** moved to Arizona from Bosnia last spring and immediately fit in with our group of player,” said **MacDonald**. “**Andrej** is a tremendous young man whose positive

attitude was a great addition to our Aztec basketball program.”

“Unfortunately, **Retief Yellowman** tore his ACL last August and was unable to play until the last home game,” said **MacDonald**. “He did such an amazing job of rehab, after only five months removed from surgery, that he was able to suit up and see live action on senior night.”

Other members of the team who were involved on and off the court include juniors **Jason Covington, Zak Ali, Crew Swearingen, Lim Anderson, Mihail Kostadinovski, Bo Dolinsek, Justin Lam, Isaac Elzy, Lavelle Lewis** and sophomore **Deshaun Johnson**.

“Our entire staff felt fortunate to have had the opportunity to work with this fantastic group of young men,” said **MacNeil**.



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## DIVERSIONS

# Remembering Raquel

By M.V. Moorhead

In Kenneth Branagh's autobiographical coming-of-age movie *Belfast* from 2021, we see a father take his wife and two young sons to the 1966 prehistoric fantasy *One Million Years B.C.*

The sons are mesmerized by the battling dinosaurs, but when the wife sees the leading lady, she gives her husband a long look and says "No wonder you brought us to this."

"It's educational for the boys," says the husband off-handedly.

"Aye," replies the wife, "Raquel Welch is a hell of an education."

I have a feeling that similar little scenes were played all over the world in those years. A friend of mine Back East remembers being taken, by

Welch was, quite simply, astounding to look at, so much so that it didn't matter very much that, especially toward the beginning of her career, she couldn't really act.

his father, to see the same movie with his older brother about the same time.

I remember first seeing it on TV a couple of years later, when I was maybe eight years old, and my Mom dryly telling me that, because of Ms. Welch's presence, my Dad would be happy to watch that one with me.

Loanna the blonde cavewoman in *One Million Years B.C.* was perhaps the signature role in the career of Welch, who passed on last week at 82. This may have arisen less from the movie itself than from the bestselling poster of Welch posing



dramatically in her costume, stylish fur and doeskin scanties touted as "mankind's first bikini."

The combination of the spectacle of the dinosaurs and the spectacle of Welch gave the film an unusual crossover appeal for both little boys and their fathers, and it's also probable that plenty of kids first took notice of women due to Loanna.

In short, Welch served as a classic sex symbol for two generations.

Her cavewoman-bikini poster is even one of the pinups, after Rita Hayworth and Marilyn Monroe, that the hero of *The Shawshank Redemption* uses to mask his escape tunnel.

My early childhood is full of memories of Welch: I remember her cruising through a human bloodstream in *Fantastic Voyage*, or making out with Robert Wagner in *The Biggest Bundle of Them All* or with Jim Brown in *100 Rifles*, or learning to shoot from Robert Culp in the revenge western *Hannie Caulder*, or riding an ambulance in *Mother, Jugs and Speed*, or riding roller skates in *Kansas City Bomber*, to name just a few.

But she worked hard to maintain her brand on TV, too, singing on Cher's TV show, or doing a duet with Ruth Buzzi on *Rowan and Martin's Laugh-In*.

Welch was, quite simply, astounding to look at, so much so that it didn't matter very much that,

especially toward the beginning of her career, she couldn't really act.

No matter how dashing her leading man, no matter how many great character actors she was surrounded by, when Raquel Welch was in a movie, it was hard to pay much attention to anyone else.

She even played the personification of Lust in *Bedazzled*, and rarely in movie history has a performer been more appropriately cast.

She also had a reputation as a diligent worker, and over time she developed some acting chops. She survived spewing the heavy load of dense dialogue in the dreadful but undeniably memorable *Myra Breckinridge* in 1970, and would eventually score two Golden Globe nominations and win once, for her turn in 1973's *The Three Musketeers*.

In the '80s and '90s she even made it to Broadway a couple of times, in *Woman of the Year* and *Victor/Victoria*, and in the 21st century she made occasional appearances in movies like *Legally Blonde* and *Tortilla Soup*, or on TV in a memorable episode of *Seinfeld*.

But for all this long and interesting career, many of my generation will remember Raquel Welch first and foremost as an unusually glamorous cavewoman.

As did our fathers.



Film Fare with M.V. Moorhead

## 'Ant-Man' pays homage to 'Star Wars' precedent

Paul Rudd, aka Scott Lang, aka Ant-Man, is taking a little hiatus from front line superhero duty. On inactive status with The Avengers, he's written a book, so he's giving readings, and hanging out with family, and smugly basking in celebrity. That's the set-up, in a few quick scenes in San Francisco, for Ant-Man and the Wasp: Quantumania, this third eponymous Ant-Man feature.

Then, thanks to science experiments by his daughter Cassie (Kathryn Newton) gone wrong, Scott and Hope Van Dyne, aka The Wasp (Evangeline Lilly) get swept into the "Quantum Realm," along with Cassie, Hope's Mom Janet (Michelle Pfeiffer) and dad Hank Pym (Michael Douglas). The Quantum Realm is a subatomic micro-verse teeming with life in which Janet was stranded for decades.

Thus Janet knows the turf, and she knows that the people there are ruled over by the tyrannical Kang (Jonathan Majors), a dimensional conqueror who she marooned in QR before she escaped. Kang would like very much to be reunited with Janet. Far-out fantasy adventures ensue.

Director Peyton Reed seems to pay heavy homage to the original 1977 Star Wars; the Quantum Realm is full of cousins of Tusken Raiders and Jawas. There are also strong echoes of the Avatar flicks, of Zardoz, and of Dr. Who, and maybe a thematic hint of Horton Hears a Who.

This is yet another Marvel entry featuring alternate universes; it has a somewhat similar look to Sam Raimi's Doctor Strange in the Multiverse of Madness from last year. As with that film, I went in with the feeling that the This-That-Or-The-Other-verse conceit that the Marvels have leaned on so hard in recent years is of limited sustainability, as it has a tendency to dilute the dramatic stakes.

On the other hand, also as with Multiverse of Madness, taken on its own terms Quantumania is perfectly enjoyable.

The visuals, however derivative, are elegant, witty and well-executed, and the glamorous cast is in pleasant form.

— Continued on Page 24

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Continued from Page 20

Rudd's sly, subtle clowning is always good company, and he carries the movie effortlessly.

The best performance, however, is by Jonathan Majors, from *The Last Black Man in San Francisco*.

His Kang is quiet, subdued, even sad, as if haunted by the joyless drive to conquer and rule.

As with Christian Bale's Gorr in last year's *Thor: Love and Thunder*, Majors brings a needed edge of serious, almost tragic menace that helps to ground this silly sci-fi spoof.

*Ant-Man and the Wasp: Quantumania* is rated PG-13 and plays at Harkins Tempe Marketplace, Harkins Chandler Fashion 20, AMC Abwatukee 24 and other multiplexes Valleywide.

## Taking the plunge, for a cause

Thrill-seekers at the Tempe Lakes surrounded the community center's pool during early morning hours for a desert-style polar plunge benefiting Tempe's adaptive recreation programs and special needs community.

Mayor Corey Woods thanked the crowd for helping to make Tempe what he called a truly inclusive community, before lining up at the edge

of the pool to take the plunge.

DJ White Sugar began the countdown, and when he reached 1, dozens of brave divers plunged into the icy pool to earn bragging rights.

Proceeds from the event and a pre-plunge party held the night before exceeded \$11,000—all of which was designated to go back into the Tempe community in the form of scholarships, grants and donations.

The Lakes Activities Committee and Team Asa, a volunteer-run charitable group, teamed up for the 11th anniversary of the heart-warming event.



Photo courtesy Brenda New

Since the inaugural Polar Bear Plunge in 2012, more than \$100,000 has been raised to help ensure individuals with different abilities are able to participate in recreational and social activities.

Team Asa provides financial scholarships to individuals, assists local schoolteachers

and programs, as well as organizations that provide opportunities to the special needs community.

In 2022, they donated adaptive playground equipment to Tempe's Clark Park, ensuring all abilities can play together and enjoy the newly renovated playground.

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## Wrangler News contributors recognized for excellence

Two former and one current Wrangler News contributors are among recipients of 2021 recognition by the prestigious Arizona Press Club, an organization of professional reporters, editors, photographers and designers from publications around the state.

The awards were delayed a year until last November by what Press Club officials described as “very trying circumstances,” presumably



conditions resulting from COVID and related slowdowns within business and industry.

Wrangler News former executive editor Lee Shappell won a first place award for headline writing and third place in the Community Journalist of the Year competition. Shappell was with Wrangler News for two-plus years after spending 35 years at The Arizona Republic. He currently oversees editorial content for two popular publications in the city of Maricopa.



Longtime Wrangler News photographer Billy Hardiman won three awards: second place in two categories, Community Photographer of the Year and Community Photojournalism Feature, and third place in the category for Community Photojournalism.



He currently operates Tempe-based PictureBilly LLC, specializing in commercial photography and television production.

The third Wrangler News staff member selected for honors was Janie Magruder, herself a veteran Arizona Republic writer who now freelances for a wide range of publishing enterprises, including Wrangler News.

Magruder received a third place award for Community Feature/Narrative Writing.

Wrangler News Founder/Publisher Don Kirkland offered congratulations to the group for what he termed “well-deserved recognition” by the state’s professional journalism community.

“These three members of our staff have been invaluable contributors to the success of our newspaper, and I’m delighted to know that their work is being recognized by some of the top professionals in our field,” said Kirkland.

“We are incredibly fortunate to have had them among those who supported our efforts during the years we’ve been an integral part of the Tempe/West Chandler community.

“For their talent and hard work on our behalf, I extend them my heartfelt thanks.”

# Need help with yard work?

Do you know of a senior resident or veteran in Chandler that needs help with yard maintenance? The City’s Neighborhood Programs Office has teams of volunteers ready to help and we need your assistance identifying those in need.

Contact City staff at **480-782-4348** or **neighborhood.programs@chandleraz.gov** to ask for help or to connect us with a senior or veteran. And if you’re a company or organization looking for an opportunity to volunteer, let’s talk!

Learn more about City programs helping neighborhoods at **chandleraz.gov/neighborhoods**.







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## Learning biology in virtual reality

# It's now the new normal on Arizona State University's Tempe campus

By Stephen Filmer

Special report

By the end of this semester, the “old” way of teaching biology on Arizona State University’s Tempe campus will be... history.

As the spring semester unfolds, students learning the foundations of life science in Biology 100, 181 and 182 will be doing so using the power of Dreamscape Learn, or DSL.

DSL is an immersive, virtual reality teaching environment which delivers an understanding of biology concepts and skills within an interactive, three-dimensional sensory experience.

Concepts as diverse as the behavior of cells, diagnosing environmental threats to animal populations, and gene editing are delivered through the Dreamscape Learn coursework.

The students’ experience in DSL is amplified by a combination of cutting edge pedagogy and the Dreamscape design team’s toolkit of 3D animation and powerful storytelling.

Using virtual reality headsets, hand trackers and joysticks, students learn by becoming scientists and solving novel problems in a narrative framework created through collaboration between leading ASU academics and Hollywood storytellers.

These three biology courses benefit from the DSL dynamic, whether students choose to learn online, or at the DSL installation inside the Creativity Commons building on the Tempe campus.

As of the start of the 2023 Spring Semester, about 4,000 students have successfully completed their biology coursework requirements using Dreamscape Learn.

Another 5,000 are expected to be enrolled for the classes that will run from now until May of this year.

ASU and DSL are now pursuing several new subject content areas, including both chemistry and climate science.

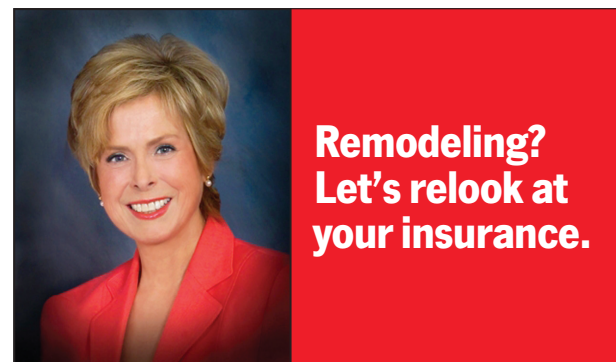
The learning outcomes of Dreamscape Learn are being tracked and evaluated within a 5-year longitudinal study.

*More about that study and the workings of the DSL program can be found at: <https://news.asu.edu/20221021-creativity-vr-biology-lab-experience-leads-student-success>*

*Visit the Dreamscape Learn website at <https://dreamscapelearn.asu.edu>*

Like what you see in Wrangler News? Think you'd enjoy being part of our team? We're always on the lookout for friendly, energetic people who think they could add their talent and enthusiasm to what we do. Call us 9-5 Monday-Friday to talk about how you might fit into our family of folks who love what we do. We'd love to hear how you might help. 480-966-0837.

We look forward to hearing from you.



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## Tempe, Kyrene schools face off in cross-district championships

By Rebecca Smouse  
Photos by Greg Howell

Fans filled the stands of Tempe middle school gyms as two unlikely teams met for a matchup years in the making: An undefeated team from Tempe Elementary School District and an undefeated team from Kyrene School District.

Connolly Middle School's Varsity Boys Basketball team faced off against Kyrene Middle School's Varsity team the evening of January 17 at CMS. The Scorpions topped the Crusaders 65 to 53.

Fees College Preparatory Middle School JV Boys Basketball team met up against KMS at Fees a week later on January 24. The Scorpions beat the Firebirds 69 to 40.

Even though the Firebirds were defeated, the coaches were happy for the opportunity to play against an elite team. The loss was a humbling experience and the team plans to use it as a learning experience to make them better for future school years, said coach Deante Thomas.

The two districts haven't met in a cross-district match in over a decade, according to Greg Howell, Tempe Elementary's PE and athletics coordinator. He said his department is working toward expanding competition play outside of the Tempe Elementary School District boundary, a project that aligns with goals of the district's five-year strategic plan.

"It's important to play against other teams because it shows our kids what competition is like outside of our district," Howell said. "It's also preparing them to be a student athlete. Academics matter, behavior matters, it all matters."

Supportive fans, family, and friends showed up in droves for both games, adding a new wave of energy and excitement to the expanded field of competition.

"There were big crowds," Howell said. "The student and parent interaction was good."

Howell said the crosstown districts plan to

meet again for the varsity and JV girls basketball championship games later in March, which are scheduled to be hosted by Kyrene Schools.

Howell added that his team is also working on developing cross-district competition opportunities for other sports, providing even more exposure for all levels of student athletes. The expanded competition provides a positive experience for the athletes to compete against students from the same feeder high school programs.

"[The goal] is to get our kids active in a competitive environment and to expand our athletics programs," Howell said.

The Crusaders varsity team went undefeated in the regular season, led by coach Gabriel Murillo who doubles as the school's PE teacher.

The Firebirds JV team also went undefeated in the regular season, led by coach and sixth-grade math teacher Corey Taylor. The varsity team finished the regular season 5-2, led by coach Deante Thomas, the school's PE teacher.

### Kyrene de los Cerritos student claims title in 2022-23 spelling bee

Top spellers from across the southeast valley competed in the Maricopa County Region 1 Spelling Bee on Saturday, Feb. 11.

Named regional champion was Aanandi Dutta, a 4th grade student

at Kyrene de los Cerritos Leadership Academy.

After nine highly competitive rounds, Dutta was the only speller in the ninth round to successfully spell *divestiture*.

In the 10th and final round, Dutta correctly spelled the championship word *vexatious* to clinch the title.

Kyrene School District Spelling Bee champion Paige Erickson, an 8th grade student at Kyrene Middle School, was also among the top 10 regional spellers.

A total of 33 spellers from Kyrene School District, Tempe Elementary School District and private, charter and homeschool organizations competed in the event after winning their individual qualifying spelling bees.

Dutta will move on to the Arizona State Spelling Bee on March 18 at the Madison Center for the Arts.

The top two spellers in that competition will qualify for the 2023 Scripps National Spelling Bee in Washington, D.C.







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