


Sept. 21-Oct. 4, 2024
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WRANGLER NEWS

Wrangler News photo by Kathryn Baldanza



**High fives to Tempe
Fire staffers who
visited Waggoner
Elementary School in
Tempe as part of the
Sept. 11 observance
of Patriot Day.
More on Pages 10-11.**

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SCAN FOR
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OFFERS





PAGE 3



HELLO, NEIGHBOR

DRIVEWAY DELIVERY AND ONLINE FOR 30-plus YEARS



Shelly Fitzloff, left, and Barbi Walker-Walsh

— Photo courtesy Christopher Walsh

The joys of listening to, and drawing strength from, personal stories

Our writer shares a tale of grief, resilience

By Barbi Walker-Walsh

While writing and telling people's stories motivated me to become a journalist later in life, I never

thought my first book would be a memoir, let alone someone else's.

Throughout my career as a flight attendant, which started in the mid 1980s

with Tempe-based America West Airlines, storytelling has been a constant. I found listening to and sharing travel tales and

— Please turn to Page 4

Visit WRANGLERNEWS.COM for updated news, photos and videos

sometimes more personal stories with passengers and fellow flight attendants enriching and perspective-broadening.

Then, in the mid-2000s, I wanted a change of careers and a move into the field of journalism.

I graduated from Arizona State University with a freshly minted journalism degree. My timing was off. Journalistic jobs were being cut, much as they continue to be today.

At the same time, I was also navigating the unexpected joys and challenges of motherhood with a toddler.

Fortunately, I was able to freelance while keeping my day job.

Fast-forward 14 years, a pandemic and two airline mergers: our little hometown airline, America West Airlines, is now the world's largest, known as American Airlines, and my life has taken a different turn than expected.

But my love for narrative storytelling has never wavered.

In 2022, on the tailwind of the pandemic, fellow flight attendant and longtime friend Shelly Fitzloff approached me with her diaries filled with the raw pain of losing her husband during the pandemic.

She'd heard I was in the middle of getting my master's in journalism from New York University and asked if I'd help shape a diary of her harrowing experience of her husband's tragic and unexpected death into her memoir.

I said yes without hesitation. It was a terrifying prospect for both of us.

"I felt very vulnerable actually putting it all out in print for the world to see," Shelly said. "It was incredibly scary to put my real thoughts on paper," she added. "It is one thing to talk with people about your feelings and intimate thoughts. It is an entirely different matter, sharing it with everyone."

"It is one thing to talk with people about your feelings and intimate thoughts. It is an entirely different matter, sharing it with everyone."

I couldn't agree more. Not only was I entrusted with her story; I was also putting myself and my skills out there for all to read.

And like Shelly, who says with so much more confidence in her voice now: "But it is my trauma, and I own it."

I've learned to do the same in my work. Owning what I write. Facing these moments together of laying it bare, as it were, was another moment of growth and connection for the two of us.

Our other shared experiences as flight attendants, mothers, caregivers of our aging parents, plus our sense of humor, helped us persevere through the most challenging times of putting a book together.

Now, the "The Widow's Tale" is a testament to our resilience and the enduring power of friendship.

"Writing the book and seeing it organized was cathartic. I think it made me realize that—damn!—I have been through a lot!" Shelly told me.

The process through her trauma and grief is now a timestamp, showing how strong the human spirit is and that, even in the darkest of times, one can find hope.

Seeing it laid out like that has made her feel much more confident and stronger—and deservedly so, she says. Shelly wants her book, "The Widow's Tale," to give hope to others who are grieving, to show that they are not alone and that, maybe, one day, they can find life with a new kind of routine—beautiful in its own way.

Shelly's book and my experience helping to tell her story are what I feel it means to connect with the power of storytelling, especially when the unexpected takes our lives into uncharted territory.

For me, helping Shelly and listening to her tales allowed me to process the loss of my beloved mother. My mom had been ill but was still strong and independent. When she slipped getting out of her tub, the trajectory of her life became a series of complications, leading to her eventual death. Having Shelly's memoir, her experiences and Shelly to lean on made getting through my loss a little easier.

Although her memoir is a deeply personal story, it also resonates with the human experience of navigating life after loss and learning how to rebuild our new narratives. Losing a loved one is hard, and learning how to live again after they are gone is even harder. But through storytelling, we find a way to connect, heal, and move forward.

You can preorder Shelly's memoir either in hardcover or e-Book format on Amazon.

Check back to get updates on a book signing party.

Hospitals provide specialized kits for autism-affected kids

Families of Tempe and West Chandler residents needing to cope with sensory sensitivities can now get help from kits available via Dignity Health satellite hospitals Valley-wide.

Dignity has announced it is meeting the sensory needs of patients on the autism spectrum through the deployment of specialized kits to help cultivate an inclusive and healing hospital environment on its Mesa campus.

Sensory inclusion kits are available for autistic patients in an effort to provide individualized care for those who may need extra support in the health care setting.

The customizable kits include

intervention items including noise-canceling headphones to help keep sounds such as beeping alarms, and overhead announcements at bay.

They also feature sunglasses to block the florescent hospital lights, a whistle to provide an auditory cue of an overwhelming situation, and a fidget to distract or occupy the patient during stressful moments like lab testing.

Other communication tools are also available as needed.

“We are incredibly proud to help further our mission of caring for vulnerable groups in our community through the sensory inclusion kits,” said Kim Frazen, director of inpatient

services at Dignity Health Arizona General Hospital.

“A hospital visit can be unfamiliar and emotionally taxing, and we feel fortunate to help make the experience less overwhelming for patients with autism.”

Since offering the sensory inclusion kits this summer, staff have been able to better assess autistic patients’ medical conditions and provide care with the support of the patient’s family or caretaker.

In addition to its Mesa campus, Dignity also provides the kits at its hospital campus in 12 satellite emergency departments across the Valley.



Randy Goff
Broker/Owner

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COMMENTARY

Park expansion includes 4 new sports fields for area residents

By Matt Orlando

Girls softball began its fall season this month, marking the grand opening of a new 30-acre state-of-the-art diamond field complex at Tumbleweed Park that is within easy access for West Chandler residents.

The complex features four lighted fields for diamond sports with a dirt infield and turf outfield that rivals the makeup of professional sports surfaces.

Sports and recreation are an important part of our residents' lifestyle. I've participated in youth recreation and competitive softball as an umpire for many years. These experiences offer young athletes the benefits of physical activity and teach essential life skills like teamwork, competition, self-confidence and sportsmanship.

Investments in parks and recreation date back to our founding with the development of Dr. A.J. Chandler Park in the historic downtown square.

The Tumbleweed Recreation Center expansion that is underway will add 11,000 square feet for recreation programming, fitness and wellness activities next spring. Construction begins this fall on an 18-court pickleball facility to be located east of the Tumbleweed Recreation Center to help meet demand for this popular sport.

The idea for Tumbleweed Park was born out of discussions to develop a regional park in the mid-1980s. These efforts were initially paused as investments were redirected to the Ocotillo area for the Milwaukee Brewers spring training and minor league operations. That land is now part of the Snedigar Sportsplex.

In the 1990s, the vision for Tumbleweed Park was revisited and 154 acres was acquired from Shrader Farms. The Chandler Tennis Center opened in 1996 as the first park amenity and the park was officially designated Tumbleweed Park in 1997.

In the early 2000s, an additional 50 acres was acquired for the park and the Ostrich Festival moved from Downtown Chandler to Tumbleweed Park. Tumbleweed Recreation Center, Playtopia, Celebration Plaza and the Arizona Railway Museum became new park attractions during the mid-to-late 2000s.

Since 2015, we've added six lighted multi-purpose athletic fields at Tumbleweed Park and now the new diamond field complex. Beyond the expansion of Tumbleweed Recreation Center and pickleball complex, future improvements are planned for Tumbleweed Ranch and another 27 acres of the park is undeveloped.

As a City Council, we're committed to create and sustain the quality and safety of Chandler's parks and the many amenities they offer residents. Maintaining and updating existing parks is our primary focus. Opening new park amenities, like the diamond field complex, offer moments to celebrate that continued investment.

Matt Orlando is a member of the Chandler City Council.

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Fire station additions called preview of city-operated ambulance service



West Chandler's Station 4 is among recipients of new ambulances.

Chandler Fire photo

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West Chandler residents will soon be the beneficiaries of 10 new ambulances authorized for purchase by the Chandler City Council.

The purchase is said to be an initial step toward implementing a municipal emergency ambulance system in the future.

One ambulance is to replace a current vehicle used at special events, for training purposes and as a reserve unit when required.

The funds to purchase the vehicle is in this year's capital improvement program for fire emergency vehicle replacements.

Delivery of the replacement unit is anticipated in fall 2025.

The other nine ambulances will support a future transition to a municipal emergency ambulance system.

These will be purchased through an enterprise fund that will be created to support ambulance transportation services in Chandler.

These vehicles, which are scheduled for delivery in fall 2026, will support the launch of a municipal emergency ambulance service in January 2027.

The City Council held a work session last month to discuss transitioning to a municipal emergency ambulance system.

There are a dozen communities in the Valley which have transitioned to a municipal system, including every jurisdiction that surrounds Chandler.

Councilmembers reviewed the results of a feasibility study conducted earlier this year by the James Vincent Group that analyzed the resource needs, deployment and costs for a municipal ambulance service.

The study determined that it is both operationally and financially feasible for Chandler Fire to provide ambulance services for the community.

Emergency ambulance services are currently offered by a provider embedded with the Chandler Fire Department through a contract that runs through 2026.



Screenings save lives.

September is National Prostate Cancer Awareness Month. Prostate cancer is the most common cancer in men, after skin cancer. Be sure to visit your primary care physician regularly and schedule your annual screening. Screenings are the easiest way to catch and treat prostate cancer as early as possible.

Scan to schedule your annual screening or visit dignityhealthazcancer.org.



Cover Story

Patriot Day observances salute first responders

Sept. 11 event draws wide-eyed kids at Waggoner school

Wrangler News photos by Kathryn Baldanza





Patriot Day celebrations at Kyrene campuses in Tempe honored first responders and service members. All events were held on Wednesday, Sept. 11. Sites included Waggoner Elementary School, where patriotic artwork was on display, with Tempe police and firefighters attending as honored guests, and Kyrene Traditional Academy, which held a flag raising ceremony in a salute to currently serving first responders and members of the military.



Artist vendor list being compiled

Tempe, West Chandler and other area artists are being to submit qualifications for inclusion in an artist pre-qualified vendor list that will be used to select artists for upcoming projects with estimated budgets ranging between \$10,000 and \$120,000.

Those included on a pre-qualified list are not guaranteed a commission; the list will be used by the city of Tempe and shared as a resource to others looking for artists for private and grant-funded projects in Tempe.

Examples include developers looking to commission artwork in Tempe; residents looking to commission an artist in conjunction with neighborhood grants; and as a pool for city projects when timing does not allow for an open call to artists.

Deadline: 11:59 p.m. Monday, Oct. 21.



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COMMENTARY

The celebration of aging: A road trip not yet completed

By Don Kirkland

Age is truly an intriguing science. As I've followed an assortment of friends, family members, business associates and others in their determination to stay young forever, I've reached what is, to me, a startling revelation:



The ups (and even a few downs, as long as they're not too far down) of getting older aren't so bad after all.

Caveat: For those who confront the adversity of illness, injury, loss of a loved one or others of the multitude of misfortunes that can happen as we go through life, read no further. Life can be awful, and there's no sugar-coating it.

However, when my 88th birthday rolled around last month, I joyously took my place among that group mentioned above. Life is good. Life is what you make it. Life, as I see it, should amble along forever, just like it is now, always has been and hopefully always will be.

It's the realization, an 'intriguing science' I've called it, when one of the young people you've helped nurture, guided, yelled at and ultimately watched grow professionally, moves onward to new challenges, new opportunities.

Don Kirkland, founder, publisher

We know, of course, that reality isn't like that. Many of the detours on the roadmap of life, age being one of them, aren't always going to take us in the direction we'd like to go.

So I've been thinking more in recent days—in particular those after the Big 88—that it might be time for me to hand the reins of my/our little Wrangler News over to someone else.

Similar ideas have occurred to me before; not only from the inner workings of my own mind but from people who truly believe I've had a good run at building what I've worked

to create: a credible publication that helps reinforce our sense of neighborhood.

"Don, why are you still doing this? Why don't you retire?"

Of course I'm glad that those around me are looking out for my wellbeing. I get it. Unfortunately, it's not that easy. Eighty-eight, however, may have made the concept of stepping away, ratcheting down, simplifying—*please* don't call it retiring—just a bit more appealing.

The problem, unfortunately, is that I've worked these many years to strengthen the ability of our neighborhoods—our neighbors—to ensure that we don't lose the sense of community that holds us together; that binds us as a powerful source for good.

On top of that, I should add, is the inevitable outcome that bothers me the most: Giving up the satisfaction I've experienced by helping guide young, aspiring writers to enhance their skills, to prepare them for a future from which, when they reach that magical 88 mark, more or less, they'll be able to experience the same sense of satisfaction that I have.

It's the same kind of realization, an "intriguing science" I called it a few paragraphs ago, when one of the young people you've helped nurture, guided, yelled at and ultimately watched grow professionally—moves onward to new challenges, new opportunities. Nothing I know of makes someone like me happier, worth every working moment on the way to Milestone 88. Hopefully even beyond.

Our Wrangler News 'Fun People' Page (Illustrated)

Over the years we've encountered quite an assortment of interesting, well traveled — fun—people whose stories and photos we've shared with you.

Ryan Bastuba, the high-flying adventurer we introduced you to several months ago, was one of those, and we've managed to stay in touch with Ryan each time he heads off on new meanderings.

Now comes Yusef Sabri, another Tempe original and likewise adventurous sort, who just returned from the latest of his annual treks to the Burning Man art & merry-making extravaganza in the remote Nevada desert.

Like with Ryan, what better way to tell Yusef's story than through the medium of photography, which with both of these guys happily provide us on a regular basis. Here's the latest. Hope you enjoy meeting Yusef as much as we enjoy seeing him when he breezes back into town.





The Economic Impact of Airports & Aviation



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Harold Page

Capacity Planning Consultant, Southwest Airlines



Ryan Reeves

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Boost in funding broadens schools' scope of programming

Arts education in Tempe has received a boost through increased funding for the city's 2024 Arts in Schools grants program.

Grants are administered by Tempe Community Arts and are designed to provide fine arts teachers with funding to work with professional artists, purchase arts equipment or provide other arts-related services.

This fall, an investment of \$70,000 will be distributed among 26 schools for a total of 60 grants, which represents an increase from the \$60,000 awarded to 25 schools last year.

Examples of projects being funded include the purchase of specialty grips to help high school ceramics students work with wheel-throwing, trimming and finishing techniques, as well as specialized percussion instruments for elementary students to make music accessible to all, including those with special needs.

In addition, residencies with guest music clinicians, performing artists and visual artists support both local arts professionals and the professional development of teachers.

Advocates of the program say arts education helps encourage imaginative problem-solving skills and emotional intelligence, as well as promoting arts literacy as a powerful means of self-expression.

"Through this grant program, we are supporting our future artists, musicians and performers," said Tempe City Councilmember Berdette Hodge, who also serves on the Tempe Union High School District Governing Board.

"Arts education is imperative for encouraging creativity, learning and communication in youth. We are proud to be funding these programs and activities while promoting equitable access for all."

To receive grant funds, visual and performing

arts teachers submitted applications detailing their proposals.

Schools receiving grants are located in Tempe Elementary School District, Kyrene School District, Tempe Union High School District, Tempe Preparatory Academy and New School for Arts and Academics.

Earlier this year, Tempe awarded 27 grants for a total of \$187,000 to nonprofit organizations and artist collectives providing inclusive arts and culture programming in Tempe. The goal of the grant program is to infuse long-term growth of the arts in Tempe by funding high-quality, community-initiated projects for arts organizations, schools, artist collectives and teachers.

For more information about the grants, programs and schools that received funding, visit tempe.gov/ArtsGrants.

Grant recipients include:

Music - Guest Clinicians - Corona del Sol High School -
Orchestra - Burn City String Quartet
Curry Elementary School - Choir - Grupo BombAZO
McClintock High School - Band - Ryan Pratt
McClintock High School - Choir - Nick Halonen
McClintock High School - Orchestra - Tetra String Quartet
Meyer Montessori - General Music - Frank Thompson
Mosley Middle School - Orchestra - Tetra String Quartet
Mosley Middle School - Band - Brian Murphy
Rover Elementary - General Music - Joe Willie Smith
Tempe High School - Band - Stephen Meyer
Tempe High School - Band - Tetra String Quartet
Ward Traditional Academy - Orchestra - Taylor Morris
Music - Equipment/Supplies
Aguilar Elementary - General Music Equipment
Arredondo Elementary - Choir Wireless Microphones
C.I. Waggoner Elementary - General Music Ukulele Stands
C.I. Waggoner Elementary - General Music Percussion
Instruments
Cecil Shamley School - Band Gong & Stand
Corona del Sol High School - Band Instrument
Components
Corona del Sol High School - Choir Sound System
Corona del Sol High School - Band Snare Drum
Curry Elementary - General Music Wireless Microphones
Curry Elementary - Band Sound Equipment
Kyrene de la Mariposa Elementary (2) - General Music
Xylophones

Kyrene de los Ninos Elementary - General Music
Percussion Instruments
Kyrene Middle School - Band Reeds
Kyrene Middle School - Mariachi Guitar & Case
Manitas Innovation Academy - General Music Percussion
Instrument
Marcos de Niza High School - Band Sound System
Marcos de Niza High School - Mariachi Sombreros
Marcos de Niza High School - Choir Microphones
Rover Elementary - Band Instrument Carts
Spracale Elementary - General Music Percussion
Instruments
Thew Elementary - General Music Ukuleles
Ward Traditional Academy - General Music Keyboards
Dance/Theatre - Guests Artists
Corona del Sol High School - Dance - Todd Muller
Kyrene Middle School - Theater - Rebecca Jacobs
McClintock High School - Dance - Donna Peterson
Theatre/Fashion - Equipment/Supplies
Connolly Middle School - Theater Production
Kyrene del Norte Academy (2) - Theater Set Supplies
Kyrene Middle School - Theater Set Supplies
Marcos de Niza High School - Theater Puppets
McKemy Academy - Theater Venetian Masks
New School for the Arts & Academics - Fashion Sewing
Machines

Tempe Preparatory Academy - Theater Set Supplies
Wood Elementary - Theater Production
Visual Arts - Guest Artists
Cecil Shamley School - Sculpture - John Toumisto Bell
Connolly Middle School - Visual Art - Rae Wilson
Kyrene de los Ninos Elementary - Ceramics - James
Schwarz
Kyrene Middle School - Visual Art - Dain Gore
Marcos de Niza High School - Stained Glass - Kathy
Connelly
McClintock High School - Ceramics, Painting - Liza Stout
New School for the Arts & Academics - Painting - Thomas
Breeze Marcus
New School for the Arts & Academics - Photo - David
Emitt Adams
Ward Traditional Academy - Sculpture - John Toumisto Bell
Visual Arts - Equipment/Supplies
C.I. Waggoner Elementary - Printmaking Supplies
Corona del Sol High School - Visual Art Equipment
Fees College Preparatory - Printmaking Supplies
Kyrene de la Mariposa Elementary - Painting Supplies
Manitas Innovation Academy - Visual Arts Supplies
New School for the Arts & Academics - Film Sound
Equipment
Tempe High School - Ceramics Equipment
Tempe Preparatory Academy - Painting Supplies

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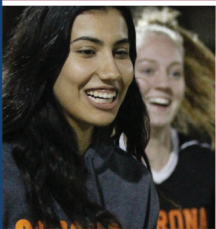
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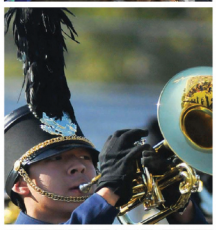


22 - 23 Tempe Union's Overall AZ Dept. Edu. Letter Grade: **A**



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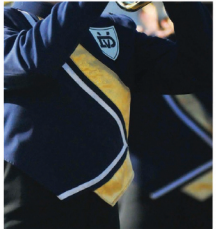


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Don't miss your neighborhood party

It's almost time for neighbors across Tempe to gather for the annual Getting Arizona Involved in Neighborhoods (G.A.I.N.) Night! Prepare some special treats, bring out the lawn chairs and games and connect with neighbors, mayor and council and city staff on Saturday, Oct. 19 - official hours are 3-7 p.m.

Each neighborhood decides what best fits their residents for commemorating the day. Keep your eye out for an event in your neighborhood and plan to join your neighbors for fun and community bonding. For more information, visit tempe.gov/GAIN, email Neighborhood Services at neighborhoods@tempe.gov or call 480-350-8234.



Free movies under the night sky

Grab the whole family and head to Kiwanis Park on Friday evenings this October for Movies in the Park! This free movie series features "The Goonies" (Oct. 11) and "Casper" (Oct. 18). Movies begin at dusk, approximately 6 p.m. Come early to reserve a spot and hang out with the Tempe Play Mobile for fun pre-movie games. Dress up and



celebrate Halloween with a special family friendly Boo Bash event on Oct. 25, featuring a screening of "Hotel Transylvania," costume contest, games and activities. Visit tempe.gov/FamilyFun for more details.

Celebrate Indigenous People's Day

Join Tempe Center for the Arts (TCA) for Indígena - a vibrant celebration of the Indigenous Peoples of Latin America, on Monday, Oct. 14 from 4:30-6:45 p.m. at 700 W. Rio Salado Parkway. Experience traditional food, dance and music that will transport you to the heart of Latin American Indigenous culture.

Bring your family and take part in engaging artmaking activities throughout the night at this free event. Learn more at tempecenterforthearts.com.

BOO Bash and Halloween Stroll

Be sure to join us for free family fun at Tempe's Family BOO Bash Friday, Oct. 25, from 6-10 p.m. at Kiwanis Park North Soccer Fields. Activities include train rides, face painting, dance party, costume contest and parade and the featured flick, Hotel Transylvania (PG). Get details at tempe.gov/FamilyFun

Come to Downtown Tempe's Halloween Stroll in Ragsdale - MLK Park (formerly sixth Street Park) for some not-so-spooky fun on Sunday, Oct. 27, from 2-5 p.m. Kids can stroll through the streets, stopping by different downtown merchants for some sweet trick-or-treating, plus enjoy games, a costume contest and more.

Get details at downtowntempe.org



History Museum kicks off new season

The Tempe History Museum's live local music series, Performances at the Museum, returns this fall through May with monthly concerts. Experience new sensations and local legends in intimate settings or the exciting outdoor stage. Find dates and lineup information at tempe.gov/MuseumEvents.

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SPORTS

Chances for state championship continue to grow

Sports Notebook

By Alex Zener

Corona's girls volleyball team has landed on the court with an electrifying 18-3 start to their 2024 season, leaving their opponents and fans wondering if this may be the year the Aztecs once again play in the state finals for the 12th time with a chance to become state champions for the fourth time in the school's history.



Corona recently took home the runner-up trophy from the Tournament of Champions played Sept. 6-7 at Westwood High School when they lost in the finals to Highland 20-25, 24-26.

The Aztecs return five players who had significant court time during competitive games last season, in addition to a junior middle blocker who is having a significant impact on the success of the team this season.

The returning players are senior **Alyssa Aguayo**, junior **Erin Clark**, junior **Avery Lim**, senior **Emma Uribe** and junior **Avalon Legg** along with junior **Hayden Conner** who played in about half of the sets in 2023.

Aguayo led the team in kills last season and was second in digs. So far this season, she leads the team in kills per set at 4.1 with a total of 167 kills. She is second on the team in hitting percentage at 0.354, second in digs per set at 3.6 and third on the team in blocks with 18.

"Alyssa is a great player," said head coach **Ben Maxfield**. "Since last season she has really improved in her power game."

"I know she will continue to score a lot of points for us, especially in big moments when we need a kill. She has also developed a great serve."

Clark, starting her third season as the Aztecs libero and ace server, was chosen to be on the second team by Maxpreps.com for her volleyball skills.

"I can't say enough about Erin," said Maxfield. "This past club season was the first time that she actually played libero/defensive specialist. She'd always been a setter for club but we needed a libero her freshman year and she filled the role well."

"Erin continues to improve tremendously on her serve receive passing and is becoming a steady defender. She has been named one of our captains and is a vocal leader on the court."

Last season Clark led the team in digs per set with 4.7 and was second in service

aces with 49. So far this season she already has 228 digs or 4.7 digs a set and once again is leading the team in service aces with 40.

Uribe, who played as a defensive specialist and server most of last season, is capable of playing at the net as a hitter, if needed.

"Both Emma Uribe and Avalon Legg are great servers and defenders," said Maxfield. "Avalon is an amazing passer and reads the game really well."

So far this season, Legg has played in 45 of the 49 sets where she is second on the team to Clark in digs with 150 and has 21 aces.

"We will need Emma to swing on the outside for us a bit this year," said Maxfield. "She's a bit undersized for an outside hitter but she brings a lot of power and can generate points."

Uribe has compiled 25 kills or almost two kills per set and five aces so far this season.

Hayden Conner, who played in about half of the Aztecs matches last season, has made quite an impression so far this season.

Conner, Corona's 6-3 middle blocker, has been so impressive that she was named No. 2 on the Arizona Republic's top 10 volleyball players to start the season.

Conner leads Arizona with a hitting percentage of .542 on her 176 kills for an average of four kills a set.

“Hayden has really improved in her hitting in the offseason,” said Maxfield. “She’s bringing a lot of power. She’s doing a great job of seeing the block and hitting away from it.”

“With our great ball control, we will expect her to get set a lot and score us a ton of points.”

Conner already has more kills in the first part of the season, 176, than she had all of last season where the stat sheet shows 164 kills.

Conner can not only hit a powerful ball on offense but she also plays incredible defense at the net. She has already compiled 49 total blocks, 23 more than junior middle blocker **Kennedy Allen** who has 26 total blocks.

“Kennedy is probably our most improved player since last season,” said Maxfield. “She has put in a ton of work to increase her lateral movement and I can see a big difference in her ability to close the block.”

“Kennedy has also developed into a great hitter, being a lot more consistent and hitting with power. She has a very high ceiling and I’m excited to see her continue to grow.”

Lim played setter along with senior **Julie Owens** last season recording 525 assists. She is currently out with an injury.

“Avery Lim has always been a great setter with great hands,” said Maxfield. “She has progressed a great deal in her setting consistency - height and tempo - and is really learning how to run a diverse offense.”

“Avery is incredibly easy to coach and is always looking for ways to improve

herself. She also plays very good defense for us.”

“Unfortunately, Avery, our starting setter, suffered an ankle sprain against Perry and we are hoping that she can be back by the end of next week,” said Maxfield. “Sophomore **Addie (Adelyn) Chang** has come in and done a nice job of running the offense for us.”

In addition to Lim and Chang, the Aztecs have a third setter on the team in sophomore **Aubrey Butterfield**.

“Both Addy and Aubrey bring athleticism to the positions, said Maxfield.” “They both have high volleyball IQ’s and are pushing Avery for playing time.”

“Both are incredibly hard working and enthusiastic. They are a huge bonus to our team.”

Chang has played in 30 sets and recorded 273 assists while Butterfield has 60 assists and five service aces playing in 60 sets.

Two juniors outside hitters, **Taryn Vesely** and **Mira Banks**, are assisting Aguayo holding down the left side of the court on offense with kills and on defense with blocks and digs.

“Both Taryn and Mira are doing a great job in the OH position, said Maxfield.” “Both of them have improved tremendously in their control and consistency since last season. They will continue to push each other for playing time.”

Both Vesely and Banks have played in over 25 sets with Vesely recording just over 60 kills and five blocks while Banks has over 50 kills and five blocks, as well, to date.

Junior right side hitter **Paige Nenaber** was a JV player who was brought up to

varsity for the state tournament last season and has continued to show improvement on hitting from the right side this season.

“We brought Paige up from JV for the end of the season last year and she had a big impact in our state playoff matches,” said Maxfield. “She hits a very heavy ball and is continuing to work hard on her blocking skills to slow down the other teams’ big hitters.”

Nenaber is averaging 1.1 kills a set with 43 kills playing right side in 40 sets.

Additional members of the team include junior defensive specialist **Adrya Vance**, sophomore defensive specialist **Brenna Walsh**, senior middle blockers, **Mia Hutchinson** and **Morgan Moraga**, and sophomore outside hitter, **Halle Chapple**.

Walsh has played in over 40 sets recording 22 service aces and averaging 2.5 digs a set while Vance has played in 21 sets and has 13 service aces and 66 digs or 3.1 digs a set.

Hutchinson, Moraga and Chapple have all seen time on the court.

Corona was scheduled to play at Hamilton on Sept 17 and then at home against Valley Vista on Sept. 18.

Up next the Aztecs will face Sunnyslope, one of the only three teams they have lost to so far this season, in a rematch on Sept. 26 at the Vikings gym.

The following week Corona is scheduled to play at Desert Vista on Oct. 1, and at home against Marana Oct. 2, before breaking for fall break.

The next match will not be until Oct. 16 at home against Millennium.



‘Forever in our hearts’ Tribute to a beloved Aztec by sad, and adoring, friends

By David Bernauer

with Andrew Lwowski

Photos by Kathryn Baldanza

Orange adorned the bleachers as the Aztecs took the field for their home opener against Pinnacle. With fans filing in and settling into their seats, there was an added moment of silence for Jackson Bickler, a Corona

student and member of the soccer team who passed away just days before the game.

“I would see that kid in the hallway and he would always smile, always support us,” Joey Taitano, a senior and center on the football team, said.

When the heartbreaking news hit Corona, an outcry of support beckoned the Brickler family.

The Aztecs’ football captains, led by Taitano, brought up the idea of taking the field with Brickler’s jersey.

The idea came to fruition the night of, Barro said. “Obviously (Bickler) wasn’t a football player; he was a soccer player, but they wanted to honor him,” Barro added. “I was blown away by that idea and I thought it was a really nice gesture.”

Some of the coaches and those in the crowd proudly repped gold ribbons.

Five of the seven poster-board signs in front of the student section were dedicated to or made some allusion to Bickler’s life, reading “Play for Jackson,” “Forever in our hearts,” or “Fight for



Jackson.”

The letter “i” in the word fight was made out as a gold ribbon, symbolizing the awareness for children’s cancer. “It was nice to see the whole school doing something for Jackson,” Briec Le Faou, a junior and member of the soccer team said.

Le Faou had known Bickler since his freshman year.

“Everyone loved Jackson. He was super lovable and I loved to see how much everyone loved him too.”

Even when Bickler was going through his cancer treatment, he’d still come to school and work out with friends when physically able to.

He was all about being around his teammates

and friends, no matter what. It’s something those who knew him will always remember.

Said Barro, fighting back tears:

“I teach the soccer P.E. class and I had a chance to teach him last year, and it’s difficult when things like that happen.

“I know our team is good friends with him. So when you lose a peer like that, it hits you pretty hard. All week we were wondering how (Bickler) was going to do, and then obviously the news of his passing came and it was extremely difficult.”

The Aztecs, who have established a supportive community known as Aztec Strong, are backed by parents, coaches, teachers and members of the student body themselves.

And the Aztecs fought for Brickler on Friday night.

After taking a 3-0 lead early in the second quarter, the Pioneers began to slowly break away, despite the home team’s best efforts. The Aztecs, fighting until the end like their friend and classmate Brickler, were able to punch in a touchdown with just seconds on the board.

Corona fell to 0-3 and is still searching for its first win of the season. But that night, the scoreboard wasn’t on anyone’s mind. Coming together as a community and fighting until the very end was all that mattered.

“We fought for Jackson, and everything we do from now on is for Jackson,” Taitano said.

Another dimension for volleyball

New program based on popular beach version of sport



By Hannah Garcia

Photos by Kathryn Baldanza

After a 2022 State title, the Aztec volleyball team looked to build upon its legacy. However, this time the improvements came from the boys side of the program.

Corona del Sol recently announced that it would be adding a boys beach volleyball team this fall.

The Aztecs' deep history with volleyball, which includes the perennial championship-caliber indoor girls team, the boys indoor volleyball team and a girls beach volleyball team, will add another layer.

While the girls team has seen recent success, returning to the state semifinals in 2023 before falling to Gilbert's Perry High School, the boys team failed to make the playoffs but have a young base to lean on and grow.

As assistant principal for athletics, Sylvester Glover, was involved in the formation of the new program.

"It is a concerted effort between our district athletic director, the Arizona Interscholastic Association, our volleyball coaches here, and myself," Glover said.

Glover aims to carry the momentum from the girls program over to the boys with the newly added program, despite the late start.

Tryouts were to occur on Monday, Sept. 16 at Kiwanis Park before first hour of classes. Corona senior Ramzey Brown was one of the players planning to try out.

"I signed up because it would help translate to indoors. My goals for the season are just to take in as much as I can," Brown said.

Brown was a four-year member of the indoor boys volleyball team, whose season takes place in the spring. Brown did not play club volleyball

outside of school, but saw the improved team chemistry it brought to the court, and now the sand, for his teammates who did play club.

The team would be coached by Mady Noble, a Corona graduate from the class of 2021, and Niko Zeiner.

"I wanted to coach this new boys program because I have a love and passion for beach volleyball," Noble said.

Noble played beach volleyball for Corona before earning a scholarship to play at the University of Arizona. Noble is also the girls freshman volleyball coach for Corona, having returned to her alma mater to coach after a career-ending injury.

"I believe beach volleyball is an amazing sport that teaches you so much more than how to play, teaching you life lessons and helps build character," Noble said.





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DIVERSIONS



Noted dance troupe promises wonder of 'Alice' at TCA



Moorhead

By MV Moorhead

“Down the rabbit hole.” The phrase has become a commonplace expression for suddenly and disorientingly entering a strange new environment with unaccustomed, sometimes scary new rules.

In recent years it has often been applied to the psychological process of political radicalization that people experience online.

But like the phrase “through the

looking glass,” and quite a few other expressions that have become familiar in our language, “going down the rabbit hole” derives from a seemingly innocent source: Lewis Carroll’s 19th-Century English children’s stories about Alice in Wonderland.

East Valley theatergoers will have the chance to go down the rabbit hole and through the looking glass and experience wonder on Sept. 25, when Tempe Center for the Arts hosts MOMIX. The celebrated dance company will

perform *Alice*, inspired by the Alice stories, and filtered through the dazzling surreal theatricality for which Moses Pendleton, the Vermont farm boy who founded the troupe in 1981, is known.

“It’s a beautiful autumnal day!” crows Pendleton, reached by phone at his Connecticut home, which adjoins the MOMIX rehearsal space. “I’m surrounded by sunflowers and dahlias!”

Pendleton names the species of dahlia, but I don’t quite catch it, and I don’t ask him to repeat it.

Moses Pendleton talks quickly, and he's one of the most buoyantly epigrammatic people I have ever interviewed. I doubt my frantically scribbled notes have any hope of conveying his eloquence.

His explanation of *Alice*, for instance, goes something like this:

"I was inspired by Lewis Carroll; the loveliness of his repression. He was also a dedicated photographer, as I am. 99 percent of my time I spend looking through glass, and that links me to Lewis Carroll."

The 75-year-old's connection to Alice didn't begin with the books, however, but with the 1951 Disney animated film version. "I don't know if I ever read the books back then," he notes, "But I was frightened by the Mad Queen [in that film]. Then years later I put together a show called *The Mad Hatter's Tea Party* for my daughter and some of her friends at Nutmeg Ballet Conservatory.»

The new show, which is family-friendly, is not a straightforward adaptation of the stories, however, Pendleton cautions. "Through the looking glass and down the rabbit hole, that's been used as a way to describe MOMIX over the years; the surreal humor. I wanted to use *Alice* and be inspired by it to create a series of kind of surreal vaudeville events. It's like MOMIX in Wonderland.»

Part of this involves the dancers using props and other low-tech methods to create striking stage effects.

"In the Caterpillar scene, for instance," explains Pendleton, "we have dozens of blue exercise balls. If you push them together it makes something like a caterpillar. But then it breaks apart."

The beauty of his performers also has a lot to do with the appeal of the show, Pendleton admits. "If you just get all the MOMIX girls in tattered white dresses, that's Alice enough for me."

"Momix: Alice" performs at 7:30 p.m. Wednesday, September 25, at Tempe Center for the Arts, 700 West Rio Salado Parkway in Tempe. Tickets range from \$30 to \$60; for details go to tempecenterforthearts.com or call 480-350-2822.

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Magical Sci-fi flourishes in newest 'Transformers'

With MV Moorhead

The Hasbro toy line Transformers debuted in 1984, when I was a college senior; I knew them only slightly, through my nephews.

As with the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles or the Power Rangers or Pokemon, I never had a personal sentimental attachment to them.

For the uninitiated: The Transformers are elegant anthropomorphic robots capable of folding themselves up into vehicles: a truck, a car, a tank, a drone.

Or, are they sleek vehicles that can *unfold* themselves into robots?

It's all rather Zen, but it was also brilliant toy marketing, taking kids beyond the childhood power fantasy of having a truck or a tank to *being* a truck or a tank.

Along with the toys, the franchise has spawned comics, cartoons, novels and several previous feature films, some animated, some live action.

I haven't seen them all, but the couple I did were overstuffed and silly, though they also offered some gorgeous imagery.

The new animated feature *Transformers One* is an origin story for the two central figures in the line's pantheon, Optimus Prime, leader of the good-guy Transformers, and Megatron, leader of the bad-guy Transformers, or Decepticons. It follows the pair, then called Orion Pax and D-16, as young mining robots, without transforming powers, underground on their home planet of Cybertron.

FILM FARE

Pax is forever snooping around old archives, looking for clues to the whereabouts of some McGuffin that will give him and his overworked comrades equality.

D-16 resents his oppression at least as much as Pax does, but he's less of a daring, chance-taking sort. Eventually they end up, along with a couple of other allies, on an adventure on the planet's bleak and mercurial surface.

I couldn't always follow all this, not just because I was unfamiliar with the references but because the movie, directed by Josh Cooley

from a script by several hands, is presented in the Michael Bay manner, with scenes so rapidly cut that you sometimes have to take the dialogue's word for what's happening onscreen. That said, it's a great-looking movie, not quite as beautiful as the recent *Ultraman: Rising*, but close.

Along with the strangely passive harlequin faces of the robots, there are lovely planet-scapes and herds of cybertronic deer and vehicles that generate their own roadways and tracks before them as they sail along, and other magical sci-fi flourishes.

It has a voice cast of stars, too; along with Chris Hemsworth and Brian Tyree Henry in the leads we also hear from Scarlett Johansson, Keegan-Michael Key, Jon Hamm, Steve Buscemi and Laurence Fishburne.

And somewhere amidst the fan service, along with a hard-to-miss Christian allegory, the plot probably carries a pretty nuanced and subtle and complex parable of radicalization and the manipulation of media.

Transformers One is rated PG and plays at Harkins Tempe Marketplace, Arizona Mills, Chandler Fashion 20 and other multiplexes Valleywide.

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