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Publisher

Heritage of community is special events

With the Great Fair being held this weekend and the "Love in the Hills" renewal of marriage vows in the park last weekend, I thought I would talk about the town's heritage in regard to special events.

Throughout the years we have had a variety of special events in Fountain Hills. As is the way these things go, there are those who like the special events and others who look on them as a big inconvenience.

The original management team that created Fountain Hills and Lake Havasu City, included the man who conceived the master plan for Disneyland (C.V. Wood) and the creator of the Hollywood Walk of Fame (Lorne Pratt). Both men were promoters. When they began marketing Fountain Hills, they created special events as a way to attract Valley residents to experience the new community and its unique setting.

The original development firm was McCulloch Properties, Inc.

They worked with a public relations firm in Beverly Hills that arranged for the celebrity appearances.

The first special event was the Arizona Chili Cooking Championship. It was held on Oct. 28, 1972.

Wood, a native Texan, was at the time, the World Champion Chili Cooker. He won the title at the World Championship in Terlingua, Texas.

The Fountain Hills chili event had western movie actors Chill Wills and Pat Buttram. Both men were rumored to enjoy their bottles. Mr. Wills confirmed it. The first thing he did when I went to interview him was he offered me his bottle of Jack Daniels.

Buttram was appearing on "Green Acres" at the time. He had no evidence of alcohol other than he just looked drunk. He was very friendly while Wills wanted to stay in his trailer (close to his bottle). I wondered if Wills was paid for his non-appearance.

There were a variety of Hollywood celebrities on hand for the opening of the Fountain Hills Racquet & Swim Club in February 1975. Among the celebrities were Bobbie Riggs, who had just lost to Billie Jean King in the "Battle of the Sexes," Claudine Longet, wife of Andy Williams, McDonald Carey, Doug McClure, Barbara Anderson, Lloyd Bridges and tennis star Tony Trabert.

Later that year, a series of park concerts were held featuring big bands. First was Les Brown and his Band of Renown. The Count Basie Orchestra played in 1978. Jazz singer Ella Fitzgerald was a surprise guest that evening.

The Phoenix Symphony, with famous guest conductors presented concerts at Fountain Park in 1975 and 1976. Among them were Arthur Fiedler, Henry Mancini, Percy Faith, John Green and Andre Kostelanetz. Kostelanetz appeared with news anchor Walter Cronkite in 1976. The concert attracted some 20,000 people to Fountain Park.

The Fountain Festival of Arts and Crafts was started by the Chamber of Commerce in November 1975 at Fountain Park. It was later moved to the Avenue of the Fountains.

The Great Fair initially began as an appreciation event for viewers of PBS Station Channel 8 and was called "8's Great Sunday." It had an art show, hot air balloon launch, running races, sky divers and a concert by the Phoenix Symphony.

The art show was eventually expanded to three days and the Chamber of Commerce took over the event in 1987 and called it "The Great Fair."

Well, I'm out of space, and I didn't get to talk about some of the biggest special events (attendance-wise) held in Fountain Hills such as White Castle Days, the 1976 Bicentennial Fourth of July event, and the big country music day in the park in 1989.

Special events for a special place. That's Fountain Hills.

Coalition Essay Contest

Teens reveal positive side of life through writing

The winners of the 2015 Fountain Hills Coalition essay contest have been announced, with Fountain Hills High School students Emerson O'Neil (first place), Avery Evans (second place) and Madeline Freyer-Melk (third place) earning top honors.

A total of 181 essays were submitted for this year's competition, with a special luncheon to honor the top 17 held on Friday, Feb. 13.

Along with lunch provided by Redendo's Pizzeria, the top three essays were read aloud during the event, with students sharing inspirational stories with their peers, family members and friends.

The Fountain Hills Coalition, which focuses on the prevention of underage drinking and educating about the dangers of drug use, once again sponsored this year's essay contest.

The competition was open to all high school students, including those who are home-schooled or attend schools elsewhere in the Valley, who live in Fountain Hills.

Entries were due in late January with a panel of judges meeting to select the top entries.

Students were asked to write on one of three topics:

- 1.) What is one thing you do or could do to contribute to a positive school environment?
- 2.) If you were independently wealthy and had no need for employment, what would you do to improve the quality of life for others?
- 3.) We all have fears. Has any fear ever held you back, and what have you done to minimize or deal with it?

Thanks to the generosity of the business community, the contest featured more than \$2,000 in awards this year, including \$500, \$100



Dwight Johnson and Shelly Mowry, left, of the Fountain Hills Coalition joined the 20 winners of the 2015 Coalition High School Essay Contest at last week's awards luncheon.

and \$50 rewards for the top essays, respectively.

All 14 honorable mentions received a \$25 prize.

Along with the three top winners, the honorable mentions went to Brandon Barth, Skye Brewster, Nate Ellis, Jared Emmons, Melissa Ervin, Nataly Grubender, Zebediah Huntener, Ashley Knox, Kaylee Nelson, Emily Pall, Trista Smith, Christopher Truong, Pearlina Washington and Jordan Wodnyski.

See related story for Emerson O'Neil's winning essay.

Students were invited to read an excerpt from their essays to the audience, sharing powerful messages about overcoming fear and helping those in need.



Here is Emerson's first-place essay

By Emerson O'Neil

While people share many similarities with one another, such as our incapacitating laziness, fascination with Tim Burton films, co-dependent relationships with Netflix, etc., we have never stood more united than in our fears.

Although each special snowflake of an individual has fears completely unique to them, there are many common phobias that the public can generally agree upon, which, as Jerry Seinfeld so kindly summarized for us, are ordered as follows: "According to most studies, people's number one fear is public speaking. Number two is death. Death is number two... That means to the average person, if you have to go to a funeral, you're better off in the casket than doing the eulogy."

At first glance, this is something to laugh off and think about on a later day

when one has too much time on their hands. But for the hopelessly analytical and the insatiably curious, a statement like this holds many darker undertones, all of which could not possibly be covered by an American sitcom.

When one thoroughly scrutinizes Seinfeld's clever, thought-provoking statement, what's important to understand is why people have such a hard time presenting themselves to one another. It all stems back to one fear that everyone, myself included, will deal with eventually: The feeling of inadequacy.

Now, it doesn't have to occur in a situation as life-threatening as public speaking, obviously, but it's the kind of phobia that clings to us like an annoying child. It's something that stays with us.

When I was a kid, I remember feeling as if the world was my friend. I didn't comprehend the concept of "proving" oneself, for

I had much more serious matters weighing on my little sausage of a brain, such as which Barbie to pick out next at Toys R Us. It's not accurate to say that the world was simpler back then; rather, my perception of it was. Shame was an emotion far too complex for me to even understand, let alone experience.

As I grew older, I began to learn and notice more things and, in the summer of seventh grade, came to the conclusion that I was lacking in some fundamental way. I wasn't as athletic or smart as everyone else, I wasn't as attractive as everyone else; the list went on and on. This realization was absolutely crushing; as a child, it had always been my hope to be more than ordinary, but my awkward, pre-teen self now saw the person that was me as even less than that.

Then came the glorious moment where my hormone-riddled body calmed down and I began having

less dramatic, angst-ridden thoughts about myself. Of course, that "awareness" of my newfound limitations didn't go away; I've just developed a healthy respect for them. That being said, I try not to let it stop me from becoming the person that I want to be; someone who I feel is not lacking in any way and doesn't need to define any part of themselves as being inadequate.

It does get hard, though, when I see other people give up on their noble dreams of grandeur and success. It certainly doesn't boost morale for the naive troops that dare hope to accomplish such impressive feats.

A little while back, I found an online blog called "Humans of New York" (HONY). In this blog, there was one posting in particular that stuck with me; though once horribly depressing, I now use it as an example. The post was a picture of a man leaning against a wall with a rather melancholy look on his face.

As Brandon, the creator of the site, kept asking him questions, the man started talking about the deep, less humorous things about himself.

"At this point in my life, I'm trying to figure out the things that I truly care about."

"What's something you care about less than you did 10 years ago?"

"Being extraordinary." The man's answer to this question really hit me hard. Was that what it would be like for me? Would I end up like this man, giving up and settling for anything?

That's the thing with a fear like this; it can cripple you until you no longer even want to try. I need to remember, though, that it's my life, and I can do whatever I want with it. I don't want to just deal with my fear of not measuring up; I want to tackle it head-on and make it my own.

It's going to become my number one motivator.

THIS WEEK'S FEATURED HOME ...



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