

serving
Northern Pinal County
ARIZONA
Superstition Mountain Country



**Missing
'Minis' Found
& Returned**
see page A-8



**Champ
Camp**
see Sports, B-1

APACHE JUNCTION
Gold Canyon

NEWS

50¢

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at Starbucks!**
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**Doolittle
Retiring**



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**Fountain
Dedication**



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Time Out



See Sports B1

Public Meetings

**AJUSD Governing
Board (school board)
regular meeting**
6 p.m. Tuesday,
April 13, 2010
1575 W. Southern Ave.

**Apache Junction
Planning & Zoning
work session**
7 p.m. Tuesday,
April 13, 2010
300 E. Superstition Blvd.

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City Facing Possible Lawsuit Over Vice Mayor's 'Road Rage' Incident

Couple files precursor to suit against Apache Junction for \$700,000

By Christina Fuoco-Karasinski
The News

The couple involved in what has been dubbed a "road rage incident" with Vice Mayor R.E. Eck and his son Robert E. Eck III filed a claim against the City of Apache Junction on April 1 for injuries sustained due to "the assault (allegedly by the Ecks) and wrongful charging committed on Eric Martinez by police officers employed by the City of Apache Junction," according to a letter from their lawyer.

But the Apache Junction Police Department (AJPD) was not involved in the October 2, 2009 incident, according to the record. The AJPD did respond to the call regarding the incident at Idaho Road and Apache Trail but "conflicted out" because the matter involved a city official and immediately

turned the case over to Pinal County Sheriff's deputies for investigation. The case was referred to Gila County for prosecution in order to avoid any conflict of interest by Pinal County. Gila County declined to charge Eck because there was "no likelihood of conviction."

In a letter to Deputy City Clerk Jan Mason, Mesa attorney Harry P. Friedlander is asking for \$450,000 for Eric Martinez and \$250,000 for Cristine Martinez. The claim is a legal precursor to a lawsuit.

"It's frivolous, just frivolous," said Apache Junction City Attorney Joel Stern. Attempts to reach Vice Mayor Eck for comment were unsuccessful.

According to the attorney's letter, at 12:07 p.m. October 2, Eric Martinez was operating a motorcycle with Cristine Martinez as a passenger.



Vice mayor R.E. Eck

Martinez was proceeding west when R.E. Eck Jr. exited the QuickTrip gas station, pulled across the median "at a place not designed for vehicular traffic, and pulled in front of the Martinez's motorcycle," causing Martinez to have to evade a collision with the vehicle being driven by Eck. Martinez then pulled forward and re-entered the inside lane of traffic and stopped at the traffic light.

While stopped at the light, Friedlander said, Eck pulled to the intersection, paused

and then proceeded to drive his vehicle into the rear of Martinez's motorcycle.

"At that time, Eric Martinez engaged his kickstand and dismounted his motorcycle and approached Eck's vehicle," Friedlander wrote. "Robert E. Eck III, son of Robert Eck Jr., exited the Eck vehicle from the passenger side and had with him a green metal fence post.

"Eck III approached and struck Eric Martinez on the back. Eric Martinez disarmed the rod from Robert Eck III, and punched him in the face."

Friedlander goes on to say that R.E. Eck Jr. then revved his engine and lunged forward colliding with Martinez's motorcycle for a second time with Cristine Martinez still sitting on board, causing

her to fall into the roadway, pinned under the motorcycle and causing her injuries.

"Mr. and Mrs. Martinez were both injured on the day of the accident and by reason thereof have been damaged in a sum of \$450,000 for the injury to Eric Martinez, taking into account his hospital and medical bills and surgical repair of approximately \$150,000 at this time. Mr. Martinez's medical bills continue to accrue.

"Cristine Martinez was injured. Demand is made for her claim for \$250,000 and it is believed that her medical bills are approximately \$80,000 and continue to accrue."

The lawyer said both sustained permanent injuries as a result of the incident, including "Road Rage", A-3

Council Honors Donor

Sanford gave \$8,000 to Arizona State Park

By Christina Fuoco-Karasinski
The News

A Texas winter visitor who donated \$8,000 to the Arizona State Parks Foundation for the continued operation of Lost Dutchman State Park (LDSP) was honored at the 7 p.m. Tuesday, April 6, City Council meeting.

Mayor John Insalaco presented Taylor Sanford Jr. with a certificate of appreciation. Sanford, who winters in Mesa, received a standing ovation.

According to Arizona State Parks staff, this donation will keep the park open for one of the three months during the summer of 2010 that LDSP would otherwise have been closed due to a lack of funding resulting from legislative budget sweeps.

It was one of several presentations/proclamations during the meeting, which is held in chambers at 300 E. Superstition Boulevard.



Taylor Sanford Jr. donated \$8,000 to help save Lost Dutchman State Park. He received a standing ovation at the City Council meeting on Tuesday, April 6.

Also at the meeting, • The Arizona Early Day Gas Engine and Tractor Association presented its \$1,815 donation to the Parks and Recreation Department Scholarship Fund.

• Insalaco proclaimed April as "Fair Housing Month,"

April 18-24 as "National Crime Victims' Rights Week" and April 11-17 as "National Public Safety Telecommunication Week."

There were six public hearings during the meeting, all see **Park Donor, A-9**

Help Celebrate City's Freeway Enhancements

Designs have arrived at U.S. Highway 60 Tomahawk, Goldfield exchanges

The City of Apache Junction, recognizing highway improvements recently completed by The Arizona Department of Transportation, invites the public to attend the grand commemoration of its Tomahawk/Goldfield and U.S. Highway 60 Freeway Landform Rock Art Projects.

Ceremonies to commemorate this occasion will be held at the Tomahawk Eastbound U.S. Highway 60 on-ramp, from 11 a.m. to noon Thursday, April 15. The on-ramp is closed to traffic for this special event from approximately 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Light refreshments, guest speakers and a color guard will provide information and entertainment. All are invited to take part in the event. Parking is available south on Auto Center Drive and at Robert Home Ford.



The Tomahawk artwork features a roadrunner while the Goldfield interchange features quail.

The City of Apache Junction was previously awarded approximately \$1.5 million in funding for the beautification of two U.S. Highway 60 traffic interchanges through the Transportation Enhancement Act for the 21st Century

("TEA-21") enhancement and American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) monies. Funding was approved by the Arizona Transportation Board provided through the Federal Highway see **Freeway, A-9**

Corporate Partnerships to Benefit City Residents

Allied Waste to fund July 4 display



An event partner and event supporters have been secured for the 2010 Fourth of July Celebration. Allied Waste Services, a Republic Services Co., is the Fireworks Show Presenting Partner for the 2010 Fourth of July Celebration. Supporters also include Frontier Ace Hardware and Mediacom Communications.

In an effort to provide city services funded by new revenue sources, the City of Apache Junction launched its Corporate Partnership Program in January.

Funds generated from the program will assist the City with providing community services such as parks, library and public safety. For businesses, the program is seen as an opportunity to show commitment to the community while being able to reach out to their current and future customer bases.

Matthew Busby, corporate partnership liaison for the City, indicated that the program creates mutually beneficial relationships between the City and the private sector.

Busby emphasized the carefully chosen name of the program—the Corporate Partnership Program; he stressed the mutual benefits to City residents and the participating businesses.

"With the help of sponsor- see **City Partners, A-5**

The News Kidcast

Mostly sunny, highs in the upper 80's with lows around 50 degrees. Possible rain Monday.

This week's
Weather
"Artoonist"

Makaya
Aguilar
Age 6

Desert Vista
Elementary
School

