



FOCUS IN SCHOOLS

Big Budget Cuts Cause Hiring Freeze

Just like families, businesses and communities currently struggling with their budgets, school districts are having to come to grips with realities caused by the faltering economy.

Facing the prospect of having to cut approximately \$2 million from the upcoming 2009-2010 year budget, AJUSD Superintendent Dr. Greg Wyman has announced that a hiring freeze has been put in place for the entire school district, effective immediately.

No new or additional personnel will be hired and vacated positions will not be automatically refilled, according to district administrators.

More than \$950,000 must be cut in compliance with the second year phase out of the Maintenance and Operations Override, necessitated by voters' failure in 2007 to approve the continuance of the M&O Override, in place since 1999.

In addition, this year's student enrollment is currently down 250 students representing a loss of an additional \$1 million in ADM (Average Daily Membership) revenue. Added together, the double financial hit brings the total necessary budget reductions to approximately \$2 million, necessitating that some hard financial decisions be made.

According to Jim Lockwood, Associate Superintendent for Business Services, student enrollment is not expected to improve over the next few years. In fact, within the next three years, AJHS will most likely lose up to 180 students from the J.O. Combs District who will be attending a new high school in their own district.

That, coupled with the currently shaky economy that experts say will take a few years to rebound, makes Dr. Lockwood think that the AJUSD can anticipate a 1%-2% decline in student enrollment annually for the next three to four years.

The data tracing student turnover indicates that 550 students left the district since last year with 300 new students enrolling. Historically, student turnover in the AJUSD has been higher than in some other East Valley districts, but the feeling is that such high mobility this year is probably partly reflective of the current volatility of the housing market.

According to Dr. Lockwood, options for solutions to the budget situation will be developed over the next several months and recommendations will be shared with employees, parents, the community and the Governing Board through a series of meetings to be scheduled after the first of the year.

PTES Named an AZ Best Workplace!

Peralta Trail Elementary School received notice on October 8 that the school has been named one of the top 25 Best Places to Work by BestCompaniesAZ and the Phoenix Business Journal for 2008.



Final rankings will be announced at the 2008 awards luncheon to be held December 12, 2008 at the Arizona Biltmore Resort. The much-coveted award is a mark of excellence in business practices. To be considered, nominees must demonstrate their effort to create an engaged and supportive work force.

Rankings are based on employee surveys that ask:

- Team Effectiveness
- Retention Risk
- Alignment with Goals
- Trust with Coworkers
- Individual Contribution

- Manager Effectiveness
- Trust in Senior Leaders
- Feeling Valued
- Work Engagement
- People Practices

Peralta Trail, a school, joins other top 100 companies that include: St. Joseph's Hospital and Medical Center, Johnson Bank, Hunter Contracting Inc., and Life Lock.

"I am so proud of this achievement and the credit for this goes to my staff," said PTES Principal Larry LaPrise.

"They are dedicated professionals who deliver their very best every day and deeply believe in what they do."

Peralta Trail Elementary School, an Arizona Highly Performing School is one of five elementary schools within the Apache Junction Unified School District.

PTES was opened in 2002 and serves 500 children and their families.

Apache Junction High School College Information Night

Thursday, Oct. 23, 2008 • 6-7 pm
AJHS Technical Center
2525 S. Ironwood Dr.

Information on Scholarships Entrance Requirements and more Don't Miss it!

AZ Tax Credit Donation Win-Win Opportunity

In the midst of the current economic situation, all of us want to see our dollars go as far as possible. By using the Arizona Tax Credit program, taxpayers have a way to ensure that their state tax dollars go directly to benefit local students in our community's schools.

The Arizona State Legislature has enacted a law (ARS 43-1089) that allows taxpayers to donate money directly to the schools of their choice and receive a dollar-for-dollar reduction in the actual taxes they owe on their Arizona State Income Tax return.

The law requires that this money be used by the schools for extracurricular/enrichment activities for students; it cannot be used in the district's regular education budget. But it provides needed funds for extracurricular programs like



not they have children in school. Taxpayers do not have to live in this school district to be able to donate to our schools, so grandparents, relatives or friends can participate in helping your children.

Wouldn't you feel better knowing that your tax money is going to the worthy enterprise of enriching a child's education by paying activity fees or providing arts opportunities?

To be eligible for the tax credit on your 2008 state tax return, donations must be made prior to December 31, 2008.

For more information, go to the AJUSD.org website and click on "Tax Credit" at the bottom of the page, or call Sandra Bohr at ext. 2001.

NJROTC, athletics, and the arts.

Individuals can make a donation of \$200, and married couples, filing jointly, can donate up to \$400. This tax credit is available to all Arizona individual taxpayers regardless of whether or

GCES Family Book Club



Gold Canyon Elementary School has introduced a new Family Book Club that has started out with 40 enthusiastic members. Each month, one of four different books (appropriate to grade level) is distributed to each family, along with activities that that can be done at home as the book is read. The next month when the group gathers again, the previous month's book is discussed and the family chooses another to take home and read. First grade student Jewellisa Lewis works with her Mom, Eva Lewis, during the club's first meeting in September.

AJUSD Academy Set

The Apache Junction Unified School District is offering residents an opportunity to join governing board candidates in participating in the first AJUSD Education Academy.

The academy will provide pertinent information on how schools are financed, the impact of the federal NCLB Act (No Child Left Behind), current legislative mandates, the financial state of Arizona and future challenges and choices facing school districts during a series of four meetings.

All meetings will be held in the Governing Board Room at the District Administrative Center, 1575 W. Southern Avenue, from 6:30 to 8 p.m. on the following dates:

Date	Subject
Wednesday, October 29	Overview of the District
Thursday, November 6	School Finance 101
Wednesday, November 19	How and What We Teach Our Kids
Wednesday, December 3	Public Education in Arizona

These meetings have been scheduled to not only bring governing board candidates up to date on District operations and issues, but to provide an overview of the District to its patrons. The public is invited to attend. Registration is necessary and participation is limited to 50. Call 480.982.1110, ext. 2014 for reservation.

Nat'l. Merit Recognition For Two

Two AJHS students have been recognized by the National Merit Scholarship Program. 2008 graduate Rubaiya Islam is a National Merit Scholarship Semi-Finalist and senior Caitlin Turner is a Commended Student.

The National Merit Scholarship Program is an academic competition for recognition and scholarships.

In earning these honors, the girls are part of a very select group. Approximately 1.5 million students take the qualifying PSAT/NM-SQT test. Of these, 50,000 high scorers are named and

34,000 of these receive the Letters of Commendation recognizing their outstanding academic promise.

About 16,000 students qualify as Semi-finalists as Rubaiya has. They are the highest scoring entrants in each state and they compete for the scholarships awarded. Rubaiya is currently a freshman in the Honors Program at Arizona State University, having graduated from Apache Junction High School. She



Caitlin Turner Rubaiya Islam

is pursuing a double major in Mathematics and Computer Science and looks forward to a career as a university teaching professor. Rubaiya is the daughter of Dr. and Mrs. Shahedul Islam of Globe, Az.

Caitlin has attended AJUSD schools since Kindergarten. She is the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Mark Turner of

Apache Junction. Caitlin plans to attend the University of Arizona and pursue a career in Social Work.

AJHS Players: 'Get Witch Quick'

Harry Potter fans won't want to miss Apache Junction High School's Drama Department's Fall production of "Get Witch Quick," a lighthearted look at magic and how it can complicate the lives of ordinary people.

The performance dates are Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday, November 5-7 at 7 p.m. in the Performing Arts Center (PAC) at Apache Junction High School, 2525 S. Ironwood Dr. Tickets are \$5 for students & seniors, \$6 for adults. Children under 5 are free. Limited reserved seats are available for \$10 per seat all ages.

The story revolves around Craft College, a finishing school for witches, though

it looks normal. But draperies open and close mysteriously, books fly through the air unaided, and a student is believed to have turned into a cocker spaniel on the eve of graduation!

The only non-witch in the school is Steve (played by AJHS senior Hans Keller), a substitute teacher who doesn't even know that it's a witches' school. His adventures in trying to navigate through a maelstrom of spells and magical goings-on is the focus of the play. Other main roles are taken by AJHS junior Nora Heilman and AJHS senior Mariah Michalek.

For more information or to reserve seats, call Paul Lanphear at 480-982-1110, ext. 5317.

Thanksgiving Aid for Project HELP

Thanksgiving turkeys and fixings are needed by Project HELP. Food can be dropped off at Project HELP between 8:30 a.m. and noon, or by appointment. The facility is located at 195 E. Superstition Blvd. Call for info at 480-288-2955.

IMPORTANT DATES

- Oct. 23 - AJHS College Information Night 6pm-7pm (Technical Center, 2525 S. Ironwood Drive)
- Oct. 23-24 - Parent/Teacher Conferences (1/2 Day)
- Nov. 11 - Veterans Day (No School)
- Nov. 26 - Thanksgiving Break Begins (1/2 day)
- Nov. 27-28 - Thanksgiving (No School)

Parent University

- 1-2-3 Magic Part I - October 29 6-7:30 pm
- 1-2-3 Magic Part II - November 5 6-7:30 pm
- Peralta Trail Elementary, 10965 Peralta Trail
- Dare to Prepare:
- New Driver Safety Program for Teens and Their Parents Title I Bldg., 1575 W. Southern Avenue October 22, 6-7:30pm
- Leaps & Bounds Kindergarten Readiness (Series of 4 sessions) Four Peaks Elementary, 1785 N. Idaho Road October 29, 6-7:30pm November 5, 6-7:30pm November 12, 6-7:30pm November 19, 6-7:30pm
- Understanding Addition and Subtraction for Primary Grades K-2 Title I Bldg., 1575 W. Southern Ave. October 29, 6-7:30 p.m.
- Understanding Fractions across the Grades (3rd to 5th) Title I Bldg., 1575 W. Southern Ave. November 5, 6-8 p.m.