Opinion

Michael Scharnow
Editor

Making a difference in town

The enthusiasm was infectious Saturday morning, as hundreds gathered at Golden Eagle Park to get their marching orders.

It could have been like work – well, everyone did end up doing some kind of "work" – but it was a fun kind of labor, a labor of love that was done for a good cause rather than a good paycheck.

Various generations came together for a few hours to contribute their time, energy and talents (that talent thing is somewhat questionable in my case, however) to a good cause.

The cause?

Make a Difference Day.

The reason?

Community.

Never mind the fact that likely millions of people contributed millions and millions of man-hours on Oct. 26 around the country as they came together for Make a Difference Day.

It is said to be the largest one-day volunteer effort in the country.

Sure, Fountain Hills will be part of those national statistics, but in a town like ours, the day means more than just numbers. It means service clubs, organizations, churches, families and other citizens coming together to spread some goodwill around the community.

Neighbor helping neighbor.

Contrary to some out-of-town perceptions, Fountain Hills isn't all million-dollar Southwest castles built into the hillsides behind gated private country clubs.

There are people living here who are alone, who are struggling, who maybe don't have the support system they should have from family, friends and neighbors. Or maybe they just don't reach out for help like they should.

Things happen. Or don't happen. And as Heather Ware, town volunteer coordinator, pointed out Saturday morning, sometimes it's easier to judge than to simply lend a helping hand.

Heather and her hard-working volunteer committee screened the dozens of projects that were accomplished Saturday. So they all needed help in some fashion – perhaps in spite of the outward appearances.

My Noon Kiwanis group ended up with another giant landscaping project. Turns out the property owner was a 90-year-old woman who had lived out here for decades. She recently suffered a stroke and had to go into a nursing home facility.

Her property was overgrown with all kinds of palo verdes and other trees and brush.

One woman on our crew, Ann Speers, who coordinates many activities at Extended Hands Food Bank, said the woman was a sweet person who had volunteered her time for decades at the food bank.

So now it was our turn to give back a little bit to this woman. Sure, some of us drew blood and got stuck by a few sharp cactus needles here and there, but this day is only once a year and only for a few hours.

That's the least we can do as a community for our community. Rather than looking inward all the time, at times it's super beneficial to look outward, to give of ourselves rather than taking all time. Much has already been given to me, it's only right to give some of that back…

Not conducive

A letter from:
Tom Murphy

I strongly oppose the proposed location of a non-alcoholic teenage nightclub at 17225 E. Shea.

My condo is located at the east end of Firebrick Resort Casitas with a patio and windows facing the nearby proposed site. I specifically selected this condo and this resort for its secluded and quiet location.

This nightclub would destroy everything I sought in buying this winter retreat 10 years ago. In addition to lack of parking spaces, there are many other negative issues. There would be constant noise from foot and auto traffic starting early evening until 10 or 11 p.m.

Capacity numbers of both 150 and 300 are far beyond reasonable for the plaza. This doesn't account for those teens from areas near and far drawn to the nightclub but not going into it.

The rear of the plaza complex is totally accessible from Firebrick, which will result in auto and foot traffic, parking issues and teen activity on and around the Firebrick drive area and our condo.

There are many security issues concerning our resort and the adjoining neighborhood. In my opinion there's no possible way the neighborhood can be guaranteed adequate policing for drug, alcohol, property violations and other security issues. This will most likely adversely affect property values in Firerock Resort Casitas and in the adjoining residential neighborhood.

This site at Shea Plaza with nearby homes and condos is just not suitable for a teen nightclub. The dark and out-of-the-way location of the proposed site is not conducive to the safety of the teens or the neighborhood.

In my opinion the teen Club would be better suited for a non-residential area, such as the bowling alley or the old Goodwill store.

Traffic improvements

A letter from:
George Williams

Looks like we can resurface all the major roads in town except Saguaro.

It would be nice if the town could review these traffic plans and not restrict the intersections when the contractor is not working near them and people are trying to get to work.

I am sure the drivers backed up on Palisades at Eagle Ridge 40-50 cars deep a couple of days last week would agree (the contractor was working near Golden Eagle and they could have easily kept the all-way stop intersection clear until after morning commute was over since they did not get to that area for several hours).

It would also be nice if the town can address a couple of their high collision locations like Saguaro/Desert Vista and Saguaro/Panorama.

These locations were identified by the town during the traffic standards committee meetings 10 plus years ago as having collision patterns that should and could be addressed (even simple striping improvements were not performed). So the Town wants $8+ million for Saguaro with just council and staff as oversight…no traffic engineers, no bond committee, no transportation commission or any other direct citizen oversight.

The FHUSD superintendent stated the school bonds have a citizen committee, Scottsdale has a bond commission, but Fountain Hills' reply when asked for a citizen group to oversee the bond…nope, don't need one, they would just bog down the process… typical Fountain Hills government.

If you vote for bonds, there should also be a citizen oversight committee… unless you trust the government to spend your money wisely. Vote your conscience, and as Reagan said, trust… but verify!

Critical

A letter from:
Ginny Dickey

Now more than ever, continuing the Fountain Hills Unified School District operations and maintenance budget override is critical for our community's children. As our state has decreased per student spending over the years, it is clear that our local option to continue to supplement operations and maintenance funding is necessary.

According to the nonpartisan Center on Budgeting and Policy Priorities, Arizona leads the nation in school spending cuts since 2008. Thirty-five states have decreased public school support since 2008, and Arizona leads the pack in reducing funds by almost 22 percent.

The rest of the bottom five…Alabama, Oklahoma, Idaho and South Carolina.

Without continuance of the override, Fountain Hills' schools will face losing even more… $1,000,000 annually in supplemental funding… money used to continue (free) all-day K, teacher aides in primary grades, salaries, training and professional development.

The operations and maintenance budget override is a local Fountain Hills option that has been in place since the late '90s. It is not an increase in your taxes. It has helped our school children excel in test scores and helped the district maintain its near-the-top excellence ratings.

All three of my sons were fortunate to benefit from strong community support during their K-12 experience, which set them and their classmates on the road to successful higher education and career opportunities.

Your vote of yes for the override will continue to provide important local supplemental funding for our students.

Health Talk

By: Maria Perreault
Program Manager
Fountain Hills Coalition and
Fountain Hills Health Council

Molly making the rounds

"Have you seen Molly?"

An innocent enough question, if you are not up to date on who, or rather what, Molly is.

Molly, short for "molecule," is the code name for the drug MDMA, the main ingredient in Ecstasy, which was popular throughout the 1990s. The difference is that Ecstasy usually comes in pill form and is commonly mixed with other drugs. Molly is pure MDMA and usually comes in a powder or capsule.

As the drug seemingly gains popularity, there are those who say it's no coincidence that many of today's biggest artists are dropping references about the drug in their biggest hitS. Miley Cyrus sung about Molly's attributes on her latest album and raved about it to Rolling Stone. Others such as Madonna, Rihanna, Lil Wayne, and Kanye West have also sung the drug's praises.

The Drug Enforcement Agency notes that "Molly" can cause confusion, anxiety, depression, paranoia, sleep problems and drug craving. Other health risks of "Molly" can include anything from involuntary teeth clenching, sudden loss of appetite, a loss of inhibitions, transfixion on sights and sounds, nausea, signs of depression and/or sadness, not being able to get out of bed for extended periods, blurred vision and chills and/or sweating, and even increased heart rate and blood pressure and seizures.

The DEA labels it a Schedule 1 controlled substance, considered to have a high potential for abuse and no accepted use in medical treatment, which means it's illegal.

Drug abuse is a serious public health problem that affects almost every community and family in some way. It's our job as parents to stay vigilant on the newest trends in pop culture so our kids are not falling victim to the "next best thing" being toted out there.

Our viewpoint

Don't forget – time to vote

Don't forget – it's Election Day on Tuesday.

Actually, the "election" has been going on a few weeks already, so perhaps the final reminder should be – don't forget to return your mail ballots by Tuesday.

It certainly helps the tabulation process if the ballots are mailed in early. However, Fountain Hills Town Hall will be open extended hours on Tuesday, Nov. 5, from 6 a.m. to 7 p.m. so people may cast a replacement ballot or drop off one they did not get in the mail.

As hopefully everyone knows by now, the ballot contains two school-related questions along with a question for the Town of Fountain Hills.

All three deal with financial issues, of course, as voters must decide to keep funding budget overrides for the Fountain Hills Unified School District along with possible approval of a $8 million capital bond for campus improvements and other projects.

The town question centers on Saguaro Blvd. – should an $8.2 million bond issue be authorized to fund a total reconstruction of the boulevard from Shea Blvd. to Fountain Hills Blvd.?

In previous editorials, we have urged voters to back all three questions. The most important point to emphasize right now is to vote. Too much apathy still exists in this country and in this community. One of our basic rights – privileges, really – is voting. Let's take advantage of it and let your voice be heard.

Trust, responsibility

A letter from:
Tom Leininger

I have been reading all the controversy surrounding the school and road issues. I believe it all boils down to two issues -- trust and responsibility.

We live in this beautiful town and it is past time that we stand up and take responsibility for our infrastructure.

Our streets are crumbling and we must fix them. Our children need the best education we can give them.

We have a faction in town who "just say no" to everything that is proposed. They do not ever trust what our Town Council and School Board propose. What they forget is that if they cannot trust anyone else, then they themselves cannot be trusted.

No one wants to pay more taxes, but we must live up to our responsibilities. I trust what the town staff and council says is the right plan for our streets. I trust what the School Board tells us is needed for our schools. I am willing to take my responsibility and vote for the road bond, the school override and the school bond. Are you trustworthy and responsible too?

Our future

A letter from:
Dwight Johnson

I urge residents to vote "yes" three times by Tuesday.

I won't revisit these initiatives since The Fountain Hills Times has done a wonderful job identifying all of the issues.

As we're less than a week away from the election, I wanted to reflect.

My son is a junior at Fountain Hills High School and therefore these school initiatives will have virtually no effect on my family and my son's education since he will graduate in a year and a half. It would be easy to sit back and vote "no" and say "let's save some pennies on my taxes."

But then I look at our beautiful town and see how it was founded. I think of two families that quickly come to mind. I think of former Mayor Jerry Miles and his wife, Jackie. I think of former Mayor Wally Nichols and his wife, Sheila. I realize these two families have never had a child in our school system, yet they have worked tirelessly to support every school bond issue and override in the

(cont. on page 7A)

Online Poll

www.fhtimes.com

THIS WEEK'S QUESTION

Could FH support a teen night club?

❒ Yes ❒ No

LAST WEEK'S RESULTS

What is the best part of Halloween?

33% Costumes 40% Candy 27% Haunted Houses

Take our weekly online poll on the home page of our website, www.fhtimes.com

This is not a scientific public opinion poll. Polls expire Monday, 5 pm.

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The Times wants to hear from its readers and encourages letters to the editor. All letters must be under 300 words. It is preferred that they be typewritten and must include a name, address and telephone number for verification. All letters are subject to editing, and all letters that are judged as personal complaints about neighbors or businesses will not be considered. No person may submit more than two letters or guest cartoons for publication during a calendar month. Two submittals will not be published in the same issue.

Letters deadline noon Monday

All letters must be submitted by noon on Monday to be considered for publication in that week's edition. They are to be dropped off at *The Times* office, 16508 E. Laser Dr., Suite 101, mailed to P.O. Box 17869, Fountain Hills, AZ 85269-7869 or faxed to 837-1951. Letters also may be e-mailed to mike@fhtimes.com.

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