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Our 32nd year of publication



WRANGLER NEWS



— Wrangler News photo by Andrew Lwowski

**Back from death's doorstep.
A remarkable recovery from
Ray Road explosion — Pg. 3**

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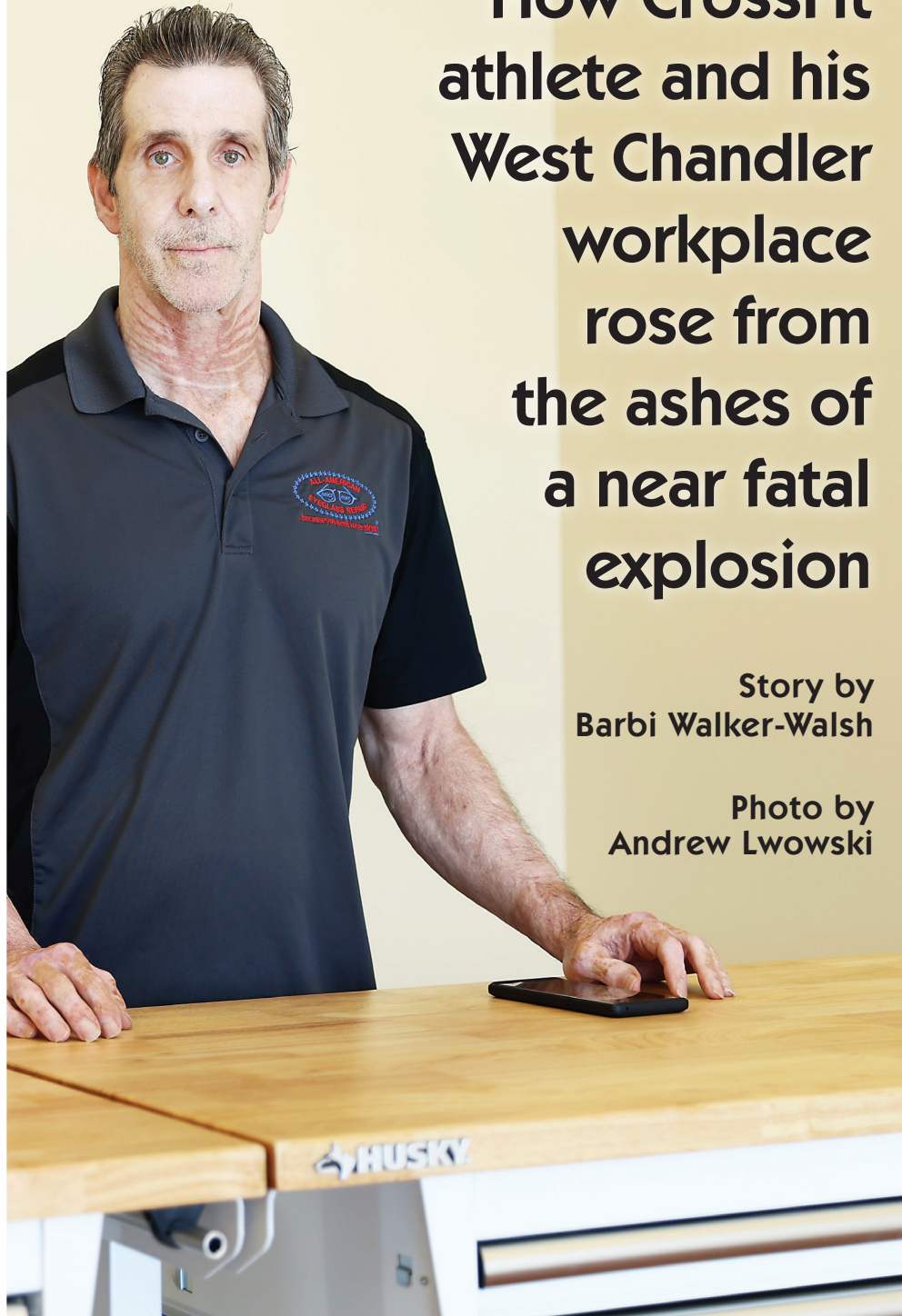




How CrossFit athlete and his West Chandler workplace rose from the ashes of a near fatal explosion

Story by
Barbi Walker-Walsh

Photo by
Andrew Lwowski



Navigating the scorched remains and heaps of debris in the sweltering 1,000-degree plus heat, Glenn Jordan recalls the sensation of his back seemingly ablaze when a natural gas leak triggered a colossal explosion one early August morning.

His first attempt to escape the inferno was through the back, but it was blocked. He turned and headed toward the front. Once he reached the storefront—its windows and door obliterated, leaving a huge void—he instinctively enacted the familiar mantra: stop, drop, and roll to put out the fire on his back.

But his back wasn't on fire; instead, his shirt had melted to his skin, a result of the intense heat.

Examining his hands, equally scalded and agonizing, he saw the skin gone—Jordan had sustained second and third-degree burns covering 30 percent of his body.

Now, two and a half years later, Jordan stands once again in that very spot at All American Eyeglass Repair alongside his friend, John Gutierrez.

At the time of the explosion, Jordan hadn't opened for the day yet. He had just started a call when he was thrown backward by the force and greeted by a thunderous boom. He remembers nothing prior to the explosion except for his location and the act of leaving a customer a message, which encapsulates the chaotic aftermath.

The gas leak originated from Platinum Printing, adjacent to the eyeglass shop, resulting in both establishments being consumed by flames and debris. The incident, on Aug. 26, 2021, collapsed Platinum Printing's roof and damaged the eyeglass shop and neighboring businesses.



Walker-Walsh

"Insulation covered the parking lot," recounts Gutierrez, son of the family-owned eyeglass repair shop's owner. Gutierrez was late to meet with Jordan and arrived shortly after the explosion. Gutierrez says he's never late.

He arrived at a chaotic scene. Once parked, he ran in the direction of the store, calling John's name. He found him sitting on the

sidewalk and was relieved to see him talking and alert.

Among the victims were Dillon Ryan, Andrew Ryan, and Parker Milderantt, employees of the printing shop. All four men were rushed to Arizona Burn Center.

Investigations revealed a nearby gas line had succumbed to degradation in the hot desert environment.

Not the first time this had happened.

Jordan was in an induced coma for 26 days. Once having regain full consciousness, Jordan, an avid CrossFit athlete, leveraged his CrossFit mindset toward recovery. He embarked on a grueling 40-day hospital stay and subsequent months of rehab. Supported by his wife, family, friends, and his-gym buddies, he faced the challenge head-on. Gutierrez, unwavering in his belief in Jordan's recovery, also harbored no doubts about reopening the eyeglass repair shop in the same location with Jordan at the helm.

The Chandler store, previously the corporate

hub for all town stores, came to a standstill post-explosion. With the store rendered unusable and equipment and inventory lost, the rebuilding process loomed large. According to numerous news accounts, a recent undisclosed settlement was reported involving the victims, businesses, Southwest Gas and Chevron-Phillips, the manufacturer of the faulty pipe.

In the now-rejuvenated shop, freshly painted in a slightly warmer color than its original white hue, Jordan and Gutierrez reflected on the explosion while contemplating a grand opening celebration. Despite tempting opportunities to relocate, Gutierrez said, "No one ever even considered going anywhere else." With roots deeply embedded in the neighborhood, the eyeglass shop is more than a business—it's a family legacy.

As they discuss the future and the prospect of a cake for the grand opening, Gutierrez highlights the shop's blank canvas status. Technological upgrades have become a priority, a facet overlooked in the pre-explosion era. Despite options to start anew

elsewhere, Gutierrez insists even though they had the opportunity to go around the corner, their commitment was to this location. "When we talked about it, it was like, yeah, we'll just rebuild it," Gutierrez said.

Rebuilding is a common theme, paralleling Jordan's personal journey, where he transformed from post-explosion injuries to completing a challenge with over 2,000 pull-ups for the fundraiser Raise Your Bar for the Arizona Burn Foundation at the Hub, two organizations that are dearest to him. The decision to rebuild the business mirrors this resilience.

Come Feb. 4, All American Eyeglass Repair, under Jordan's guidance, will resume operations. Same location, same commitment to customer service, and the familiar presence of Jordan behind the counter.

A business reborn, incorporating the past while propelling it into the future, ensuring the continuity of the family legacy and commitment to the community who supported them.

Give back by serving on a city board

Looking for a way to give back and serve your community? Applications are now open for city's 25+ boards, commissions and residents' committees. Check out the various opportunities and consider applying for a position that fits with your schedule and interests.

chandleraz.gov/boards



Awards celebrate all who benefit neighborhoods

Compassionate, connected and uniquely Tempe neighborhoods are sources of comfort, strength and beauty for the residents who live in them.

Wrangler News readers can celebrate special people, places and actions by nominating them for a Neighborhood Award at tempe.gov/NeighborhoodCelebration.

Nominations close Feb. 15 at 5 p.m.

Award possibilities include honors for individuals, neighborhoods, spaces, events or initiatives.

Anyone can nominate, and being a Tempe resident is not a requirement for nominators. Nominees, however, must live and/or work in Tempe.

The Neighborhood Awards are an opportunity to express Tempe's collective gratitude and appreciate the unique contributions that make our Tempe neighborhoods exceptional, according to



Neighborhood Award winners and Tempe community members at the 2023 Celebration event.

Joel Stern and Gabe Hagan, chair and vice-chair of Tempe's Neighborhood Advisory Commission.

"Whether it's through individual acts of kindness, group initiatives or beautifying our shared spaces, these efforts create a sense of belonging and community spirit," said Stern.

Honorees will be recognized at the 2024 Neighborhood Celebration on Saturday, April 6, in the Fiesta ramadas area at Kiwanis Park.

This yearly event, hosted by the city of Tempe and sponsored by Salt River Project, invites the city residents for breakfast, live music, arts, crafts, games and bonding in the park.

Said Mayor Corey Woods:

"...I am thrilled to see the vibrant spirit of our neighborhoods shining through the 2024 Neighborhood Awards.

"This initiative celebrates the heart of our community, showcasing the compassion, connection, and unique contributions that define Tempe".

In addition to Neighborhood Awards, Tempe will honor community members for arts and culture contributions, sustainability achievements, water wise landscapes and historic preservation efforts. Nomination forms are available at tempe.gov/NeighborhoodCelebration.

LUCAS

Real Estate

Erika
Lucas-Goff
(daughter)

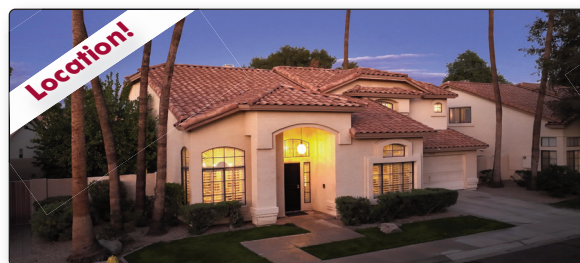
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Help Shape Tempe's Budget: Attend a Feb. 6 public meeting

Every year one of the most important things Tempe does is plan and pass an annual operating and capital budget which covers all services and programs for residents. The budget is a reflection of community priorities which is why the City needs community input to help allocate the funds.

Attend a budget meeting Tuesday, Feb. 6. The online meeting via Zoom is at noon and the in-person meeting is at 6 p.m. at the Tempe History Museum, 809 E Southern Ave.

For more information on the meetings and Tempe's budget, go to tempe.gov/budgetplan.

Register to vote for March 12 election

The City of Tempe is holding a Primary Election Tuesday, March 12 to nominate and/or elect the Mayor and three members of the City Council, in conjunction with a Special Election giving Tempe voters the opportunity to vote on the General Plan 2050. Informational pamphlets will be mailed to Tempe households with a registered voter beginning on Feb. 6.



Other key election dates:

Feb. 12: Last day to register to vote. Check your status at BeBallotReady.Vote.

Feb. 14: Ballots mailed to registered Tempe voters; ballot drop boxes available.

March 1: Last day to request a replacement ballot. Request.Maricopa.Vote for details.

March 4: In-person voting locations and ballot replacement centers open. Locations.Maricopa.Vote for details.

March 12: Election Day. Election night results will be posted online after 8 p.m. at Results.Maricopa.Vote.

Find election information at tempe.gov/election. View the general plan at tempe.gov/2050.

Healthy Giving in 2024

In our recent Community Survey, Tempe residents said helping unsheltered people was their top priority. The best way of doing this is through Healthy Giving, which supports a person's long-term needs, such as shelter or substance abuse treatment, and encourages working with experienced nonprofits to help people end their homelessness.

The city's "Real change, not spare change" campaign underscores that giving at intersections, parks and other public spaces can delay or divert a person from seeking lasting help.

Unsanctioned charitable programs in public spaces like parks can also greatly impact neighborhoods. Though driven by compassion, these programs can draw large crowds and create safety concerns such as discarded hypodermic needles. Consider supporting efforts focused on providing people with the most effective help and connections to life-changing shelter and resources. Learn more at tempe.gov/HealthyGiving.

Boards and Commissions

Tempe residents interested in actively participating in community affairs are invited to apply for volunteer board and commission openings.

All boards and commissions play a crucial role in shaping policies that enhance the safety, beauty and connectivity of the city.

In total there are 28 Boards and Commissions, each connected to an area of special interest.

Three specifically have immediate volunteer openings:

The Family Justice Commission
The Commission on Disability Concerns
The Technical Code Advisory Board of Appeals

Interested individuals should apply by filling out the Board and Commission Application as soon as possible to be considered for the next appointments. Want to see some of the accomplishments of these groups? Each year, the appointed members of Tempe's Boards and Commissions produce a collective annual report. You can read the 2023 report now at tempe.gov/BoardsandCommissions.

Register for spring classes & swim lessons

As the weather warms up for spring, it's the perfect time to head outside and try something new! Tempe offers classes and activities for every age, interest and ability. Choose from exercise and fitness, arts, sports, boating and so much more.

Peruse all offerings and register by visiting tempe.gov/play. Registration begins Feb. 21 for residents and Feb. 27 for nonresidents. Classes begin in mid-March.

Knowing how to swim is an invaluable lifesaving ability that is important for all ages. The City of Tempe strives to reach the goal of zero drownings by offering affordable beginner swim lessons this spring for all ages. Learn more and sign up at tempe.gov/swim.

Come out and play

Enjoy a free day of play for kids and families of all ages at PlayDay on Saturday, Feb. 24, from 10 a.m.-2 p.m. at Kiwanis Park. Join in on a variety of structured and unstructured games and events, including kayaking on Kiwanis Lake, obstacle courses, a variety of sports, art projects, reading activities, skateboarding and more. This event is sponsored in part by the Tempe Diablos. Learn more at tempe.gov/PlayDay.

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Empty Bowls fund-raiser returns for 22nd year

Tempe Community Action Agency and United Food Bank are collaborating again to present the 22nd annual Tempe Empty Bowls fundraiser, 10 a.m.-2 p.m. Feb. 24.

The event will be held in the Community Center courtyard near the Tempe Public Library, at 3500 S. Rural Road.

This year's event will combine art and community action to help combat food insecurity in Arizona.

Arizonans can check out and purchase from hundreds of bowls on display, hear live music and sample soup, which is free with the purchase of a bowl.

The two agencies work with Tempe Union High School students, teachers and local artists, as well as participants from the Edna Vihel Arts Center, to create handcrafted, decorative clay bowls for display and purchase during the event.

Each bowl is said to represent the acknowledged hundreds of "empty" bowls in the community.

"This year's family-friendly fundraiser is designed to bring artists, emergency food providers, and neighbors together to make an impact on hunger in our community." Said Deborah Arteaga, CEO of Tempe Community Action Agency.

Proceeds will benefit the nonprofit Tempe Community Action Agency and United Food Bank.

This community tradition is reported to have gathered over 5,000 attendees in past years to achieve an annual fundraising goal of \$30,000.

"We are thrilled to once again partner on this event," said Jason Reed, CEO of United Food Bank.

"The number of Arizonans struggling with food insecurity has seen a massive increase over the years. This fundraiser will provide community members in need with reliable access to everyday meals."

The program traces its origins back to 1990, during which an impassioned Michigan High School arts teacher and student group sought a way to incorporate local, handmade art and resources to support a food drive to engage the community and amplify donor turnout.

The students used their skills in a class-wide project to create a bowl for a fundraising meal with a lasting impact.

Guests were served a simple meal of soup and bread and were invited to keep the bowl as a reminder of hunger in the world.

United Food Bank and Tempe

Community Action Agency will be celebrating their 22-year anniversary of community outreach, inviting participants to help combat local food insecurities.



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JANE POSTON

COUNCILMEMBER
ANGEL ENCINAS

COUNCILMEMBER
CHRISTINE ELLIS

Tempe's carbon neutral goal aims 11 years forward

Tempe is more than halfway to its goal of using 100% renewable energy for city operations due to a new Salt River Project partnership.

By 2026, say experts, 52% of Tempe's city operations will be powered by renewable energy, with the goal of 100% by 2035.

The partnership, approved by Tempe City Council on Jan. 19, will supply up to 20% of the electricity for city facilities within the SRP service area with clean, renewable energy from a 300 megawatt solar field planned for construction in Flagstaff.

The partnership will supplement

Our aim is to improve community health outcomes, save money and create jobs while setting a precedent for Tempe residents, businesses, and other cities to prioritize investing in energy-efficiency.

— Tempe Sustainability Director Eric Iwerson

the city's current renewable energy efforts—six solar installations at city facilities and an existing partnership for renewable energy through the APS Green Power Partners Program.

"The council is making progress on the city's goal of achieving carbon neutrality in municipal operations with a strategy of 100% renewable energy," Mayor Corey Woods said.

"By entering into this agreement with SRP, city operations powered by renewable energy will increase from 35% to 52% by 2026.

"Tempe really has been making strides as a leader to address sustainability in our community."

Energy use accounts for 70% of Tempe's municipal carbon emissions and 56% of community-wide emissions. Tempe is taking action to reduce municipal energy use by

investing in technologies that use less energy and by powering city buildings, streetlights, and water treatment facilities with renewable energy.

"Ultimately, Tempe is working toward the council-adopted goal of carbon neutrality in city operations by 2050.

This goal considers emissions from city electricity, transportation fuels, waste and waste operations." Sustainability and Resilience Director Eric Iwerson said.

"By becoming carbon-neutral, we aim to improve community health outcomes, save money and create jobs while setting a precedent for Tempe residents, businesses, and other cities to prioritize investing in energy-efficiency."

In addition to renewable energy, Tempe is making strides in other sustainability-related initiatives like sustainable building practices, landfill diversion, water conservation, extreme heat resilience, community resilience, expanding access to local food and more.

Recently Tempe City Council adopted a green building policy, known as the International Green Construction Code, which commits future city facilities to sustainable building practices and establishes a voluntary sustainable building code for local developers to follow.

Community members can make an impact and save money by taking simple steps to reduce their energy use:

- Plant native or desert-adapted trees and plants for natural shade near your home
- Cover drafty windows or install insulating drapes or shades near windows
- Find and seal leaks around utility cut-throughs for pipes, gaps around chimneys and recessed lights and unfinished spaces behind cupboards
- Look into available rebates and incentives

Wrangler News readers can learn about energy savings tips, Tempe sustainability initiatives and more at tempe.gov/SustainableTempe.

Harris voted Chandler's newest vice mayor



O.D. Harris

The Chandler City Council voted during its Jan. 11 Meeting to elect Councilmember O.D. Harris as the city's new vice mayor. Harris will serve in the position through Jan. 9, 2025.

"Our community is at the heart of everything that I do – it's why I ran for Council in the first place," said Harris.

"I thank my colleagues for giving me the opportunity to further serve in this capacity and I am looking forward to the year ahead."

A U.S. Army veteran, entrepreneur and

business owner, Harris began his first term on the City Council in January 2021.

Harris has been committed to creating an inclusive and welcoming Chandler for all residents. He prioritizes mental health programming and partnerships, recognizing the vital role it plays in the well-being of our community.

In addition to his civic duties, Harris is a best-selling author and founder of the national Ready Set Go Foundation, which empowers young people to pursue their dreams and reach their full potential.

His work with education and mentorship has had what officials say is a profound impact on countless lives.

Harris' expertise in accounting showcases his commitment to excellence and fiscal responsibility.

He currently represents Chandler on the local, regional and national level, including the Institute for Building Technology and Safety Board of Directors; Valley Metro Rail Board of Directors; Valley Metro Regional Public Transportation Authority Board of Directors; La Frontera Arizona and EMPACT-SPC Governing Board; Big Brothers Big Sisters of Central Arizona; Black Philanthropy Initiative; Chandler Community Safety Subcommittee; Chandler Connectivity Subcommittee and Chandler Quality of Life Subcommittee.

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We'd love to hear from you.

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Wet, wild and bone-rattling cold was the promise of the annual Polar Bear Plunge at South Tempe's Lakes community, which has staged the event since 2012. In those years, says originator and planner Denise Rentschler, more than \$100,000 has been raised for Team Asa, a volunteer group that supports adaptive recreation programs for the special needs community.

— Wrangler News photos by Andrew Lwowski







COMMUNITY



Tempe reports drop in homelessness, continues to address community needs

The number of people experiencing homelessness in Tempe has dropped significantly as a result of enhancements to Tempe's homeless solutions, according to officials.

Proactive daily outreach, city-run shelter space, an expanding jobs program and a 24/7 crisis response line

are among the strategies driving the decrease.

In the city of Tempe's latest community survey, residents said homelessness was their top priority.

Officials say the city remains committed to helping unsheltered people end their homelessness, investing nearly \$5 million this fiscal year in homeless solutions and helping 1,280 people in the last two years into a successful housing resolution.

The city's long-held goal is said to be designed to make homelessness rare, brief and one time.

While significant progress is being made, issues still exist. A careful balance

is needed to help those who need it most and still keep Tempe's parks and neighborhoods safe, clean and available for everyone's enjoyment.

Charitable food events in parks have prompted ongoing complaints from nearby residents.

Kelli Cholieu, founder of Clean Up Papago, said there has been an uptick in trash and drug paraphernalia found in the area after the events take place.

"Our organization has picked up uncapped, used syringes in children's playground areas. We don't feel safe enjoying our parks and preserves in this beautiful city," she said.

On Jan. 19, the city denied a request for a special event permit to AZ Hugs for the Homeless.

The organization hosts charitable food events that can draw as many as 150 people to Tempe parks.

By denying the application, AZ Hugs will not be able to apply for a special event permit to hold an event for a year.

While Tempe staff had met with the group in hopes of finding compassionate solutions, a spokesperson said AZ Hugs continued to violate City Code 5-2 by holding unpermitted food events.

This reportedly was in repeated defiance of numerous written and verbal notifications about the need for a permit.

At a Jan. 11 City Council meeting, several residents repeatedly asked city leadership to address

unsanctioned special events in parks, citing safety concerns, excessive trash, hazards such as hypodermic needles, improper use of ramadas, environmental impacts and conflicts with properly permitted events.

One resident said, "Structured programs that combine food services with other services to get people back on their feet in a more appropriate setting would be less damaging to our environment."

Another resident asked city officials to "strike a balance" between compassion and special events in parks that can impact neighborhoods.

The public comments echo what city leadership said it has consistently been hearing from residents concerned about health and safety as a result of unsanctioned events that draw hundreds of people to various locations weekly.

Public open space used for events, whether hosted by a nonprofit organization, resident or business, requires a special event permit. The city's top priority was reported to be focused on ensuring safety for all involved—event sponsors, attendees, residents and others—through the special event permit process. While the officials say the city admires the compassion that goes into helping people who are unsheltered, charitable food events must follow

the same rules as other Tempe events open to the public.

Through the city's special event process, one nonprofit has successfully transitioned its charitable food event to private property from a park.

The city is currently reviewing an application from another organization wishing to hold a permitted charitable food program; that organization halted its program while going through the city's permit process.

Tempe's public open spaces, including parks and preserves, provide opportunities for neighborhood connections and promote healthy communities.

These valued spaces contribute to a safe, sustainable, diverse and healthy environment, enhancing quality of life in Tempe.

Along with addressing homelessness, feeling safe in city parks is said to be a top resident priority.

Tempe City Council meetings can be watched at tempe.gov/Tempe11 for a presentation about Tempe's work helping unsheltered people while endeavoring to keep neighborhoods and parks safe and to hear public comments about unsanctioned events in parks, said one official.

Chandler participates in annual Point-in-Time count

Chandler's annual Point-in-Time enumeration was due to be conducted Jan. 23 in conjunction with an ongoing effort to determine the number of people experiencing homelessness.

The count is part of a widely held effort to identify the extent of the problem throughout the country.

It includes a brief survey (conducted on a smartphone app) to identify the needs of those experiencing homelessness in the community. Each city in Maricopa County is responsible for counting within its boundaries on this day.

The morning of the count, volunteers team up in pairs and canvass assigned areas to identify and survey people experiencing homelessness in Chandler city limits.

Results of the count are submitted to and compiled by Maricopa County Association of Governments and will be available in mid-2024.

Clothing for needy kids is goal of fashion event

Assistance League of East Valley will host a day of fashions and fundraising on Saturday, March 2, at the Marriott Phoenix Chandler, 1600 S. Price Road, Chandler. The event will help provide new school clothing and uniforms for over 6,000 needy school children this year.

Tempe leaders who will be modeling fashions at the event include Tempe Mayor Corey Woods; Brad Cox, vice president of the Tempe Diablos; and Pam Goronkin, former president of Downtown Tempe Community. Fashions are by Kiss Me Kate Boutique and Caddie Shack Golf.

The event will feature a morning of boutique vendors, as well as a silent auction and raffle before the noon luncheon. Derek Staahl, a news anchor on Arizona's Family, 3TV and CBS 5, will be the emcee.

Reservations for the event are available online at the organization's website, www.assistanceleagueeastvalley.org or by mail or in person at their thrift shop, 2326 N. Alma School Road, Chandler.

An all-volunteer 501(c)(3) organization recognized for its work with East Valley schools and agencies, Assistance League of East Valley also provides 13 college scholarships and over 5,000 clothing and hygiene kits for victims of assault or crisis.



Carolyn Larsen, left, and Virginia Metz prepare floral centerpieces for the Assistance League of East Valley fashion show and luncheon March 2.

Sports Notebook . . . with Alex Zener

Corona, Marcos athletes take fall sports awards



Alex Zener

Corona's boys soccer team started the season with one of the school's best records in years, 10-0, and are currently 11-5 overall, ranked No.

11 with only four games left in the regular 6A season before the state championship playoffs.

"This is my first year coaching Corona's boys soccer team so the program is still evolving," said head coach **Keith Diamanti**. "The season started off amazingly with the team posting a 10-0 record before the holiday break in mid-December,"

"We started the season in late November winning the Ram's Invitational Soccer Tournament hosted by Washington High School when we defeated five teams," said Diamanti.

The Aztecs scored 18 goals at the Ram Invitational while senior goalkeeper **Seth Feliz** and junior goalkeeper **Payton Roehrich** combined to only allow four goals to be scored against them when they defeated Notre Dame Prep, Sunnyslope, Cortez, Ironwood and Apollo.

Both Feliz and Roehrich have played in 13 of the 16 matches to date, combining to achieve seven total shutouts.

"Seth and Payton are two of the best goalkeepers in the state," said Diamanti. "Most programs only have one starting goalkeeper but Corona is lucky to have two. Our goalkeeper's

play is one of the main reasons the program has done so well."

The Aztecs won their next five matches before the holiday break, defeating Basha, 2-0, Liberty, 3-1, Sandra Day O'Connor, 2-1, Dobson, 8-0 and Brophy College Prep, 2-0.

"We were consistently ranked in the top 10 in the state during the month of December before traveling out of state during the break to compete against some of the best teams in California at the SOCAL High School Soccer Showcase Tournament."

The Aztecs were challenged with losses to San Clemente and Torrey Pines high school teams but defeated San Dieguito Academy 2-0 at the SOCAL tournament.

With 11 seniors out of the 23 players on the roster, the team should have experienced players to provide leadership at every position.

"We are fortunate to have 11 seniors this season that have helped us with our success," said Diamanti, "but I will continue to expect leadership from these older players as we head into the playoffs."

The Aztecs have been quite productive in the goal scoring category with a total of 42 goals in 16 matches scored by 16 different players.

"We do have offensive talent on our team but part of our scoring may be because the team is playing under a different system than past seasons," said Diamanti. "The team has been trying to focus on defense and counter-attacking their opponent."

"We have been fortunate that we have been finding the back of the net due to our attacking players playing with a great deal of confidence."

One of those attacking players is senior **Sean Maguire** who is the leading goal scorer on the team.

Maguire has been the most prolific out of the 16 goal scoring players, having scored almost half of the Aztecs goals, 19 of Corona's 42 goals while compiling 44 points.



Corona's boys soccer team started the 2023-24 season going 10-0, one of the school's best starts to the season in recent years. Group includes Jace Forsberg, Ian White, Christopher Young, Anthony Gonzalez, Beck Czuchran, Matthieu Mazon, Coach Taylor Williams, Payton Roehrich, Vaughn Harris, Daniel Lawton, Leo Farnsworth, Matteo Burgess, Carson Zink, Seth Feliz, Coach Keith Diamanti, 3rd row, Samuel Corcoran, Pablo Frausto, Sayal Pandey, Tarik Dzambegovic, Nicholas Mahan, Sean Maguire, Malo La Faou, Broden Rice, Charles Nania and Ved Karkathar.

— Photo courtesy Scott Lundahl

"Sean has been playing extremely well and leads the 6A Central region in goals scored," said Diamanti.

"In the system that we are playing, Sean is usually marked by two opposing players, but he has still been able to score goals with the assistance of his teammates."

The second leading goal scorer on the team is senior midfielder **Jace Forsberg**, who has scored four goals with a total of 11 points.

"Jace has played a large role in Corona's goal-scoring ability this season," said Diamanti. "Both Sean and Jace play club soccer together so they have a great deal of chemistry between them, which is evident when they are on the field together."

Along with the 11 seniors, the six juniors and five sophomores on the team have all contributed to the Aztecs' success.

Four juniors and one sophomore have each scored two goals out of the first 16 matches, including junior midfielders **Matteo Burgess**, **Tarik**

Dzambegovic, **Leo Farnsworth** and **Nicholas Mahan** and sophomore midfielder **Ian White**.

Senior defender **Christopher Young**, senior midfielder **Vaughn Harris**, senior midfielder **Samuel Corcoran**, senior defender **Ved Karkathar**, junior midfielder **Sayal Pandey**, junior defender **Broden Rice**, Roehrich, sophomore defender **Anthony Gonzalez** and sophomore midfielder **Carson Zink** have all scored one goal each.

Most of Corona's sophomores gained valuable experience as freshman on the varsity team.

"Corona's freshman class last year was loaded with talent, and several of them have played significant minutes for us this year," said Diamanti. "I expect our sophomores to continue to grow as players and transition to the more physical high school game as the season progresses."

Although Maguire is the assist leader on the team with four assists, Burgess, Dzambegovic and White are

tied for second place with four assists each.

Players with three assists each include senior defender **Pablo Frausto**, Harris and Forsberg, while senior defender **Daniel Lawton** and Farnsworth have two assists and Roehrich, Karkathar, Zink and Pandey have one each.

The Aztecs would be nowhere without their defensive players who rarely show up on the stat sheet but are crucial in helping goalkeepers Feliz and Roehrich defend the goal.

“Our defense is focused on keeping our shape and staying organized,” said Diamanti. “As long as the team is committed to playing defense, we have a chance to be competitive in every game.”

“The defensive players who have stood out in this endeavor so far include defenders Corcoran, sophomore **Beck Czuchran**, Gonzalez, Harris and Lawton.

Other members of the team who have contributed to the Aztecs' success on and off the field include senior defender **Matthieu Mazon**, senior midfielder **Malo La Faou** and sophomore midfielder **Charles Nania**.

The Aztecs were scheduled to play at home against Highland on Jan 23 and at home against Gilbert on Jan. 25. On Jan. 30 they have a match at Quenn Creek before their last home game on Feb. 1 against Desert Ridge.

That's the date when Corona's 11 seniors will be honored at the last home game.

The top 16 ranked teams in the 6A conference will qualify for the state championship conference slated to start the first round on Feb. 13 at the higher seed.

Marcos boys soccer

Marcos de Niza boys soccer team, currently ranked No. 13 in the 4A conference with a 4-2 overall record, has six regular season matches left before the first round of the 4A state playoffs scheduled for Feb. 13.

The Padres have an experienced team, with 10 seniors, eight juniors and one sophomore.

Senior striker **Anselmo Gandara Garcia** leads the team in goals, having scored 11 out of the teams 17 goals to date, while accumulating 24 points. Six other players, seniors **Shane Ellett** and **Dom Molina** along with juniors **Polo Rosas**, **Yahir Contreras**, **Diego Ruiz** and **Jesus Puccini**, have each scored one goal.

Ruiz and Ellett are the team's assist leaders with three assists, each followed by senior **Jose Castro**, Gandara Garcia and Contreras with two assists.

Four Padres have one assist each, including senior **Oscar Caro Diaz**, Puccini, junior **Jack**

Daniel and junior **Angel Gonzalez Camaro**.

Ten players on the team received points in addition to the 24 recorded by Gandara Garcia. Ellett and Ruiz each have five points, followed by Contreras with four points, Puccini with three points, Castro, Molina and Rosas with two each and Caro Diaz, Daniel and Gonzalez Camaro with one each.

Junior **Miguel Pelayo** is the Padres' sole goalkeeper. He has only allowed three goals in the first six matches, has three shutouts and is credited with 14 saves.

Other members of the Padres soccer team who contribute to the team's overall success on and off the field include seniors **Cesmar Delgado**, **Eduardo Mancera Garcia**, **Royden Kirui-Kibet**, **Mikey Richardson** and **Jayden Copeland**, junior **Mateo Quiroz** and sophomore **Marco Sanchez**.

Delgado, Mancera Garcia, Copeland and Sanchez have played significant minutes in all six games so far this season.

Marcos was scheduled to play at home against St. Mary's on Jan. 23 at Seton Catholic, on Jan. 25 at Saguaro, on Jan. 29 at home against Mesquite, on Jan. 31 and at Vista Grande on Feb. 2.

The Padres' last home game where they will honor their 10 seniors is scheduled for Feb. 5 against cross-town rival McClintock.



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Koa Peat in a Wrangler News photo from 2022.

Like other family standouts, he's 'destined for greatness

It was two years ago that Wrangler News contributor Sam Voas profiled another standout among the athletes of Tempe's longtime Peat family.

Now, Peat is considered the top-ranked basketball prospect in the nation in the Class of 2025, shining on the court at Perry High School in Gilbert, as well as on the world stage on the U.S. Junior Team.

When Peat was profiled as a 14-year-old eighth-grader, he was 6-foot-7 and on college basketball scouts' radar.

The quiet gentle giant preferred to shun the limelight and let his game do his talking.

During one of his days of online classes from Aprende Middle School done, Koa dribbled a basketball on the sidewalk as he sauntered across the street to his West Chandler neighborhood park.

The young teenager moved with a balletic grace that made it hard to believe he 6-foot-7.

He speaks little as he glides across the concrete basketball court at Centennial Park. His mother, Jana Peat, admires her son from the sideline as he jukes an imaginary defender and rises up for a jump shot.

"He is quiet, like his dad," she said.

Indeed, Koa's voice is barely

audible over the jangling swish of the chain net. Perhaps that sound communicates everything the eighth-grade phenom wants to say.

Like many of basketball's greats, Peat prefers to let his game do the talking.

Talent like Peat's truly does speak for itself. He was ranked ninth in the nation among basketball players in his age group. Already, he has drawn the attention of college scouts. Arizona State became the first to offer him a scholarship.

Now a junior in high school, Peat's Division I offer list extends to 30 programs, including prestigious college hoops programs such as North Carolina, Arizona, Duke and Kentucky.

He is now 6-foot-8, 215-pounds and a consensus 5-star prospect with a .9985 composite score, according to 247 sports recruiting profile. He reigns atop his state and region, second at his position and is the No. 3 player in the country, according to Rivals.

However, Peat's talents don't fall far from the tree. He is the youngest of seven children, and his father, Todd Peat, is a former NFL lineman. His four older brothers went on to play NCAA Division I football after graduating from Corona del Sol High. The most recent one, Keona, is playing for Arizona State. His two older sisters, also Corona alums, play D-I basketball. And most notably, Peat's brother, Andrus, is an offensive lineman for the New Orleans Saints.

Despite this, Peat believes that his basketball success is more a product of hard work than of genetics. He approaches the game with discipline and maturity far beyond his years. He completes two workouts a day, one on his own and another guided by his brother and coach, Todd Peat Jr. They include drills to improve shooting, ball-handling, footwork and conditioning.

"I'd rather go through the hard work than go through losing," Peat said, as he sinks another deep three-pointer.

Jana smirks in agreement. "He hates to lose," she said.

Peat credits his competitive spirit in large part to his siblings. For as long as he can remember, he's been playing sports against his brothers, a tradition that is ongoing. He believes that these usually playful fraternal contests helped forge his drive to be the best he can be.

"Yeah, they're good," he said, of his brothers' basketball chops, "but I'm the best."

Peat's goal is to be an NBA player. In a perfect world, he'd be wearing a Suns uniform.

"I'd like to play for my hometown team," he said.

That dream is starting to look more and more like a reality for the young hooper. Peat has been leading the Perry Pumas on varsity for three years and earned Gatorade Player of the Year 2022-23 after averaging 19.7 points per game, 9.4 rebounds per game, three assists per game and 1.3 steals per game.

Peat has been in the national spotlight before high school began, but that didn't infiltrate his work ethic and maturation as a young boy. "It's nice. I don't really let it get to my head," he said. "I'm just humble about it. I just work every day to try to be the best player I can be."

Following in the athletic footsteps of his family, but carving out a different path on the hardwood, Peat is destined for greatness.



Residents of Tempe and Chandler will gather at Tempe Town Lake to celebrate peace, mutual respect and understanding at the annual Regional Unity Walk on Saturday, Jan. 27. The 1-mile walk begins and ends at Tempe Beach Park with residents of neighboring communities. Festival starts at 4:30 p.m. with music, food and fun. The walk itself starts at 6 p.m. Information: 480-350-8979 or diversity@tempe.gov.

March 11 deadline for young artists to show off creativity

Calling all West Chandler and other city artists ages 6 to 17. Chandler Community Center will transform into a gallery featuring artwork from local youth at an upcoming youth art show. Submissions are accepted through March 11.

From dynamic sculptures to multimedia illustrations to crocheted creations, the youth and teen show invites young artists to share their creativity in a public forum.

"We are thrilled to offer a platform for the Chandler youth community to showcase their vibrant creativity," says Kennedy Terrill, event coordinator.

"The show is a celebration of the diverse

talent that enriches our community. It's an opportunity for youth to express and share their gifts with fellow community members, fostering a sense of connection."

There is no cost to enter, and artists can submit up to three pieces.

Accepted submissions will be featured in a Youth and Teen Art Show at the center, open to the public March 22 through April 5.

A grand opening event will be open to the public on March 22 from 6-8 p.m. In addition to viewing the artwork from Chandler artists, guests can also listen to music from a Chandler teen band and participate in the voting panel. Kids also can create an art project of their own.

Prizes will be awarded to first place in each category, to be determined after the submission deadline of March 11. The center is at 125 E. Commonwealth Ave.

Art aficionado will teach others how to develop painting skills

Chandler's Golden Neighbors program is hosting a free event for "golden" residents (55 years+) from 10:30 a.m. to noon on Tuesday, Feb. 13, at the city's Youth Recreation Center.

This month's gathering will feature a volunteer passionate about art who will lead attendees through a painting activity for all levels. Supplies needed for the painting activity and snacks will be provided.

West Chandler residents planning to attend are asked to RSVP online no later than Feb. 7 at chandleraz.gov/GoldenNeighbors, call 480-782-4362 or email neighborhood.programs@chandleraz.gov to register.

The Golden Neighbors program was created as a resource to connect seniors with services offered by the city and local nonprofits. Information or donations: chandleraz.gov/GoldenNeighbors

Annual competition open for artists, writers through Feb. 20

Aspiring writers and artists are being invited to show off their talents in the 2024 Tempe Writing Contest.

Writers can submit original work for a chance

to be published in this year's Tempe Writes: An Anthology. Artists also can submit original designs for a cover design contest.

Submissions will be accepted through Feb. 20.

There are three writing genres from which to choose—fiction, poetry or creative nonfiction like memoirs or essays.

Writers can enter one of three categories: high school student, college student or adult.

The contest is open to Tempe residents, Tempe Public Library cardholders, Phoenix-area residents, high school students and college students.

Writers can prepare their submissions using free resources from the Tempe Public Library, such as personal consultations with the library's writer-in-residence, writing workshops, and the Pen to Paper resources for writers newsletter.

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Giveaways, catered food, free produce and fun were attractions at the city of Tempe's free community food showcase and open house, designed to be a family-friendly event at Tempe's EnVision Center on East Apache Boulevard, a resource hub set to open later this year. — Photo courtesy city of Tempe

Tips on selling your home, even in a cold and rainy winter season

Conventional wisdom says spring is the best time of year to sell your home.

While spring is definitely the busiest time of year to buy or sell a house, that doesn't mean you can't sell in winter.

You can still get a great deal for your house; you just need to put in a little work.

Here are some tips to help you get your home market-ready for the winter months, provided by the Tempe/West Chandler team of Agnew Real Estate:

1. Create a warm and inviting atmosphere.

The cold and snowy weather can be a bit of a downer, but it gives your home a chance to show off! Consider lighting subtle candles to give your home a nice smell and add some extra light.

You may want to play some calming music as well. Finally, make sure you keep the heat up to a

comfortable temperature for your buyers so they feel cozy as they view your home.

"There are many advantages to selling in the winter."

2. Get your curb appeal ready for winter. First impressions matter in real estate, which is why how your home looks from the outside is so important. The winter months provide unique challenges for this situation, like snow.

Make sure your driveway is cleared off, and buyers have a clear path to your front door.

Also, consider some subtle winter decorations to liven things up; just make sure you don't go too far!

3. Let in as much light as possible. Winter isn't exactly known for its abundance of natural light, which is why loads of it will make your home really stand out.

Open all the windows you can, turn on the lights in places you can't, and consider using candles to brighten your property up.

It's possible to get a great deal for your home any time of the year—as long as you know what to do.

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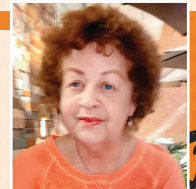
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DIVERSIONS

'Mean Girls:' A moral treatise that leans to the dark side

By M.V. Moorhead

“It’s a cautionary tale...” So the Greek chorus characters Janis and Damian sing to us at the beginning of *Mean Girls*, the new musical remake of the well-loved 2004 teen comedy, pared down from the 2018 Broadway version. This may be the secret

of *Mean Girls*, in each iteration: it really is a moral tale with a cautionary point, and the heroine really does go to the dark side.

As you’ll recall, Cady Heron (Angourie Rice) is a smart kid who grew up in campsites in Africa; her mother (Jenna Fischer) is a researcher.

When she lands at a suburban American high school for junior year, the divisions in cafeteria clique and caste strike her as similar to those in the animal kingdom.

She gets sucked into spending lunches with “The Plastics,” a circle of glamorous sycophants led by uber-mean girl Regina George (Renée Rapp).

Cady agrees, initially, at the urging of artsy girl Janis (Auli’i Cravalho) and big gay Damian (Jaquel Spivey) to serve as a double agent in a revenge plot against Regina.

But gradually, of course, the plastic begins to take over for real.

Or maybe the secret is just that

the film, scripted, like the original, by Tina Fey (freely adapting a book by Rosalind Wiseman), is funny and sweet, but not so sweet that it forgets to be, you know, mean.

Or maybe it’s that most of the songs, by Nell Benjamin and Jeff Richmond, are delightful, and buoyantly staged by directors Samantha Jayne and Arturo Perez, Jr.

Overall, these actors don’t have the vibrancy or distinctive personalities of the original film’s cast, but they make up for this with terrific musical performing. Rapp brings such a baleful moan to “Meet the Plastics” that she really is a little scary, and Rice shades herself from guileless to conniving very believably. A few vets are around; Fey and Tim Meadows reprise their roles from the first film, and Busy Phillips and Jon Hamm contribute funny bits. The standouts, however, are Cravalho as Janis and Spivey as Damian, both equipped with gorgeous voices and the ability to act while they’re belting.

Fey’s generous-hearted—and sensible—take on popularity and self-esteem has provided a solid and unsentimental piece of role modeling for teens (and the teens that endure within most adults) for 20 years now. Maybe this movie will extend it for another 20.

Mean Girls is rated PG-13 and plays at Tempe Marketplace, Chandler Fashion 20 and other multiplexes Valleywide.



Longtime Tempe musician and vocalist celebrated his 70th birthday with — what else — a night out on the town. — Photo courtesy Corey Woods

An advance look at what's coming up at Tempe Center for the Arts

The Gallery at TCA provides visitors a space for thoughtful and engaging art experiences. Free admission, tours and outreach programs are available year-round.

Large-scale rotating exhibitions include a wide variety of local, regional and international artists, as well as themes of popular culture and interest.

Over the past 14 years, the gallery has produced more than 150 large and small-scale art exhibitions and featured more than 2,500 local and national artists. New and exciting exhibitions continue to be developed with a special focus to broaden the mind, relate to multiple age groups and create interest in a variety of fields and subjects.

Gallery Hours: Tuesday - Saturday, 10 am - 5 pm
Gallery Admission: Free
Phone: 480-350-2867

UPCOMING . . .



“Venerations” by artist Wabwila Mugala “Storytellers”

Now - April 20, 2024

Discover the powerful narratives of locally and nationally recognized women artists in this exhibition. Through visual art they tell stories about themselves and others. Displays offer personal insights into a range of human experiences like grief, trauma and the healing journey. The artists also reveal their compassion for others and seek to engage with timely conversations about family, race, gender

and self-expression. Together, this diverse group of voices emphasizes the dynamic roles women play as storytellers within our families and communities.

Exhibiting Artists:

Cristina Cárdenas
Liz Cohen
Jan Talmadge Davids
Wabwila Mugala
Beth Ames Swartz
Claire A. Warden

Additional Works By:

Faith Ringgold
Kara Walker
Janice Lowry
Lalla Esaydi

Gallery Programs and Workshops

Feb 8 | 6:30 - 8:00 pm | FREE

This artist panel talk brings together female storytellers from different artistic disciplines including visual art, music, dance, theatre and spoken word. Panelists will discuss the commonalities that tie their practices together as well as the differences that challenge each discipline. Special guests include exhibiting artists, Carley Conder, Artistic Director of CONDER|dance, and international performers from the upcoming TCA Presents performance "Small Island Big Song" on Feb. 10th.

Mar 23 | 10 am - 2 pm | FREE

Join mixed media artist Wabwila Mugala on a fascinating exploration of African textile and the joy of telling a story through symbols, pattern and play. Participants will be able to learn a bout and experiment with printmaking techniques on recycled textile pieces.

Social Media Resource Event for Creatives

Apr 6 | 10 am - 12 pm | FREE

Are you a creative looking to boost your presence and storytelling skills on social media? During this event you can visit with professionals such as data experts, marketing gurus, social media influencers and artists. Each expert's booth will help you learn more about local resources as well as techniques for increasing engagement rates, creating meaningful content and growing your reach. Whether you are selling art, promoting your brand or just sharing your story - these helpful humans will help you strategize your next social media posting.



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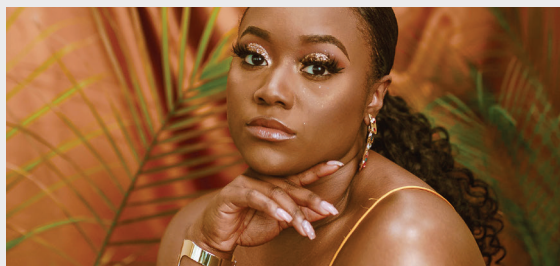
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Salt River wild horses — ‘pure delight’

Public's help sought in ongoing battle to keep herds wild and free

Story and photos by Sally Mesarosh

Observing wild horses in and around the lower Salt River of the Tonto National Forest is always a delight. An iconic symbol of the American West, the horses' majestic beauty represents strength, courage and freedom.

The Salt River herd is descended from the Spanish horses brought to Arizona by Spanish missionary Father Eusebio Kino in the 1600's.

Today, the horses roam the 20,000 acres on both sides of the lower Salt.

Sometimes it takes a bit of luck to find them, but parking lots are available at five of the seven recreation sites (Coon Bluff, Goldfield, Blue Point, Pebble Beach and Water Users) along Bush Highway.

The horses don't stay in one place for very long due to their migrating patterns. Although many people love the horses, Simone Netherlands, president and founder of Salt River Wild Horse

Management Group, said minding the horses' humane management is a never-ending battle. Some organizations would rather get rid of wild horses than let them remain in the wild.

The management group, meanwhile, has been instrumental in protecting the horses for the last few years, battling for their safety and giving them a voice.

Working with Congress and federal and state governments, today the Salt River wild horses are protected under Arizona Revised Statute 3-1491 (aka the Salt River Horse Act). The group manages the horses under contract with the Arizona Department of Agriculture.

"We battle to keep these horses free," Netherlands said. "One of the ways we do that is to help stabilize the population through humane fertility control. We went from 109 foals in 2019 to just two in 2023."

Maintaining fertility control is one of the agreements with the Forest Service and the AZDA.

Additionally, during times of limited natural resources, the group provides highly-needed certified weed-free hay to maintain the health of the horses.

What can the public do to help?

"We still need to give horses a voice," Netherlands said. "... by donating money, sponsoring a horse through our group or calling their legislators. I advise people to go beyond their donations and really be engaged.

"The battle is ongoing and what keeps them wild and free is the voice of the public. Our biggest mission is to change the course of history for them. We must fight for them, they have been here for centuries."

Netherlands also cautioned: "Never get closer than 50 feet to the horses and don't feed them. If you run across an injured horse, the group's website and call its hotline at 480-868-9301.

For information OR to make a donation, visit <https://saltriverwildhorsemanagementgroup.org/>.





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We serve as the voice of business, a catalyst for economic growth, and a champion for a strong community.



Tempe Chamber Foundation and Wells Fargo Announce Recipients of Black Women in Business Supportive Grants

The Tempe Chamber of Commerce Foundation and Wells Fargo are proud to announce the recipients of the Black Women in Business Supportive Grants totaling \$100,000. The grants were awarded to assist Black women-owned businesses in developing, growing and sustaining their businesses.

Recipients were selected out of a pool of over 200 applications. Colin Diaz, ACE, IOM, Tempe Chamber President/CEO said, "It was encouraging to see the diverse types of businesses represented by the applicants – a myriad of deserving businesses. This grant helps to level the playing field, promote inspiration and create an equitable opportunity for everyone to thrive. It demonstrates to future business owners that success is achievable."

The recipients are as follows:

2 Doves Notary, LLC – Joycelyn Wooten
 Arizona Network of African American Behavioral Health Providers – Buffy Wooten
 AVID Consulting, LLC – Dr. Cindy Banton
 Bashir & Associates, LLC – Jeanine Bashir
 Big Red's Hot Sauce – Quantasia Ford
 Black Russian Label – Joanna de 'Shay
 Brownstone Spa, LLC – Stacy Best-Nervis
 Meineke Car Care Center 2830 – LaVon Jackson Maccanico
 Sugar Puffs – Nyktashia LaFate
 Sol Revolution, LLC – Veronica Clark
 Total Nourish Beauty – Sammi Tolliver
 Wholeness 2 Peace Care Services – Katrina Harrell

Tempe Workforce Skills Accelerator Empowers Small Businesses to Upskill Employees

The Tempe Chamber of Commerce and Rio Salado College have partnered to create the Tempe Workforce Skills Accelerator, which will offer three microcredentials to Tempe businesses to upskill their workforce: Small Business Management, Data Analytics, and Quality Customer Service.

The program's microcredentials are accredited, transferable and stackable to higher-level degrees, giving students the opportunity to further their education and in-demand workforce skills.

Tempe employees and residents interested in improving their skills set and preparing to meet employer needs can now apply for the Tempe Workforce Skills Accelerator Scholarship, presented and funded in partnership with Amazon. Learn more at www.tempechamber.org



LEARN MORE ABOUT THE TEMPE CHAMBER: WWW.TEMPECHAMBER.ORG

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