

High-Flying
Broncos at
the Talking
Stick Arena
pages 6 & 7

LEDGER

JANUARY 6, 2016
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CLIMBING
PICACHO
PEAK

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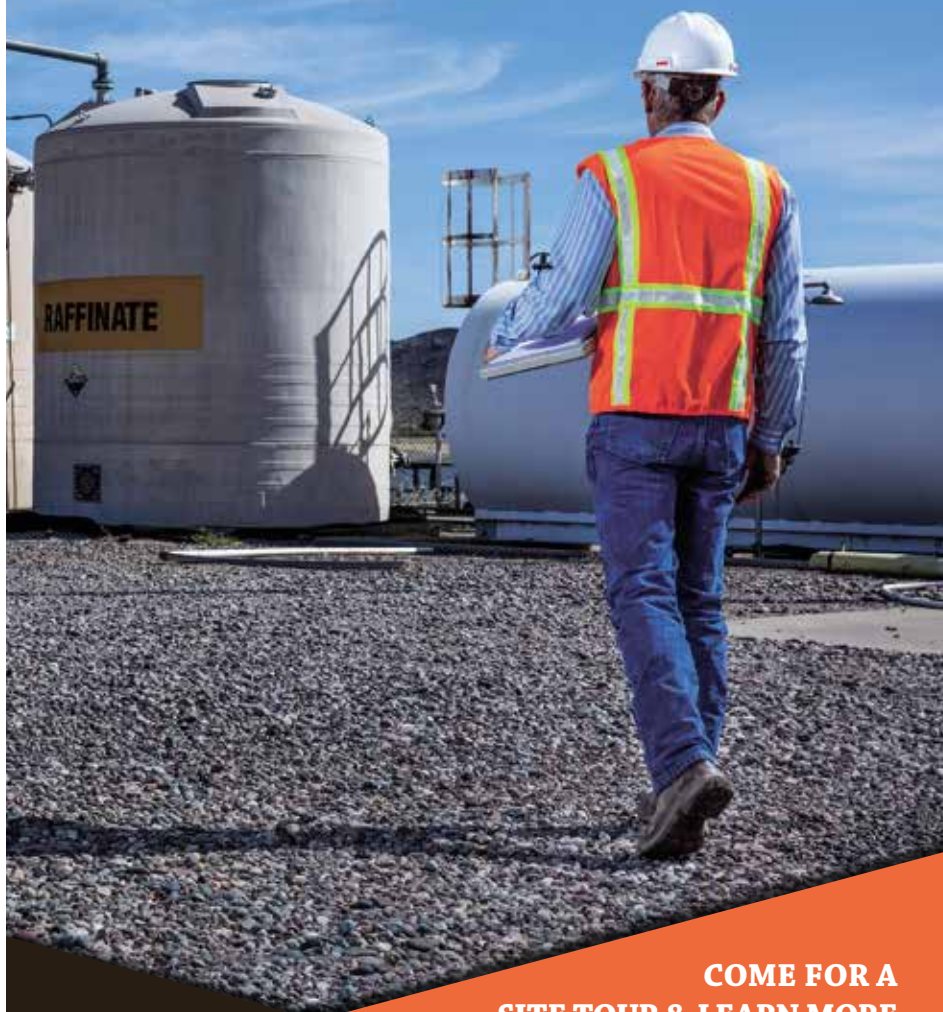
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Climbing Picacho Peak

By Gary Every
Special to Copper Area News

Picacho Peak towers above I-10 about halfway between Phoenix and Tucson. The black mountain shoots up out of the flat desert earth, a steep rocky crag like a fist shaking at the heavens.

It is the most noticeable landmark for miles around in any direction. The state park is famous for its spring display of wildflowers but climbing to the top of the mountain is a very exciting adventure featuring steel cable ladders, and catwalks.

Picacho is a Spanish word which means "peak", so the correct translation is "Peak Peak." Picacho Peak is believed to be about 22 million years old or four times



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It's a steep climb up
Picacho Peak.

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David Brinkley

older than the Grand Canyon. Although the towering spire of rock resembles a volcano, it is actually a long ago lava flow that was eventually tilted on its side to create this steep peak. Geologists are not certain where the prehistoric volcano which regurgitated this giant mountain was located.

We park at the Sunset Vista trail head. We start hiking, meandering between volcanic boulders amidst a thick saguaro forest. The first couple miles of the trail are relatively flat as we approach closer to the steep peak. It becomes apparent that we will pay for this relatively easy stretch of hiking as we approach the base of the peak and suddenly the angle of the slope changes drastically.

Shortly after the trail becomes extremely steep we come across the first of the cable ladders. The ladder climbs the black rock maybe fifty feet, the top bending away and just out of sight. The climb is simple, grab a cable with each hand and then there are plenty of footholds on the craggy black rock. I take one careful step at a time as I slowly ascend the cliff, grabbing a cable tightly in each hand while my heart pounds wildly.

Atop the ladder we come to a trail junction, to the left is the trail we will take back down but to the right is the trail which climbs the peak. At first glance the trail disappears into the steep wilderness but there is a faint trail meandering amidst the rock and cactus. We soon come to a second set of cables, nowhere near as precarious as the first. The set of cables after that winds up a sharp turn like a craggy spiral staircase. My heart pounds wildly once again, equal parts exertion and nerves.

Every year the state park holds reenactments of the Battle of Picacho Pass, the 2nd westernmost battle of the Civil War. On April 15th, 1862 a group of Union soldiers attacked a small group of Confederate scouts at Picacho Pass in the shadow of Picacho Peak. The battle decided nothing much in a war that was being

“

Just something to think about the next time you are driving past Picacho Peak and a gust of wind shakes your car.

Beware the ghost of El Tejano.

determined further east. Every March the state park hosts reenactments of the Battle of Picacho Pass as well as reenactments of other western Civil War Battles. Ironically, there are often many more eager volunteers reenacting the Battle of Picacho Pass than participated in the original skirmish. The enthusiasm and pageantry of men on horseback makes for a wonderful afternoon.

The next cable ladder leads to a narrow catwalk. Although there is another cable to hold and netting to catch us, I am becoming painfully aware just how high we are now and how really steep this mountain is. I tread the narrow boards of the catwalk very carefully.

There was a second Civil War battle fought at Picacho Peak that is not nearly as well known. John D. Walker lived among the Pima for many years and even wrote the first Pima

Continued on page 4



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JANUARY 2016

FLORENCE COPPER COFFEE

07

Join Florence Copper on Thursdays at 10 a.m. for the weekly Coffee Club. Enjoy a hot beverage and pastry with other residents of the community as you chat about the Florence Copper Project, the future of Florence, or anything else. Coffee Club meets at the Florence Copper Community Center, located at 130 N. Main St. in Florence. Due to the holidays, the Coffee Club meetings for Dec. 24 and 31 have been canceled.



POWWOW FARMERS MKT.

09

On Saturday, Jan. 9, Produce on Wheels Without Waste will return to the San Tan Valley Farmers Market. Buy 60 pounds of produce for just \$10. And you get to pick it out! Artisan breads will also be available for purchase. The Farmers Market is located at Combs High School, 2505 E. Germann Rd., San Tan Valley. For more information please call 602-684-5489.



ANIMAL FLASHLIGHT WALK

09

Head over to the San Tan Mountain Regional Park on Saturday, Jan. 9, at 7 p.m. and join rangers as they listen and look for clues that animals such as owls, kangaroo rats, and javalinas leave behind. Bring your flashlights. Wear closed-toed shoes and bring plenty of water. Meet at the main trailhead area. Registration is not required and the event is free with the \$6 per vehicle park entry fee. For more information, please visit www.maricopa.gov/parks/santan. The park is located at 6533 W. Phillips Rd., Queen Creek.



Climbing Picacho Peak

Continued from page 3

dictionary. When the Civil War arrived he led two companies of Pima and Maricopa against their traditional enemies - the Apache. Walker led his native soldiers into battle wearing only a breech clout and war paint. His long hair was tied up in a bun. His face was painted black with ash. Walker charged into battle with a wild war whoop and an ironwood club.

Walker and his company of Pima warriors surprised a group of Apaches atop Picacho Peak and slaughtered a camp of seventy five men, women and children. Those victims who were not shot leapt from the steep precipices to escape the withering assault. Major Dorn reported in his interview with Farish for his History of Arizona written in 1918, "Even now (approximately fifty years later) you still see on this battlefield, the skeletons of the Apaches in the crevices."

The last of the cable ladders behind us we begin the final, relatively easy ascent to the peak. The geology at the top changes, the rocks are no longer the bubbly basalt which forms the towering spire but become a Precambrian granite, rocks torn free from deep inside the earth and carried to the surface. The view is

incredible, vistas in every direction. We start to name the mountains we recognize Santa Catalina, Antelope Hill, Tabletop Mountain, Black Mesa, the Galiluros and more including Baboquivari the sacred mountain of the O'odham.

The Rooster Cogburn Ranch is nestled at the base of the peak. It is an ostrich ranch. The ostriches figure in one of my favorite Arizona legends. More than a century ago a stagecoach bandit named El Tezano was ambushed at Picaho Pass. His ghost has been seen in the region many times since they built the interstate highway. He charges down the steep slopes of Picacho Peak atop a snorting stallion. It is said that when the wind gusts atop this flat stretch of highway it is the ghost of the stagecoach bandit El Tezano, shaking coins loose from automobiles and still earn an ill-gotten living. The legend has changed in recent years. Now the ghost of El Tezano charges recklessly down the slopes of Picacho Peak riding an ostrich. Just something to think about the next time you are driving past Picacho Peak and a gust of wind shakes your car. Beware the ghost of El Tezano.



PINAL COUNTY LANDMARK

Spring is coming and Picacho Peak is a great nearby destination.

Editor's Note: Gary Every is a columnist who writes for the Ledger's sister newspapers, Pinal Nugget and Oracle Towne Crier. We thought our Ledger readers would enjoy this story about a nearby landmark.

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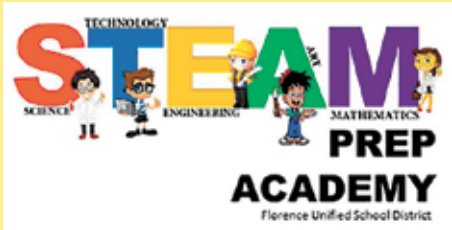
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A lot of our guys grew up in Arizona and are Suns' fans too, so I think it's great for them to be there and get that kind of experience.

Poston Butte 'hoops it up' at Talking Stick Arena

By Andrew Luberdia
Southeast Valley Ledger

The Poston Butte boys' and girls' basketball teams took part in the Hoopin' it Up at the Arena Series on Dec. 22. Sponsored in part by the Phoenix Suns, the annual event provides high school basketball teams an opportunity to play a game at Talking Stick Arena, the home of the Suns.

"A lot of our guys grew up in Arizona and are Suns' fans too, so I think it's great for them to be there and get that kind of experience," Poston Butte boys' head coach Noel Nafziger said. "We'll do it as long as we can; as long as they'll have us."

Both teams played against Williams

Field with the Black Hawks besting both the boys' and girls' team. The Broncos' girls were defeated 41 – 33 while the boys were dealt a 62 – 41 loss.

In the boys' game the Broncos' were short-handed from the start, playing without injured shooting guard Preston Anderson and later without starting forward Josh Zaker, who was suffered a leg injury early in the third quarter and did not return.

Senior Qujuan Steward, who scored a game-high 25 points, almost single-handedly kept the Broncos in the game during the first half, which ended with the Broncos' trailing, 29 – 23.

The Black Hawks' pressure proved to be a problem for the Broncos' in the second half, allowing them to open

a 10-point lead midway through the third quarter. The lead continued to grow throughout the rest of the second half.

"Our problem is our guys don't want to read defenses," Nafziger said after the game about his team dealing with Williams Field's pressure. "They just want to catch and dribble right away and when we dribble it's usually with our head down and we don't see passes."

"We hung in there pretty well in the first half without Preston, but we can't turn the ball over and expect to stop a team like (Williams Field) and that's what happened in the second half."

The Broncos played much of the second half with only two of their normal five starters on the floor.

That definitely affected the Broncos' performance in the second half, but Nafziger refused to use the excuse, instead he preferred to view as an opportunity for some other players.

"We need those guys to have a chance," he said about his starters. "When they go down we talk about other guys stepping up. It was a good learning experience for the younger kids."

In addition to Steward's 25-point effort, sophomore Kevin Johnson finished with nine points and senior Zach Merrill contributed a team-high six rebounds.

Upcoming schedule: Jan. 6 at Dysart, Jan. 8 at Gila Ridge, and Jan. 11 at Higley. All games are scheduled for 7 p.m.

Photos by Kelli Luberd



FREE THROW

Poston Butte's Kevin Johnson at the free throw line.



FLOATER

The Broncos' Qujuan Steward (23) puts up a floater versus Williams Field at Talking Stick Aren on Dec. 22.



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All Academic Honors for local area football players

By Andrew Luberd
Southeast Valley Ledger

A number of local football players have already received numerous postseason honors for their performance on the field. Now Sports360AZ.com, a local digital media outlet with high-quality high school sports content, has released its 2015 All-Academic Football Teams, which represent "the best the state has to offer both on the field as well as in the classroom."

Players were nominated by coaches and members of the Arizona High School Football community, according to the site. Nominees were required to be varsity level student-athletes with at least a 3.0 unweighted or a 3.5 weighted grade-point average.

The following is a list, by school, of local area players who received All-Academic honors:

First Team: Justis Brown (4.4 GPA).

2015 All-Academic Divisions I-II Honorable Mention: Tyler Bloom (3.7 GPA), Kaleb Honea (3.6 GPA), Jace Koester (3.4 GPA), Max Drew (3.5 GPA), Zane Whiting (3.86 GPA), Chase Thomas (3.3 GPA), Packer Brown (4.2 GPA), Tyson Gardner (3.4 GPA), Nico Martin (3.5 GPA), Codie Davis (3.1 GPA), and Zach Glaess (4.315 GPA).

POSTON BUTTE

2015 All-Academic Divisions I-II Honorable Mention: Chase Taylor (4.59 GPA).

COMBS

2015 All-Academic Divisions III-VI Honorable Mention: Coda McLaws (3.36 GPA).

SAN TAN FOOTHILLS

2015 All-Academic Divisions III-VI Honorable Mention: Kyle Stanifer (unlisted GPA).

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2015 All-Academic Divisions I-II

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4 Corners of Sports

basketball season enters 2nd half

By Andrew Luberda
Southeast Valley Ledger

Now that the holiday break has ended for local area schools, the basketball season kick into high gear as sectional play and the race for the playoffs begin. Both the boys' and girls' teams at all of the schools in the *Ledger's* distribution area return to the court this week. Here's a look at the upcoming schedule for each team:

SAN TAN FOOTHILLS

Sabercats: Jan. 6 vs. San Manuel, Jan. 8 at Hayden, and Jan. 11 vs.

Benjamin Franklin. All games are scheduled for 7 p.m.
Lady Sabercats: Jan. 6 vs. San Manuel, Jan. 8 at Hayden, and Jan. 11 at Coolidge (7 p.m.). All games are scheduled for 5: 30 p.m. unless noted otherwise.

COMBS

Coyotes: Jan. 6 vs. Verrado, Jan. 8 vs. Scottsdale Prep, and Jan. 12 vs. Estrella Foothills. All games are scheduled for 7 p.m.
Lady Coyotes: Jan. 8 at Parker and Jan. 12 at Estrella Foothills. All games are scheduled for 7 p.m.

POSTON BUTTE

Broncos: Jan. 6 at Dysart, Jan. 8 at Gila Ridge, and Jan. 11 at Higley. All games are scheduled for 7 p.m.
Lady Broncos: Jan. 6 vs. South Mountain, Jan. 8 vs. Apache Junction, and Jan. 11 at Desert Ridge. All games are scheduled for 7 p.m.

QUEEN CREEK

Bulldogs: Jan. 7 at Campo Verde and Jan. 11 vs. Alhambra. All games are scheduled for 7 p.m.
Lady Bulldogs: Jan. 7 vs. Campo Verde and Jan. 13 vs. Williams Field. All games are scheduled for 7 p.m.

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Litter Hotline delivers gentle, vital message: Trashing Arizona costs us all

PHOENIX – Those who litter along Arizona highways can face fines up to \$500. But those fortunate enough to have fellow motorists rather than law enforcement see them may wind up getting a letter warning about the harm litter causes – and a litter bag.

In partnership with Keep Arizona Beautiful, a statewide nonprofit organization that empowers citizens to care for their environment through litter prevention, recycling and beautification, the Arizona Department of Transportation maintains a Litter Hotline allowing the public to report those who trash our highways. Providing a vehicle's license plate number and other details to 1-877-3LITTER, or through an online form on Keep Arizona Beautiful's website at kazb.org, results in a cautionary letter being sent.

About 1,500 letters go out each year. Nothing is shared with law enforcement, and those reported have no points added to their driver licenses.

"Besides harming Arizona's land, water and quality of life, littering along highways is a significant cost to ADOT and, in the end, to all of us," ADOT Director John Halikowski said. "While those who litter deserve what they get if caught by law enforcement, a gentle reminder through the Litter Hotline can make someone think twice about tossing something out the window."

In the Phoenix area alone, highway maintenance crews pick up enough litter each year –about 1.2 million pounds in all – to fill more than 111,000 garbage bags.

In addition to the Litter Hotline, ADOT combats litter through its Adopt a Highway programs. Adopt a Highway volunteers can apply for two-year permits to clean up roadside litter, or businesses can contract with maintenance providers to perform the work as part of the Adopt a Highway sponsor program.

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With the New Year Comes Big Changes

Starting with the Jan. 6, 2016 issue, the Southeast Valley Ledger will be published on the first and third Wednesdays of each month. That's not to say we won't have your weekly coverage. New stories and breaking news will be published online at copperarea.com and stvdailyprss.com.

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