

El Mirage News

www.cityofelmirage.org

Vol. 3, No. 1

623-972-8116

El Mirage turns the corner financially

This fiscal year, the City has stabilized revenues and even seen growth in some areas. From July through November 2011, City sales tax collections were running 6 percent ahead of last year, and 3 percent ahead of budget. This would be the first fiscal year since 2008 that current year sales tax collections have exceeded the previous year's sales tax collections. Local sales tax isn't the only revenue that is ahead of last year. State sales taxes are also up, which are revenues the State shares with cities and towns. A utility rate study was conducted in 2011 and rates were adjusted to

ensure utility funds were maintained at adequate levels.

City Manager Spencer Isom stressed "innovations and efficiencies in service delivery" as his message for the 2011-12 fiscal year. Expenditures have been reduced, yet key service levels have been maintained and methods for service delivery improved.

- The complement of firefighters has returned to 24, providing improved fire protection for El Mirage and surrounding communities.

- Various departments and divisions were combined and staffing stream-

lined to minimize operational overhead.

- Discretionary spending for lobbyists and public relations firms has been eliminated.

- The General Fund budget for expenditures was reduced from \$18.7 million in FY 2010-11 to \$16.5 million in FY 2011-12. Expenses are down, yet the City continues its progress on a number of major capital improvement projects. Projects include a new fire station, El Mirage Road expansion, Gentry Park improvements, a new police station, a recreation facility with pool, access barriers



Dr. Spencer Isom, El Mirage City Manager

at wash culvert structures, and the Brisas well site. A complete list of capital improvement projects can be found at www.cityofelmirage.org/DocumentView.aspx?DID=1618.

The City recently adopted its first five-year

capital improvements plan (CIP). The CIP is fully funded and focuses the City's resources on the priorities established by the City Council and residents. Among the priorities is the City's goal to seek opportunities to bring residents together. During this fiscal year, many such opportunities will be realized including the City's 60th Anniversary Celebration, the El Mirage Community Garden, Fourth Fridays, the Spring Music Festival, the Easter Egg Hunt, the Christmas Tree Lighting and Pancake Breakfast, as well as other events. The City continues to pursue

additional ways to broaden and further establish the sense of community among El Mirage residents.

City Manager Isom expressed his belief that El Mirage City government is operating the way a local government should. "Council set the goals, a conservative budget has been established, and a five-year plan for important capital improvements has been adopted," he said. According to Isom, "After three years of coping with the effects of the economic downturn, it appears El Mirage is turning the corner. We expect good things in FY 2012-13."



El Mirage Engineering Inspector Antonio Hernandez (I) checks on the access barrier under construction beneath Thunderbird Road.

El Mirage Council keeps pledge to secure culverts

The El Mirage City Council is making good on its pledge to place access barriers at entrances to eight drainage culverts beneath City roadways. The Council's decision to restrict culvert access became a top public safety priority following the tragic April 2010 death of an El Mirage teen whose body was found next to the culvert crossing Thunderbird Road. The culverts, which are big enough to walk through in some areas, are located between Greenway and Cactus Roads along the City's drainage channel. The culverts will no longer provide a place for

hidden criminal activity. "Blocking pedestrian access to the culverts is one of the best things we can do to keep residents safe, especially our kids," said Vice Mayor David Shapera.

The access barrier improvements reviewed and permitted by the Maricopa County Flood Control District consist of heavy gauge steel grates that will fully cover culvert entrances, yet still allow for storm water runoff during rain events. The grates can be removed for periodic maintenance of the culverts. The project is slated for completion in January.



New Fire and Police Stations underway in El Mirage

This summer, El Mirage broke ground for a new fire station being built directly adjacent to the existing 15 year-old station near Thunderbird and El Mirage Roads. Since the existing station was built, the El Mirage population has more than quadrupled to a current level of 32,000 residents. "The current station is no longer adequate for housing the staff and equipment needed to provide optimum fire protection," said Howard Munding, the City's Fire Chief. For the Fire Depart-

ment, construction of the new station represents the realization of a pledge made in 2008 when voters approved a bond for the facility. The unexpected economic downturn during the three succeeding years resulted in post-

ponement of the project. "New station construction is now moving very well, and we expect it to be completed by summer 2012," said Mayor Lana Mook.

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Mayor's Message: A New Year's resolution

Over the holidays, I was humbled to witness many ways El Mirage residents reached out to those in need. Thanks to you, our Police and Fire Departments, as well as area churches, civic organizations, and food banks were able to provide much needed support to individuals and families throughout our community who otherwise would have had

little to celebrate. What's uniquely wonderful about the holidays is that they allow us to give pause... to count our blessings, to celebrate with loved ones, and to realize the joy that comes with giving of ourselves to help others.



Mayor Lana Mook

Soon after the parties are over and the decorations put away, we'll turn our attentions back to the things that occupy our everyday lives. Unfortunately, the charities we so readily

helped just weeks ago will be left struggling to keep pace with needs that have no expiration date. As we

consider our resolutions for this New Year, let us remember lives brightened by good works during the holidays, as well as our own blessings - a job, a home, a family - and resolve to continue being the caring, generous community that is El Mirage.

On behalf of the City Council and the staff of the City of El Mirage, I want to wish each of you a very happy, healthy New Year.

Council Corner: Community involvement key to safe City

During the past year, members of the City Council had the opportunity to interact with the El Mirage Police Department on numerous occasions as City officials and as private citizens. Such interactions are essential to the department's community-based policing philosophy, which supports active partnerships between community members and police to solve problems and improve the quality of life in El Mirage. Working in partnership with the Police Department has been eye opening. We've learned of the many resources the department places at residents' disposal to support partnerships with police that prevent and reduce crime. We've also learned how these partnerships have led to arrests and convictions

for such crimes as burglary, graffiti, and drug activities. Finally, we have come to more fully understand the Police Department's commitment to transparency in sharing information, as well as receiving feedback from community members about their concerns.

The list on page three details several of the resources utilized by the El Mirage Police Department to engage in meaningful, effective partnerships with the community.

Each of the resources noted here are most effective when residents are vigilant. This means keeping their eyes and ears open, being aware of their surroundings, and taking simple

MORE COUNCIL CORNER ON 3

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COUNCIL CORNER, From 2

Resource	Access
Nixle – A web-based resource providing real time public safety-related news and information to residents. Examples of information include road closures, alerts of police activity and trends involving illegal activity.	Go to www.cityofelmirage.org/index.aspx?NID=267 .  Click on the nixle icon to sign up.
Raids Online – A web-based tool that maps criminal activity within the area defined by the user. RAIDS Online helps the public get a better idea of the crime-related activity in a specific area so they can make more informed decisions about how to stay safe.	Go to www.cityofelmirage.org/index.aspx?NID=267 .  Click on the Raids Online icon to sign up.
Facebook – A web-based social networking site allowing citizens and police to interact with each other about a broad range of topics.	Go to www.cityofelmirage.org/index.aspx?NID=267 .  Click on the Facebook icon to sign up.
Twitter – A web site where the Police Department posts a broad range of announcements, alerts, community events, volunteer opportunities, and facts of interest to residents.	Go to www.cityofelmirage.org/index.aspx?NID=267 .  Click on the Twitter icon to sign up.
Channel 11 – Local Cable television channel where police-related and general interest news, events, and alerts can be viewed.	Go to Cox Cable Channel 11.
Silent Witness - A non-profit program created to give citizens the opportunity to assist law enforcement in solving crimes. Citizens remain completely anonymous and are paid cash rewards of up to \$1,000 when the information they provide leads to an arrest or indictment.	Go to www.silentwitness.org , or call the following hotlines: 480-WITNESS (948-6377) or 800-343-TIPS (8477)
Graffiti Hotline – A phone number allowing citizens to report graffiti activity to Police. Callers may remain anonymous.	Call 623-876-4611.

precautionary steps to deter crime. According to City Councilman Roy Delgado, "I was a military police officer for 11 years." Almost daily, we encountered incidences that could have been prevented if homes and cars had been locked, or if neighbors had reported suspicious activity." Police Chief Steve Campbell agrees. "If it looks suspicious, call. Don't second guess."

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FOCUS ON THE FIRE DEPARTMENT



News from the El Mirage Fire Department
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Operations and administration open 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday



Fire damages El Mirage business

El Mirage fire crews responded to an alarm late Friday, Dec. 2 at 12329 Northwest Grand Avenue to discover a fire in the suite occupied by Sun Cities Appliance. The fire appears to have been caused by an overloaded electrical cord. Damage to the store, estimated at \$15,000, was confined to the area of origin because the building was protected by a fire sprinkler system. According to the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), electrical fires accounted for 13 percent of all home structure fires from 2003 to 2007.

To prevent electrical

fires in a home or business, NFPA recommends the following safety tips:

- Replace or repair damaged or loose electrical cords.
- Avoid running extension cords across doorways or under carpets.
- In homes with small children, make sure the home has tamper-resistant (TR) receptacles.
- Consider having additional circuits or outlets added by a qualified electrician so extension cords do not have to be used.
- Follow the manufacturer's instructions for plugging an appliance into a receptacle outlet.
- Avoid overloading outlets. Plug only one high-wattage appliance into each receptacle outlet at a time.

• If outlets or switches feel warm, or frequent problems such as blowing fuses, tripping cir-



Aftermath of Fire at Sun Cities Appliance.

cuits, or flickering lights occur, call a qualified electrician.

• Place lamps on level surfaces away from things that can burn, and

use bulbs that match the lamp's recommended wattage.

• Make sure the home has ground fault circuit interrupters (GFCIs) in

the kitchen, bathroom(s), laundry room, and basement.

• Arc-fault circuit interrupters (AFCIs) should be installed in the home

to protect electrical outlets.

For more information, contact the El Mirage Fire Department at 623-583-7968.

Fire Department Monthly Report: November 2011

El Mirage Fire Units responded to the following incidents during the month of November 2011:

Structure fires.....6
Other fires.....11
EMS calls.....195
False Alarms.....26
Other calls.....65
TOTAL.....303

Total Fire Loss = \$0

FIRE, From 1

With the new fire station well underway, City officials are now turning their attentions toward building a new police station approved by voters during the Nov. 8 bond election. The new station, to be located just south of Gateway Park, replaces the aging modular buildings that make up the current police complex. "An internal project team has been assembled to spearhead the new station's construction and we are already preparing an ambitious timeline to provide the public the new facility it deserves," said City Manager Spencer Isom. "We'd like to assure the citizens of El Mirage this is their station," said Police Chief Steve Campbell.

THE BLUE BYLINE

News from the El Mirage Police Department

14405 N. Palm St. • 623-933-1341 • www.cityofelmirage.org/police

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New Assistant Police Chief on board

The El Mirage Police Department has a new Assistant Chief. Terry McDonald, who joined the department Nov. 28, comes to El Mirage with an extensive 36-year law enforcement career. He served with the Phoenix Police Department for 31 years, followed by stints as the Interim Police Chief with the City of Apache Junction, as an investigator with the Arizona Department of Gaming and most recently as the Police Chief for the Town of Youngtown.

"Terry's successes

in executive leadership roles and community-based policing will be a good fit for the City of El Mirage," Police Chief Steve Campbell stated. "He has a good reputation for building relationships with employees, businesses, and residents in a community."

Assistant Chief McDonald looks forward to meeting El Mirage community members.

New Assistant Chief Terry McDonald (l) Receives Congratulations from Chief Steve Campbell.



Residents get rewards for reporting graffiti

Graffiti is a crime that affects everyone in the community. It invites other criminal activity, results in costly repairs or replacement of damaged property,

and decreases property values. The El Mirage Police Department is committed to decreasing graffiti in the City through vigilant patrols and investigations.

The Department also works closely with other City departments and property owners to ensure that graffiti is quickly removed.

Residents may report

graffiti in their neighborhoods by contacting the El Mirage Police Department at 623-933-1341. Residents who provide information that leads to the arrest of a

known graffiti vandal may be eligible for a reward of up to \$250.

Contact the graffiti hotline at 602-262-7327 to report graffiti vandals.

THE BLUE BYLINE

Celebrate the New Year safely

Residents are reminded to celebrate safely this New Year's Eve. Discharging firearms is illegal within City limits. The passage of "Shannon's Law" in July 2000 makes it a felony to recklessly discharge a firearm into the air. Shannon Smith of Phoenix was 14 years-old when she was killed by a stray bullet as she sat in her backyard. Remember: What goes up must come down somewhere.

Fireworks may be purchased legally in Arizona. However, the City of El Mirage has instituted an ordinance that bans certain firework-related activities. The sale of fireworks to persons under the age of 16 is prohibited. The use of all consumer



fireworks within City limits is also prohibited. Fireworks can contribute to fires, as well as severe injuries. The City ordinance regulating their use is intended to preserve the safety of the entire community.

El Mirage police officers will be actively patrolling the City in search of impaired drivers. Residents are urged to consume alcoholic beverages responsibly. Designating a sober driver can save lives and prevent

serious injury, and help partygoers avoid the legal consequences of overindulging.

The El Mirage Police Department wishes residents a safe and prosperous 2012.



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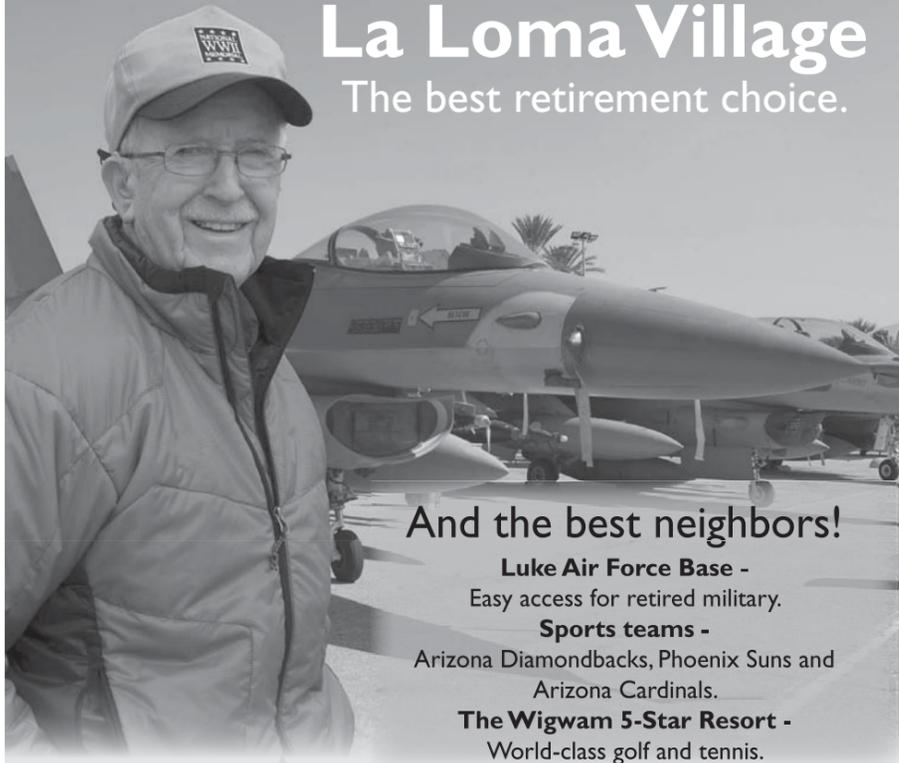
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Citizen Committee volunteers to meet Jan. 24

Citizen participation is essential to the success of El Mirage, and the City is offering residents, business owners, neighborhood groups, and others interested in being involved in the City's progress a chance to participate as volunteers on the committees listed below. Each committee is headed by a member of the City Council. Join Council members and City staff at the kick-off meeting for all committees 6 p.m. Jan. 24 at the El Mirage Senior Center, 14010 N. El Mirage Road.

1. Home Improvement/Revitalization – A committee working with homeowners to repair, re-condition, and clean up their homes and surrounding properties.

2. Parks and Recreation – A committee to assist in organizing community events at Gentry Park, Gateway Park, and other areas in the City.

3. Public Safety – A committee to assist the Police and Fire Departments, as well as the El Mirage City

Court with solutions to graffiti and other types of vandalism, community education, and crime prevention.

4. Senior Services – A committee to assist with activities for El Mirage seniors including serving as teachers, transportation aids, and event organizers.

5. Water and Energy Conservation – A committee to identify energy-efficient alternatives such as solar that would provide residents both cost savings and a greater awareness of the importance of energy conservation.

6. Community Garden – A committee to help organize volunteers, teach gardening, and perform other tasks to help keep the garden vibrant year-round.

7. El Mirage History – A committee to help accurately chronicle the community's past through photos, documents, and personal recollections.

For more information, call 623-876-2973.



From left: El Mirage City Manager Dr. Spencer Isom, Tolleson Mayor Adolfo Gamez, El Mirage City Councilman Roy Delgado, and Joe Seibert enjoy the golf tournament.

Firefighter Association Charity holds golf tournament

The El Mirage Firefighter Association Charity hosted its 1st Annual Charity Golf Tournament Nov. 5 at Pueblo El Mirage Golf Club to raise money for its college scholarship program.

The charity raised more than \$6,500 through entry fees, raffles, and event sponsorships. Twenty teams participated in the tournament, which

included a luncheon at the Rio Mirage Café. The scholarships will be available for the fall 2012 semester.

Additional details can be found after the first of the year at Dysart High School's website, <https://schoolweb.dysart.org/SchoolSites/index.aspx?sid=205&page=-1>, under the Guidance and Counseling link, or at emfdcharities@hotmail.com.

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El Mirage Community Garden News

So much of building a successful community garden is about the volunteer efforts and donations of individuals and organizations who believe in its power to transform an empty space into a beautiful, bountiful gathering place; strangers into fellow gardeners; and quiet into civic pride that resonates throughout the community. Among the garden's contributors are the following who have been instrumental in the garden's initial construction:



Saul Carranza, Sun Rise Tree Farm

- Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railway, Goodyear for railroad ties to construct the garden boxes.
- Swan Hill Nurseries, Waddell for olive trees along the garden perimeter and center seating area.
- Sun Rise Tree Farm, Sun City West for Palo Verde trees along the garden perimeter and center seating area. The organization also donated the City's official Christmas tree
- Reveal Church, Sur-

prise for volunteers who helped assemble and fill the garden boxes

- The LDS Church, El Mirage for volunteers who helped secure garden trees in place, assemble garden boxes, and clean up the site

- Lowe's Home Improvement Center, Surprise for much of the site's irrigation system

- EMD Group, El Mirage for decorative brick used to construct seating

Each of the organizations above worked closely with the City's Public

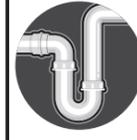
Works staff to complete key garden elements. Their generosity comes from not only an enthusiasm for growing things, but from special connections with El Mirage. Saul Carranza's family at Sun Rise Tree Farm, for example, has been serving El Mirage for more than 25 years. In his comments about the garden, he quoted William Shakespeare saying, "One touch of nature makes the whole world kin."

Jan. 24, the City is planning a meeting to update residents and others con-

cerning leasing garden space, volunteering, making donations, and serving on a standing committee to help coordinate garden activities. The meeting will take place at 6 p.m. at the El Mirage Senior Center, 14010 N. El Mirage Road. For additional information about the January meeting, go to the City web site at www.cityofelmirage.org and click on "Community."

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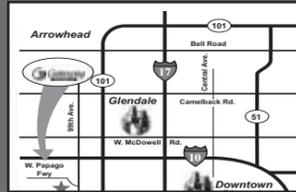
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City's new website takes on new look and promises easier access to services

A soft roll-out of the City's new website was presented at the Dec. 8 City Council meeting. El Mirage City Manager Spencer Isom referred to the new website as "...another promise kept."

The intent of the new website is to make access easier to online request forms, bill paying event information, and other City services. The site features an intuitive menu under the heading, "I Want To..." allowing for faster access to the City's most requested services. During the next month, other features will be added to the website to simplify the business license application process and help users navigate municipal

court information. The changes are expected to be completed by the end of January, well ahead of original projections.

Economic development is an integral part of the City's future, and new website features are designed to promote the City's economic development potential. Soon, prospective businesses and developers will have access to maps, demographic information, retail and commercial real estate offerings, as well as the City's plans for growth and development.

The El Mirage website can be accessed at www.CityOfElMirage.org.

City holiday celebrations brought smiles, donations

December 2011 marked the beginning of new holiday celebrations in El Mirage including a Christmas tree lighting ceremony and a pancake breakfast hosted by the El Mirage Firefighters Association Charity. Residents and visitors filled the City's Civic Plaza on Dec. 9 to enjoy the tree lighting which

included carolers, food, and Santa's arrival by fire engine. On Dec. 17, City Council members, firefighters, and their families served more than a thousand pancakes at the Senior Center, where Santa handed out candy and posed for photos with area children.

Donations of food and toys

were collected at each event, and thanks to the community's generosity, 115 families and children had much to celebrate during the holidays. Mayor Lana Mook summed up the events saying, "El Mirage is a giving community. We are more than residents. We are neighbors that look out for each other."

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El Mirage News Jan 2012

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City Council honors Arizona's 2012 Teacher of the Year

At the Dec. 8 meeting, Council members honored Reading Interventionist Kristie Martorelli from Thompson Ranch Elementary School, for her recent selection as the Arizona Educational Foundation's 2012 Teacher of the Year. Mayor Lana Mook read a proclamation and presented Martorelli and Thompson Ranch Principal Frances Sperling with

the City's 60th Anniversary Commemorative Coin.

In her comments, Mayor Mook thanked Martorelli for her dedication to students. "We deeply appreciate the many contributions you have made to the children of El Mirage, as well as our entire community," Mook said. Martorelli acknowledged the countless good wishes



Kristie Martorelli with El Mirage Mayor Lana Mook

she has received since being named Teacher of the Year and promised to continue doing her best to instill a love of reading in her young students.

Bill Gentry Park to undergo major renovations

For more than 40 years, Bill Gentry Park has been a gathering place for El Mirage residents. Here, they've watched their children play baseball and softball, and brought their families together for many special celebrations. Now, after years of steady use, the park will undergo major renovations as promised by the new City Council. "Renovating this park was one of our priorities as a Council and our City staff has helped us deliver," said Councilman and long-time resident

Joe Ramirez.

Among the park's new features will be covered dugouts, more durable perimeter and outfield fencing, an expanded concession/restroom facility, security enhancements, and re-orientation of the ball field for safer play.

The renovations are partially funded through an \$86,000 grant from the Arizona Sports and Tourism Authority. Construction on the project began in December.

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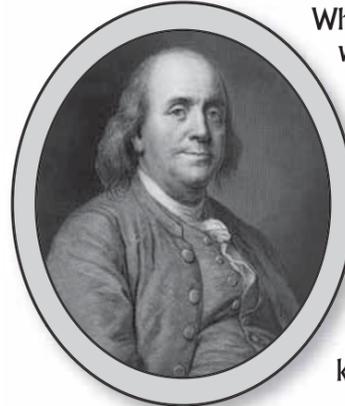
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COMMUNITY CALENDAR

EL MIRAGE BRANCH LIBRARY
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 www.mclidaz.org

All Maricopa County Library District libraries will be closed Jan. 1 and 2 for New Year's Day; and Jan. 16 for Martin Luther King Jr./Civil Rights Day.

CHILDREN
 SNOWFLAKE STORY
 TIME: 10 a.m. Jan. 10, 17, 24, and 31, meet in the Community Room and enjoy fun stories and silly songs for children ages 1 to 5 years and their caregivers.

TEENS
 THE GREAT GATSBY TRIVIA AND COSTUME CONTEST: 4 p.m. Jan. 26, ages 12 to 19 can meet in the Community Room to celebrate the Big Read, "The Great Gatsby." Come for a trivia contest; or wear a costume from the book for a costume contest. The Big Read is presented locally by the West Valley Arts Council in partnership with the Maricopa County Library District. The Big Read is a program of the National Endowment for the Arts in partnership with the Institute of Museum and Library Services and Arts Midwest. All prizes donated by the Friends of the Library. Registration required.

ALL AGES
 FRIENDS OF THE EL MIRAGE LIBRARY: 1:30 p.m. Jan. 24, join friends in the Community Room, and help support the El Mirage Library. New members welcome.

ADULTS
 ORGANIZING YOUR FAMILY HISTORY SEARCH: 1 p.m. Jan. 12, meet in the Community Room and join the West Valley Genealogical Society for a beginner's guide to finding family history. Plus, find out about local services and resources of the Society.

JOB SEARCHING BASICS BY GOODWILL OF AZ: 1 p.m. Jan. 10, Goodwill of Central Arizona will teach basic job searching, determining type of work you want, and steps to take when the interview is over. Pre-requisites are the ability to type, create an e-mail account, and have comfortable with use of internet. Class size limited. Registration required.

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 14414 N. El Mirage Rd.
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COMPUTER BASICS: 6 to 8 p.m. Mondays and Wednesdays, Learn computer basic skills: Microsoft Word, Internet and creating an email account. Price is \$25.

GED: 6 to 8 p.m. Tuesday and Wednesday; 10 a.m. to 12 p.m. Monday through Tuesday. Prepare for the GED exam. Price is \$30.

ROSETTA STONE: Various times, learn basic English vocabulary via computer software program. Price is \$25.

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To register, contact Susie at susier@dysartcom-

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Non-fiction can be as fascinating as fiction

By MARK L. SMITH

I have written a lot about popular fiction. I read at least one a month, but I also read one non-fiction book each month just to stay in touch with reality. Sure, you can get a quick synopsis on Wikipedia, but if you really want an education, there's nothing like a good non-fiction book.



All of us have some non-fiction topic we love to read about. Some people like history. Some folks are into travel, even if it is from the safety of their favorite armchair. Some anxiously await

the next diet, exercise, or cook book based on the latest medical study [I recently read two such books, one advocating meats and the other vegetables.] Some love the

new wave of books on spirituality. Some are into sports or hobbies and appreciate books on "how to's" or about the people who do them well. Others love to read biographies

of historic figures or the latest celebrities.

There are also many great non-fiction videos and DVDs available, not to mention the numerous newspapers and magazines that offer a daily reality check.

Take advantage of all these non-fiction media at your local library where you can check them out for free.

CALENDAR: Volunteers needed, From Page 10

communitycenter.org, or call 623-974-4156.

AFTER SCHOOL PROGRAM: 1 to 7 p.m. Mondays; 3 to 7 p.m. Tuesday through Friday, Kindergarten through high school youth and teens after school program. Cost is \$1 per day drop-in rate, or \$20 per month. Contact Priscilla Pena at priscillap@dysartcommunitycenter.org, or 623-583-2137.

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