

SRPMIC SENIORS AGES 90+ CELEBRATED BY COUNCIL



Eleanor Flores was one of 10 Community Seniors recognized during the April 16 SRPMIC Council Meeting held at the Council Chambers.

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Jason Largo Becomes Certified Arborist



Newly certified arborist and SRPMIC member Jason Largo safely removing a branch from a tree within the Community.

BY ANDREEA MIGUEL
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On March 31, Salt River Pima Maricopa Indian Community member and Public Works Road Landscape Maintenance Worker, Jason Largo became an arborist.

An arborist is a certified specialist who obtains advanced

knowledge for tree care. From maintenance to tree biology and safety when it comes to removing trees along with other practices. Three years of experience in tree care and an application to become a certified arborist are required, before one is able to take a 200-question test in which each individual is given

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Six SRFD Firefighters Promoted to Company Officers



Chief Tsosie Wood (LEFT) and Deputy Fire Chief Mink (RIGHT) congratulate all six new fire captains on their promotion at the ALA Lecture Hall on April 22.

BY CHRIS PICCIUOLO
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Six Salt River Fire Department staff were promoted to company officers with the title of captain at the Accelerated Learning Academy Lecture Hall on April 22.

Capt. Anthony Garcia, Capt. Cris Ries, Capt. Ramon Arenas Jr., Capt. Chris Gannon, Capt. Adrian Vega and Capt. Xavier Martinez were welcomed into their new roles with their cheering family members by their side and in the seats.

"As the newest class of [SRFD] company officers, these

individuals represent the next generation of leaders within our organization," said SRFD Operations Deputy Chief Mike Mink. "They have all completed a tremendous amount of intense training, education, and officer preparatory courses and programs that have provided them the necessary knowledge, skill-sets and experience to be successful in their new positions."

Mink explained that as company officers, each will be responsible for the supervision of a six-person company—an engine or ladder company, along with a rescue company. The

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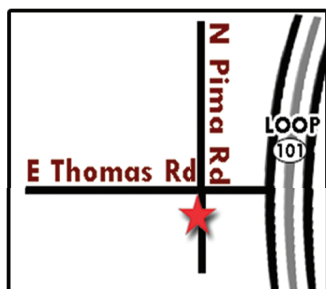
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President Harvier Travels to OKC for Self-Determination Hearing



Images courtesy of House Subcommittee on Indian and Insular Affairs via YouTube.

BY CHRIS PICCIUOLO
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Fifty years ago, President Richard Nixon championed the idea of “Indian self-determination,” advocating for the federal government to end its “termination” policy of assimilating Native Americans into mainstream society and instead allow for tribes to govern themselves and make decisions for their own tribal members.

In July 1970, Nixon told the Congress on Indian Affairs, “This policy of forced termination is wrong, in my judgment, for a number of reasons. First, the premises on which it rests are wrong. Termination implies that the federal government has taken on a trusteeship responsibility for Indian communities as an act of generosity

toward a disadvantaged people and that it can therefore discontinue this responsibility on a unilateral basis whenever it sees fit.”

This new policy led to the enacting of the “Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act (ISDEAA)” in 1975.

As part of the 50th anniversary of ISDEAA, Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community President Martin Harvier traveled to Oklahoma City, Oklahoma on April 4 to give testimony at a Congressional hearing of the U.S. House of Natural Resources Committee. The hearing was held at the First Americans Museum and featured testimony from tribal leadership based in Oklahoma. Harvier was the lone tribal leader from out of state.

Harvier was concerned about many issues related to the Bureau of Indian

Affairs (BIA), including a probate backlog and slow lease processing.

“We entered into our first BIA self-governance compact in 1995 and have expanded that agreement several times over the last 30 years,” Harvier told the committee. “Today, we operate 17 programs including tribal courts, road maintenance and law enforcement. Perhaps the most impactful had been the Land, Title and Records Office (LTRO). Before taking over the functions of LTRO, it took the BIA up to six months to record a lease. After we took this function over, the Community now records the leases in 48 hours.”

Harvier later said in a video message to the Community, “My message was very simple. In order for self-determination policy to work, it must be funded.”

On April 7, the U.S. Senate unani-

mously passed a bipartisan resolution recognizing the 50th anniversary of ISDEAA, led by chair of the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs (SCIA) Sen. Lisa Murkowski (R-AK) and SCIA vice chair Sen. Brian Schatz (D-HI).

“Because of ISDEAA and the expansion of self-determination and self-governance across many agencies, Tribes have raised the quality of life of their people, boosted local economies, improved health care delivery, and designed and implemented services that are better tailored to their unique communities – including in job training, transportation, housing, social services, forestry, and more,” said Murkowski, in a press release.

National Native American Boarding School Healing Coalition Releases Annual Report



The National Native American Boarding School Healing Coalition

BY JUAN YSAGUIRRE
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The National Native American Boarding School Healing Coalition (NABS) is a non-profit organization that raises awareness and implements healing procedures to combat the atrocities committed by the U.S. Indian boarding schools ran by the federal government and local churches. The Carlisle Indian Industrial School, known as the first U.S. government-ran boarding school, opened on November 1, 1879, in Carlisle, Pennsylvania. The school closed in 1918 and was later repurposed for military use.

Established in 2012, NABS has spent the past 13 years addressing the generational traumas caused by the boarding school system.

According to their website, NABS was fiscally sponsored by the Native American Rights Fund (NARF) until

becoming financially independent in 2015.

Furthermore, in August 2023, NABS established an online digital map which showcases the more than 520+ locations of the U.S. boarding schools. The information is free and available to the public.

That same year, NABS collaborated with the U.S. Department of the Interior to create a permanent oral history collection of survivor testimonies which is also available to the public. “Telling my story has been a weight lifted off my shoulders. The world needs to know,” said Dr. Ramona Charette Klein, U.S. Federal boarding school survivor (1954 to 1958) and NABS Board 1st Vice-President.

Dr. Ramona Charette Klein is an enrolled member of the Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa.

O’odham Action News has been monitoring NABS since 2024 when the organization held a legislative briefing in February of the same year regarding Senate Bill 1723/H.R. 7227, otherwise known as a bill to establish a Truth and Healing Commission on Indian Boarding School Policies Act.

As of December 2024, the bill is currently being “held at the desk” of Congress, which means the bill has passed in the either the House or Senate and will resume when leadership feels the time is appropriate. It is essentially a temporary pause, not a rejection.

In 2024, NABS conducted 168 interviews with U.S. boarding school survivors and attendees from Oklahoma, Alaska, Minnesota, Utah, Michigan,

North Dakota, Montana and Hawai’i.

Nearly 1,000 Indigenous relatives attended the opening/closing ceremonies in the 9 states NABS visited in 2024.

As part of their policy and advocacy procedures, NABS also collected and showcased administrative records from U.S. boarding schools for public viewing via their NABS home website.

Earlier this year, *O’odham Action News* located the names of 10 young people listed from the Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community that were registered in the Carlisle boarding school database, which dates to August 1, 1899.

“We believe that expanding access to these records is essential for raising public awareness of these issues and ultimately driving a national movement toward truth, justice, and healing,” said Fallon Carey (Cherokee Nation) NABS Digital Archives manager.

In December, NABS collaborated with the National Institute of Health (NIH) Tribal Health Research Office (THRO) to host the Federal Indian Boarding School Healing Summit, an event which highlighted efforts from NABS and NIH to address the atrocities caused by the Indian Civilization Act and Federal government’s Indian boarding school policies.

“We continue to value our strength among the relationships that we have built within our communities, across political parties, and most importantly among each other. We will continue to seek truth, justice, and healing, continuing to stand in solidarity with you,” said Deborah Parker (Tulalip Tribes), chief executive officer for NABS.

Interactive Map of Boarding Schools



Native American Boarding School Oral History Project



SRPMIC Hosts Several Events Commemorating Sexual Assault Awareness Month

BY JUAN YSAGUIRRE
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Editor's Note: This story contains sensitive subject matter that readers may find upsetting.

During the month of April, the Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community hosted several events to help continue to raise awareness and showcase support for Sexual Assault Awareness Month.

Here, in the Community, the Health and Human Services Prevention and Intervention Department helped facilitate weekly gatherings, both in-person and virtual. The month-long awareness campaign encouraged membership, staff and their loved ones to showcase their support by dressing in teal, wearing their finest denim, and continue to believe survivors while remembering the loved ones who have suffered due to sexual assault.

ACESDV Webinar – Sexual Violence 101

On April 15, the HHS team assisted with a webinar presentation, “Sexual Violence 101,” facilitated by Sierra Mark of the Arizona Coalition to End Sexual and Domestic Violence (ACES-DV).

“Sexual violence is any unwanted actions,” said Mark during the webinar presentation. Her webinar explained the impacts of sexual violence as well as informing individuals on ways they can help. “An act that is sexually violent does not mean someone is forced down or physically assaulted. These are all unwanted and unwelcome sexual acts, taking away a person’s right to bodily autotomy,” said Mark. She added, “Sexual violence can occur without physical touch.”

Mark shared that in a 2020 study

conducted by the U.S. Department of Justice showed that every 68 seconds someone is sexually assaulted. “Most times, sexual violence comes from a person an individual trusts and knows,” said Mark. “Usually, the child knows the person committing sexual assault. Only a small portion comes from complete strangers. More than likely, the person [who committed sexual assault] was in the child’s social circle. These are family members, friends, coworkers, acquaintance, etc.,” shared Mark.

Later, Mark informed how we all can become better supporters to those who disclose sexual assault instances. “Blaming victims does nothing. When the victims are blamed, they are less likely to disclose and report in the future. They won’t receive justice within the criminal justice system and perpetrators continue, along with trauma and depression. Both go hand-in-hand.”

She added, “Survivors don’t control how they respond to trauma. Nobody deserves assault. We must remember, healing is not a straight line. We must always listen and believe survivors.”

The Medical Evaluation of Child Sexual Abuse

On April 22, Dr. Melissa Manning from the River People Health Center began her webinar presentation, “The medical evaluation of child sexual abuse,” by stating an important fact. “Saying to a child, ‘I believe what you say’ can be therapeutic to that child,” she said. During her presentation, Manning highlighted the crucial and important steps her and the RPHC staff conduct when there is a report of child sexual abuse.

“We want to treat the whole child, even if there is sexual abuse that has occurred,” Manning said. Over 115 guests attended the online presentation.

Manning’s presentation detailed when a sexual assault report has been submitted to the proper authorities, a medical evaluation is the crucial next step.

“I don’t get into details of time/ what happened. But if the kid tells me the type of contact that happened, that allows me to test for STI’s and conduct my medical piece appropriately,” said Manning.

Ensuring the child is as comfortable as possible, Manning reiterated to webinar attendees that a patient’s comfort level is constantly maintained and is of the utmost importance. “I tell children we’re going to take pictures of their body for this checkup only. No one else should be taking pictures of your privates. If it happens, tell someone.”

All photos/video conducted by RPHC during an exam become legal and confidential documents.

She continued, “During exam, if a child wants to see their body on camera, they can and are allowed to. If they decide no, that’s their choice,” Manning said.

During the webinar presentation, photos of sexual abuse were shared as Dr. Manning educated all on the negative impacts sexual assault has on a child, which include anxiety, depression, loneliness, feelings of isolation and much more. “Never discount the validity of a child’s story,” said Manning.

“My job as a pediatrician is to do what is in the best interest for the child in that moment. Keep in mind, the child has been abused in the worst way possible. The medical evaluation process can be validating to the child. Even though a medical exam can be normal, it doesn’t discount what the child has said about what has happened to their body,” she said.

Teal and Denim Days
To continue to showcase support, on April 8, the SRPMIC unveiled “Teal Day” in the Community. Annual “Teal Days” are held on the second Tuesday of April. Similar to how pink represents support for breast cancer, the color teal was selected as the official color to help raise awareness of sexual assault. Community membership, staff and their loved ones wore teal to show support to those impacted by sexual assault.

Additionally, the SRPMIC Family Advocacy Center highlighted “Denim Day” on April 30 by hosting a community-outreach vendor booth inside of the Round House Café. Established in 1999, “Denim Day” was created in response to a 1998 court-case in Italy in which a decision was overturned when a judge exclaimed that a victim must have consented to her rape since she was wearing tight denim jeans. A worldwide uproar soon followed and now “Denim Day” is held on the last Wednesday of April each year to help believe survivors and end victim-blaming.

FAC staff handed out informational brochures as well as handouts which detailed the department’s services and contact information. Many were encouraged to visit the FAC booth to write a message on denim of Community-wide support by writing in permanent marker.

If you or someone you know is seeking medical assistance, please contact the River People Health Center by dialing (480) 278-7742.

For those needing assistance from the SRPMIC Family Advocacy Center, please dial (480) 362-5425.

In case of an emergency, please dial 911.

U.S. Senator Cory Booker Visits SRPMIC



(LEFT) U.S. Senator Cory Booker is welcomed with a sign at Two Waters A. (RIGHT) Sen. Booker, SRPMIC President Martin Harvier and Vice-President Ricardo Leonard pose for a selfie. Photos courtesy of the Office of Congressional and Legislative Affairs



BY CHRIS PICCIUOLO
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U.S. Senator Cory Booker arrived at Two Waters A, stepped out of the elevator and saw a welcome sign with his name on it. Booker proudly posed for a photo in front of the sign.

Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community President Martin Harvier and Vice-President Ricardo Leonard welcomed Sen. Booker, who came to learn more about the priority issues of the Community on April 14.

“We look forward to building a partnership with [Booker] and his team,” said Harvier.

Also present for the meeting was the SRPMIC Office of Congressional and Legislative Affairs (OCLA).

OCLA secretary Dr. Heaven Sepulveda and Sen. Booker had a laugh about Sepulveda’s first name.

“This is the first Heaven I’ve met and it’s nice to visit with Heaven. I hope I

get a return,” joked Sen. Booker. Booker’s last-minute visit to the SRPMIC came a day after Sen. Booker’s town hall in Cuk Son (Tucson), where he shared the stage with U.S. Sen. Mark Kelly, U.S. Rep. Greg Stanton and former Rep. Gabby Giffords and talked with Arizona voters about a variety of topics.

Booker is a Democrat representing New Jersey in the Senate since 2013. He ran for the Democratic ticket in the 2020 U.S. presidential race. Most recently, he made history on the Senate floor by delivering the longest Senate speech that lasted 25 hours.



LEFT TO RIGHT: Sen. Booker, President Harvier and Vice-President Leonard meet in the Executive Office.

News and Events In and Around Indian Country

BY DALTON WALKER
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Sober Living Home Fraud Grant Program Winners

Eleven Native nations and Native organizations in Arizona were named Sober Living Home Support Program Grantees.

Arizona Attorney General Kris Mayes made the announcement in May. Each were awarded up to \$500,000 to provide compensation, remediation and supportive housing for those affected by the fraud involving Arizona’s Health Care Cost Containment System.

The grantees include Pascua Yaqui Tribe, Native Action Program, Native American Fatherhood and Families Association, Native Health, Navajo Veterans Organization, Tucson Indian Center, Scottsdale Recovery Continued, West Valley Health Equity, San Carlos Apache Healthcare Corporation, Defenders of Children and the Phoenix Indian Center.

GRIC Names New Royalty

The Gila River Indian Community held its annual royalty pageant in April. Gabrielle Garcia was named 2025-2026 Miss Gila River. First Attendant Virginia Rossel, Jr. Miss Gila River Paige Thomas and First Attendant Peyton Thomas were also crowned.

Each serves a term through April of next year. For photos of the pageant, check the GRIC’s Facebook page.

New Miss Indian World Crowned

A Prairie Band Potawatomi Nation citizen was named Miss Indian World 2025-26.

Dania Wahwasuck was crowned April 26 in New Mexico at the popular Gathering of Nations Pow Wow. Wahwasuck scored the most points in the best essay and best dance categories. Miss Indian World is a cultural goodwill ambassador representing Indigenous people across the world.

Indigenous Peoples Day Nixed

President Donald Trump said the federal government would no longer recognize Indigenous Peoples Day alongside Columbus Day.

Former President Joe Biden was the first president to mark Indigenous Peoples Day by issuing a proclamation in 2021. However, the proclamation didn’t establish it as a federal holiday.

Columbus Day was established as a federal holiday in 1937. It usually falls on the second Monday in October

Some states also recognized Indigenous Peoples Day.

Indigenous Leaders Meet in NYC

The annual United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issue in New York City took place in late April and early May.

Indigenous people from Turtle Island and across the world regularly attend the two week-long session held at the United Nation headquarters in New York.

This year’s theme was “Implementing the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples within United Nations Member States and the United Nations system, including identifying good practices and addressing challenges.”

A recap can be found on the United Nations website.

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Jason Largo Becomes Certified Arborist

Continued from Cover

three and a half hours to complete, which is exactly what Largo did. “It’s not super difficult, but one would definitely need to study.” Largo explained.

After a certificate is issued, Largo has three years before he must apply and take the 200-question test once again to maintain his certification.

“Trees are a necessity to daily life, so it is important to take care of them properly,” said Largo, “I will be able to use some of the knowledge I learned and apply it in field.”

An arborist certification will help Largo as he works with the Roads and Maintenance crew as they clear paths by cutting weeds, shrubs and trees, whether it’s trimming or cutting down trees along the roads or sidewalks.

“I would like to thank my supervisors [and] managers Jay-Dean Dallas, Jennifer Jack, Mike Byrd and SRPMIC for giving us opportunities like this.”



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SRPMIC Holds National Day of Prayer Ceremony

BY NALANI LOPEZ
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Across the nation, U.S. citizens celebrate National Day of Prayer on May 1.

On this national holiday, those of all faiths are encouraged to gather in prayer and reflection.

Here, in the Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community, members, employees and visitors filled the Two Waters Courtyard for a National Day of Prayer ceremony.

The theme of the ceremony came from Romans 15:13, “Pour Out to the God of Hope and Be Filled.”

The morning of humility, gratitude and prayer united all with uplifting and motivating messages and prayer for the well-being of the Community.

Speakers included Pastor Josh Austin from the Salt River Church of Christ, former Council member Tom Largo Sr. from the Well Ministries, Pastor Marty Thomas from Pima Christian Fellowship, Pastor Len Andrews from the Well Ministries, Council member Michael Dallas Sr., Pastor Merrill Jones from the Lehi Church of the Nazarene, Gilbert Garza Jr. from Victory Outreach Church Mesa and Pastor WinterElk Valencia from the Salt River Assembly of God.

Prayers were dedicated to the families, incarcerated, churches, military, emergency and medical personnel, government officials, elders and youth within the Community.

The prayer ceremony reminded all in attendance of the power of unity, optimism and hope for the days ahead.

2025 Theme:

“Pour Out to the God of Hope and Be Filled.” Romans 15:13

“Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you will abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.”



Community members, employees, and visitors gathered in the Two Waters Courtyard for the SRPMIC National Day of Prayer on May 1.



Community church officials were invited to share uplifting messages and prayers for those in need.



The ceremony began with music by John Kingsley and Sandra Brandt.



President Martin Harvier emceed and offered the opening prayer for the morning.



Former Council member Tom Largo Sr. prayed for the incarcerated members of the community.

Salt River Schools Holds Child Care Development Fund Hearing for Proposed Changes

BY CHRIS PICCIUOLO

O'odham Action News

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A public hearing for proposed changes to the Child Care Development Fund (CCDF) took place at the Salt River Schools (SRS) Education Board room on April 17.

The purpose of the hearing was to inform Community member parents, guardians, Community members and Native American families residing in the CCDF service area (Mesa, Tempe, Phoenix, Scottsdale and Glendale) about the current plan and the proposed changes to the plan, as well as gathering public feedback.

According to the Arizona Department of Economic Security, the CCDF provides funding to state, tribal and territory lead agencies to offer services to families through subsidized childcare, to oversee the regulation of childcare providers, and to implement activities that improve the quality of childcare. The CCDF is administered by the Administration for Children and Families, Office of Child Care.

At SRS, the Early Childhood Education Center (ECEC) receives federal funding from the development fund, which is used to subsidize the Extended Day program and the Certificate program.

The CCDF team at SRS is comprised of program Manager Pamela Prasher, program liaisons Sarah Talahongva and Tanya Molina, program Enrollment Technician Lisette Rincon, ECEC Billing



The CCDF team at Salt River Schools presents information at a hearing for proposed changes to the Child Care Development Fund, on April 17.

Accounting Clerk II Jennifer Correa and program Billing Accounting Clerk III Lisa Loya.

ECEC leader Michelle Kuamoo began the hearing by sharing the ECEC services that are currently provided. Kuamoo said that early education and childcare services are funded through two federal grants: Tribal Child Care and Head Start. The Head Start funding at ECEC is only for SRPMIC children, while Tribal Child Care early education services serve children from the SRPMIC as well as SRPMIC-enrolled children residing in surrounding communities.

Three proposed changes were explained by the CCDF team: payments for certificate program, eligibility and expanded services.

One proposed change to payments for the Certificate program is eliminating co-payments.

“Currently, families apply, and they show their income and based on that income and their household size, they are given a copayment that they would then give to their childcare provider. We are looking to eliminate that

co-payment for those families,” said Loya.

Another proposed change is to remove per capita as part of the income collected to determine eligibility for the Child Care Development Fund program. The benefit of excluding per capita would benefit families by qualifying them for the lowest co-pay in the program.

As for expanding services, currently the tribal lead agency does not allow children to get services using CCDF funding who are over age 13 but below age 19 who are physically and or mentally incapable of self-care. A proposed change allows a child with a diagnosed disability up to the age of 19 to receive CCDF funding or care.

Following the hearing, the Community was able to give their feedback on the proposed changes.

You can watch the full hearing on the Salt River Schools YouTube page for a more in-depth look at the proposed changes.

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For more details, please contact Lisa Miguel at 480.850.7761, email at lisa.miguel@casinoaz.com.

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SRPMIC SENIORS

AGES 90+ CELEBRATED BY COUNCIL



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Danny Harvier.



Barbara Johnson.



Ruth Chough.

BY JUAN YSAGUIRRE

O'odham Action News
juan.ysaguirre@srpmic-nsn.gov

Several generations of Salt River Pi-ma-Maricopa Indian Community families met inside of SRPMIC's Council Chambers on April 16 to celebrate and honor Community seniors celebrating over 90-plus years of life.

Prior to the recognition, President Martin Harvier provided insight as to how the celebration came to be. "A few weeks ago, Council member [David] Antone brought it to our attention that one of our elders was reaching 90 years of age," he began. "Council had a discussion, and we all thought, 'How many other Community members have reached the age of 90?'"

The answer? 10 Community seniors.

The seniors recognized were:

- Alonzo Jose (Age 112)
- Barbara Johnson (Age 92)
- Damon Andreas (Age 93)
- Danny Harvier (Age 91)
- Eleanor Flores (Age 95)
- Hazel Rivers (Age 89)
- Ruth Chough (Age 95)
- Josie Duarte (Age 90)
- Shirley Martinez (Age 90)
- Thelma Gonzales (Age 90)

As families and their loved ones made their way into the celebration, a photo gallery of the 10 seniors decorated the inside of the council chambers. Many former SRPMIC presidents, Council members and managers, directors, and staff also attended the celebration.

"It's a special opportunity ... to have our elders [here] today, to be able to

celebrate the wisdom and the life they have brought to our Community," said Harvier in the moments leading up to the celebration.

Each Community senior was recognized for their achievements in the workplace, academics, as well as sharing their favorite hobbies and interests they most enjoy. Additionally, each senior and the number of children, grandchildren, great-grandchildren, and great-great grandchildren were also shared.

Council members greeted each senior in attendance and congratulated their families as they all posed for photos. With nearly every seat filled inside of the Council Chambers, the overflow of guests had many standing in the back area as applause and cheers filled the venue throughout the celebration.

Every senior in attendance received

a bouquet of flowers and a blanket which contained the SRPMIC seal as well as their name stitched onto it.

In total, seven seniors and their families were in attendance to the celebration.

Following the honoring, Council member Antone extended his appreciation to the seniors, their families, and the Community for hosting the celebration. "I think everybody on Council had the same idea that everybody that has reached that milestone and has contributed through their wisdom, knowledge and their ability to be here that long," he said.

"I congratulate all of the recipients that have lived that long and it's just something to be very proud of."

Then, with a smile, he finished, "And so, we'll be back in 10 years."

Continued from Cover

crew is made up of the company officer, engineer, two engine/ladder firefighters and two rescue company firefighters.

Often the first arriving officer to significant incidents such as house fires or motor vehicle accidents, it is the company officer's responsibility to coordinate the initial firefighting or medical care efforts and direct and assign personnel to specific tasks on the scene. The company officer also requests additional resources when needed and makes strategic decisions prior to the arrival of the battalion chief.

According to Mink, the company officer wears many hats. They are responsible for assisting with fire prevention programs and public education, and they act as a coach and mentor, providing examples of quality leadership and opportunity for their personal growth.

The company officer is also responsible for overseeing the upkeep of the fire station, assigned apparatus, firefighting and medical care equipment, as well as their crews' personal protective equipment (PPE).

When the ceremony was finished, the new company officers headed over to the ALA cafeteria with their families and crewmates for a catered lunch and a slice of cake decorated with congratulatory words.



New SRFD Company Officers

Capt. Anthony Garcia
- Fire Station 291
- Engine Company -
A-Shift

Capt. Cris Ries - Fire
Station 292 - Engine
Company - B-Shift

Capt. Ramon Arenas Jr. - Fire Station 293
- Ladder Company/
Technical Rescue -
B-Shift

Capt. Chris Gannon
- Rover Captain -
C-Shift - Will be
assigned to Recruit
Training Officer
(RTO) Fall 2025
Academy

Capt. Adrian Vega
- Rover Captain -
B-Shift - Will be
assigned to Recruit
Training Officer
(RTO) Fall 2025
Academy

Capt. Xavier Martinez
- Rover Captain -
A-Shift - Will be
assigned to Recruit
Training Officer
(RTO) Fall 2025
Academy

Congratulations!



Captain Arenas and family



Captain Martinez and family



Captain Garcia and family



Captain Vega and family



Captain Gannon and family



Captain Reis and family

Capt. Velasquez 'Vel' Sneezy Retires



(LEFT) Capt. Sneezy at his retirement ceremony while the SRFD Pipes and Drums band plays in honor of his service.

BY CHRIS PICCIUOLO
O'odham Action News
chris.picciuolo@srpmic-nsn.gov

Capt. Velasquez "Vel" Sneezy was hired to join the Salt River Fire Department (SRFD) on December 4, 1992. On March 28, his 33 years of service to the Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community came to a celebratory end as he retired from his position at a ceremony held at Station 293 on Talking Stick Way.

Guests present for his ceremony included SRFD retirees, SRPMIC President Martin Harvier, members of Council and Chief Steve Brady, who came to the SRFD back in the early 1990's from Buffalo, NY. Brady served as the training chief for many of the veteran firefighters who still serve the SRFD.

Capt. Sneezy was presented a ceremonial ax and honored by the SRFD Honor Guard. A table was set up dis-

playing Sneezy's well-worn protective fire hat and photos from his many years of service.

Fire Capt. Rork said that Sneezy wore many hats during his service with SRFD, which included starting the Technical Rescue Team, his involvement with the Wildland Team, acting Battalion Chief and rounding out his career as a training captain.

"Training was one of his passions and being the training captain suited him well," said Rork. "Being a part of his crew was fondly referred to as being in 'Velcatraz.'"

Rork said that in Capt. Sneezy's life away from the department, Vel is a husband, father, grandfather and friend, among many other titles.

Sneezy is known to be an avid fisherman "that didn't seem to catch many fish," joked Rork. He is also a musician who loves to strum his 6-string and belt out tunes.

Seatbelt Safety Applies to Everyone

SUBMITTED BY SALT RIVER POLICE DEPARTMENT

Buckle up, don't pay the price.

Why is this important?

Because seat belts save lives. When worn properly, they significantly reduce the risk of severe injury or death in the event of a crash. According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), seat belts reduce the risk of fatal injury by 45% for drivers and front-seat passengers in passenger cars, and by 60% in pickup trucks, SUVs, and vans.

Are seat belt violations considered a primary or secondary offense?

Within the Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community, seat belt violations are a primary offense. This means that Salt River Police Officers can stop and ticket a driver or passenger solely for not wearing a seat belt, no other traffic violation needs to have occurred.

The Salt River Police Department urges all drivers and passengers to make the smart, safe decision: buckle up, every trip, every time.

For your safety and the safety of others, please remember: seat belts aren't just a good idea, they're the law.



SALT RIVER POLICE DEPARTMENT

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Phone: 40-362-7775 Fax: 480-362-5568 www.SaltRiverPD.com

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
May 6, 2025

SALT RIVER POLICE DEPARTMENT AWARDED \$4,000.00 BY THE ARIZONA GOVERNOR'S OFFICE OF HIGHWAY SAFETY (SCOTTSDALE, AZ)

May 6, 2025 — Salt River, AZ — The U.S. Department of Transportation's National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), in partnership with the Arizona Governor's Office of Highway Safety, is urging all motorists to buckle up as part of the national Click It or Ticket seat belt enforcement campaign. This high-visibility effort runs from May 19 through June 1, 2025, coinciding with the busy Memorial Day holiday travel period.

Throughout the campaign, the Salt River Police Department's Traffic Enforcement Unit will join law enforcement agencies statewide to emphasize both education and enforcement. Officers will be increasing patrols in areas where seat belt use is statistically lower and the risk of fatal crashes is higher. "We see the results of not wearing a seat belt all the time. We see the loss of life. So often, it could have been prevented," said Lieutenant William Peel of the Salt River Police Department.

According to NHTSA, in 2023, 49% of passenger vehicle occupants killed in crashes were unrestrained. Seat belts are proven to reduce the risk of fatal injury by 45% for front-seat occupants and by 60% for light truck occupants. Despite these facts, many drivers and passengers continue to ride unbuckled—particularly at night. In 2022, seat belt use in passenger vehicles saved an estimated 14,955 lives nationwide. If everyone had been wearing seat belts that year, NHTSA estimates an additional 2,549 lives could have been saved. "We're reminding everyone that seat belts save lives — no matter your age, seating position, or time of day. Whether you're in the front seat or the back, buckling up should be automatic," said Lieutenant Peel.

The Click It or Ticket campaign is not just about writing citations—it's about saving lives. The Salt River Police Department urges everyone to do their part: buckle up, every trip, every time.

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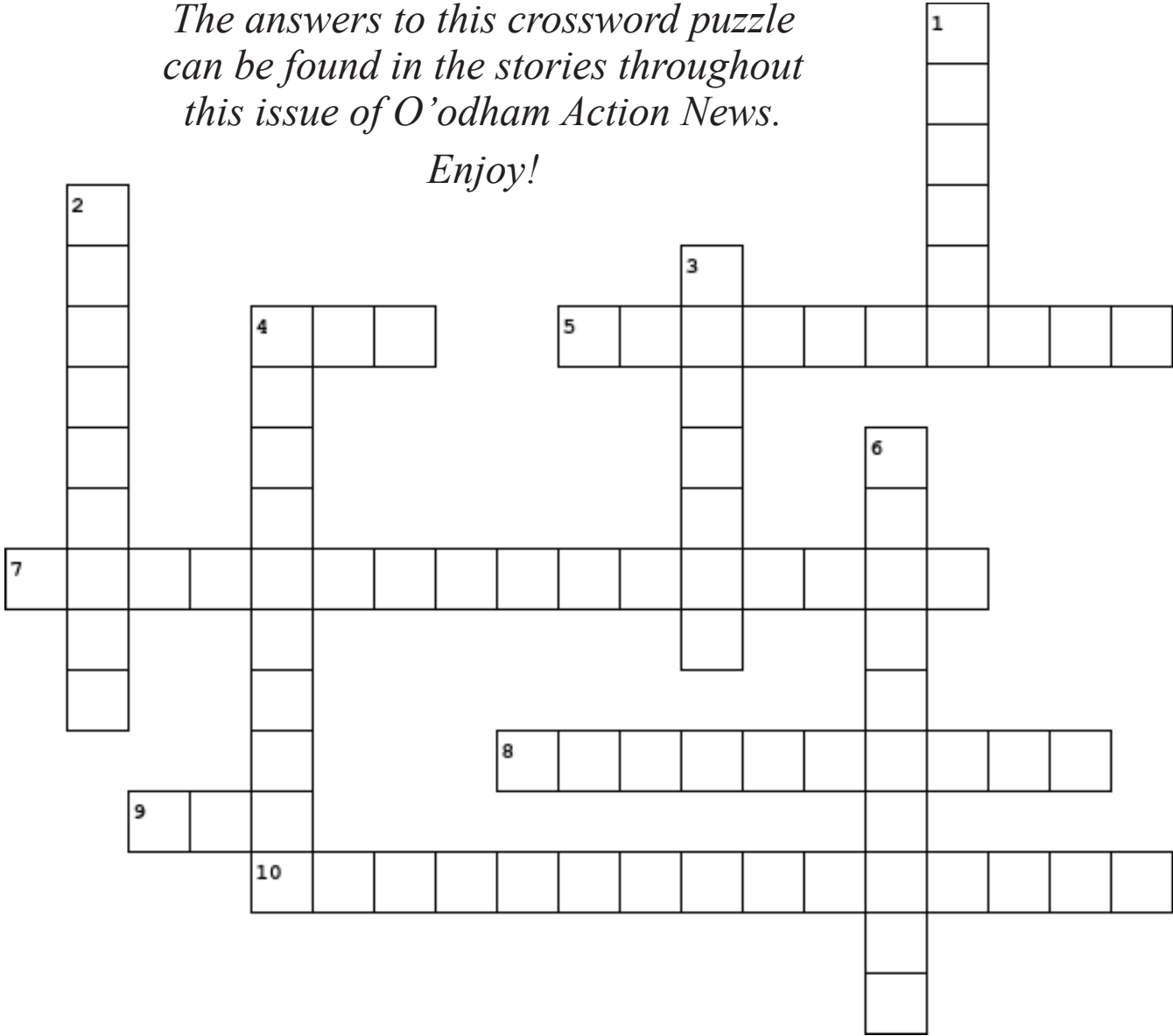
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SCAN ME

Can you solve the crossword puzzle?

The answers to this crossword puzzle can be found in the stories throughout this issue of O’odham Action News.
Enjoy!



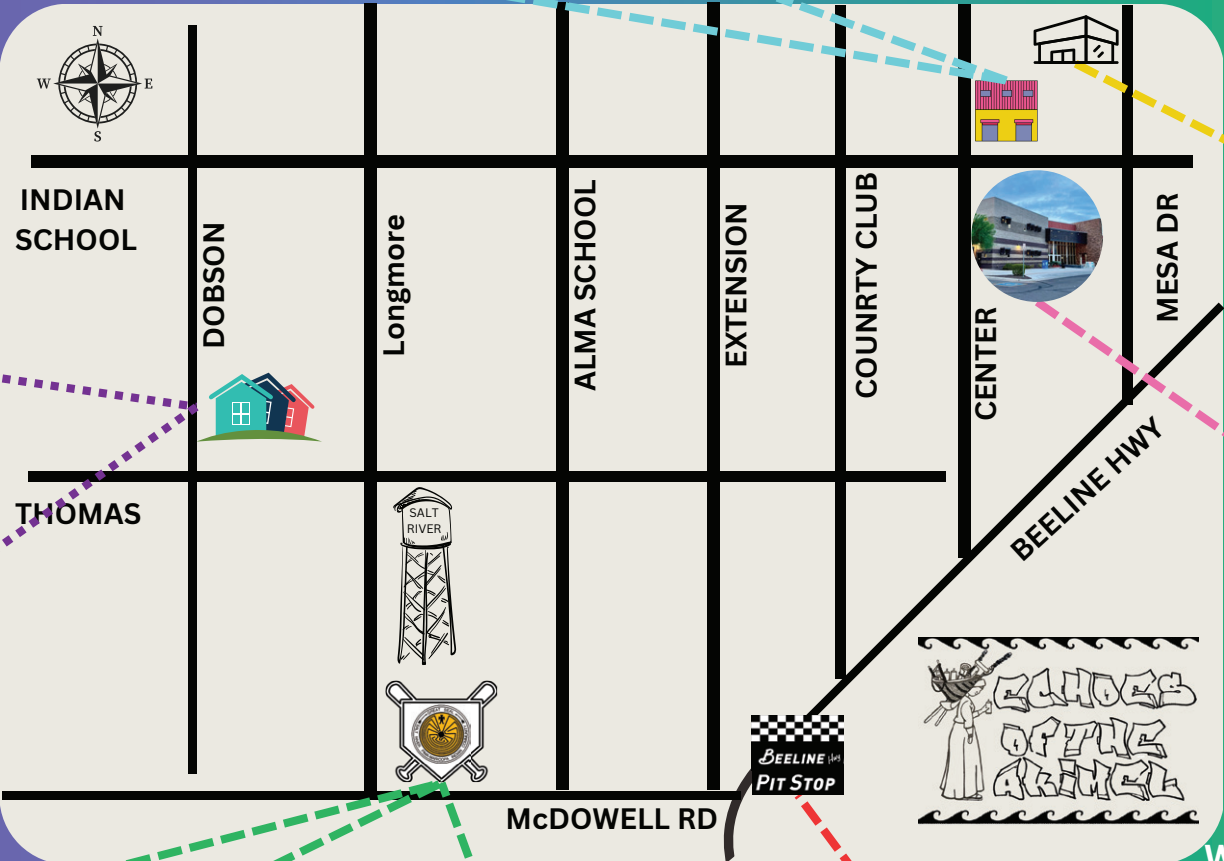
- Across**
- 4. The Number of SRPMIC fire department staff who were promoted to Company Officers with the title of Captain
 - 5. The U.S. Senator who recently visited with SRPMIC Council and staff from OCLA
 - 7. The sole tribal leader from out of state at the congressional hearing in Oklahoma City (*Title and Last Name*)
 - 8. SRPMIC Community member and newly certified Arborist
 - 9. The Number of SRPMIC seniors who were recognized for being over the age of 90+ years old
 - 10. The New Miss Gila River 2025-2026

- Down**
- 1. Last name of ECEC leader
 - 2. The name of retiring Captain Sneezy’s crew, affectionately
 - 3. Type of offense for seat belt violations
 - 4. Miss Salt River 2024-2025
 - 6. Arizona Coalition to End Sexual and Domestic Violence staff member who facilitated a presentation on Sexual Violence

Echoes of the Akimel
MURAL 2025
MAP



We hope these walls continue to inspire, uplift, and remind every young person in the Community that their stories—and they themselves—truly matter.



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Salt River Elementary School’s Nacho Average Field Day



Salt River Elementary students played outdoor games and activities during their field day on April 25.

BY NALANI LOPEZ
O’odham Action News
Nalani.Lopez@srpmic-nsn.gov

Salt River Elementary School’s annual Field Day was nacho average event this year. A fun-filled afternoon of food, water and play brought students and families together on April 25. The event kicked off with a nacho lunch of tortilla chips and ground beef. The meal provided students with energy for the afternoon ahead. Once out on the field, students rotated in classic activities like tug-of-war, bean bag toss and scooter board games. Huddles of students planning their

next move in flag football, or lines of students cheering on their teammates in tug-of-war showcased the student’s athleticism, teamwork and competitive spirit. Surrounding the games, multiple water bounce houses provided an escape from the heat. To heighten the fun, a water hose from the Salt River Fire Department transformed the playground into a mini waterpark. Teachers and volunteers ensured the activities ran smoothly and that all students were having fun. To close the field day, Miss Salt River Sialik King served snow cones to the students.



McKellips Road Project Moves Forward with Box Culvert Work

SUBMITTED BY MARICOPA COUNTY
TRANSPORTATION DEPARTMENT

The McKellips Road improvement project (TT0342) continues toward its anticipated early 2026 completion. The project is located entirely within Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community (SRPMIC) land and stretches from Alma School Road to the Loop 101. This project includes intersection upgrades, a raised median, pedestrian and bike facilities, and space for future roadway lighting. These improvements are designed to reduce congestion and support long-term development in the East Valley. A major stage began Monday, March 24, when McKellips Road closed between 92nd Street and Longmore Road for a box culvert installation that crosses both sides of McKellips. Box culverts are structures that help manage stormwater drainage under the road. The

full closure for this project segment is expected to last 60 days, with reopening likely in late May. Before the closure, a Traffic System Management (TSM) meeting was held at SRPMIC administrative offices in February to share closure details and gather community input. MCDOT representatives worked with area stakeholders and partners (emergency medical services, police departments, etc.) to share information about the closure. As construction progresses, additional phased lane closures may be needed to complete the work. The project team does not currently foresee any other full closures, and will continue to share updates to keep employees, residents, and travelers informed.



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Rev. WinterElk Valencia
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saltriveragchurc.com
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Information was correct at the time of print, however, services may have changed since then.

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DISTRICT C COUNCIL MEMBER Cheryl Doka	LEHI DISTRICT COUNCIL MEMBER Michael Dallas, Sr.
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DISTRICT D COUNCIL MEMBER Su:k Fulwilder	
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JUNE 20	JUNE 6

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SRMG Around the Community



April 3rd

SRMG participated in the White Cap Golf Invitational at Legacy Golf Club.

The annual golf tournament benefitted the St. Jude Childrens Research Hospital. The Marketing team hosted a booth at Hole #8 where they connected with the golfers and shared SRMG's mission and vision. Thank you White Cap for having us be a part of your event!



April 4th & 5th

SRMG supported the 8th Annual Piipaash Matasheevm by providing lighting for the event.

The Aggregates team partnered with the Piipaash Matasheevm Committee to help illuminate the annual gathering! SRMG is always proud to assist at community events – we hope everyone enjoyed the festivities this year!



April 12th

SRMG donates materials to Batting Cage project for the Round Valley Little League.

SRMG teamed up with SRP and other organizations to help build a new batting cage for the Round Valley Little League. SRMG was recognized in their opening day ceremony on April 12th. We are happy to support youth sports and be part of such a meaningful project!

Check us out at . . .
www.srmaterials.com



Exceptional People...Exceptional Benefits...Exceptional Company
Phoenix Cement Company and Salt River Sand & Rock,
dba Salt River Materials Group,
both divisions of the Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

ONGOING

DIABETES SUPPORT GROUP, 1st and 3rd Wednesday of each month from 11 a.m. – 12 p.m. in room 3104 (Cloud), 3rd floor of RPHC. This free, confidential, and safe group of individuals support one another by utilizing their collective experiences and learned wisdom. This gathering is for adults diagnosed with diabetes. For more information, contact (480) 362-3355

SENIOR BOOK CLUB, 2nd and 4th Wednesdays from 10:30-11:30 at the Tribal Library at WOLF.

TAI CHI FOR SENIORS, Tuesdays 9-10 a.m. at WOLF Senior Room and Thursdays 2:30 – 3:30 p.m. at Senior Services North Annex. Join Senior Services for tai chi, an ancient Chinese martial art used today as an effective moving meditation that improves the health of the mind and body. All abilities and fitness levels are welcome. For community seniors 55+ and adults with adaptive needs. Questions? Call (480).362.6350.

YOGA FOR FALL PREVENTION, Mondays 9 a.m. – 10 a.m. at WOLF Senior Room. All Fitness Levels Welcome! Sign up with Celinda Joe at (480) 876-7180 and request transportation if needed.

YOGA FOR FALL PREVENTION, Fridays 1 p.m. – 2 p.m. at WOLF Senior Room. All Fitness Levels Welcome! Sign up with Celinda Joe at (480) 876-7180 and request transportation if needed. **Last Fridays of Each Month are YOGA BINGO with prizes!

WATER AEROBICS AT WAY OF LIFE FACILITY POOL, 45-minute sessions on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays at 10 a.m., 12 p.m., and 1 p.m. No registration required. Questions? Call (480) 362-6310

NAMI FAMILY SUPPORT GROUP, First and

Third Wednesdays of each month from 12 p.m. – 1 p.m. at RPHC 3rd Floor, Room 3104. Contact (480) 362-6948 for more information.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SUPPORT GROUP, 5:30 - 6:30 p.m. at RPHC. Women's meetings held on Tuesdays, men's meetings held Wednesdays.

WELLBRIETY 12 STEP AND MEDICINE WHEEL, Wednesdays and Fridays 9:30 a.m. – 11 a.m. Wellbriety is a Native American recovery fellowship that blends spiritual practice with the 12-Step program. Its approach to recovery focuses on healing and is rooted in the Teachings of the Medicine Wheel, the Cycle of Life, and the Four Laws of Change. Wellbriety emphasizes creating new thought patterns, attitudes, and feelings about sobriety based on traditional concepts and Native American teachings.

TALKING CIRCLE FOLLOWING WELLBRIETY, Wednesdays and Fridays 11 a.m. – 12 p.m. Following the Wellbriety session, participants are invited to join the Talking Circle to share insights and experiences related to living in recovery and honoring traditional practices, including fellowship, community, and connection. Talking Circle sessions also take place every Wednesday and Friday, from 11:00 AM to 12:00 PM.

WARRIOR'S SUPPORT CIRCLE, 2nd Thursday Warrior's Support Circle is a talking circle aimed at offering our Veterans a safe space to meet and share their life experiences, challenges, and successes. The circle offers a free, confidential space for members to take steps towards recovery by gaining insight from others and learning more about PTSD, adjustment issues after reintegration into the civilian world, and to discuss general challenges that accompany service in the military.

CRAFT COMMUNITY REINFORCEMENT AND FAMILY TRAINING, Support group for families of loved ones battling substance abuse/addiction/dependence. Fridays 4 p.m. - 5:30 p.m. at RPHC Room 3106 (3rd Floor) For More Information please contact Shea Hinton at (480) 362-2739

SALT RIVER VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION ORIENTATION, Bi-weekly on Tuesdays 10:30 a.m. – 12 p.m. Human Resources, Two Waters Building B. Walk-ins welcomed! Contact (480) 362-2650 for more information.

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17 CM ANTONE DISTRICT B MEETING, 9 a.m. at SRPMIC Council Chambers. Please contact council secretaries with questions at (480)-362-7469.

19 KINDERGARTEN CELEBRATION, 9:30 a.m. - 11:15 a.m. at the Accelerated Learning Academy lecture hall. Celebrate Salt River Elementary School students. For more information, call (480) 362-2400.

20 CM DALLAS / CM SCABBY LEHI DISTRICT MEETING, 6 p.m. at Lehi Community Building. Please contact council secretaries with questions at (480)-362-7469.

20 COMPUTER CLASSES FOR SENIORS, held at Two Waters Building A - Red Mountain Computer Lab. Community Seniors 55+ are welcome to attend the computer basic classess provided by SRPMIC Information Technology Department - Customer Care Division. Classes are held once a month from 9:00AM - 11:00AM. No computer experience is required. We will see YOU there! You can contact the Senior

Services Department for transportation to the Two Waters class at: (480) 362-6350.

20 ECEC PROMOTION CEREMONY, 4 p.m. - 6 p.m. at the Accelerated Learning Academy gym. Celebrate our Head Start students rising to kindergarten next year. Park in lot south of the football field along Highland Avenue. For more information, call (480) 362-2200.

21 SIXTH GRADE PROMOTION, 1:30 p.m. - 3 p.m. at the Accelerated Learning Academy lecture hall. Celebrate Salt River Elementary School students. For more information, call (480) 362-2400.

22 PEACE OFFICER MEMORIAL, Beginning at 8 a.m. at the Two Waters Courtyard. Join your Salt River Police Department as we honor our fallen officers.

24 FLAG PLANTING, Beginning at 7 a.m. We are requesting volunteers to help us with placing American flags on the gravesites of our communities fallen warriors to honor their sacrifice and commemorate their service to this nation. For more information, call (480) 362-7884.

26 MEMORIAL DAY - OFFICES CLOSED, Please plan accordingly. Essential Services will remain operational.

26 MEMORIAL DAY PROGRAM, 7 a.m. at Salt River Cemetery. Reception to follow at 8 a.m. at Salt River Community Building. Please contact veteranservices@srpmic-nsn.gov or contact Veteran Services at (480)-362-7884 with questions.

27 SUMMER KICK OFF, 6:30 p.m. - 9 p.m. at Lehi Aquatic center. Come join us for games, a raffle, a photo booth, Community Recreational Services food truck and movie featuring Surf's Up. For more information, call (480) 362-6310.

28 SENIOR HEALTH & FITNESS DAY, 9:30

a.m. - 11:30 a.m. at Way of Life Facility Fitness Center. Event Highlights to include: Group fitness activities and demos, health & Wellness Education and screenings as well as snacks and incentives. Sign up by May 26th with Dion Begay at (480)-362-7320 or Celinda Joe at (480)-876-7180

28 DIVE-IN MOVIE NIGHT, CRS Aquatics invites you to enjoy your favorite movies under the stars – while floating in the pool! Come out every Wednesday evening this summer for family-friendly fun at Dive-In Movie Nights. Doors open at 7:15, showtime at 7:30 p.m. at Salt River and Lehi Pool. Questions? Call Aquatics at (480)-362-6310

29 CM BUTLER DISTRICT A MEETING, 6 p.m. at SRPMIC Council Chambers. Please contact council secretaries with questions at (480)-362-7469.

31 PROBATE AND WILL OPEN HOUSE, 8:30 a.m. - 2:30 p.m. at ALA. Hosted By Community Development Department (CDD) and Legal Services Office. For more information, contact (480)-362-7370 or cddprobate@srpmic-nsn.gov

HA:ŞAÑ BAHIDAG MAŞAD XLY'A XAMXUK JUNE

13 SRPMIC DAY - OFFICES CLOSED, Please plan accordingly. Essential Services will remain operational.

14 SRPMIC DAY CELEBRATION, Save the date! More details to come.

19 JUNETEENTH - OFFICES CLOSED, Please plan accordingly. Essential Services will remain operational.