

**MARCH 25 - APRIL 7, 2023 • VOL 33, NO 5**

**WRANGLER  
NEWS**



**SEE PAGE 6 FOR MORE PHOTOS OF THE SKY-HIGH FUN AT THIS YEAR'S OSTRICH FESTIVAL** Wrangler News photo by Andrew Lwowski

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Andrew Lwowski at work as a staff member for Wrangler News.

— Wrangler News photo by Don Kirkland

## Our writer-photographer Andrew Lwowski wins 1st place in Hearst Awards program **Earns coveted 'Pulitzer Prize' of college journalism**

By Don Kirkland

In the last several months, we've had the pleasure of receiving news of awards for journalistic achievement being received by several of our former and current contributors, and we recognized their achievement in a previous edition. Naturally, we're delighted that their work is seen as notable by the premier organization of professionals in our field, Arizona Press Club.

But nothing has been so happily received, so remarkable, so impressive, as first place honors in the Hearst Awards Program, known widely as the

Pulitzer Prize of collegiate journalism, bestowed on our writer and photographer Andrew Lwowski for his 2,000-word in-depth exploration of how the tiny, often overlooked town of Eloy managed to produce five NFL football players, the most of any single geographic entity in our state.

Not only did Lwowski's in-depth look at the how and why of this distinction earn him the coveted Hearst award but an accompanying \$3,000 to tangibly distinguish his efforts and provide a dollars-and-cents incentive to pursue what appears

to be a certain future in his chosen field. Naturally, we're delighted that Andrew, a former Corona del Sol and ASU student, has elected to spend some of his post-graduation days as a member of our staff.

In the few months he has been with us, he has shown a rare combination of talents in both writing and photography, normally the domain of only one professional. As a result, we've quickly grown to involve him in our planning and execution of each issue. You can view his fascinating story and photos in our April 8 issue, and join us in celebrating what we all know is Andrew's assured journalistic future of NFL-worthy proportions.



Chandler Regional Medical Center during August 2021 opening ceremonies for new patient tower.

—Wrangler News file photo

## Underserved in Tempe, Chandler share Dignity Health funding

**F**ive community projects led by 15 community-based organizations, including Tempe Community Action Agency, will share in nearly half a million dollars in grant funding from Dignity Health Chandler Regional Medical Center, among a coalition of Dignity hospitals in the Southeast Valley.

The program, under the umbrella of Dignity's Community Health Improvement Grants initiative, is said to be one example of how a not-for-profit health organization can work collaboratively with the communities it serves to help improve the health and well-being of vulnerable and underserved populations.

Funded by small annual percentage contributions from all Dignity Health hospitals, the program has awarded \$91 million to nearly 3,800 health improvement projects since 1991.

The program awards funds to local organizations that work collaboratively as a team to address identified needs and promote health and well-being services to underserved populations, specifically in priority neighborhoods identified by the program's tri-annual Community Health Needs Assessment.

Among the teams, known as Community of Care projects, that were awarded funding, are:

• **Led by Aster Aging Inc., AZCEND and Tempe Community Action Agency**, the East

Valley Senior Home Sharing Program works to prevent homelessness among older adults. Through an intensive assessment and case management approach, the program connects pairs of vulnerable seniors to share homes and expenses while providing each other with companionship. An ongoing array of wrap-around supports will be available, including access to benefits & financial aid, senior center or home delivered meals, transportation, home care, and social services.

• **Destination Diploma Chandler** identifies homeless youth and supports students' efforts to remain in attendance and graduate. Child Crisis of Arizona, Chandler Education Foundation and Matthew's Crossing have teamed up for this project which also helps students have a post-secondary plan in place.

• **The Freedom House** is a joint effort between Hope for Addiction, Jesus Cares Ministries, and Gospel Centered Biblical Counseling. Their mission is to provide safe shelter and transition support for at-risk families for up to two years while teaching them to be self-sufficient, productive members of their community with less reliance on state services. Individual care plans are created based on the needs of the family, and services include: housing, career counseling, addiction/trauma informed counseling, financial responsibility education,

nutrition and healthy living tools, effective parenting coaching, and personal responsibility and time management support.

• **Mission of Mercy of AZ** partnered with Arizona Diabetes Foundation and AZCEND for the Improving the Health of Uninsured Patients with Diabetes project. The project serves uninsured and underinsured diabetic patients by providing comprehensive care via regular medical exams, prescription medications, diabetes education, monitoring of the key indicators of diabetes, and increased access to fresh produce.

• **The Youth Mental Health Collective** is run by notMYkid, Bring Change to Mind and Laloboy Foundation. The goal of this collective is to reduce mental health crisis and suicide risk among children in and near Chandler by increasing knowledge, skills and access to care. The evidenced-based and informed programming includes culturally inclusive prevention that educates youth, creates meaningful opportunities for prosocial involvement, and prepares youth with essential life skills.

Children who need additional support also receive peer support and access to counseling services.

Information: [www.dignityhealth.org/arizona/locations/chandlerregional/about-us/community-benefit-outreach/community-grant-initiatives](http://www.dignityhealth.org/arizona/locations/chandlerregional/about-us/community-benefit-outreach/community-grant-initiatives).

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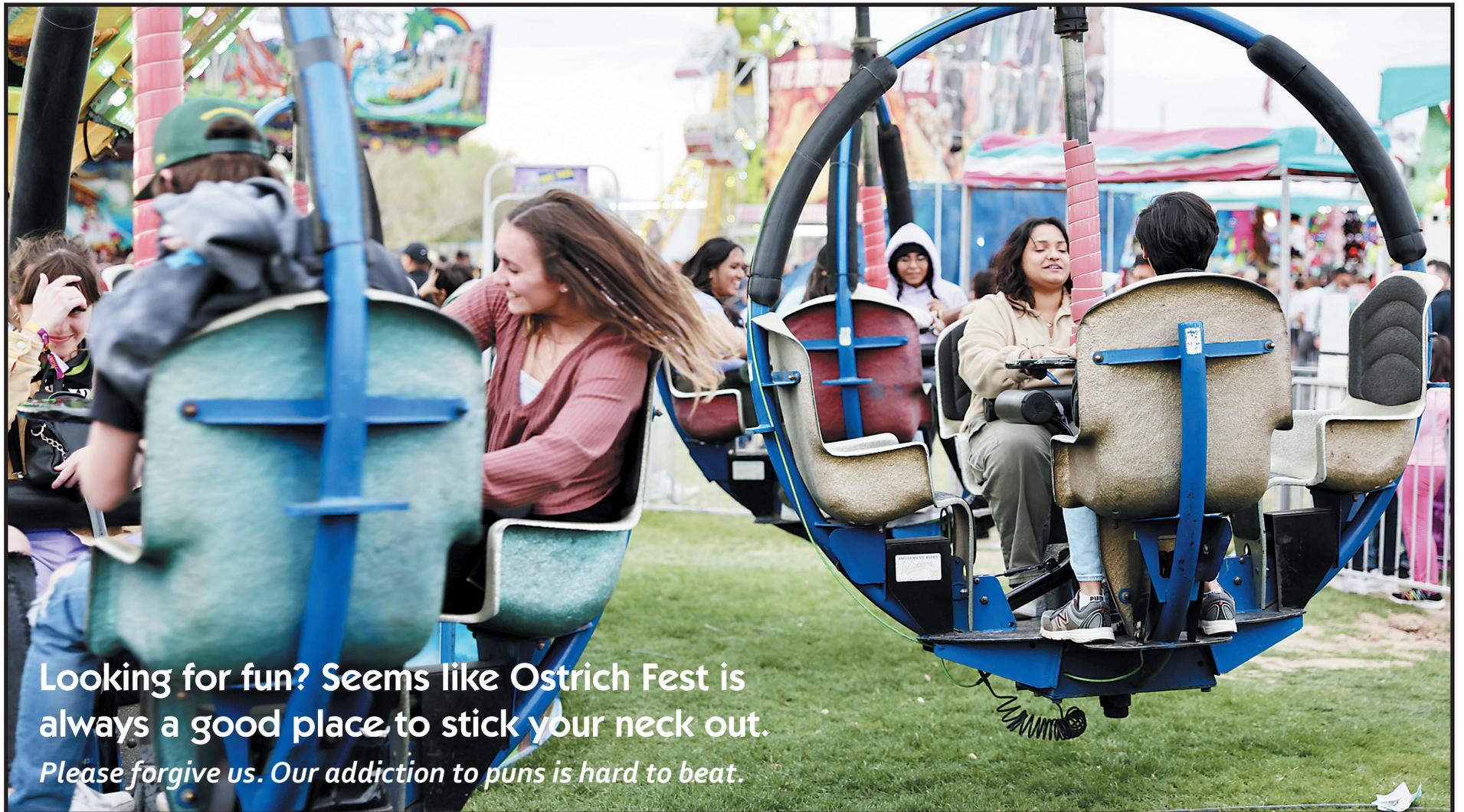


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Looking for fun? Seems like Ostrich Fest is always a good place to stick your neck out. Please forgive us. Our addiction to puns is hard to beat.



## Food and amusement galore!

The Ostrich Festival at Tumbleweed Park offered unlimited food and fun for everyone, with rides, games and, the main attraction and featured guests, live ostriches.

— Wrangler News photos by Andrew Lwowski



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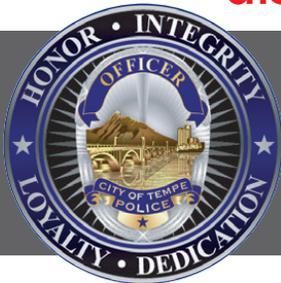
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## COMMENTARY

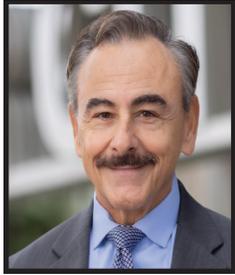
More related content Pages 10-13

### 'Balancing act' helps avoid government overreach

By Matt Orlando

The very essence of Arizona is rooted in local control. The Arizona Constitution is different than other states, designed to protect cities and towns – and the citizens who live in them – from government overreach.

Our system allows local municipalities to develop their own charters and govern themselves. This creates a wonderful balancing act between state and local authority, and it's by design.



That's why the recent actions of the state legislature are so surprising.

House Bill (HB) 2061 and Senate Bill (SB)1063 are my first examples. Several city and town councils across the state have elected to levy a Transaction Privilege Tax (TPT) – or “grocery tax”, as it's being called in current news reports.

Chandler's TPT is one of the lowest in the state at 1.5%. The City collects a little over \$14 million that is used to help fund police, fire, parks and street projects.

These bills would ban cities from collecting that tax. One of the problems with this is obvious – cities will be on the hook to either find that money in other places or make cuts to services.

Shouldn't these issues be decided by cities and towns, instead of the state attempting to usurp your authority?

Over the years, there have been other attempts by the state legislature to limit local control.

And over the years, the Arizona Supreme Court has created a clear

line in the sand – is the issue at hand local or statewide? With this in mind, how can these bills represent a statewide issue when not all cities and towns even have the TPT?

Their residents wouldn't see ANY benefits from the ban.

My second example is SB1117, which will create new and burdensome rules for housing developments. This bill would undo local zoning laws with new building height rules and density requirements.

Let's be very clear about a few things. First, the premise that cities and towns are to blame for the housing crisis is not accurate. There are several issues at work in the crisis we face. For instance, in Chandler there are four multifamily projects ready to break ground in our city.

They've been approved by the City Council, have all the necessary approvals and zoning worked out. The problem is, they can't get built. Developers are struggling to get financing, labor and supplies.

So how does this bill help get these 800+ multifamily units built? And how can legislators at the State Capitol, who typically campaign on fewer barriers for developers, suggest that adding these new restrictions to force a city's hand will work?

The answer is simple. It won't.

To top it off, any time the state usurps a city, it is also usurping the citizens of the city who have voted for local leaders to make these types of decisions.

I implore our friends at the state legislature to rethink these bills and to sit down with cities and towns they are charged with representing to talk about real and lasting solutions.

— Matt Orlando is a six-term member of the Chandler City Council.

### Tempe must vote 'no' on all 3 ballot propositions

By Ron Pies

The “Big Lie” has come to Tempe. No, this is not about a Presidential or Senate election. It's about a Special Election starting next month on the so-called “Tempe Entertainment District” proposed by a Las Vegas billionaire, Alex Meruelo. He claims that his Arizona Coyote stadium project is “privately” funded, yet, he's demanding taxpayer contributions in the form of revenue from sales taxes, plus the authority to impose new taxes on Tempe business, residents and guests, and unprecedented property tax forgiveness for 30 years plus 8 years. What is disappointing is that some “prominent” Tempe citizens have bought into this “Big Lie” and I see it tearing our community apart.

I've dedicated my life to serving Tempe's families, students, children, seniors - the full gamut of everyone in our community. In 99 percent of my positions - paid, elected and volunteer alike - I've felt good about the direction we're going and why we're going there. This is not the case here. To see a proposal put forward that robs from the public coffers that support all in our community is deeply disturbing, and to see the excess, untruths and hostility of the developer and private interests promoting these proposals even more disheartening. We are better than this.

The Arizona Coyotes, owned by Bluebird Development owner Alex Meruelo, are the same organizations that were kicked out of a hockey arena BUILT BY GLENDALE. The facility has cost taxpayers hundreds of millions and they still owe millions more. Finally, Glendale acted after bills were not paid by the billionaire. Since the team left the arena, Glendale began to make money, rather than lose revenue. They also stiffed Tucsonon payments for the Roadrunner's arena, home to their farm team.

Nationally-respected financial analysis firm Dun and Bradstreet indicates that Meruelo's and Coyotes' financial stability is highly questionable. In fact, the independent financial firm rated both entities as “High Risk” of Delinquency and overall Failure. In other words, it's

doubtful that they have the ability to fulfill their rosy promises to Tempe. Compare that to the financial analysis the Coyotes are pushing which comes from Beacon Sports - a firm designed to promote stadium financing at all costs.

The project has been suspect from the start, in that it appears that the City's “Request for Proposals” was crafted by the Meruelo organization themselves. Unsurprisingly, only the Coyotes and Meruelo's firm Bluebird LLC, a business registered with the Arizona Corporation Commission as a “Foreign Entity,” responded to the bid that was handwritten for them. In addition, the attorney representing the Coyotes and the chief negotiator donated heavily to Council candidates' campaigns and has made other promises too, such as continued support and use of VIP suites in the proposed arena.

Innumerable reputable studies across the US have shown that taxpayer subsidies for professional sports, rarely, if ever, materialize as having a positive financial impact on the cities involved. Impacts on local economies have proven dismal. University Of Chicago economist Allen Sanderson once observed that if the intention of public stadium funding is economic growth, a more effective method would be dropping money at random from the sky.

The data presented by the Tempe 1st citizens' group has yet to be convincingly rebutted. To state that the project is totally privately funded is simply untrue – it's irrefutable that hundreds of million dollars in public monies would be going to a corrupt billionaire and casino operator if Tempe accepts this very bad deal.

Perhaps the overriding question is why a billionaire needs taxpayer subsidies if he expects the project will be lucrative?

Until and unless facts are produced by the out-of-state billionaire to refute the data presented here and by a volunteer coalition of actual Tempe residents known as “Tempe1st,” we citizens of Tempe must vote NO, NO, NO on all three ballot propositions.

Ron Pies is a former director of Tempe Community Services, former Kyrene Governing Board member and longtime Tempe resident.

## Opinion

## Tempe Wins organizers dispute opposition claims as 'hyperbole'

Submitted by Sophie O'Keefe-Zelman  
For Tempe Wins

Whether it involves government, politics, business or just common decency, Tempe is a community that values the truth and civility. As voters decide on Props 301, 302, and 303, honesty is critical.

However, the political organization calling itself "Tempe 1st" has resorted to calling a respected Latino business leader "Corrupt" with absolutely no justification or evidence to back up the false claim.

While hyperbole has always been a staple of political discourse, campaigns are still expected to tell the truth. Aside from being dishonest to voters, the false claims spread by Tempe 1st are damaging the reputations of Meruelo and his businesses without justification.

That's why attorneys for the group supporting the entertainment district, "Tempe Wins", along with Bluebird Development, and Alex Meruelo himself, have sent Tempe 1st cease and desist letters.

The truth is that Alex Meruelo is an American success story. His parents came from Cuba seeking a better life. He worked his way up from humble beginnings and now has a 40-year record of business successes in highly regulated industries through multiple economic cycles in banking, media, real estate, and food services. He is the first Hispanic to have controlling interest in an NHL team, the Arizona Coyotes.

Yet his plan to pay Tempe \$50 million for an old landfill near Tempe Town Lake to build a privately funded entertainment district and sports arena is under attack by a small group of individuals who lack respect for the truth. They want to defeat Props 301, 302, and 303, rather than see Tempe gain the additional jobs and revenue for city social services this project would deliver. The members of the opposition may not need or care about social services, new employment opportunities, or common decency, but many others do. The political process should be above name-calling and focus on the merits of the deal.

The plan calls for a \$2.1 billion dollar investment from the private sector. It has been described as "the best sports arena deal in Arizona history" by Tempe Mayor Corey Woods and was approved unanimously by Mayor Woods and the Tempe City Council because it is privately funded. Yet Tempe 1st continues to defame this project with the slogan, "No Handouts for Corrupt Billionaires."

Tempe 1st member Lauren Kuby's opposition to the project is also hypocritical given her previous vote as a Council Member. In 2021, then Council Member Kuby voted in favor of an agreement between the City of Tempe

and the Los Angeles Angels that gave \$40.9 million for renovations for Tempe Diablos Stadium.

Props 301, 302 and 303 will turn a landfill that currently generates zero revenue into a landmark that generates more than \$690 million in net benefits for Tempe for critical social services and city needs, \$33 million for public safety, \$13.1 billion in additional spending in Tempe, and 6,900 permanent jobs. Further, Props 301, 302 and 303 are a historic vote for union jobs and union families.

The project includes an unprecedented labor agreement directly in the governing agreement with the City of Tempe that commits the developer to utilize union labor.

"Tempe Wins wants an honest debate about the facts of this important project because we believe an honest debate will win the day as voters are asked to cast their ballots by May 16th.

We also hope that many of the opponents to our proposal don't embrace the ugly and false tactics employed by Tempe 1st. We simply ask them to play fair and tell the truth," said Xavier A. Gutierrez, president and CEO of the Arizona Coyotes.

In addition to boosting Tempe's economy, Props 301, 302, and 303 would clean up an unsightly and hazardous landfill without impacting city coffers. The project has been endorsed by civil rights organizations, labor leaders, chambers of commerce, former City Council Members and four former Tempe Mayors.

For more information about Tempe Wins visit [www.TempeWins.com](http://www.TempeWins.com).

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# PROTECT OUR



★ **VOTE NO on 301, 302 & 303** ★  
**"Tempe Entertainment District & Sports Franchise"**

This bad deal creates **\$500 million** in taxpayer-funded property tax breaks using a legal mechanism known as a Government Property Lease Excise Tax. The pro-business **Goldwater Institute** called these GPLET schemes **"crony, corporate welfare"** that **"unfairly shifts the tax burden to existing residents and businesses."**<sup>1</sup>

They also point out that **"GPLET abatements leave gaping holes in school-district, community college, hospital, and county budgets, which rely on property-tax revenues..."**

If passed, Tempe will have to pay a corrupt billionaire developer **\$250 million** in shared City tax revenue. They say it's "publicly funded", but the fine print tells the real story. Tempe deserves better than this bad deal.

<sup>1</sup>[https://www.goldwaterinstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/Backgrounder\\_Phoenix-GPLET4.pdf](https://www.goldwaterinstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/Backgrounder_Phoenix-GPLET4.pdf)

## Here's a Few Reasons Your Tempe Neighbors are Voting NO:

- |                                |                              |
|--------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Increased Neighborhood Traffic | Massive Water Waste          |
| Creates 2 New Taxes            | Increases Jet Noise          |
| \$700M in Taxpayer Handouts    | Threatens Community Services |
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The Tempe Chamber of Commerce presents the State of Our Congressional District, including a federal update on the 4th Congressional District from Congressman Greg Stanton and an opportunity to interface with state-level elected officials. The event will be held Wednesday, April 5, 2023 at the Rio Salado College Conference Center at 2323 W 14th St. Tempe, AZ 85281.

This event welcomes community, educational, political, and civic leaders to Rio Salado College for brunch, providing the business community an update on critical issues affecting our district, state, and country.



**Featured Speaker**  
Congressman Greg Stanton  
4th Congressional District

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Please contact David Key at [david@tempechamber.org](mailto:david@tempechamber.org) for sponsorship opportunities.

**REGISTER FOR THIS EVENT & LEARN MORE AT [WWW.TEMPECHAMBER.ORG](http://WWW.TEMPECHAMBER.ORG)**



**Friday, March 31st**  
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Kyrene Middle School  
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Bring Your Lawn Chairs  
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to Enjoy This Event!

**NOTICE TO OUR READERS:** A commentary with the headline 'Arguments Against Prop 303' appearing in the most recent online issue of Wrangler News carries an attribution to Wrangler News Staff. This is both misleading and incorrect. The wording is among a set of standardized online subheadings, not a reference to any actual author. The opinion piece in question carried the signature of Robert Zumoff, who is not connected in any way to Wrangler News. The online attribution to Wrangler News was a technical error and has been removed. It was correct in our print edition.

## We Hear You!

# OLLI is coming to Chandler

Osher Lifelong Learning Institute (OLLI) has partnered with the ASU Chandler Innovation Center (ACIC) to bring two "pop-up" classes to the City of Chandler and East Valley communities.



**Doug Bradley**

Doug Bradley is a author, educator, and Vietnam veteran who has written extensively about his Vietnam and post-Vietnam experiences.

**Tuesday, April 4th | 10:30 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.**

*Next Stop is Vietnam: The War on Record*



**Kevin Sandler**

Kevin Sandler is an associate professor in the Film and Media Studies Program. He specializes in the contemporary media business, with a particular focus on censorship and animation.

**Friday, April 21 | 10:30 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.**

*A look back at Tootsie*

[Click here to register!](#)





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# WHAT WAS YOUR NO. 1 FAVORITE RIDE? ADMIT IT: WE ALL HAD ONE

Concept, questions, interviews and photos exclusive for Wrangler News by Andrew Lwowski



**Chuck Montgomery,  
Glendale**

“My favorite car of all time, I would say, was the Ford Mustang. I liked the original ‘65—I had one. It was the best car. It was a great car, lots of fun, perfect size and speed.”



**Robyn Souder,  
Apache Junction**

“Well, it’s got to be mine of course! The ‘55 Studebaker Speedster. It’s my favorite because it runs really well, it’s really smooth. There were just over 2,200 made, and I’ve driven across the country in it.”



**Tom Chadwick,  
Mesa**

“This one right here (pointing to his Challenger) because it’s mine. This was my first car, I’ve had it since I was 16. And my favorite car isn’t just any Challenger, but this one right here. I’ve done everything to this car, the engine, the paint, all the mistakes, it is me. All me.”



Tempe hosted its first annual Concours show at Tempe Beach Park, allowing for car enthusiasts and collectors to display their favorites. Hundreds of entries lined the park while hundreds of lookers and families enjoyed the weather and display. Classic cars from the '50s and '60s, along with lifted and polished trucks, and even modified street cars were on display, joined by a live DJ and food trucks offering a great time for all those who came out.

— Wrangler News photos  
by Andrew Lwowski





## COMMUNITY

# Foster care board volunteers sought in Tempe, W. Chandler

Arizona officials are telling Tempe and West Chandler residents that they need help in expanding awareness of the volunteer program that reviews cases of children in the state's foster care system.

The request comes from Gioia Kaid, who works with the review board overseeing such services within the Dependent Children's Services Division of the Arizona Supreme Court.

Here's a bulleted list of what Kaid hopes will be useful details:

- We have 55 boards in Maricopa County.
- Each board consists of five citizens from across the community.

- The board members are appointed by the presiding judge of Maricopa County's Juvenile Court to a three-year term and can request to be reappointed when their term is up. Most do (usually over 90%).

- The board members commit to meeting virtually one weekday per month to review the cases of children who are subject to a dependency court action and in out-of-home care.

- They review the same cases every six months until permanency is achieved.

- As children return home, are adopted, have guardianship granted or age-out of the system, new cases are added to the board's review day.



— Provided photo

- The board makes recommendations regarding services and permanency options to the Juvenile Court and interested parties in the case.

- Currently, the 55 boards review the cases of about 5,175 children in Maricopa County.

- Current need is for 43 volunteers to become board members in Maricopa County.

- Statewide, the FCRB has approximately 108 boards and 540 dedicated volunteer positions.

- Volunteers receive training and participate in continuing education opportunities.

### Prior to the Review Day

- Board members review material via a secured website about 10 days before the review date.

- Board members review the case material that includes progress reports, case plans, service participation documentation, CASA reports, etc.

- They prepare questions to ask the attending interested parties the day of the review.

### On the Board Day:

- Board members meet in a virtual format from home.

- A FCRB staff member (program specialist) facilitates the review day.

- As each case is reviewed, interested parties associated with that particular case have an opportunity to appear before the Board and speak about their concerns, successes,

wants and needs.

- The interested parties consist of case managers, attorney's, biological parents, foster parents, counselors, licensing workers, court-appointed special advocates and selected others.

- The board members ask questions to clarify and corroborate information.

- The board members identify and make recommendations to the Juvenile Court.

- The FCRB staff member (program specialist) prepares a written report detailing the statements given by the interested parties and recommendations made by the board.

- The report is forwarded to the Juvenile Court and mailed out to all interested party of the case.

### To Become a Volunteer:

- You must be available one weekday per month.

- You must be at least 21 years old.

- You must be able to pass a fingerprint background check.

To volunteer for the FCRB, request an application by going to: [www.AZFCRB.org](http://www.AZFCRB.org) or consider Court Appointed Special Advocates, in which volunteers are appointed by the court to advocate for specific child with whom they are paired.

To learn more about becoming a CASA volunteer visit [AZCASAVolunteer.org](http://AZCASAVolunteer.org).

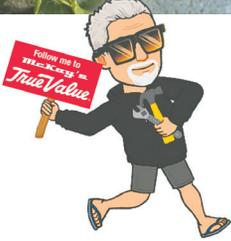
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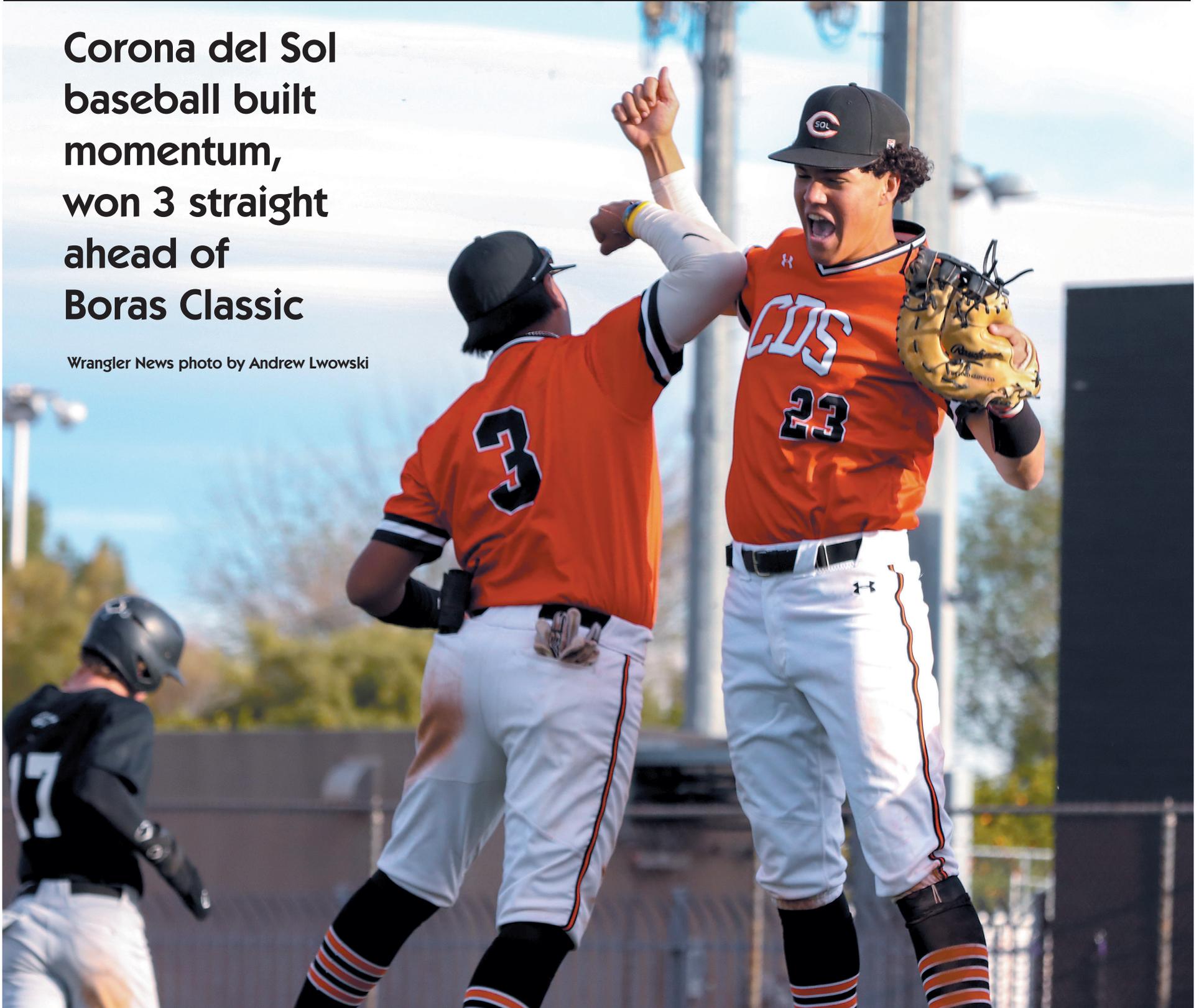




# SPORTS

## Corona del Sol baseball built momentum, won 3 straight ahead of Boras Classic

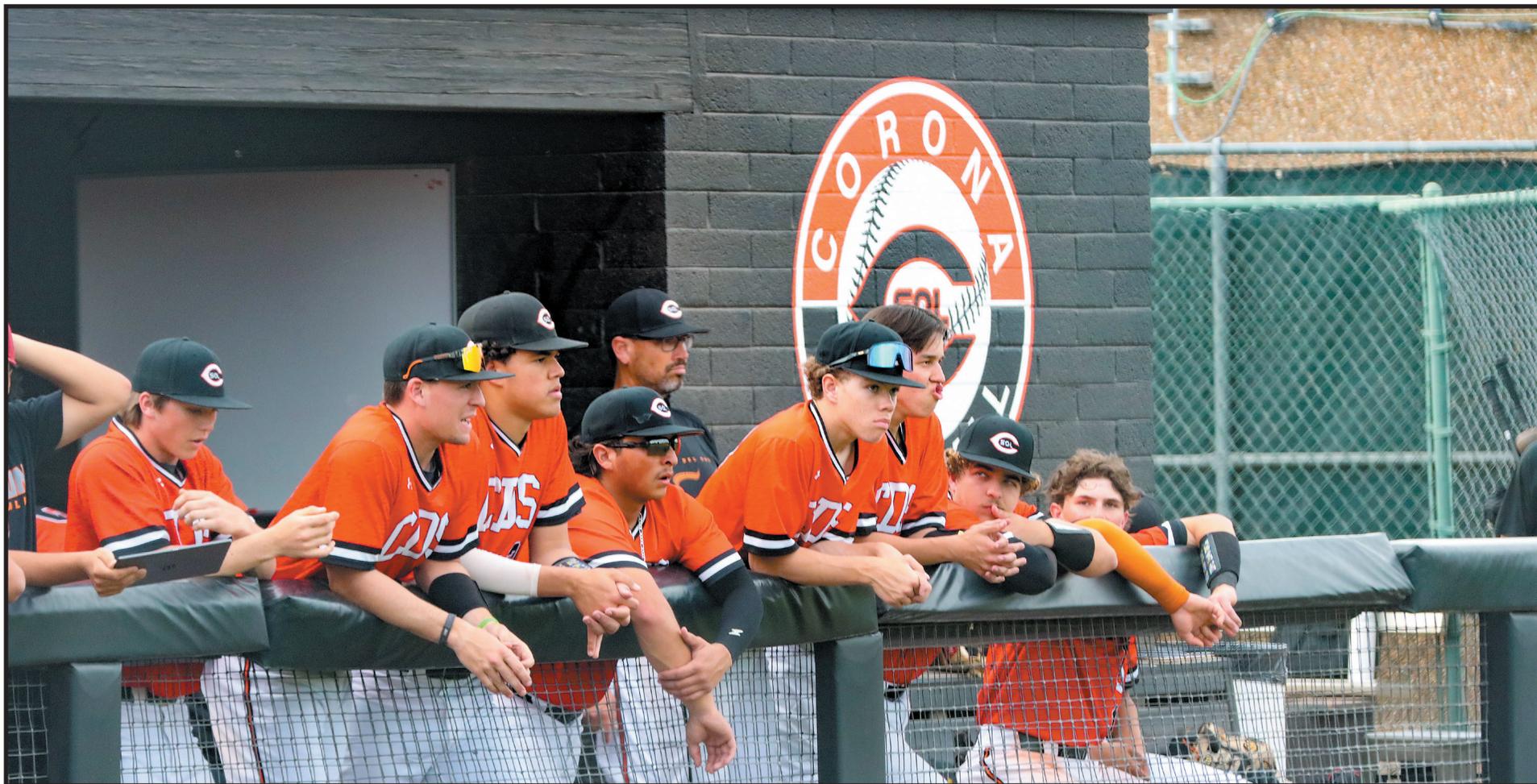
Wrangler News photo by Andrew Lwowski





# SPORTS

## Tourney leaves Aztecs short in the win column



The Aztecs took on Brophy Prep, with Corona coming out on top with a 3-1 victory.

— Wrangler News photo by Andrew Lwowski

### Sports Notebook by Alex Zener

Corona's baseball team won its first two games before losing to two out-of-state teams at their own First Look High School Showdown invitational tournament.

The Aztecs defeated Saguaro 14-0 and Bishop Verot, out of Fort Myers, Florida 3-2, but lost to Ocean View from California and Hoover from Alabama.

So far this season, senior **Trey Anderson** and junior **Myles Harrison** lead the team in batting average, while Harrison leads in three other statistical categories.

Harrison has the highest on-base percentage, the

largest slugging percentage and the most doubles on the team.

Senior **Justin Corless** had the only home run and senior **Conner Bigelow** has the most runs scored at four.

Senior **Cole Carlon** has the most RBI's and the most triples while sophomore **Jaiden Lo Re** has the most stolen bases.

Seniors **Landon Springmeyer** and **Jacob Gutierrez** has the highest fielding percentage on the team. The Aztecs have six pitchers who have made appearances on the mound so far this season.

Carlon, freshman **Carter Jacobson** and Harrison have pitched the most innings but Corless, senior **Kobe**

**Ladd** and sophomore **Quintin "Thor" Pelczarski** have seen action.

Others team players who contributed on or off the field to the Aztecs' success include seniors **Zane Coggins** and **Gabe Carrizoza**, juniors **Owen McGraw**, **CJ Arellano**, **Carson Hammer**, **Jaxon Hamilton**, **Nick Mustacchia** and **Jack Trimble**, sophomore **David Baxter** and freshmen **Parker Williams**, **Jaxen Maxey** and **Preston Berg**.

Corona, currently 7-5, will face its first Central region team, Desert Ridge, on March 28, before playing at Mesa Mountain View on March 30. The next home game will be March 31 against Desert Ridge before the Aztecs play at Gilbert on April 4.

Corona's softball team, currently ranked No.11 in the 6A Conference, started the season playing in the Lion Country Classic Invitational, Feb 23-25, hosted by Red Mountain High School where they defeated Desert Mountain, 13-3, to win their first game of the season on Feb. 25.

Nine different players scored against Desert Mountain with seniors Madison Romero and Jaclyn Ibarra along with freshmen Kaylie Pequeno and Jami Sheehan leading the team in scoring with two runs each.

The other five runs were scored by senior Elizabeth Cowgur, juniors Kaitlyn Schmidt, Abby Ritchhart, and Olivia Rios plus freshman Brooke Sheehan.

The Aztecs used the momentum and confidence gained from their win over Desert Mountain, two days later on Feb. 27, to defeat Chandler High School, 12-2 and win their first regular season game.

Similar to their win against Desert Mountain, Corona had seven players score runs against Chandler including freshman Saige Peters, Ibarra, Sheehan, Freund and senior Gina Jackson, who each scored two runs.

The other two runs were scored by Ritchhart and junior Siena Meraz.

The Aztecs then lost a close game to Basha, 3-1 before winning the next two in the I Love This Day Benefit Tournament hosted by Willow Canyon High School, March 9-11.

On March 9, Corona defeated the Gila Ridge Hawks, 6-5, and on March 10 the Aztecs defeated the American Leadership Academy West Foothills with another impressive 13-1 win before losing to the Cienega Bobcats 2-3 on March 10.

The Aztecs would, one day later, avenge that loss with a dominating 16-2 win over Cienega on March 11.

Romero led the team in scoring with four runs, followed by Peters and Rios with three each, while Pequeno and Sheehan each had two runs and Schmidt and Ritchhart had one each.

"I am very happy with where we are at this point in the season," said head coach Sean Thornton. "We have been working on becoming a cohesive team and polishing up some stuff so that we will be at our best when it matters."

The Aztecs returned 11 players from last season's team that made it to the state championship as the No. 10 seed.

"We have a big senior class returning this season and they have played an enormous role in the success of this program going on four years now," said Thornton. "They have great leadership ability, as a whole, and I think they can guide this team to a long playoff run."

Several of the seniors have played on the varsity since they were freshman.

"Four of our seniors will be four-year letter winners including Jaclyn Ibarra, Jacqueline Tom, Isabelle Freund and Gina Jackson," said Thornton. "Madison Romero, Larisa Pagel and Lizzie Cowgur also make up our stellar senior class that have really pushed our team to be better. They will leave their mark on Corona's softball program, for sure."

Returning juniors from last season include Alyssia Munoz, Meraz, Ritchhart and Rios.

In four of the five games the Aztecs have won, they have outscored their opponents by 10 or more points which is proof that Corona has batters who can hit the ball.

"Jaclyn Ibarra is one of the best hitters around," said Thornton. "She may not bring a lot of pop but she is incredibly hard to get out and almost always finds a way to get on base."

Ibarra, who has started every game, is second on the team with a batting average of 0.526 amassing 10 hits, 7 RBI's and four runs to her credit. She is third on the team in on-base percentage at 0.571.

"Isabelle Freund, Abby Ritchhart, Jacqueline Tom and Olivia Rios provide the power to our lineup," said Thornton. "We anticipate this group to be able to put up lots of runs via the long ball. They also have the ability to get runs across through small ball given the team speed that our team possesses."

Rios, who plays third base on defense, leads the team in six offensive statistical categories including a batting average of 0.548 and an on-base percentage of 0.600. Rios leads the team in runs scored with nine and hits with 17 and she is No. 1 in RBI's with 12.

Freund currently is one of the top three players in several statistical categories including home runs with two, triples with one, hits with 11, runs with eight, stolen bases with two, RBI's with nine and slugging percentage at 0.714.

Ritchhart leads the team in slugging percentage at 0.863 or the total number of bases scored per opportunity at bat. She is tied with Freund in home runs with two, is second in doubles and triples and third in RBI's with nine.

Tom has hit one home run, scored three runs on six hits and has three RBI's.

Corona's infield has two very experienced players, one newcomer and one player waiting in the wings anxious for her chance to get on the field.

"Our infield is led by Isabelle Freund, at shortstop, and Jacqueline Tom, as catcher," said Thornton. "Together it's like having two more coaches on the field."



Front Row - Jaclyn Ibarra, Abby Ritchhart, Madison Romero, Isabelle Freund, Jami Sheehan  
2nd Row - Gina Jackson, Lizzy Cowgur, Siena Meraz, Alyssia Munoz, Larisa Pagel, Leah Montenegro  
3rd Row - Kaitlyn Schmidt, Olivia Rios, Brooke Sheehan, Kaylie Pequeno, Jacqueline Tom  
Back Row - Coach Ellis, Saige Peters, Coach Freund, Coach Thornton, Caitlyn Ackerley, Coach Ettinger

"They make on-field adjustments, communicate these adjustments to other players and bring back information so that we can make in-game changes. They are both all region players and I believe their best season is ahead of them."

Freund has put out 10 players, including two double plays and has 24 assists while Tom has had 30 chances to put out a base runner and has put out 28 along with two assists. Both have a 1.000 fielding percentage.

"Siena Meraz has stepped into a new role as our starting first baseman and has been great defensively," said Thornton.

Meraz has statistically performed an amazing job at first base, putting out all 48 of the 48 chances she had for a putout including two double plays, to garner a 1.000 percentage.

"We are also waiting to get junior transfer Leah Montenegro eligible to play," said Thornton. "Leah is a tremendously versatile player who can play both on the infield, at potentially second base, or in the outfield."

Corona's outfielders include three experienced players and four freshman.

"Our outfield may be one of our biggest strengths," said Thornton. "It is led by Gina Jackson who was named all-region center fielder the last two seasons."

"Joining Jackson is another all-region outfielder, Jaclyn Ibarra plus Kaitlyn Schmidt and four freshman," said Thornton. "Saige Peters, Brooke Sheehan, Jami Sheehan and Kaylie Pequeno are our freshman outfielders."

"These seven outfielders are capable of covering so much ground and, with their strong arms, have the ability to make demanding throws."

Jackson, Ibarra, Schmidt and Pequeno

all have played stellar statistically with a 1.000 fielding percentage.

Jackson was 10 for 10 in chances and putouts while Ibarra, who plays outfielder when she is not pitching, put out two with two assists on four chances.

Pequeno was four putouts on four chances, Jami Sheehan was four out of five and Brooke Sheehan had five assists out of six chances.

The Aztecs have three pitchers to choose from on their roster this season.

"We are lucky to have three pitchers, led by all-region pitcher Jaclyn Ibarra. We believe all three can step in the circle and give us a shot to win," said Thornton.

"Jaclyn, as a varsity pitcher going on four years, has stepped into many pressure situations and thrived," said Thornton. "There has never been moment that is too big for Jaclyn."

"Alyssia Munoz steps into the No. 2 slot this year and is playing well. She currently leads the team in wins, ERA and strikeouts," said Thornton.

"In addition, we have freshman Caitlyn Ackerley, who is off to a great beginning by winning her first two starts at varsity."

The Aztecs were scheduled to play at O'Connor on March 20 and at Pinnacle on March 21 before their next home game. They will play Desert Ridge on March 28 and Mountain View on March 30.

"It's been a good start to the season with over half of our scheduled regular season games left before the playoffs," said Thornton. "We have had some players stepping into new roles and we have lots of young players that we have added to our roster. We have a lot of girls competing at several different positions and it has been fun to watch them grow every day."



# DIVERSIONS



## Despite some viewpoints, Oscars' diversity reigned

By Debra Moorhead

The telecast of this year's Academy Awards received the best TV ratings for an Oscar ceremony in the last three years. But that's not saying much, considering the limitations caused in recent years by the pandemic, combined with factoring into this year's numbers those who only tuned in hoping for possible after effects of "The Slap."

There were widespread complaints of "a lack of diversity" at this year's Oscars. Odd considering that there were five Asian-American nominees in the acting categories alone, three of whom walked away with trophies.

Daniel Kwan, one half of the Everything Everywhere All at Once writing/directing duo, was also a big winner.

The Best Documentary Short Film award went to Indian filmmaker Kartiki Gonsalves and producer Guneet Monga for *The Elephant Whisperers*.

In addition, an Indian composer and lyricist

won the Oscar for Best Song for "Naatu Naatu" from the film *RRR*, the production number for which was one of the highlights of this year's show.

The song made history by becoming the first Indian song to win an Oscar, leaving Rihanna and Lady Gaga in its dust.

Other opinions:

**Best Dressed:** Best Supporting Actress winner, Jamie Lee Curtis, and presenter, Julia Louis-Dreyfus, who managed to look both stylish and sexy without benefit of thigh-high slit or dipping décolletage.

**Worst Dressed:** Singer-songwriter, Tems, whose frock featured both thigh-high slit and a cumulus cloud-cover that obstructed the view of those seated behind her.

**Best Acceptance Speech:** There were plenty of heart-tugging moments, including Best Supporting Actor winner, Ke Huy Quan, marveling at his transition from refugee on a boat to Hollywood's biggest stage.

But our favorite was Best Song composer, M. M.

Keeravani singing some of his speech to the tune of the Carpenters' *Top of the World*.

**What the Academy Did Right:** The decision that all 23 categories would be presented live, reversing last year's decision to cut eight Oscar categories—documentary short subject, film editing, makeup and hair styling, original score, production design, animated short film, live action short film and sound—from the live broadcast. These categories all represent essential moviemaking arts and crafts, and the winners deserve their moment in the spotlight at least as much as any actor, director or producer.

**What the Academy Did Wrong:** The "In Memoriam" Segment.

A meager 3-minute roster that omitted such luminaries as Melinda Dillon, Clu Gulager and Paul Sorvino, not to mention legendary actress Marsha Hunt, whose career spanned 80 years, and Charlbi Dean, one of the stars of this year's Best Picture nominee, *Triangle of Sadness*. Inexcusable.

## For our writer, crash justifies no Mini expression of thanks

By M.V. Moorhead

**H**ow nerdy do you have to be if your midlife crisis dream car is a Mini Cooper? As nerdy as I am, I guess. Sometime in the early 2000s, not long after they became available on the American market, I became infatuated with the British compacts. I even test-drove a new one once, as a lark on a day off, even though it was out of my price range.

I'm not sure what it was about Minis that I found so appealing. I've never been an automotive enthusiast; all I ever really wanted in a car was reliability, affordability and a way to play music. But some confluence of Anglophilia and a fondness for the quirky made little hearts float over my head whenever I saw a Mini go by.

My wife observed this, and two years ago this month, shortly after I was released from an eight-day hospital stay with COVID, she informed me that I would be getting a 2015 Mini for my birthday. Our kid would therefore inherit my beat-up black Corolla, which she promptly had detailed to remove the gallery of bumper stickers from its back end, so that it soon looked fairly presentable again as well.

Delighted as I was by this gift, I also feared that it might prove a case of "be careful what you wish for." And indeed, there were prices to pay: it was difficult, for one thing, to find mechanics who were familiar enough with the make and model to work on her. Also, some of the manly-men types with whom I worked mocked and teased me for driving such an un-macho car. They'd see it and say things like "Aww, how cute."

A lot they knew. Little Miss Mini, I would soon learn, was regarded as a high-performance automobile, turbo-charged and capable of some real zip. I'm no speed demon, but I soon came to really enjoy the car's responsiveness and agility. And when there was engine trouble, I was charmed by the way the dashboard, advising me to get the car to a service center, would use very British phraseology like "Drive Moderately."

Alas, my romance with this car would be relatively short-lived. A few weeks ago I was driving home from a movie screening when I was suddenly struck from behind, hard.

The Mini was totaled, and very soon I found myself, just a week shy of two years after I got the most extravagant birthday present I've ever received, removing my personal items from her and saying goodbye. I also said thank you. Despite the car's supposed ineffectuality, she kept me alive.

## Coming Up at Tempe Center for the Arts

### Con Tumbao

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### Radmilla Cody

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### Safos Dance Theatre

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### Vintage Clothes

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**“Are Tempe voters and its City Council who have not bothered to learn from history, **ESPECIALLY THAT OF GLENDALE**, doomed to repeat it?”**

**- Joyce Clark**

**Former Glendale Vice Mayor & Current City Councilmember**

**Wherever Meruelo goes, bad news follows...**

**BUSINESS INSIDER**

**Arizona's terrible NHL team is begging voters for \$200 million to build a permanent home, but stadiums are consistently huge money pits**

Brent D. Griffiths Feb 6, 2023, 3:20 PM

**azcentral.**

**Arizona Coyotes stiffing Glendale? And this team wants somebody to build a new arena?**

*Opinion: Glendale should be raising holy you-know-what over the Coyotes stiffing them on the rent.*

Laurie Roberts  
Arizona Republic

Published 5:30 p.m. MT Sept. 17, 2020 | Updated 11:43 a.m. MT Sept. 18, 2020

©CBS | NHL HOME SCORES SCHEDULE STANDINGS TEAMS STATS ...

**Coyotes may be locked out at Gila River Arena over delinquent taxes, unpaid arena charges, per report**

Glendale, Ariz. announced earlier in the 2020 that it wouldn't renew its operating agreement with the team

By Wajih AlBaroudi Dec 9, 2021 at 12:24 pm ET • 1 min read

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Las Vegas billionaire & Coyotes owner Alex Meruelo has a long history of not paying taxes, skipping out on rent and breaking promises - just ask Glendale & Tucson.

Now, he's hoping Tempe will pay his bills & line his pockets with \$700+ million of our tax dollars. Let's not add Tempe to the trail of bad headlines that follows Meruelo wherever he goes.

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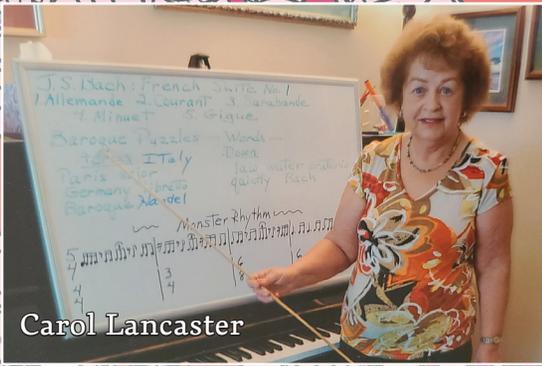
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**If you live in an HOA community**, have you ever considered getting involved by serving on the board, or even learning more about how a homeowner association operates? Now's your chance. Chandler's HOA Academy is back for a spring series during the month of April.

The program is taught by Mulcahy Law Firm, P.C. and is designed to educate residents and homeowner association board members about the various tools, resources and recent legislation that impact their neighborhood.

The free sessions are scheduled from 5-6:30 p.m. and will focus on the following topics:

**Wednesday, April 5 – How to deal with difficult homeowners**

**Wednesday, April 13 – HOA Bootcamp:** Participants will learn the basics of HOAs/condos; how board members ensure that association business is conducted efficiently and professionally; and board members' duties, roles and responsibilities.

**Wednesday, April 19 – Virtual question & answer session** featuring a variety of hot topics. Participants are encouraged to bring their questions to be addressed by experts in the legal field.

**The first two sessions will be at Chandler Museum, 300 S. Chandler Village Drive.  
The final session will be held virtually.**

Residents may register online at Chandler HOA Academy, or email [neighborhood.programs@chandleraz.gov](mailto:neighborhood.programs@chandleraz.gov). For questions about the spring HOA Academy, call the city's Neighborhood Programs Office at 480-782-4363.

# 36th Annual Chandler Chamber Community 2023 Awards

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# A MESSAGE FROM OUR PUBLISHER

**For 30-plus years, Wrangler News has brought neighborhood-centric information (and enjoyment) to the residents of South Tempe and West Chandler.**

**After all these years, we get as much pleasure from our work as we did publishing that very first edition.**

**What brings us the greatest reward, however, is knowing that we've built long-lasting relationships with the business owners, writers, photographers — and readers like you — who tell us they love what we do as much as how we do it: With the same kind of neighborly devotion you'd expect from, well, good neighbors. Just like we'll continue to be in the years ahead.**



  
**WRANGLER  
NEWS**

## Tour de Tempe is April 9

Join more than 800 bike riders at the Tour de Tempe community bike ride on Sunday, April 2, at Kiwanis Park, 6111 S. All-America Way.

This free, 10-mile bike ride is led by members of the Tempe City Council.

Registration starts at 7:30 a.m. and the ride starts at 9 a.m.

Advance registration is requested by visiting [tempe.gov/BikeMonth](http://tempe.gov/BikeMonth) through March 30.

Grab a free T-shirt (for the first 850 riders), and free breakfast foods and coffee, available on a first come, first served basis.

Helmets are required. Event sponsors include The Husband and Wife Law Team, The Bicycle Cellar and Pedal Haus Brewery.



## Tempe *News Briefs*

### Tempe Town Hall on Aging is April 1

Join fellow residents and local aging experts on Saturday, April 1, from 10 a.m. to noon, at the Tempe History Museum for a town hall discussion on issues of interest to seniors.

This is your chance to talk about concerns for yourself or loved ones in areas like health, safety, home security and more.

Feedback will be taken during this guided discussion and used to identify issues needing solutions in the local area.

The museum is located at 809 E. Southern Ave. For more information, contact event organizer and Tempe resident Linda Arters via email at [artersgroup@gmail.com](mailto:artersgroup@gmail.com) or at 602-677-3533.

### 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](http://BeBallotReady.Vote) or by calling 602-506-1511.

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

### Zero Waste Day is April 29

Residents are encouraged to bring unwanted items for reuse, recycling or repurposing to Tempe's next Zero Waste Day from 7 a.m. to 1 p.m. on Saturday, April 29, at the Tempe Fire Training Center, 1340 E. University Drive.

Accepted items include paper for secure shredding, building materials, tires, clothing, household items, scrap metal, bikes and household hazardous waste.

Food and pet supplies donations will also be collected. Participants must live in Tempe or Guadalupe and provide proof of residency. For the full list of items accepted, visit [tempe.gov/ZeroWaste](http://tempe.gov/ZeroWaste).

### Students: submit artwork for Law Day!

The Tempe Municipal Court invites Tempe and Kyrene school district students in fourth, fifth and sixth grade to take part in the Law Day 2023 art contest. Students can draw, paint, sketch or create a collage depicting the importance of the U.S. Constitution as a cornerstone of democracy. Students are encouraged to use their imaginations and creativity. The deadline to submit is April 24 and all entries will be displayed from May 2 through May 14 at Tempe History Museum.

Cash prizes will be presented to the winners. For details, visit [tempe.gov/court](http://tempe.gov/court).

# Show Us Where You Read Your Wrangler News

*Ruth Morrow recently visiting from Iowa over Christmas was caught up in a recent edition of The Wrangler News while enjoying the Arizona sunshine.*

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**2023**

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**PENTAIR**

## ZITA JOHNSON: A tribute

*Editor's note: Over the time Wrangler News has been in publication, and over our staff's own longtime remembrance of Zita, we felt it would be appropriate to set aside this page for a deserved tribute. The following obituary helps to fulfill, in small part, our desire to recognize her many contributions to our community, and our collective memories of her.*

Zita Mulligan Johnson was born on September 27, 1936, at Fort Snelling, Minnesota, and died at home in Tempe surrounded by her family on March 1, 2023 after a life of devotion to family, service, and leadership. She leaves a legacy of love, hope, and a commitment to excellence.

Zita's early years were spent in Omaha, Nebraska with her mother Mildred Mulligan while her father, Dr. Arthur Mulligan was serving in the Army during WWII. After the war, Zita and her two brothers Mike and Pat returned to Brainerd, Minnesota where her sister Patricia was born. Zita attended Brainerd High School and earned her BS at the University of Minnesota, where she discovered her passion for education.

On a New Year's Eve blind date during college, Zita met the love of her life, Pen Johnson, of Little Falls, Minnesota. The two worked during the summers at Madden's Resort on Gull Lake near Brainerd. After graduation, Zita and Pen married on September 6, 1958 and moved to East Lansing, Michigan where Pen was completing his studies. After Pen's graduation, the newlyweds moved to St. Louis, Nashville, and then to Columbus as Pen began his long and successful career as an Innkeeper. Their sons Mark, Gregg, and Stephen were born during these years, as the family lived in the hotel's manager apartments. These years moving all over the country, raising three little boys in hotels and eating meals in the dining room was a busy and exciting time for Zita and Pen's young family. After moving to Denver, their daughter Jennifer was born in 1968.

Zita, Pen and their four children moved to Tempe in 1970 where Pen opened the Holiday Inn next to the rapidly growing ASU campus. As her children grew Zita jumped in with both feet, sharing her love of skiing, swimming, and tennis with her family. She was an active leader in Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, and the PTA. The family loved camping on the beach at Rocky Point and spending summers at the family cabin in Minnesota. Zita drove a station wagon full of kids to countless events and activities. Her love of animals led her to breed golden retrievers, and over the years scores of puppies joined families throughout the Valley.

Throughout her life Zita was an avid reader, enjoying fiction and nonfiction books on all subjects and devouring two newspapers every morning. She was a news and information buff, and had informed opinions on events all over the world. Pen will tell you that Zita Mulligan was thrifty at heart, caring for her family throughout her life by clipping coupons, collecting Green Stamps, and shopping the specials at four grocery stores every week. She became an accomplished seamstress, making clothing for herself, Pen, her kids, and her grandkids as well as many memorable Halloween costumes and Christmas stockings. Although Zita was frugal, she was incredibly generous in sharing her time and talent with her family and community.

Zita continued her career as an educator at ASU,

starting as the Assistant Director and Head Teacher at the Child Study Lab (CSL) in 1976. She would continue to serve ASU for 18 years, taking on additional responsibility for CSL's education and research programs, teaching and developing undergrads to meet the challenges of the classroom, and doing what she loved most: spending time with babies, toddlers, preschoolers, and parents. During these years, Zita influenced the early development and education of thousands of young children. After her retirement she was frequently approached by young adults all over town, who were eager to share that they were CSL alumni. Zita could always remember their names and their time as toddlers in the classroom.

During her time at ASU Zita earned her Masters in Education Administration and was recognized with the ASU Alumni Association Staff Leadership Award in 1999. She published several papers in professional journals exploring the education and development of young children, and was a presenter at many conferences and other events. Zita would tell you that one of her proudest moments was co-presenting a workshop on Early Childhood Education Community Collaboration with her daughter Jennifer at the National Association for the Education of Young Children Conference in 1999.



Zita recognized the challenges her community faced including poverty, racism, homophobia, hunger, addiction, and teen pregnancy. Zita deeply believed in the potential of all people to lead successful,

productive, and happy lives. Zita lived her values by jumping in and working hard to create change and to improve the lives of those around her. Her approach was to first learn all she could about the issues, reading everything she could find. Then she sought out people working in the field, and spent time learning from those impacted. And then she got to work. Her leadership style was a mix of respect, persuasion, and kindness, coupled with a drive to get things done. And get things done she did.

Seeing the challenges that low-income children faced, Zita volunteered as one of the first Head Start teachers in America, traveling into Denver to help prepare preschoolers and kindergarteners for a successful education. Zita was a strong supporter of school integration, and the family participated as her boys were bussed to schools in the inner city. Before the term "anti-racist" was common, Zita spent countless hours bringing together groups to share Diversity Dialogues through the Tempe Talks program. She led her community in celebrating the accomplishments of Dr. Martin Luther King, and served as a member and chairperson of Tempe's Human Relations Commission. She coined the phrase "Together We're Better" and she made the slogan come to life in her actions.

Exemplifying passion for education, Zita was perhaps best known for her service on the Tempe Union High School District Governing Board from 2002 to 2012, including serving as President in 2004, 2007, and 2011. During her time on the Board she worked to establish the International Baccalaureate Program, the Peggy Payne Academy, and Compadre Alternative High School, as well as many other curriculum additions for

students of all abilities. She was a steadfast advocate for Sex Education and worked during and after her board service to provide it in High School. Recognizing the challenges of teen parents who were struggling to both raise children and get a good education, Zita was a staunch and longtime advocate of Teenage Pregnancy and Parenting Program (TAPP). Since TAPP's inception countless young families have had the opportunity for a stronger start. Zita established the annual "Beat the Odds Scholarship" to enable teen parents to continue their education beyond high school graduation, and together with her family and friends endowed a scholarship for Early Childhood Development undergrads at ASU.

The list of Zita's service and leadership roles is extensive. Her 50+ years of community service touched multiple organizations such as Hospice of the Valley, Tempe Sister Cities, Tempe Homeless Task Force, and the Children's Museum of Phoenix. Zita served on the Boards of Tempe Community Council, Tempe Centers for Habilitation, Tempe Leadership, Assistance for Independent Living, and Tempe Community Action Agency. In recognition of her service, Zita was chosen for Tempe Leadership's Outstanding Community Leadership Award in 1997, and was recognized with the Don Carlos Humanitarian of the Year Award in 2001. Zita received the Women Who Make a Difference Award in 2003, and 2009 she was honored with the MLK Diversity Award from the City of Tempe. In 2011 she was named a City of Tempe Legend by the Tempe History Society. Zita was also honored with the prestigious Barbara R. Norton Service Award in 2013.

Zita loved Tempe and her neighborhood and knew the importance of strong leadership in her community. To make change, she served in campaign leadership and fundraising roles for candidates who supported the causes she felt were important. As a mentor, a board member of Tempe Leadership, and a volunteer at Sister Cities, she gave her time and talent in coaching and developing leaders of all ages.

Most of all, Zita loved her family. She and Pen were married for 64 years, and they had four children: Mark, who died in 1998, Gregg, Steve, who died in 2013, and Jennifer. Her daughters in law were very special to her: Joan Widdifield, Nancy Johnson, and Joan M Johnson. Zita was an adoring grandma of five: Kate, Scott, Natalie, Colin, and Jennifer Mary; and a great-grandma to Stevie and Nick. She was close to her sister Patricia and brothers Mike and Pat and she had great love in her heart for her nieces and nephews and their families. She was the center of her large, extended family, always loving, present, and connected with her family members, no matter how far they were geographically. The warmth of gatherings in her home was only exceeded by the deliciousness of her recipes, many of which her children and grandchildren have adopted. She championed her family's accomplishments and showed up to celebrate milestones all over the country. Her love and support was always deeply felt by her children and grandchildren.

The Johnson family will join with the community in celebrating Zita's life on Friday, April 28 at 2:00 pm at the Tempe Center for the Arts.

Contributions may be made to the Zita Johnson Memorial Fund at Tempe Community Action Agency at <https://tempeaction.org/zita-johnson.html> or 1208 E Broadway Rd. Suite 111, Tempe, AZ 85282.



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