

# Wrangler NEWS

Think Local. Read Local.

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From upbeat Broadway classics to gospel and pop, the 142 members of Tempe Community Chorus have been singing their hearts out for 25 years. Page 15.



Paralympic cyclist Todd Key inspired students at Gilliland Middle School with a message about overcoming obstacles and helping others along the way. Page 6.



Students at Fuller Elementary got a lesson in baking bread—and sharing the handmade goodness with the needy and hungry in the community. Page 5.

What's Inside

## Saddle Up

A law-enforcement rarity in an age where technology reigns



Tempe's mounted police unit visited Buena Vista Ranchos, where residents offered their community arena for training.

— Wrangler News photo by Alex J. Walker

### Mounted patrols trot fearlessly where others dare not tread

Just as did many police officers during their early days on the force, modern-day cop Stephanie Braxton has a partner when she patrols Mill Avenue on weekend nights. But her backup in this case is a four-legged one, and his name isn't Fido.

Officer Braxton's steadfast, not-to-be-messed-with partner is a 2,000-pound gelding named Ranger, who she says is the perfect companion for what she calls her dream job.

"My whole life, ever since I was a little kid, I've been riding horses," Braxton said. One of two full-time mounted police officers for Tempe, Braxton said she's been in this—the "perfect" job—

since 2007.

If having equestrian blood flowing in one's veins seems a rarity, Braxton insists she's not the only one who has a love for horses.

Lt. Michael Pooley, who oversees Tempe's metro bureau, said he hopes to one day train for the mounted patrol. Tempe is one of few departments in the state to still have such a unit, he said, alongside Scottsdale and the Maricopa County Sheriff's Office.

"Basically, what we use them for is crowd control," Pooley said.

"One of the biggest reasons is the number of special events we have. Tempe has over 350 (of those) a year that draw thousands of people."

Mostly, the event-goers are

well-behaved, Pooley said, "but there are times when crowds get large and out of control. They do things they shouldn't be doing."

That's where the horses come into play.

The department has seven of the equestrian beauties, stabled at Kiwanis Park. A mounted officer holds the manpower and capabilities that could be considered equal to that of six non-horseback officers, Pooley said.

Braxton says Pooley knows whereof he speaks.

"When a fight breaks out, that's our time to shine," Braxton explained. "We blow our whistles, we yell, so they should hear us

— MOUNTED, Page 9

## Refugees, fleeing war, find respite among Valley's welcoming families

By Joyce Coronel

The holidays are the time of the year when families gather to celebrate and hold each other close, sharing laughter, love and a home-cooked meal.

Not everyone is so fortunate.

For refugees arriving from war-shattered Syria, the season of joy may prove a lonely interlude in a foreign land.

Enter Rabbi Shmuly Yanklowitz, president and dean of Valley Beit Midrash, a Jewish community organization. Together with Arizona Jews for Justice, Rabbi Yanklowitz, joined by Sarah Kader and her family, welcomed two Muslim families from Syria for the start of the holiday season, Thanksgiving.

Kader, her husband and their new baby, along with members of their extended families, hosted a Syrian family that included a mother and father with

— REFUGEES, Page 8

## ASU prof helps kids engineer a path to careers of the future

By Mark Crudup

Students at Aprende Middle School are getting a head start in engineering, and the community service it provides, with the help of a program established by Arizona State University professor Dr. Tirupalavanam Ganesh and Jennifer Velez, of the Ira A. Fulton Schools of Engineering.

"We are systematically trying to make a difference in high schools, and now middle schools, as well," Ganesh said. "Kyrene has agreed to pilot the program this year at Aprende."

The project, called Engineering Projects in Community Service, or EPICS, provides middle school students the opportunity to understand what encompasses engineering and the stakeholders involved.

"Right now, we're trying to figure out how to get middle school students to understand the engineering

— ENGINEERS, Page 14



Dr. Tirupalavanam Ganesh, right, of ASU's Ira A. Fulton Schools of Engineering, and teacher Jennifer Velez gave students at Aprende Middle School a lesson in the importance of teamwork.

— Wrangler News photo by Mark Crudup

## Engineers

From Page 1

design process and to understand more about the people we are serving," Velez, who leads the program at Aprende, said.

"Working in a team is so integral to being an engineer and that's hard for some middle school students."

Bringing general engineering concepts, such as discipline and self-control, to the middle school

level will allow students to better prepare for a career in the growing technology field, Velez said.

"It's really trying to catch kids at a younger age and grab their attention," she said. "If they decide to be an engineer in the 10th grade, they may already be behind."

According to Velez, all of the sixth-grade science teachers at Aprende are integrating the EPICS program into their classes.

"They have certain concepts that they have to cover," Velez

said. "So, they'll do a sustainability unit, a water filtration unit, etc., and then they've implemented the EPICS program into their existing program."

Engineering serves as a basis to learning science and making something with that science, Ganesh said.

"Applying the science to a real-life need is really what engineering is all about," he said.

"So we are attempting to bring this concept into the middle school classrooms."