

Opinion



Ryan Winslett
Editor

Safe Homes Network

It's hard to believe, but the school year is only weeks away from wrapping up. Over the next month, sports teams will be completing their spring seasons, seniors will be gearing up to graduate and local schools will be busy with all manner of year-end events, inductions, parties and the like.

The Fountain Hills Coalition recently hosted its final meeting of the school year and won't be back in session until this fall. At the meeting held April 13, Coalition members were updated on everything from preliminary results of the recent community survey to the progress of on-campus special events and more.

One of the Coalition's ongoing efforts, however, will be especially important through the next several months as students head off to enjoy their summer vacations, and that's the Safe Homes Network. In short, this network serves as a database of local parents who have promised to keep their homes drugs and, when it comes to minors, alcohol free.

I'm not a parent. I may tell you that Aria is my daughter but, let's face it, she's a cat. Still, my teen years aren't so far behind me that I don't remember what it was like for my mother to worry herself to death over my brother and me when we hit the road on a Friday or Saturday night.

If I'm being honest, I wasn't super great at keeping my parents informed, despite the fact that they were extremely reasonable when it came to our household weekend rules. We had a curfew and, if we were going to be even a minute late, all we had to do was call and let them know. I was bad at the calling part because I was young, dumb and genuinely lost track of time. So if you're reading this, Mom, sorry about that!

As for everything else, my Pop summed it all up in a single statement. He'd look my brother and I square in the eyes and simply say, "Don't do anything stupid."

Nowadays, technology makes it easier than ever for parents and their kids to stay connected. If I had a cell phone in high school... Well, I probably would have still been bad about remembering to call home those times I was going to be late. But at least I wouldn't have had an excuse anymore!

The Safe Homes Network helps take some of the guess work out of the equation. Once you sign up, you've got access to the full network, allowing parents to stay in contact with one another and double check "the facts."

If your youngster is heading over to John's place, you can check and see if John's folks are a part of the Network. If they are, you can probably rest assured that your kid is heading to a safe place. If you need more assurance, though, you can actually contact John's folks and make sure that, yes, they are allowing John to have a party and, no, there won't be a keg of beer on the patio.

To learn more about the Safe Homes Network and other Coalition projects, just head over to safehomesfh.org. At the bottom of the page, you'll find a link to the Safe Homes Network, where parents can sign up to earn a little extra peace of mind.

The TLC

A letter from:
Cathay Fischer

It is truly upsetting that the Technology Learning Center (TLC) will no longer be able to offer regularly-scheduled tech workshops. As a long-time student, supporter and volunteer instructor/registration coordinator of TLC, the suspension of classes is a black mark for the Town, its Council Members and the Community/Senior Activity Center.

To lose this community asset should be a warning sign to residents as to what the powers that be identify as expendable educational programs.

A Community Center should offer a variety of activities for all its residents. So bingo, dominoes and ping pong would be considered (by some) just as important as keeping the seniors up-to-date with their computer, tablet and smartphone skills. It's been almost two years since TLC was notified that their lease agreement with the Town, for the dedicated computer lab space they had been using, would not be renewed.

TLC (a non-profit, all volunteer organization) was informed they would have to pay the hourly rate, which is the same rate charged to revenue-producing home owner associations and other outside companies and clubs.

This new rate, along with the stipulation of TLC having their workshop schedule finalized at least three months in advance, was implemented. Furthermore, a seven-day cancellation clause required TLC to pay for the unused space if a workshop cancellation notice was not given prior to that seven-day period.

I've read many articles in this newspaper that our Town values and depends on its dedicated volunteers. If that is true, why does that same town make it so cumbersome and difficult for the TLC volunteers to reach their selfless mission: Keeping the seniors of Fountain Hills technically and mentally sharp?

Food for thought – when an educational program is allowed to die, so does the learning experience of those affected students.

Better way

A letter from:
Henry Broge

There has to be a better way. This week ICE sent a woman with four American-born children and a husband to a deportation center in Louisiana. She has a valid work permit until June. She entered the U.S. illegally in 2002. She has no criminal history. She came here to escape the drug cartels.

The breakup of this family is disproportionate punishment to the crime. We need a bipartisan solution to this gestapo-like enforcement of the law. George W. Bush proposed a good one while he was in office, but it did not get any traction.

We are quick to bomb Assad for his actions against humanity. We are not so quick when it comes to reforming this mean-spirited attack on humanity. Hatred for the minority

should not be a source of pride but one of disgust. Be comfortable in your biases.

Sister Cities

A letter from:
Art Tolis

The Town of Fountain Hills has always been one of the best places to live in Arizona. We have been voted the number one best place to raise a family and I couldn't agree more.

So many positive qualities of our community to share. Recently I had the privilege to hear Enrique Melendez, board member of Sister Cities program, speak to our Realtor community about the Sister Cities program and how Fountain Hills has participated in the program for many years and currently has four Sister Cities around the world.

Sharing our amazing community with these other cities and encouraging possible investments and sharing resources is another opportunity for our small community of Fountain Hills to be recognized throughout the world.

I was very impressed with the presentation by Enrique and personally decided to have my family join as a member of the organization. I encourage others to learn more about the program and think about joining. It would be great for our community to continue to support this program and grow additional relationships with other cities around the globe.

We have an amazing community to share with others to encourage tourism and investment locally. I'm looking forward to participating in the program and doing all I can as a Town Councilman to support the efforts of the Sister Cities program. Personally, I think we need to reach out to Amalfi, Italy, next and I volunteer to be our ambassador! Anyone like to join me? Support the program by joining and let's make new valuable relationships around the globe to share all we have here in Fountain Hills with others.

800-pound gorilla

A letter from:
Ronald Weir

While I was on safari in South Africa I was told a story about juvenile elephants. Now you may ask, what on Earth does this have to do with world governments? I will get to that.

Seems they were relocating elephants to protect the herds, stop poaching and land destruction. Juvenile elephants were relocated to protected areas in South Africa. Turns out they became very destructive to the land and started chasing, playing with and killing rhinoceroses. This was a problem because they were also trying to protect the rhinoceroses.

The solution to the problem was to bring in some bull elephants. Within a month, the juvenile elephants were well behaved and left the rhinoceroses alone.

Now we come to the US as the 800-pound gorilla. The United States has been clearly the world super power since the second World War; the 800-pound gorilla. For the past eight years that leadership has

been in question by actions and statements. And we have had other nations take advantage of that. The world bullies and tyrannical governments have moved into that void and tried to further their agendas. Just like the juvenile elephants without senior supervision.

Many of these agendas have threatened the United States and our allies. Under Trump's leadership, the United States' role as the world's super power has quickly been reasserted.

Hopefully, like the bull elephants limiting the destructive behavior of the juvenile elephants, the United States has shown rogue nations that it is not in their best interest to continue their threatening agendas.

Bullies

A letter from:
Mardi Evelyn

What happens to bullies when they grow up? Well, some of them join social media groups where they find like-minded personalities. I suppose the cocktail of anger and ego must be too intoxicating to pass up. In fact, there is an underground group right here in Fountain Hills.

You don't have to join the group to see the garbage that is spilled among this group's members (thank you, screen shots!). I ask myself, is this where childhood bullies congregate as adults? Is this where they continue to cultivate their fears and prejudices? Why are they trying to divide this community? Why are the Mayor and our State Representative even affiliated with such a group?

It's easy to sit behind a computer and write big, ugly words aimed at hurting others. I guess this behavior must feel powerful to those who dish it out. I mean, when you can't argue your point intellectually, you just resort to swearing and belittling. Bravo!

Of course, their kind of power is utterly useless. Shameful, really. And I wouldn't be surprised if the youth are watching and taking notes. Learning. Absorbing. Modeling.

Do these underground members realize their hate, prejudice and misogyny are visible for all of us to see?

We are all watching. The kids are watching.

Prayer

A letter from:
Mike Crichfield

Easter is over. What did Easter mean to you this year? New clothes, chocolate bunnies and Easter eggs?

Has the story of how Jesus suffered and died for you already faded from your thoughts, to be replaced with everyday concerns? God said in 2 Chronicles 7:14, "If My people, who are called by My name, will humble themselves and pray and seek My face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sins and heal their land."

Do you agree that our land needs healing and forgiveness? Anger, frustration, bitterness and despair are signs that this land is

Our viewpoint

The Town's budget

It's clear that creating the Town's annual budget is no small undertaking. If you need further proof of that, then you can dig into some "light reading" in the form of a 400-page document that makes up this year's proposed budget. If you've ever wondered where the money goes and why, that's certainly a good place to start for a thorough explanation.

But of course nobody expects every voting citizen to pour through all of those stats, figures, charts and graphs; that's why the Town Council exists. But that doesn't mean we shouldn't all at least do our part to stay informed. To that end, we'd encourage everyone to attend two upcoming sessions specifically planned to address the 2017-18 budget.

The first of those sessions is tomorrow evening, April 20, at 6 p.m. This session is only set to last until about 6:30 p.m. so, if you aren't planning to attend the Town Council meeting that follows, you're not being asked to give up too large of a time commitment to attend. During that time, a presentation will be given to address this year's proposed budget and the process by which it was created. If nothing else, this open house should serve as a nice primer to prepare everyone for the special session scheduled for Monday, April 24.

While the April 20 session will be a quick and clean overview of the budget's creation, the April 24 meeting will get into the nitty-gritty details. You'll probably want to plan for a long haul on this one, as it's likely to be packed with all of the who, what, when, where, why and how details related to the creation of this year's proposed budget.

We often hear folks ask why money goes to one program and not the other, or why the Town is unable to afford new staff or a certain project while they're able to find the funds for other things. These are questions everyone has a right to ask, and sessions like this are where you're most likely to get your answers directly from the source.

If you have further thoughts, concerns or questions, then you should have plenty of time to prepare them before speaking at an open call to the public prior to the Council voting on said budget.

Praying for that healing hand of the Lord and it is time for His people to get serious about humbling themselves in prayer.

Thursday, May 4, is the annual National Day of Prayer and what better time to join with believers all across the USA as they come together in homes, churches and groups to pray?

The National Day of Prayer committee of Fountain Hills will again be holding their annual event at Fountain Park. Complimentary food and beverages will be served from 5 to 5:45 p.m. Then, at 6 p.m., there will be a one-hour prayer service led by pastors of the Fountain Hills Christian Ministerial Association. Mark your calendar

now and make every effort to attend. God is waiting for us to return.

Snake training

A letter from:
Howie Jones

Many thanks to Chris Rich of Rio Verde for organizing last Thursday's snake avoidance dog training. The Snake Safe training is not only invaluable to the dogs, but can create an early warning signal for the dogs' owners as well.

The training session was several hours and led by a very patient and experienced master dog trainer, Web Parton of Tucson. More information is available at the snakesafe.com website.

MELT Self-Care series offered next month

The MELT Self-Care series is being offered by Town of Fountain Hills Recreation Department at the Community Center during May.

Participants will learn about the common causes of pain and how to minimize or eliminate them by using simple techniques they can do at home.

All participants must be able to get to and from the floor without assistance, since many moves are done on the floor. Wear comfortable exercise clothes, bring a yoga mat and water.

Linda Rode will be the guide for these classes and has 11 years of experience teaching private and semi-private therapeutic and group yoga. She is also a holistic health coach and has extensive training in the MELT Method.

The free MELT Demo class (course #2891) will meet Monday, May 1, from 4 to 5 p.m. For 50 years and

older, space is limited to 12 participants.

The MELT four-week self-care series (course #2898) will meet Thursdays May 4 through May 25 from 4 to 5:30. This is for those 50 and older and the cost is \$40.

The MELT Hand & Foot treatment intro class (course 2900) will meet Monday May 1 from 2:30 to 3:30 p.m. This is for those 50 years and older and is \$10.

The Hand and Foot intensive class (course #2904) meets on Monday, May 15 through May 22 from 2:30 to 3:30 p.m. This is for those 50 years and older and is \$20.

Register early as class size is limited to the first 12 registrants. Register online at fh.az.gov/recreation or at Town Hall or at the Community Center.

For more information, contact Bryan Bouk at 480-816-5170 or bbouk@fh.az.gov.

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Letters deadline noon Monday

All letters must be submitted by noon on Monday to be considered for publication in that week's edition. It is preferred they be emailed to ryan@fhtimes.com. They also can be dropped off at The Times office, 16508 E. Laser Dr., mailed to P.O. Box 17869, Fountain Hills, AZ 85268-7869 or faxed to 480-837-1951.

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