



Across the Back Fence

April 2008

News For Neighbors From The City of Mesa Neighborhood Services Department

Congratulations to the Neighborhood Award Winners

The City of Mesa celebrates the outstanding achievements of Mesa residents and neighborhood groups by announcing the winners of the 2007 Spirit of Mesa Awards.

Pioneer Estates II has received the Events and Community Building Award. The neighborhood was recognized for holding several major events; including an Easter egg hunt in the park, a Clean Sweep, a G.A.I.N. event and brunch meetings. Sherwood has been given the Public Safety Award. The neighborhood was recognized for starting a Block Watch program, which had 100 percent participation from residents at its first meeting, and for successfully gating an alley through the City's Alley Abandonment Program.

Park Place Association has received the Beautification Award. The association was honored for converting turf and adding low water use plants at a community park. The water bill in the park has dropped from approximately \$800 per month to \$300 per month due to the turf reduction and a new efficient sprinkler system that includes a rain sensor.

La Cruz has been given the Margie Frost Advocacy and Organization Award. The neighborhood was recognized for the Mesa Canal Project. On October 4, more than 200 volunteers and residents transformed a dusty parcel into a neighborhood-gathering place with a playground, two shaded

sitting areas and an educational area, which includes two murals and a large map of the United States.

Donna DiFrancesco and Teresa Salazar have received the Virginia Lamb Award for Neighborhood Leadership. Both have been instrumental leaders in the La Cruz neighborhood for many years, often hosting meetings at their homes. DiFrancesco and Salazar helped organize, inform and motivate their neighbors to complete the Mesa Canal Project, transforming a vacant dirt lot filled with broken glass and garbage into a beautiful common area for residents to congregate and watch their children play.

The winners, who were selected by a committee of community representatives, will be recognized April 7 at the Mesa City Council meeting and at a reception at the Mesa Arts Center. Costco is donating food for the reception. The award winning neighborhoods will receive two "Spirit of Mesa Award Winning Neighborhood" signs to be installed by the City of Mesa. As winners of the Virginia Lamb Award, Donna DiFrancesco and Teresa Salazar will receive engraved plaques.

For more information, contact Mesa Neighborhood Outreach Coordinator Susan Frabotta at (480) 644-5432.



Free Paint for Beautification Projects

Mesa residents looking for a way to spruce up their home's exterior are invited to take advantage of the City of Mesa's Paint Reuse Program. Buckets of paint are provided at no charge to Mesa residents and non-profit groups to help them with their exterior home and community improvement projects.

The paint provided through the program is collected from the City's Household Hazardous Waste Collection events where residents bring in their no longer needed, but still useable, cans of latex paint. The paint is then sorted, filtered, mixed and repackaged into five-gallon containers and made available for exterior reuse.

Interested parties who would like to request paint may call the Paint Reuse Program Coordinator at (480) 644-2690.

Free Tax Preparation Until April 12

Don't rush out and pay to have those federal and state tax returns prepared just yet! You may qualify to have your taxes prepared at one of the four Mesa VITA (Volunteer Income Tax Assistance) Sites for free. That's right. Volunteers are trained and certified by the Internal Revenue Service.

If you earned \$50,000 or less and have basic tax returns then you qualify to have them completed and e-filed for FREE! Not only can you have your returns done for free, you may qualify for the Earned Income Tax Credit. If you qualify, it could be worth up to \$4,700 this year. So you could pay less federal tax or even get a refund. But it's not about the money, it's about the difference it can make in your life. To see if you qualify, go to www.irs.gov/eitc for free information. The interactive EITC Assistant can show you if you qualify.

The Most Rewarding Job You Will Ever Have

The Crisis Nursery has been involved in providing services to the community for over 30 years. We are dedicated to breaking the cycle of child abuse and neglect. Services we provide include a shelter for children ages 0-11 and an enriched early childhood educational program that works with over 70 children and their families in our surrounding community. In August 2006, Crisis Nursery developed a foster home licensing program dedicated to finding safe and loving homes for abused and neglected children. We are really excited to say that we already have some wonderful foster families and several going through the licensing process!

Crisis Nursery is constantly looking for families who want to give back to the community through their involvement in the foster care system. This can be done in a few different ways. First, families can, of course, become licensed foster and/or adoptive parents. Some of the things you need to be licensed are to be a legal resident, financially stable, be at least 21 years old, pass a CPS and criminal history check, pass a home inspection, can be single or married, and complete a 30 hour training class. If getting licensed is not an option for you, a second way to help is for businesses or individuals to become community sponsors willing to help families who are working on becoming licensed. There is no fee for getting licensed for foster care. In fact, there is a state subsidy for caring for children in your home. However, there are expenses that a family may incur during the licensing process such as providing car seats for the children, furnishing a bedroom, fencing a pool for children 6 and under, or buying the proper fire extinguisher.

For more information about Crisis Nursery's foster care program or other programs, please contact Rachel Williams at (602) 412-8861 or Veronica Soto at (602) 358-5166 or by email at fostercare@crisisnurseryphx.org.

City Hall at the Mall

It is a unique way to bring City government directly to residents. The City of Mesa will be conducting "City Hall at the Mall" Saturday April 12 from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. at Fiesta Mall.

Several City of Mesa departments, including Neighborhood Services; Utilities; Parks, Recreation and Commercial Facilities; Library; Building Safety; and Transportation will have displays and information set up in the center court area. Outside Fiesta Mall, in the East Alma School Road parking lot, the Mesa Police Department and Mesa Fire Department will have displays and equipment.

Besides the City displays, representatives from Fiesta Mall will have a table in the center court area with information about the mall's redevelopment plans. In addition, customers will have an opportunity to sign-up to win a \$200 Westcor gift card along with other prizes.

Fit City Event

April's Fit City Challenge will be held Saturday April 26 at Hohokam Stadium, 1235 N. Center Street from 9 a.m. to Noon. Activities will include a 7th inning stretch, running the bases, warning track walk-ups to a 5K walk, and outfield walkouts. Registration begins at 9 a.m., raffle prizes at 9:45 a.m., and activities at 10 a.m.

Mesa's Fit City Challenge is a program developed by the City of Mesa Parks, Recreation and Commercial Facilities Department to encourage Mesa residents to increase their level of physical activity and discover new ways to become more physically fit and healthy!

The Fit City Challenge includes one event each month in 2008, at various locations throughout Mesa. **For more information, log onto www.mesafitcity.com or call (480) 644-2863.**

Household Hazardous Waste Collection

Saturday, April 19, 2008
Center Street Facility
2412 N. Center St.
8 a.m.-noon

District 6 Building Strong Neighborhood

is set to kick-off April 17. The target area is 80th Street and Southern. For more information contact the Neighborhood Outreach Office at (480) 644-5700.



Neighborhood Services Department
20 E. Main Street, Suite 650
Mesa, AZ 85201
(480) 644-2387

www.cityofmesa.org/neighsvc
neighsvc.info@cityofmesa.org