



WRANGLER NEWS

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Principal Nate Maruco headlines
this Father's Day special edition
. . . Pages 16 through 20

Wrangler News photo by Andrew Lwowski



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Passage from life to death: The tragedy of elder abuse



Having ‘a village’ vital to mobilizing care; June workshop set to raise awareness

Wrangler News staff report

For Tempe councilmember Berdetta Hodge, the memories of agonies that people can experience as they age are particularly vivid. Over an eight-month period, her own grandfather suffered health setbacks, hopes and signs of recovery, only to end with his untimely death.

She also remembers the challenges of developing ways to help care for the ailing relative as both she and other family

members did what they could to make his recovery, or transition to the inevitable final days, more bearable for all involved.

Theirs, it seems, provides a valuable example of how that part of a loved one’s ultimate confrontation with life’s end is supposed to occur.

Not every story unfolds the same way, however, Hodge says.

Nor does every situation involve care that spans 24 hours, seven days a week. Her experience, she notes, benefitted from

— Continued on Page 4

“We need to shine a bright light on the prevalence of elder abuse as the ‘silent crime’ that robs our seniors of their dignity, health, financial security and, in some cases, their lives.”

— Berdetta Hodge

“having a village around,” comprising a brother and five sisters. Nonetheless, it was hard on everyone.

And while the strain affected those who were involved, she said, “It was all worth it. With the collaboration of extended family times in those golden years, we were there for each other.”

This, she says, represents an example of how family can ease the passage from life to death. Not all are so fortunate, however, and studies frequently reveal situations involving abuse of the individual being cared for.

This, it has been explained, is where planners of the June 15 informational session hope to raise awareness.

“We have to educate people to make sure how not to take their stress out on the family members we’re caring for,” she

says—to recognize when abuse by others may be taking place.

According to Hodge, nationally aggregated statistics show that approximately one in 10 Americans aged 60+ have experienced some form of elder abuse, with estimates ranging as high as five million affected each year.

So when she and Mayor Corey Woods, who is working jointly with Hodge to increase understanding, their message will coincide with the national observance of Elder Abuse Awareness Day.

According to Hodge, the day’s discussion will focus on the seven types of elder abuse as well as how to avoid becoming a victim.

Said Hodge:

“I’m honored to be hosting this important event with experienced public safety leaders from city of Tempe and Maricopa County, joined by Linda Arters, an elder justice advocate and Tempe resident.

“We need to shine a bright light on the prevalence of elder abuse as the ‘silent crime’ that robs our seniors of their dignity, health, financial security and, in some cases, their lives.”

The one-hour event features a panel discussion about recognizing, preventing and reporting elder abuse, followed by a Q & A.

In addition to Woods and Arters, Hodge will be joined by panelists including Assistant Tempe Police Chief Dane Sorensen; Interim Tempe Fire and Medical Rescue Chief Darrell Duty; Maricopa County Deputy Sheriff James McFarland; Deputy County Attorney Jared Price of the Family Violence Division; and Deputy

County Attorney Mary Harriss of the Fraud Division of the chief attorney’s office.

This marks the fourth consecutive year that Woods other city officials have recognized the day of awareness.

Proclamations and community events have promoted education and resources to help protect Arizona seniors.

According to planners, elder abuse statistics are staggering. One in 10 Americans ages 60 and older have experienced some form of abuse, yet only one in 14 cases come to attention of authorities.

Additionally:

- Elders who have been abused have a 300% higher risk of death when compared to those who have not been mistreated.
- Belittling, threats or other uses of power and control by individuals are signs of verbal or emotional abuse.
- For each case of financial exploitation, 44 cases go unreported. Studies today estimate losses of \$36.5 billion and growing to \$2.5 trillion by 2035.
- Elder abuse is not just physical, it can be emotional and psychological, neglect, sexual, isolation, undue influence and financial and material exploitation.
- Older adults may become vulnerable due to isolation, physical or mental disabilities and dependence on others for assistance. Most perpetrators of elder abuse are family members.

Reservations: cepan_d_alizadeh@tempe.gov or 480-350-8597. Details: tempe.gov/hodge.

The program is scheduled 9-10 a.m. at Friendship Village, Tempe.

18,000 online visits to our Wrangler website? Sounds good to me.

By Don Kirkland

Our young, tech-savvy writer/photographer Andrew Lwowski, who among other tasks monitors this newspaper's daily website numbers, approached me the other day with what I considered some astonishing news.

Astonishing, I say, because my thoughts about our online initiatives seem to have been stuck in times that were embarrassingly short of where they should be during the exploding digital era in which we live.

For quite a while during our early years, my idea of up-and-coming communications advances appears to have been stuck at about the same time and place as the advent of two tin cans and a string.

As you may have already concluded from this and past commentaries, my publishing history looking back 60 or so years has been focused

almost exclusively on print media.

Yes, I was an editor on a 24-hour radio news station in LA for a while back in the day, but that proved to be a short-lived adventure based largely on the fact I had to show up for work at 5 o'clock every morning.

Not bad if I was going fishing that day; not good if I was going to be sitting at a desk with teletype machines chattering next to me for 8 (if I was lucky) solid hours.

So—fast forward—to the late 1980s. That's when the idea came to me for a community-based, neighborhood-focused newspaper, in a city that I lived in and loved. It was, simply said, a moment of opportunity that was too good to pass up.

Since then, as our regular readers know, we've been a go-to source for neighbor-friendly stories, photos, business and government advertising... all the things that people in a community enjoy finding regularly in their driveway.

Well, that was then. (Remember the mention of two tin cans and a string). And don't get me wrong: those newspapers in the driveway every two weeks aren't going to go away.

But, going back to Andrew's "astonishing" revelation, the growth of our online version of Wrangler News, along with local high school sports

coverage and daily breaking news, seem to be a development that we cannot ignore. Not today, not in the future.

Not only are we thrilled about those 18,000 website visits that have been reported in the past month; we're committed to growing that number even further. We hope that as we advance, again to a new moment of opportunity, by bringing *Wrangler News* to our readers in an even more accessible format, you'll be as excited as we are—and as tempted to explore our digital offering of neighborhood news.

If you have ideas/suggestions about ways in which our foray into digital newspapering can best meet your needs, we hope you'll share your thoughts with us.

Remember: This is not just *our* newspaper; it's *yours*, too. For three decades and more, *Wrangler News* (which many still refer to as the *Warner Wrangler*) has been part of this community.

We won't be going away any time soon, and we hope you won't either. Especially now, as those 18,000 website visits continue to grow.

Give it a try. Come visit our digital edition at www.wranglernews.com. See you online!

— Don Kirkland is the founder and publisher of *Wrangler News*

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Freely Taproom's Paul Gillingwater persevered through the pandemic, product delivery issues to create the hive of South Tempe.

— Photo by Andrew Lwowski

Freely, still the buzzing place to bee

By Barbi Walker-Walsh



Barbi

Freely Taproom & Kitchen, nestled in the vibrant NW corner of McClintock and Warner, draws locals to its buzzing hub with a unique blend of great drinks, delectable food, and a strong sense of community.

The thriving restaurant has become the pride of the neighborhood and its owner, Paul Gillingwater.

“My original plan was to create a casual beer bar that served some food,” Gillingwater said.

But Freely has grown into something much bigger, a restaurant sculpted by the voices of those it serves.

“I love to pose the questions, ‘Why do you love Freely and what would you change about Freely?’” Gillingwater said.

“The responses can be very motivating.”

Opening during a global pandemic brought numerous challenges, even for Gillingwater, who

has been in the restaurant business since he was a teen. Equipment delays and finding good help pushed the soft opening so far out that it eventually became moot, and they skipped a grand opening altogether.

Regardless, the restaurant found its home.

But it wasn't just the quality of food and beverages that saw Freely through tough times; it was the connections made with guests that helped drive its success. “This is exactly what we set out to do,” Gillingwater said.

Freely's success is a testament to community-driven growth and the realization of Gillingwater's vision. Freely not only survived but thrived.

Becoming part of the neighborhood has been incredibly gratifying, Gillingwater said.

“I really feel like Freely has become the neighborhood gathering place.” Although the growth and popularity of Freely make it harder for Gillingwater to interact with patrons as much as he'd like, he still finds time.

“I'll likely be cleaning up the dining room or

— Continued on Page 7

bringing your food to your table when you see me," he said.

This is often how he meets neighbors and gets direct feedback from customers.

Now that a brunch menu and bottle shop are Freely staples, Gillingwater is looking ahead and hints at cooking up a few new menu items for the Freely crowd, like enhancing the brunch menu and expanding sandwich options.

"Stay tuned!" Gillingwater said.

Gillingwater praises the people behind the counter and in the kitchen for making Freely shine. "They take pride in their job, and it shows day in and day out."

Freely's ambiance is inspired by the Italian concept of a "third space," popularized by Howard Schultz, the founder of Starbucks.

This third space is neither home nor work but a welcoming place designed for gathering, conversation, and connection.

It's a space where you can feel "free to bee"

yourself without any prejudice or judgment.

The name Freely emerged from a fortunate naming conflict but eventually became the ethos of what Freely stands for. The original name, Fremont, couldn't be used due to a similar name held by a brewery. Fortunately, this issue was identified months before opening.

"Our logo, which includes a bee, was already in place, and 'Free to Bee' was a crucial part of our identity," Gillingwater said. "Thus, we chose 'Freely' as the name."

Unique as an adverb, he said, it signifies a place of comfort and community connection for him and his staff, embodying the essence of being free in time, place, and circumstances.

Arizona holds a special place in Gillingwater's heart and, as an ASU alum, it's a sentiment reflected in Freely's ambiance and decor.

Artist Bethany Jagielko created the murals inspired by the natural beauty of Arizona. The blooming saguaro cactus mural represents renewal

and growth and was inspired by the abundance of flowering saguaro cacti Gillingwater noticed during a hike in the spring of 2021.

When he saw the crowns of flowers buzzing with honey bees collecting pollen, he knew this vibrant image would be perfect for a mural.

The cityscape mural symbolizes the neighborhood where Freely is located, emphasizing the deep connection to the local community.

The bee also has come to represent Gillingwater. He spent many childhood summers with his aunt in Salt Lake City, Utah.

Just below her house was the Beehive State capitol, where a giant beehive with the inscription "Industry" is etched into the bronze.

Just like bees being industrious, Gillingwater embodies hard work and perseverance, always striving for a better life for himself and those in his hive.

This industrious spirit is at the heart of Freely.

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Hello and goodbye



Councilmember Joel Navarro's last Tempe City Council meeting takes place on June 27. He served the City of Tempe for 16 years. Some of his best-known accomplishments included his passion for Tempe's live music scene, his dedication to public safety, his work to reduce opioid addiction and his many efforts to improve education, affordable housing and neighborhoods.

Best wishes to Councilmember Navarro in his future endeavors. Councilmember Nikki Amberg was elected in March for a four-year term.

She has been part of the fabric of Tempe for the last 25 years, working with nonprofit organizations like Tempe Community Council and Big Brothers Big Sisters, and helping with Tempe schools.

She, as well as Mayor Corey Woods and Councilmembers Randy Keating and Doreen Garlid, will be sworn in on July 1 at Tempe City Council Chambers, 31 E. Fifth St.

Check your mailbox: annual resident survey is mailing now

Now's your chance to tell the City of Tempe what you think about transportation, parks, safety and city services and programs. Each summer, a large group of Tempe households are chosen at random by the city's third party, professional survey conductor; they are mailed a hardcopy survey to fill out and return. If you receive one, please

fill it out. Your survey responses are never made known to the city by name – only the aggregate results are provided. The results help the city determine community priorities and identify ways to better serve you.

Take the survey online between June and July at tempe.gov/surveys.

Water donations needed

The city's HOPE and CARE 7 teams use bottled water to engage with unsheltered people and help them cool off and hydrate. Can you help? Contact HOPE@tempe.gov to donate.



Indoor fun at TCA

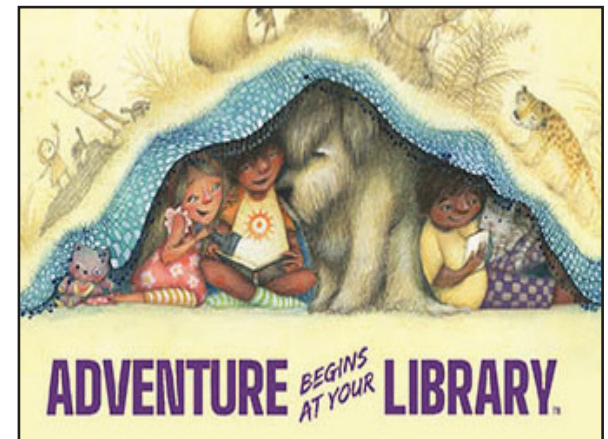
Beat the heat with free creative fun at Tempe Center for the Arts' Draw-A-Thon on Saturday, June 22, 10 a.m.- 4 p.m.

This annual event is jam-packed with hands-on art activities, meet-and-greets with professional artists and new techniques inspired by the Gallery at TCA's "CURIOUS MINDS" summer exhibition.

Learn more at tempecenterforthearts.com.

Tempe Time Machine

Kids learn about our city through crafts, stories, activities, and live demonstrations at Tempe History Museum every Wednesday except June 19 from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. through July 17. tempe.gov/TimeMachine



Summer of fun at Tempe Public Library

Super Summer Saturdays drop-in crafts and Summer Reading Program fun happen through Aug. 1 at Tempe Public Library, 3500 S. Rural Road.

Free Youth Transit Passes

The Youth Transit Pass allows Tempe and Guadalupe kids (ages 6-18) to ride Valley Metro light rail and buses for FREE!

It's a great way to get to school, parks and after-school activities. Register at the Tempe Transit Store (200 E. Fifth St.) weekdays 8 a.m.- 4:30 p.m.

The child must be present to get the pass. Don't forget to bring proof of residency and your child's birth certificate. Get details at tempe.gov/YouthPass.



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SPORTS

Padres' Figueroa fired up about young, scrappy '24 roster

Summer preview stories and photos on this and facing page by Andrew Lwowski

Just as the heat intensifies, so does the grind for the Marcos de Niza football program.

The Padres, coming off an underwhelming 4-6 overall record, 1-3 in the 4A Desert Sky section, are looking to right the ship in the 2024 season. And it starts with a rejuvenated roster.

The Padres graduated both veteran quarterbacks, Braesen León and Tegan Ligouri-Melenez, in addition to skill players on both sides of the ball. Michael Turner led the team in tackles per game, and was a major contributor as a pass catcher in 2023. Jamari Johnson had a team-leading five interceptions.

Though the 2024-25 roster is gearing to have about 10 seniors, says head coach Anthony Figueroa, he expects the team to go to war.

"We're going to be young but we're scrappy," he said.

"We have a lot of kids, young men that are dedicated to the program they bought into.

"Friday night they're going to be competing, you know. We're going to go through a couple rough spells—just the youthful kind of things that occur—nerves and mistakes and things like that, but these guys are smart.

"And they'll pick it back up. They're very confident in their abilities and are confident with each other. I don't see us having too many issues."



Preparation for the Padres 2024 season has already begun .

The strong sophomore and junior class should bring a new element to the gridiron, with the goal of seeing the game through.

"The expectation is that we play for 48 minutes," Figueroa said. "We don't get in our heads; we have each other's backs and we just scrap, you know... We're going to fight for 48 minutes. That's my expectation."

Having improved offensive and defensive lines will certainly help with that mission. The game is

won in the trenches, and Figueroa says both lines are the team's strong point thus far. "Those guys have been pouring themselves into the process," he says of his linemen. "[I've] seen a big improvement with those guys, not only on the field but in the weight room and their camaraderie with each other. They hang out with each other and break bread and build those relationships because they're a unit.

"They're doing everything they can to make

sure that when it gets real, they're going to have the bonds that need to be in place for them to be able to overcome some of the obstacles."

Though summer break goes for another month, the Padres have been putting in work since the end of May, both on the field and in the weight room Monday through Thursday.

It's constant work, but to Figueroa, himself a Marcos graduate, it's doing what he loves for a program he loves.

Aztecs' expectations Barro looking to postseason success in Year 3

Corona del Sol's Jake Barro says three is typically the lucky number — at least for him as a head coach. Having spent 11 years in that role, he has seen the fruits of his labors ripen in the third season with his programs.

Barro is coming off back-to-back playoff appearances with the Aztecs, but now the mission is to win in the playoffs.

“We know we can be a consistent 6A playoff team,” Barro said. “Can we get in and win and advance now? I certainly feel like we have to do it. It’s something that I think we’ll be able to accomplish, especially in year three; we’re getting a lot of buy-in and the culture is starting to take shape.”

Take a step back to 2021: Casa Grande High, a program which had a bad track record on the gridiron, was guided to its first state title since 1950 under Barro.

Barro’s path to postseason success with the Aztecs now starts with a young core that he believes is more “bought in” and will be better than previous years.

The youth of the program will also bring a new identity to the field. Former Aztec quarterback Connor Ackerley, among others, graduated, while star receivers Raiden Vines-Bright and Jai Jones transferred.

Corona possessed one of the state’s premier pass-catching groups in 2023, but will look to do damage in the box in 2024.



Barro expects smash mouth football to become Aztecs 2024 identity.

“We are considerably stronger upfront this year,” Barro said.

“Our offensive and defensive lines are going to be the strength of our team going into next season. And that’s really a big-time positive for us. Last year we were pretty young up front on both sides of the ball. And so that was something that we just kind of had to piece together and develop through the season.

“I think you’re going to see dramatic improvement in the offense and defensive lines and, you know, in turn you’ll see an improvement in the run game on offense.”

Barro gives credit to strength and conditioning coach Pete Salazar, who has been creating programs for the team.

Recently, Corona took third place behind St. John Bosco (Bellflower, Calif.), and Hamilton in the big man competition held at ASU.

“He has done an outstanding job of getting our kids advanced in the weight room and we’re stronger than we’ve been since I’ve been here... considerably stronger.”

With the emergence of a young, unproven quarterback at the varsity level, the Aztecs will need to count on its front seven to pave the way.

There are still two months until the start of the season, but as Barro says he sees it now, there’s no reason this year’s roster can’t surpass last year’s results.



Corona's softball team had to defeat No. 1 Red Mountain two separate times in the 6A State Championship playoffs to make it to the quarterfinals, where it lost to Hamilton for a second time and were eliminated from the tournament. Bottom left: Miquela Tammaro, Brooke Sheehan, Jemma Jones, Leah Montenegro, Abby Ritchhart, Trinity Gonzales, Kaylie Pequeno, Olivia Rios. Top left: Maya Cardenas, Jami Sheehan, Siena Meraz, Alyssia Munoz, Saige Peters, Tatum Locke, Briseis James, Audrey Brown, Caitlyn Ackerley.



Team members honored their senior players at the final home game during the regular season. Senior players were Olivia Rios, Abby Ritchhart, Alyssia Munoz, Siena Meraz, Leah Montenegro, and Trinity Gonzales. Photos on this page courtesy Katie Pick.

Seniors lead Aztecs softball in 6A playoffs



Corona's softball team went from looking like they couldn't buy a win after losing seven straight games leading up to the 6A state playoffs, to being one point away from a legitimate shot at playing in the championship semifinals.

The Aztecs, as the No. 20 seed, had to play and win against No. 13 seeded Perry in the 6A Conference

Play-in tournament on April 24, to even have a chance to play in the 2024 AIA Softball 6A State Championship playoffs.

"I really did not know what to expect out of the players against Perry," said head coach **Sean Thornton**. "After losing seven straight games, you never know what is going through the player's heads. Are they done or do they still have some fight in them?" Not only were the Aztecs not done for the season but they also proved they had plenty of fight left by defeating Perry, a team they had lost to early in the season 2-12, by scoring 12 runs to the Puma's eight in the conference play-in.

"That game against Perry was huge for us," said Thornton. "Our offense really came alive and showed that they had a lot of fight left in them. Perry is a tough young team, and to go on the road and win that game was enormous."

Besides waking up the offense, the win against Perry also helped the team's senior mainstay come alive. "Our senior leadership really stepped up from that game on in guiding us through the

SPORTS NOTEBOOK with Alex Zener

entire playoff run," said Thornton. "They took more control of the team and held everyone accountable."

Two seniors who were instrumental in this leadership development were **Abby Ritchhart** and **Alyssia Munoz**. Abby and Alyssia evolved into the roles of captains for our team," said Thornton. "They became the lead-by-example and take-control players that coaches always want on their teams."

"Abby was our defensive leader who produced key defensive plays and, along with Alyssia, became the battery that shutdown offenses," said Thornton.

"Abby was always pointing out what we had and where to go on every pitch of the game. She was the loudest on the field every step of the way," he said. "Alyssia pushed everyone to be the best. She talked to the team about not always having to be perfect in all aspects of every game but instead finding ways you can help your team, whether it is in the field or at bat."

During each of the playoff challenges, different players were not always perfect at every facet of the game. Some may have struggled hitting but were clutch in the field playing defense.

"For instance, while **Lea Montenegro** struggled at times in the field she would turn around and produce key hits at bat, specifically against Perry and Red Mountain. She even stepped up her defense in the playoffs making a handful of great

plays throughout." With the win against Perry in the 6A Conference Play-In, Corona made it into the playoffs as the last of the 16 teams to qualify at the 6A state tournament.

As the No. 16 seed, the Aztecs were slated to play against No. 1 Red Mountain in the first round. The Mountain Lions were shocked when they were defeated 4-1 by Corona. Munoz, who had played a great game pitching all seven innings against Perry, surrendering only two earned and six unearned runs on 11 hits, had another stellar game against Red Mountain. Munoz, once again, pitched all seven innings against Red Mountain, striking out nine batters and allowing only four hits, which resulted in one unearned run.

Two younger players stepped up on offense against both Perry and Red Mountain. Sophomores **Saige Peters** and **Kaylie Pequeno**, along with Montenegro, played exceptionally well at bat against both the Pumas and Mountain Lions.

Against Perry, Peters had three hits, scoring two runs and three RBI's while Pequeno had two hits, one a home run, while she scored three runs with three RBI's.

"Kaylie Pequeno hit her first career home run in the win against Perry and also made some great plays in the outfield for us," said Thornton.

Montenegro also had two hits, one of them a home run, to score two runs and one RBI.

"Leah was offensively a key to our playoff run," said Thornton. "Although she was only with us for two years, she quickly grew as a player and a leader on the team."

Against Red Mountain, Corona has four batters

who carried the load each getting hits to score runs.

The Aztecs started strong, scoring two runs in the first inning and two in the fourth inning, going up 4-0 before the Mountain Lions could score a run.

Senior **Siena Meraz** tallied .667 with three hits, two runs and one RBI while Pequeno achieved .500 with two hits and two runs. Peters was at bat four times, scoring two runs and one RBI.

"Siena may be one of the most unrecognized players on our team," said Thornton. "Defensively, at first base she made every play look easy. Siena was the calming voice that helped keep everyone together. Then at bat, she was one of our best consistent hitters."

"Siena may not have hit for power but she was great at always making contact and always moving runners. She always battled at the plate to put the ball in play, keeping our offense going. She had some big hits for us throughout our playoff run."

Junior **Miquela Tammaro** was the fourth Corona batter to step up against Red Mountain, batting .500 with two hits and two RBIs.

"Miquela had numerous clutch hits in the playoffs, specifically against Red Mountain, that put us in position to pull out the win," said Thornton.

"Miquela had a tough role, because she was only used on offense for us," said Thornton. "At the plate, she was one of our best hitters throughout the year, which is why she was recognized in the post season as an All-City and an All-Region selection."

After defeating No. 1 Red Mountain in the first round of the playoffs, Corona had to play No. 8 Hamilton in the second round on May 1.

The Aztecs were 1-9 against Hamilton over the past seven years and unfortunately did not win this second-round playoff game either. They lost to the Huskies, 6-2, and had to move into the losers bracket in the double elimination tournament.

One of the highlights in the game against Hamilton, though, was freshman third-baseman **Jemma Jones** who hit .667 with two hits, one a home run, along with one run and two RBIs.

"Jemma stepped into the varsity lineup due to the injury of senior **Olivia Rios**," said Thornton. "Playing third base is no easy task. Although she struggled a bit early on, as the season progressed, Jemma made it look easy. She really grew as a player and looked like she had been playing varsity softball for years."

"Jemma plays with so much energy and enthusiasm it is contagious."

Corona moved on to defeat No. 13, Desert Ridge, 13-10. in the losers bracket on May 1 to stay alive and continue playing in the 6A championships.

The Aztecs' win over Desert Ridge was the result of a complete team effort in both defense and offense.

Corona used three pitchers, junior **Briseis James**, Munoz and sophomore **Caitlyn Ackerley**.

James, the starting pitcher, was credited with the win after pitching 3.2 innings. Ackerley and Munoz each pitched 1.2 innings. On defense, double plays by Peters, Jones and Meraz kept the Aztecs in the game.

On offense, Corona's bats were hot.

Montenegro hit 1.000 with three hits, two of them home runs, with three runs and five RBIs.

Ritchhart hit .667 with two hits, one a home run, two runs and two RBIs, while Jones hit .667 with two hits, three runs and three RBIs.

Other runs were scored by Peters, Jami Sheehan, Brooke Sheehan and Meraz.

"The Sheehan twins, Jami and Brooke, are dynamic players for us," said Thornton. "Many people may not know but they are not only standout players in softball but they are also standout players in soccer."

"They both were tremendous defensively for us all season, but in the final stretch of the regular season and the playoffs, they really began to heat up offensively."

"Jami Sheehan was recognized for her efforts and accomplishments by being selected to the Tempe All-City Team, the All-Central Region Team and was Second Team All State.

The Aztecs earned a spot in the quarterfinals when they knocked No. 1 Red Mountain out of the playoffs.

The 3-1 win against the Mountain Lions was not easy but the Aztecs prevailed for their second win against Red Mountain in the state playoffs.

Munoz proved once again to be dependable on the pitching mound. Against the Mountain Lions, she pitched the entire seven innings allowing only four hits and one earned run.

"Alyssia Munoz is a player who always gave us a shot to win every game," said Thornton. "She stepped into the circle every game and battled no matter who we were playing."

She held the team accountable and collaborated with coaches to make changes and offer suggestions. It was like having a coach on the field at all times."

"Alyssia had waited her turn for three years to be the number one pitcher. When she finally got her shot, she stepped in and was amazing.

"Alyssia may not be one of the hardest throwers out there but she has a devastating change-up pitch which kept offenses in check," said Thornton.

"Her greatest strength may be that she is a fighter. Even when she would get into difficult circumstances with runners on base, she always

found a way out of trouble."

"Alyssia led our team to the playoffs and dominated in the diamond for the Aztecs," said assistant coach **Katie Pick**. "She finished the season with 129 strikeouts, which put her in the Top 10 in the 6A Division. She ended her high school career with 195 strikeouts, which made her fifth in Corona school history."

"Alyssia will go down, statistically, as one of the best pitchers in school history," said Thornton.

Munoz was one of the self-proclaimed team captains along with Ritchhart.

"Alyssia is a true leader that takes accountability for everything, whether it is on her or not and will always be the first to pick everyone else up," said Thornton. "She was recognized for both her softball skills and leadership qualities with an All-Region selection and Second Team All-State selection."

While at bat against Red Mountain, Corona had five different players who had at least one hit.

Ritchhart had two hits on three times at bat, hitting a double and one RBI, while Montenegro had two hits when at bat three times, along with a double and two RBIs.

"I would say that the Sheehans, along with Leah Montenegro, Siena Meraz and Miquela Tammaro, pushed our offense throughout the playoffs. They provide a spark and loads of energy for our team throughout," said Thornton.

In the quarterfinals, Hamilton came out swinging and scored three runs in the first inning and two runs in the second to just one by Corona.

Down 5-1 at the end of the second inning, the Aztecs were finally able to score a run in the fifth inning. They pushed hard in the seventh trying to force overtime by scoring two runs but came up short losing 5-4 and were eliminated from the tournament.

At the plate, each team had eight hits with Peters, Jami Sheehan, Brooke Sheehan and Ritchhart each hitting .5000.

Peters went 4-2 scoring one run on a home run with one RBI while Jami Sheehan went 4-2 scoring one run on 2 hits with one RBI.

Brooke Sheehan was 4-2 with two hits and two RBIs and Ritchhart was 2 for 1 with just 1 hit. In addition to Munoz, Montenegro, Ritchhart and Meraz, seniors **Trinity Gonzales** and Olivia Rios were honored at the last home game of the regular

In the pages that follow, we invite you to meet — and appreciate — some special dads we've selected to profile for Father's Day 2024.





CELEBRATING DAD



Nate Maruca

School principal and
father of three sons

Whether he's on his way to Thew Elementary, where he's the school principal, or headed home to greet his own three kids, Nate Maruca will tell anyone who asks that all is good.

In fact, that's the guiding overview of life he learned growing up and even today wants to instill in every kid with whom he comes in contact.

Maruca, who started with the Tempe Elementary district eight years ago, operates under similar philosophies whether he's reaching for positive outcomes in the classroom or at home with a 9-year-old and 7-year-old twins. Among the most effective of the values he relies on, Maruca says, is that having fun as an adult can help create a positive learning environment for kids in the classroom or at home. "You can teach anything, whether it's learning fractions or doing chores around the house," he says.

"When I have the boys doing the laundry at home, I try to include the idea of fun

as an outcome. 'We're going to do this laundry and then we're going to go for a bike ride.'"

Summarizing some of Maruca's learning strategies, he suggests that helping kids develop their own passions is also important. "That's a win for me as a dad. And when they come back at some time in the future and say they're finding love in what they do, that brings me joy."

Also important, says Maruca, is letting kids make mistakes and supporting them when they do. "How we respond when they do and embrace their failures is important both in school and at home," he says.

"The first time a kid at home falls off the bike...that's how they learn. Next time they're going to wear knee pads." What it all boils down to, suggests Maruca, is that kids still have to come to (life) realizations on their own, and parents are there for support. "When they make mistakes, I can tell them about the mistakes I made." These are simply part of what it takes to accomplish what he considers dual goals. "This is what's so important," Maruca says. "The two most important jobs I have are being a dad and being an educator."

Ward Walston

After Ward's passing last year, his son George kept the family business going

In the words of Ward Walston's son George, who stepped into his dad's role after the patriarch of Great Harvest Bakery died unexpectedly last year, the transition involved what was indeed a steep learning curve.

"In a way, it required me to go back to my days of growing up in my dad's hardware store in Idaho. I was somewhere between 6 and 8 years old in those days, and it seemed that I did a bit of everything: Organize the plumbing section, unload the trucks... watching and observing my father, seeing how he ran the business—always treating the customers well."

It was a small town and a small business, recalls George. My dad knew everyone on a first-name basis.

Which is perhaps how George, now that his father is gone, has managed to keep the South Tempe bakery going, even adding some touches that he wasn't able to do when his dad was in charge.

Although he says he was "passingly aware" of most of what his dad did to keep the business running smoothly—purchasing, solidifying relationships with vendors, knowing the secrets to repairing equipment around the bakery...having the hammers, screwdrivers and electrical diagrams of most everything that could fail—there was still what George recalls as "a steep learning curve."

Now, after spending the past months trying to recreate the qualities he appreciated most in his father, George says he hasn't reached quite the level of perfection his dad possessed.

Says George: "It's been a tough act to follow; my father was indeed one incredible guy."





Paul Weigel

A Tempe dad's book chronicles his life, losses and the bond with his daughter

Paul Weigel's life always felt hard. After spending his childhood isolated with distant and detached parents, losing his college sweetheart in a horrible tragedy, and the unexpected death of his father, he spent his life in despair. It all just hurt.

Everything changed when his daughter, Natalie, was born. From day one, Weigel and Natalie shared an incredible bond. She was a constant source of peace and inspiration to him, and he was determined to give her the love and security he'd never had. His life and the family that he dreamed about seemed to be finally getting on track—that is until a devastating cancer diagnosis threatened that future.

But this time around, Weigel chose hope. If you believe in the impossible, he told himself, the incredible can come true.

Using this mantra, Weigel pushed forward, determined to show his daughter true strength and power—facing his illness' and treatment's ups and downs with courage, training and completing an Ironman triathlon within six months of finishing chemotherapy, and continuing his dedication as a loyal father.

In the book he wrote chronicling his story, *Iron Dad*, Weigel celebrates the unique bond between fathers and daughters and shares an inspiring story of finding and clinging to the joy in life, no matter the odds.

Still cancer-free 10 years later, he wrote *Iron Dad* to share his story with others. The book is available from Amazon.com.



Michael Lwowski

A letter to my Dad from Andrew Lwowski — Happy Father's Day

I'm sure we'll spend Father's Day how we usually do; lounging by the pool with classic rock playing and a few drinks. Stella and Missy (our dogs) will be diving in off the side, chasing a ball. You'll tell me how you'll kick my butt in a game or two of horse and we'll chirp back and forth while Mom and Jack (my brother) float around.

It's the small moments like these that mean the most. And it's all those same small moments between the ongoing life lessons that I'm grateful for.

In elementary school, we would sit in the car waiting to hear Mark and Neanderpaul's "dumbass of the day" on the radio before the time came to drop me off. Over the summers, you would pick me from summer Kidzone to get Blimpies subs for lunch.

In middle school, you would take me to swim team practice in Chandler, and we'd stop for Dairy Queen on the way home.

Now, as I've gotten older, our relationship hasn't changed; it's just matured. I cherish every time we play golf, even though I haven't beaten you yet. And despite the fact that you've been playing for almost as long as I've been alive, that doesn't stop our competitiveness or trash talking.

PS: I'll never forget when we went to Topgolf years ago for Father's Day, and even though I had pneumonia and could barely stand or swing, you still managed to trash talk.

The balance between relationships I have with you and Mom is what makes ours work so well, and it's the upbringing that I want when I start a family of my own.

There were countless routines unique to us when I was a kid, and those are what I know I will always remember.

I couldn't imagine what my life would be like if it were not for you pushing me through Cub Scouts and Boy Scouts and, eventually, Eagle Scouts. Through all those years of camping trips, all those experiences and all those lessons, I'm not sure I'd have the same leadership or work ethic in the way I attack my life.

There were times I wanted to quit and plenty of times where I was unmotivated, but your direction and courage to work through it is still evident today.

The effort I see from you to provide the life I live and the family that we have will always motivate me to be successful in my career.

From the activities we do to the corny jokes you crack that (maybe) get me to crack a grin, thank you for being you. That's what being a father is all about—providing the best life for your kids.

Father's Day can be overlooked but is never underappreciated. So to you, Dad, Happy Father's Day.

— Andrew Lwowski is the Associate
Publisher of Wrangler News

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DIVERSIONS



Cast retains agelessness in latest 'Bad Boys'

By M.V. Moorhead

Walking out of the theater after *Bad Boys: Ride or Die*, the fourth film in the Miami cop franchise, I was reminded by a friend that the original was released in 1995.

Strange as it may seem, *Bad Boys* is almost 30 years old.

My first reaction was envy at how well the stars, Will Smith and Martin Lawrence, appear to have aged.

These can no longer properly be called bad boys; as a title, something more like *Grumpy Old Men* seems more in order at this point. Yet neither actor looks ridiculous going through their action paces.

FILM FARE

But it also strikes me that, to have lasted anywhere near this long, these movies must have meant something to audiences.

Using the most routine, generic, by-the-numbers car chase and explosion formula, these four flicks, spaced out over decades, have kept people coming back to theaters.

The reason, of course, is the bickering. Directed by the Belgian filmmaking team of Adil El Arbi and Bilall Fallah, *Ride or Die* opens with Mike Lowrey (Smith) and Marcus Burnett (Lawrence) kvetching at each other on their way

Mike's wedding. There's a vague attempt to flip the script (by Chris Bremner and Will Beall) by giving Marcus a health scare which turns him into the daredevil of the duo and Mike into the worrywart.

But the result is basically the same, with our heroes squabbling like an old married couple as they attempt to redeem the reputation of their late boss Captain Howard (Joe Pantoliano).

The Captain (who appears, via some visions and prerecorded cautionary messages) has been posthumously framed by drug dealers, led by a quite hissable Eric Dane. Jacob Scipio returns from the third film--over which *Ride or Die* felt to me like an improvement--as Mike's hunky convict son Armando.

In what appears to be a sheepish, pre-emptive

wink at the audience, Smith gets slapped at one point in *Ride or Die*. Still, even with that almost fourth-wall gag, it wasn't until near the end, when an enormous albino alligator threatens Marcus, that it occurred to me what the *Bad Boys* flicks have come to resemble in tone: the Bob Hope-Bing Crosby *Road* pictures.

But that series of seven goofy, easygoing movies started in 1940 and ended in 1962. So for longevity, *Bad Boys* already has it beat.

Bad Boys: Ride or Die is rated R and plays at Harkins Arizona Mills, Tempe Marketplace, Chandler Fashion and other multiplexes Valleywide.

Mark Moorhead has been a contributor to Wrangler News for almost two decades. A longtime staff member at Phoenix New Times, he brings an abundance of film insight to our readership.



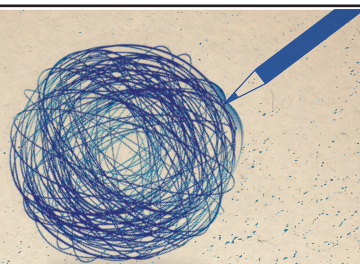
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We're always on the lookout for friendly, energetic people who might want to add their writing or photo abilities to our ongoing production needs. Call or email us to talk about how you might fit into this family of happy folks who love what we do. We look forward to hearing from you.

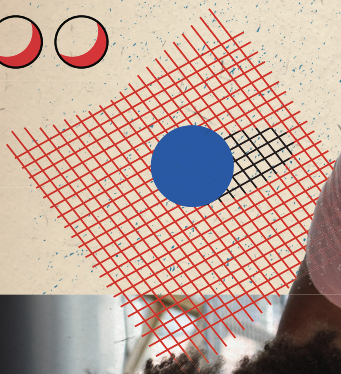
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Draw-a-Thon: It's back at Tempe Center for the Arts

Tempe Center for the Arts' free Draw-A-Thon is back again this year – Saturday, June 22 from 10 a.m. – 4 p.m. It's a cool, indoor celebration of drawing for all ages.

Participants can get hands-on experience with art-making, meet professional artists and discover innovative techniques inspired by the staff's "Curious Minds" exhibition.

From turning doodles into music to Sonoran Desert Line Art to drawing booths to art displays to games and more, it's interactive fun for all ages.

For anyone who loves to draw, doodle, create and play—or who's just looking for family fun—the annual Draw-A-Thon has something for everyone.

Highlights of this year's activities include:

- Amped Up Drawing with Joe Willie Smith. Turn drawings into sounds
- Sonoran Desert Line Art with Rebecca Ross
- Screening printing with Jared Yazzie of OXDX Clothing
- Giant Spiral Art with Jamie Glasser. For lovers of Spirograph toys, you'll love the local artist's giant spiral making machine.
- Special project and drawing activity booths with local arts and culture organizations including:
 - Xico, ASU Center for Science and the Imagination, Tempe Community Arts and Edna Arts, Tempe History Museum, Tempe Public Library.

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Don't miss this cool family fun event!

Date: Saturday, June 22, 2024

Time: 10 am – 4 pm

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For more details and updates, visit tempecenterforthearts.com or call 480-350-2822.

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— Continued from Page 15

season.

“Trinity worked so hard to make the team and the growth she made from freshman year to senior year was amazing,” said Thornton. “She was a great teammate that was always keeping everyone on the team up.”

Gonzales played second base in 13 games where she put out eight runners and assisted on four with only one error in addition to scoring six runs.

Rios missed the entire season after suffering a torn ACL during flag football in the fall.

“It was a big loss to the team when Olivia was injured,” said Thornton.

“She continued to be a huge part of the team even though she was never able to take to the field. She will continue playing next season at Chandler Gilbert Community College.”

Other scholarship athletes including Ritchhart who will be playing at University of Texas El Paso, Munoz at Davis and Elkins College and Meraz at Central Arizona College.

Others member of Corona’s softball team included freshman outfielder **Maya Cardenas**, sophomore first baseman **Audrey Brown** and junior outfielder **Tatum Locke**.

SCHEDULING NOTE

PLEASE BE AWARE THAT OUR NEXT EDITION OF WRANGLER NEWS WILL BE PUBLISHED 3 WEEKS FROM NOW INSTEAD OF THE USUAL 2 WEEKS DUE TO OUR OBSERVANCE OF A SHORT VACATION WEEK. WE WILL RETURN TO THE OFFICE ON MONDAY, JUNE 24.



How We Stand Roundtables

The Chandler Chamber adopts public policies based on members’ stances, & takes direct positions on bills based on our annual "How We Stand" Legislative Document.

Help us write this year’s legislative agenda by attending our free roundtable discussions throughout June 2024 at ASU Chandler Innovation Center.



Discussion Topics

Monday, June 10, Growth & Land Use, 8:00am | Energy, Water, Utilities & Environment, 9:30am

Wednesday, June 12, Immigration, 9:30am | Defense & Cybersecurity, 11:00am

Friday, June 14, Education, 8:00am | Economic Vitality & Expansion, 9:30am

Tuesday, June 18, Workforce Policies, 8:00am | Healthcare & Affordable Insurance, 9:30am

Wednesday, June 19, Efficient & Effective Government, 8:00am | Legal & Regulator Reform, 9:30am

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Virtual meetings open for input on streetcar stops, operations

Virtual open house opportunities are available until June 28 for members of the public to comment on streetcar stop areas and plans for operations of the system's Rio/East Dobson extension.

Studies currently under way will analyze how to best connect the existing streetcar line in downtown Tempe to activity centers and neighborhoods in a western direction.

The recommended route would continue the streetcar east along Rio Salado Parkway from

Marina Heights in Tempe to Dobson Road in Mesa, then south to Main Street.

Eric Iwersen, Transportation and Sustainability Director for the city of Tempe, said the studies are being undertaken to help ensure as positive a future as possible for the planning effort.

Said Iwersen:

"Tempe has a long history of investing in public transportation in the Valley, as an important way to support mobility options for all visitors and residents but also to advance increasingly sustainable solutions.

"The city's neighborhood Orbit routes, city-wide bus routes and now the light rail and streetcar options all offer more efficient use of streets and do so with cleaner fuel that reduces pollution and carbon impacts."

According to Iwersen, Tempe already has the highest per capita ridership in the region, with the streetcar exceeding ridership projections.

Thus, he added, it has been determined important to explore extensions of a new system to

high demand areas like Tempe Marketplace, ASU's Novus District and growing neighborhoods in the east part of Tempe into Mesa.

The public can also participate virtually and provide feedback online at the Virtual Open House through Friday, June 28, at www.redestreetcar.com.

A digital flyer containing details is also available, and an online visit to valleymetro.org/rede contains more information on the project.

In terms of background, the Rio East-Dobson Streetcar Extension Study builds on the Tempe/Mesa Streetcar Feasibility Study, which was conducted spring 2018 through summer 2020.

The REDE study will provide a detailed analysis of how streetcar can most effectively operate along the study route, from Rio Salado Parkway and Marina Heights in Tempe to Dobson Road in Mesa and south on Dobson Road to Main Street. The study includes determining traffic configuration and stop location areas.



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Community Resource Guide Find the activities, classes, locations and information you need.

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Submit a service request – let us know about street lights that are out, graffiti, code violations and more – tempe.gov/311 or download the app
In case of emergency: Call 9-1-1.

Tempe Police non-emergency line – 480-350-8311

Business resources/Tempe Economic Development

tempe.gov/EconomicDevelopment

Building permits

[Tempe.gov/Building Safety](https://tempe.gov/BuildingSafety)

CARE & HOPE Line

Those experiencing homelessness can get help by calling 480-350-8004

City parks

tempe.gov/parks

Downtown Tempe/ Mill Avenue information

DowntownTempe.com

Give or get help from local nonprofit agencies

tempe.gov/nonprofits

Homeless Solutions

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tempe.gov/EndingHomelessness

Neighborhood Association/HOA information

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MARK STEWART

FOR MARICOPA COUNTY SUPERVISOR

Paid for Mark Stewart for Maricopa and approved by Mark Stewart

✓ Budget Transparency

✓ Public Safety

✓ Border and Election Security

As a devoted family man, small business owner, and passionate public servant, I believe that government works best when it is limited and efficient, maximizing our freedoms and unshackling business owners. It has been an honor to represent the people of Chandler as Vice Mayor and councilmember for the past seven years. We have a safe, family-friendly community that welcomes entrepreneurs and large businesses and has world-class education opportunities.

As your County Supervisor, I will place transparency, public safety, and efficient operations at the center of Maricopa County ensuring our home will be a place to live, work, and grow for generations to come.

INNOVATION, OPPORTUNITY, SECURITY

