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Rich Madden

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Galloping delivery

Members of the Hashknife Posse with the Navajo County Sheriff's Office rode into Fountain Hills Thursday, Jan. 28, with a mail delivery for the U.S. Post Office in town. The posse makes an annual ride from Holbrook to Scottsdale carrying the mail. For additional pictures of activities that day, see Page 14A.

Times photo by Bob Burns

* Drug coalition rolls up sleeves in town effort

Leaders seek to change the 'norms'

By Ryan Winslett
Times Reporter

The first step to recovery is admitting one has a problem. Over the past couple years, Fountain Hills, as a whole, has slowly begun to open its eyes to the existence of underage alcohol, tobacco and drug abuse here.

The old beliefs of "not my kids and not in this town" have begun to fade as citizens realize local children and the community are not immune to these problems.

Drugs are here. Alcohol and tobacco abuse by underage teens are here.

Parents, business employees and individuals who knowingly allow and even contribute to the delinquency of minors are here.

Now that some residents have come to terms with these facts, the second step is to act to make a change.

Many community leaders have already begun the process in the form of the Fountain Hills Youth Substance Abuse Prevention Coalition.

Headed by director Carole Groux and associate Karen Bayne, the coalition held a public meeting Jan. 21 to keep building toward a reduction of illegal drug use in Fountain Hills.

Such a goal will take time, obviously, but with

support coming from all directions, Groux is optimistic progress can be made.

From local business owners and school officials to law enforcement agencies, town government officials, religious and fraternal organizations, civic groups, healthcare professionals, concerned citizens, parents and more, a collective "Fountain Hills" was truly present at last week's meeting to discuss the future and the issues of drug abuse in all its forms.

Parent Mike Vaught was on-hand at the meeting, stating out loud what many tend to shy away from in this quiet community.

"There's a lot going on here under the surface you just don't see if you don't get involved," Vaught said. "Raising the consciousness of the town to these types of things has become critical in my mind."

Groux agreed, stating that the prevention of drug abuse must be a community effort, as it is itself an environmental dilemma.

"Talking to your kids, giving them the facts and explaining what these substances do to their body just isn't enough anymore," Groux said.

School Superintendent Dr. Bill Myhr added

(cont. on Page 5A)

Candidates speak out Five seeking council seats debate the issues

By Bob Burns
Times Reporter

Tait Elkie separated himself from other candidates for Town Council at a campaign forum last week by advocating a change in how the town receives its legal advice.

Elkie, an attorney, said one of his biggest concerns is the manner in which a number of lawsuits have been handled in the past.

He said he does not like the fact that the town attorney works for a law firm under contract to the town paid with billable hours.

Elkie said he would pre-

fer to have an attorney working under the town manager with closer ties to the town and does not see the community simply as a client.

He made particular note of the suit brought against the town by its previous landlord. Elkie said the judge in the case was critical of the town's legal team

for delaying progress in the case.

Councilman Mike Archambault, running for a third term on the council, said Elkie was not privy to closed executive sessions regarding the case so he should withhold his opinion.

Archambault said the town tried to get the land-

lord to sign a new lease so the town could legally proceed with paying taxes and other obligations.

"You need all of the information to make the right decisions," Archambault said.

Councilman Henry Leger said the town has worked hard the past few years to resolve a number of outstanding lawsuits and much of it came together at one time.

The town attorney operates with the best interest of the town in mind, Leger said, and in many cases it is the town's risk management company that manages the lawsuits, not the

Art League claims 'First Saturday Art Walk'

Apparently many are confused about what exactly is the "First Saturday Art Walk."

The Fountain Hills Art League has been holding a First Saturday Art Walk lakeside and behind Plaza Fountainside at El Lago and Saguaro boulevards since February 2008.

The Town of Fountain Hills has recently begun a "First Saturday Art Walk" on the same day as a guided tour of the town's public art.

The Fountain Hills Art League invites all residents and winter visitors to the

Saturday, Feb. 6, First Saturday Art Walk.

The league's walks are held on the first Saturday of each month through May.

More artists will be showing their work in February, so if residents have been to the Art Walk in the past few months then you will find new art.

Valentine's Day is coming up and this would be a great opportunity to find something for that special person.

Stroll the plaza and view paintings, photog-

raphy, sculpture, mixed media, jewelry and many other artistic and imaginative items -- all created by artist members of the Fountain Hills Art League.

The FHAL First Saturday Art Walk will be held lakeside and behind Plaza Fountainside at El Lago and Saguaro boulevards from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., weather permitting.

Patrons can bring this article along with them to the Art Walk and receive a 15 percent discount on purchases from participating vendors.

Additional election coverage:

- Voter registration deadline, P. 8A
- Q&A series continues, P. 8A
- Video profiles, see www.fhtimes.com



town attorney.

Councilwoman Ginny Dickey said the council is responsible for lawsuits. She said ultimately it is the council that decides whether or not to take the advice of its attorney.



Renew your vows before judge

Fountain Hills Municipal Court Judge Ted Armbruster will preside over a Renew Your Love ceremony for Fountain Hills residents just in time for Valentine's Day.

The Town of Fountain Hills Activity Center for Seniors and Boomers is hosting the ceremony planned for Thursday, Feb. 11, from 1:30 to 2:30 p.m.

The town is using this event as a way to honor couples for their years of marriage and commitment and allowing them to renew their vows, whether they have been together for five years or 50.

There will be a wedding

cake with the honor of making the first cut going to the couple who has been married the longest. There will also be refreshments for the reception.

Couples wishing to participate must register prior to Friday, Jan. 29, by calling Kelley, 480-816-5186 or Teri, 480-816-5229.

Couples may invite friends and relatives to the ceremony, however, those attending as guests must RSVP by Thursday, Feb. 4.

There is no cost for this event, which is being made possible by Antiquity Recordings and Fellowship Square.

*COALITION: Parent problems, too

(cont. from page 1A)

his opinion.

"I have felt a lot of resistance from parents on this," Myhr said. "I feel we have a bigger adult issue in this town than a student issue."

He said some parents feel their teens drinking is a "rite of passage" for them.

Environmental

Groux went on to explain the roots of environmental strategies, which are influenced by a complex set of factors including rules and regulations, enforcement, community norms, media and accessibility.

All factors combine to create an environment where drug abuse can thrive and all must be addressed in order to get a hold on the problem.

It is to this end that the coalition was formed: to consider the environment of Fountain Hills, consider the reasons local youths pursue these practices, consider the aspects that allow such activities to take place and the consequences for their occurrence.

It's a lengthy task, and not one expected to be car-

ried out overnight.

Subcommittees or task forces are expected to form shortly, geared at tackling the individual tasks of providing information, educating the community, providing support, altering consequences when necessary, modifying local policies and, eventually, changing the cultural norms within Fountain Hills so that this type of behavior is no longer acceptable.

As the coalition continues its work, Maricopa County Sheriff's Office Captain John Kleinheinz stated the need to draw more involvement from the community, as it will ultimately be the responsibility of said community to carry out the needed changes.

"The community needs to wake up and get involved with this," Kleinheinz said.

"There is a silent majority ready for a reason to get active. For however many we have involved in this, there are multiple times that number out there who need to be woken up and tasked with getting the job done."

The next step will be to devise a plan as a community and then, most importantly, to act on that plan.

According to Mayor Jay Schlum, the time to look the other way, or treat these matters as "no big deal" has passed.

Now is the time to create change.

"We need to change the norms here in Fountain Hills," Schlum said. "People should be afraid of this. We should be embarrassed of this. And only we can change it."

For more information or to take part in the Youth Substance Abuse Prevention Coalition, contact director Carole Groux at cgroux@mac.com.



Daybreak

It was another beautiful sunrise over Red Mountain, and Rick Blumberg captured this moment from his backyard on Tuesday, Jan. 26. Red Mountain has a variety of names, from Red Rock to Gunsight.