

**Teens on vacation
want to sleep
late and shop**

HAVASU SUNDAY | PAGE 1B



Colt baseball
Printing Plus wins season finale

SPORTS | PAGE 14A

SUNDAY
JUNE 21, 2009



TODAY: Bright sunshine, breezy
FORECAST, PAGE 19A

TODAY'S
NEWS-HERALD

LAKE HAVASU CITY, ARIZONA | \$1.25 | WWW.HAVASUNEW.COM

**Mohave
County
gets on
Twitter**

*Emergency updates
set to be on the Web*

STAFF REPORTS

KINGMAN — Mohave County's health department, emergency management division and sheriff's office have combined forces to release computer or text-message announcements in regard to emergency situations, road closures, Amber alerts and public health concerns by use of Twitter, according to a press release issued by Mohave County.

"When Emergency Management responds to a fire, they can warn people of smoke in the area or whether an evacuation may be imminent," said Jennifer McNally, public health deputy director for Mohave County in the press release. "They can send a message on Twitter and those people who are following will know the situation."

The county began using Twitter to pass along information updates when the first cases of swine flu arrived in Arizona.

Interested individuals can create a Twitter account and select the agency information they would be interested in receiving.

"First, they should check their own cell phone contracts to make sure they have a text messaging plan," McNally said. "Otherwise, their cell phone company could charge them for every text message they get. That can add up."

To sign up, visit www.twitter.com/mohaveinfo on the Web to view what has been sent out by Mohave County. To receive computer updates from that site, click on "join today" and fill out the name and address information required.

To receive the information via cell phone as a text message, go to www.twitter.com to create a cost-free account, and then follow instructions to follow mohaveinfo, which is the name of the county's Twitter account.

"Individuals can also use their cell phones to sign up for cell phone messages. He or she can simply send a text message stating 'follow mohaveinfo' to phone number 40404. If the process is successful, Twitter will respond with a confirmation message. If no confirmation is received, the signup didn't go through," McNally said.

This is only a drill



Diana Parker/News-Herald Photos

Emergency department technician Holly Cisneros prepares to roll mock victim Bryan Toy into the emergency room after the decontamination process is completed.

Emergency team trains for biohazard exercise

By DIANA PARKER
TODAY'S NEWS-HERALD

When Havasu Regional Medical Center staff mobilized Thursday to treat a 12-year-old boy who had been contaminated by an unknown chemical substance, they could be forgiven if the operation wasn't as efficient as it might have been.

The "victim" was actually the son of hospital employee, enlisted to play the part, and the whole maneuver was a drill. It was the first time staff had been tested on procedures they learned during two days of biohazard/chemical decontamination training this week.

Using a grant from Arizona's Hospital Preparedness Program, HRMC contracted with DQE Inc., an Indianapolis-based emergency preparedness company, to train 12 staff members from several departments on how to respond when a patient arrives at the hospital contaminated by a biological or chemical substance. The group will comprise the hospital's new Decon First-Response Team.

As part of the training, team members

learned the principle of RIN — or recognize, identify, notify — as it relates to biological and chemical contamination. They also learned about keeping a safe distance as they practiced interviewing the victim from several yards away.

"Nurses don't do as well in this training because their impulse is to disregard everything and render care, but we don't do it that way anymore," said DQE trainer Rich Shelton.

There are no hard and fast rules for how wide of a berth contamination victims should be given, Shelton said. That can depend on the substance involved, and it can take hours or even days to identify a contaminant.

"The biggest challenge to this is the unknown," Shelton said. "We overplay everything. We stay up wind and up hill." In Thursday's drill outside the emergency room, 12-year-old Bryan Toy stripped down to his swimsuit and slipped into a plastic poncho while team members helped responders Todd Swensson and Damian Ball don decontamination suits and respirators.

See DRILL, Page 7A

City budget goes up for final review

Last chance for public to voice their opinions

By TONY WAGGONER
TODAY'S NEWS-HERALD

After months of discussion, the Lake Havasu City budget for next fiscal year could be set in stone this Tuesday.

The 2009-10 fiscal year budget will go before the City Council Tuesday night for adoption. The meeting will serve as a final opportunity for residents to voice their concerns, opposition or support of any expenditures or estimated tax levies.

The city is slated to begin the fiscal year with an operating budget of

just about \$72.5 million. Projected expenditures for next year would be \$269,576,196, with revenues estimated at \$249,688,363.

The city budget comes with a city property tax rate of around 58 cents per \$100 and with a first-year rate increase of \$156.78 per acre in Irrigation & Drainage District tax.

Late last week former City Councilmember Sam Scarmardo said the council's decision to raise the IDD property tax back to the 1997 levels is in vio-

See BUDGET, Page 7A

Benefit performance to honor Bob Clawges

STAFF REPORTS

A group of local performers will stage three benefit performances of Tennessee Williams' "A Streetcar Named Desire" next week in memory of actor, musician and theater supporter Bob Clawges.

The performances, featuring actors from City Center Entertainment, Grace Arts Live and Allied Arts, will take place Thursday, Friday and

Saturday in Lake Havasu High School's Little Theater. Tickets are \$15 at the door and show times are 7:30 p.m. all three nights.

All proceeds from the performances will be used to finish renovating the dressing rooms at the high school's Performing Arts Center. At the time of his death, Clawges was director of the PAC and had started the project of improving the dressing rooms. He died Feb. 20.

Food bank feeding more families with Wal-Mart's help



Tony Waggoner/News-Herald Photo

The Lake Havasu City Interagency Councils' Food Bank Annex has allowed the organization to stock more food to help more needy residents. The councils have also recently become part of Wal-Mart's Feed America program, which has helped to increase the amount of food put in each food box going out to families.

By TONY WAGGONER
TODAY'S NEWS-HERALD

A joint venture between the Lake Havasu City Interagency Councils and Wal-Mart is putting a little more food on the table for needy residents.

As part of Wal-Mart's nationwide Feed America campaign, the company provides excess food with good expiration dates to local food banks.

Interagency Councils Executive Director Rich Miers called the program a huge benefit to the residents of this community.

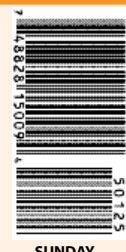
Miers said the program has really allowed the food bank to enhance the nutritional value of food boxes it serves to local families on a weekly basis.

"This doesn't replace anything," Miers said. "It is enhancing the opportunity for us to provide more food to these families."

See BANK, Page 6A

"This doesn't replace anything. It is enhancing the opportunity for us to provide more food to these families."

RICH MIERS
INTERAGENCY COUNCILS
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



INSIDE TODAY'S NEWS-HERALD

Classified Ads Pages 7B to 12B
Comics/Crossword/Dear Abby Page 14B
Lottery Numbers Page 15A
Sports Pages 14A to 17A
Stocks/Marketplace Page 12A

Volume 44, No. 170

TOP OF THE NEWS

IRAN: Defiant Tehran protesters battle police | Page 13A

BACK TO GREECE: Athens welcomes home Gods, heroes to Acropolis | Page 20A

BORDER: Ranchers worry that sick cows could cross into U.S. | Page 9A



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Endangered wolf allowed to stay in wild

ASSOCIATED PRESS

ALBUQUERQUE, N.M. — Federal wildlife managers have decided to allow an endangered Mexican gray wolf that has been linked to four livestock killings to remain in the wild in southwestern New Mexico.

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service regional director Benjamin Tuggle made the decision Friday regarding the alpha male of the San Mateo pack.

Despite a policy that allows the agency to remove a wolf from the wild after three livestock kills in one year, Tuggle said in a memo to the coordinator of the Mexican gray wolf recovery program that removal of the animal could hurt any potential population gains.

The male wolf — known as AM1114 — is raising four 8-week-old pups with help from the pack's alpha female, officials said.

"This is a productive pack. They're producing pups," said agency spokesman Jose Viramontes. "The Fish and Wildlife Service is in the business of successful reintroduction of the Mexican wolf and this aids that. The regional director felt with that goal in mind we'd be able to leave the animal out there longer."

Michael Robinson of the Center for Biological Diversity, a group that has been critical of the way the agency has handled the wolf reintroduction program, called Tuggle's decision "good news."

Robinson said the reproductive success of the San Mateo pack is "extraordinarily important just given the tiny population size and the very, very few breeding pairs that exist in New Mexico as well as Arizona."

The Mexican wolf, a subspecies of the gray wolf, was exterminated in the wild in the Southwest by the

1930s. In 1998, the government began reintroducing wolves along the Arizona-New Mexico line in a 4 million acre-plus territory interspersed with forests, private land and towns.

Biologists had hoped to have at least 100 wolves in the wild by now and 18 breeding pairs. The most recent survey shows there were 52 wolves and less than a handful of breeding pairs scattered between New Mexico and Arizona at the end of 2008.

Tuggle requested in his memo that the recovery program's interagency field team continue to monitor the San Mateo pack and try to prevent any further livestock kills by the pack.

Viramontes tactics may include establishing a food cache for the wolves — native prey that would be placed in certain areas by wildlife managers — to prevent the wolves from going after livestock.

Diana Parker/News-Herald Photo

Art Sullo, right, and Joe Panhans, center, of Havasu Regional Medical Center's Environmental Services Department, help Todd Swensson don a decontamination suit during a drill Thursday to test what hospital staff learned during two-days of decontamination training.

► DRILL CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1A

Team to continue training with course on Internet

Nearby, other team members erected a portable decon shower. Once Swensson and Ball were safely suited up, they accompanied Toy into the shower for a thorough washing. Then the responders washed themselves before being helped out of their moon suits. The freshly decontaminated victim was helped onto a gurney and wheeled into the emergency room.

During the entire operation, Shelton fielded questions, reminded the students of the proper proce-

dures and checked on a stopwatch. Then he called the group back into a conference room for a debriefing.

Plant Operations Manager Shirley Biedenkapp said with hands-on training complete the team would continue training with an Internet-based course to help them expand and refresh their knowledge of decontamination procedures.

You may contact the reporter at dparker@havasunews.com.

► BUDGET

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1A

All city departments faced 20 percent cuts

-lation of the Lake Havasu City Tax Limitation Initiative or Singer Initiative. Scarmardo said he, financial manager Bob Singer and former Lake Havasu City Mayor Harvey Jackson would likely file a Class Action lawsuit against the city and four council members who voted for the increase.

If a lawsuit is filed, the IDD increase could receive an injunction from the court. Mayor Mark Nexsen said if that happens the city would be forced to take some sort of action to secure the IDD.

"I would imagine a (judge's) decision would be rather rapid," Nexsen said. "If delayed long enough, I would assume we would have to implement some sort of rate increase to make sure the IDD doesn't go bankrupt."

The council was faced with the decision of increasing water rates by 29 percent over the next year or implementing an IDD tax increase to \$134.43 per half-acre spread out over the next three years.

Polls conducted by the Chamber of Commerce indicated that more than 83 percent of those people surveyed were for the IDD increase. Nexsen did vote against the increase at the June 16 meeting, saying it needed to go before the voters, but he said he supports the decision made by the majority of the council and is confident if the item went on the ballot it would pass.

The city looks to begin the fiscal year with between \$9.4 million and \$12 million in its general fund. Twenty-percent reductions across the board in all city departments were implemented throughout the budget process, which Nexsen says was a hard decision on the part of all department heads and city officials.

"I really believe the carry forward balance is because of the heroic efforts of city staff," Nexsen said. "Everyone understood and reacted to the

loss of revenues."

The council and city staff worked successfully to close a gap of around \$1.4 million between expenditures and revenues in the fund.

Almost all city departments incurred a reduction in force to close the \$1.4 million gap. More than 50 employees were laid off, as a result of budget reductions. Many others took early retirement, and positions within several city departments will go unfilled.

The city ended up with around \$37 million in revenues in the general fund and \$36 million in expenditures.

"We're certainly balanced and where we need to be," Nexsen said. "The only wildcard will be the state budget and whether the plan on punishing the cities and towns."

Word of a possible Vehicle License Tax sweep has come out of the Arizona State Legislature. The city could be facing some tough decisions down the road with the loss of state-shared revenues, VLT funds and impact fees as legislators and Gov. Jan Brewer work toward an agreement on the state budget.

The city could lose up to \$618,000 in funds from the VLT sweep, which the Legislature would like to direct toward education and schools in the state.

The Legislature budget also called for a three-year moratorium on impact fee collections and a relaxation of spending restrictions on impact fees already collected.

July 7 the council will meet to discuss adopting tax levies for special districts in the city, including Improvement Districts 1, 2 and 4.

The City Council meeting will be held Tuesday at 6 p.m. The council will adjourn to a special meeting to discuss adopting the final budget and hold a public hearing. The meeting will be held inside the council chambers at the Police Facility.

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