



**Fireworks
Over
Gold Canyon**
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Born To Ride!
see Sports, page C-1

APACHE JUNCTION NEWS

Gold Canyon

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**National Day
Of The
Cowboy**



Official Program
In this week's edition of
The News

**AJUSD
FOCUS
SCHOOLS**

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Monsoon



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Cheers



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Public Meetings

**Apache Junction
Planning & Zoning
regular meeting**

7 p.m. Tuesday,
July 22, 2008

300 E. Superstition Blvd.

**Superstition Mts. Comm.
Facilities District No. 1**

6 p.m. Wednesday,
July 23, 2008

Apache Junction Fire
District Board Room
565 N. Idaho Road

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AJ Emissions Station To Open In January

City issues certificate of occupancy, opening delayed by new software installation

By Christina Fuoco-Karasinski
The News

APACHE JUNCTION- Although it has received its certificate of occupancy from the City of Apache Junction, the long-awaited Apache Junction emissions station is not slated to open until Jan. 2, 2009, according to officials.

"The reason for the delay is that all of the stations will be using new software to accommodate a revised testing procedure," said Sandie Smith, Pinal County supervisor. "They are installing new hardware to accommodate the change."

She said soon officials will begin installing and calibrating the emissions testing equipment at the station, 565 E. 38th Ave., Lot 40, in the Baseline Industrial Park.

Bill Watson, a consultant for Gordon-Darby which is over-

seeing the construction of the Apache Junction, Deer Valley and Goodyear facilities, said the Apache Junction office will have three bays and be operational Mondays through Saturdays. It will employ about 12 people.

"Depending on the attendance from people learning about it, we would like to be testing about 40 to 50 cars an hour," Watson said.

"That's the capability of the facility. We'll have to see how well it's attended early on. Queen Creek (residents) will be able to use that as well."

The request for an emissions station dates back six years, according to Smith and Stephen Filipowicz, the city's economic development director.

"Just about every year, we asked if we could get our emissions control station," Smith said. "When the legis-

lature included us in the non-attainment area— when we had to do emissions— one of the things the representative of this area said was that they would bring an emissions station here."

But contracts had already been drawn up for a number of new emissions stations in Arizona. In order to build a station in Apache Junction, that contract had to be amended, Smith said.

Each year officials would try to pass the bill, however, it was turned down due to budgetary restrictions. Senator Rebecca Rios managed to push the bill through and ADEQ funded the project.

"When the contract was renewed they added it there. Everything fell into place," Smith said. "We're very, very happy now that we are able to have the emission station where our folks live."



Smith said the benefits are two-fold. First, Apache Junction residents save on gas they would use to drive to the closest location, which is situated at Greenfield and McDowell roads. Second, while cars are waiting to be checked, they're also saving on gas and emissions.

City & Water District Receive National Awards

Excellence in financial reporting

City of Apache Junction Finance Manager John White recently received a national award from the Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA) of the United States and Canada.

Actually, there were two awards, one for the city of Apache Junction and one for the Apache Junction Water Company. Both received the Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting for their comprehensive annual financial report (CAFR).

The Certificate of Achievement is the highest form of recognition in the area of governmental accounting and financial reporting, and its attainment represents a significant accomplishment by a government and its management.

The CAFR has been judged by an impartial panel to meet the high standards of the program including demonstrating a con-



City Finance Manager John White

structive "spirit of full disclosure" to clearly communicate its financial story and motivate potential users to read the CAFR.

The GFOA is a nonprofit professional association serving approximately 17,000 government finance professionals.

Officer Wins Az. DARE Award

By Christina Fuoco-Karasinski
The News

APACHE JUNCTION- When Apache Junction DARE officer Bill Virtue hears his students say they avoided drugs because of him, he knows he made the right career decision.

"I never had any inkling to go into law enforcement," said Virtue, who studied financial banking in college.

"When I was 18, I answered an ad for a detention officer because it paid \$2 more an hour" than the financial jobs, he added.

He served as a detention officer from 1989-1991. Virtue joined the Pinal County Sheriff's Office in 1991 and stayed through 1994, when he started at the Apache Junction Police Department.

His career choice paid off more than financially. In June, he was named DARE Officer of the Year for the state of Arizona.

"This is the highest honor to receive from DARE," said Virtue, who has enjoyed two



DARE officer Bill Virtue

stints as a DARE officer— from 1995 to 2000 and from 2005 to the present.

"I love the program. This is the thing I enjoy the most about law enforcement— working with and teaching the kids," said Virtue, who is secretary of the state DARE branch.

"There are so many negative influences on kids, that anything positive is definitely needed."

The DARE Program is taught by police officers to exit elementary students. In Apache Junction's case, this

is fifth grade since sixth graders attend middle school.

"It's a program to teach kids, (1) how to make good decisions and (2) to say 'no' to drugs."

Virtue teaches at all five elementary schools and is responsible for 20 to 25 classrooms per year. It is a 10-week program that teaches kids the dangers of the four core drugs considered gateway drugs — tobacco, alcohol, marijuana and inhalants. There is an option for three supplemental classes: methamphetamine, bullying and prescription drugs.

He said prescription drug abuse is a "huge, huge issue in the United States. In Arizona, we've been hearing and seeing a lot of it at the high school level."

This year, DARE is going to expand its program to parents, offering evening classes either at Four Peaks Elementary School or the police department. The classes will teach adults the warning signs of drug abuse. More information will be available soon.

City Councilman's Home Foreclosed

Severs owes back payments & taxes — To be auctioned October 7

By Christina Fuoco-Karasinski
The News

APACHE JUNCTION- The home of City Councilman Joe Severs will be put on the auction block in October due to foreclosure and back taxes, according to papers filed with the Pinal County recorder on June 26, 2008.

The home at 1184 N. Starr Road will be sold at public auction 11 a.m. Tuesday, Oct. 7, at the main entrance of the Superior Court Building, 971 Jason Lopez Circle, Building A, Florence, to the highest bidder for cash. According to the paperwork, Severs owes \$425,000 on the house and two years of back taxes. Severs has had the house up for sale for about nine months.

Neither Severs nor a representative for the current trustee, attorney Michael A. Bosco Jr., returned calls from the News.

The *East Valley Tribune* reported that Severs said he plans to stay within the city in light of the foreclosure and

even though his family is living in Gilbert. For those who still question his residency, Severs told the *Tribune*, "It's nobody's damn business." However, state law requires that city council members reside within the city limits of the city they represent.

According to Tony Vehon of Lake Realty, 80 percent of the listings in Apache Junction are either homes that are foreclosed on or under a short sale.

"It's only about 20 percent of the listings that are actually owner-occupied where they're selling it in a normal kind of way," Vehon said. "It's pretty astounding that the large majority of the homes listed in our MLS are in that status— already bank-owned or being sold under a short sale."

Vehon described a "short sale" as a situation in which a homeowner owes more on their home than it's worth.

"They go to the bank and the bank is willing to let them sell it for less than what is

see Foreclosure, A-5



Councilman Joe Severs' contractors license was also suspended July 1.

The News Kidcast

Monsoon storms in the forecast all week.
Highs around 100, lows around 80 degrees.

This week's
Weather
"Artoonist"
Makayla
Bonillas
Age 6
Superstition
Mountain
Elementary
School

