Violins Teach More than Music; Students Learn New Life Skills

By Caitlin Altendorf

Find some feet and grab a seat.

That’s the saying in the music room at Drachman Montessori Magnet School. Here the walls are covered with song lyrics and bright posters filled with pictures of students at violin concerts. Music stands and a piano line one wall of the room and on the opposite wall are closets full of violins.

When students enter the room, they grab a violin, find a pair of painted feet on the carpet and adjust their stance. Ready to play, they stand with violins on their shoulders and wait for their cue.

At Drachman, all 307 students will learn how to play the violin. In a program that has been running for seven years, students are taught how to play the violin based on elements adopted from the Shinichi Suzuki method.

“For the first six weeks of kindergarten this is all we do — learn how to stand still and hold the violin,” said Laura Barry, the violin specialist at Drachman.

Barry, who has taught in Tucson for nearly 20 years and has been playing violin for just as long, believes in the school’s philosophy that all children have talent and can learn.

“It just works,” she said. “By second grade the kids can play.”

By incorporating elements of the Shinichi Suzuki method with her own ideas, Barry teaches the students to “speak” violin.

The native-tongue approach, as she refers to it, was built around the idea that a child learns to speak their native tongue without first learning to read it. When applied to music, the same approach is taken. Students learn music by ear rather than by reading notes.

“Starting with kindergarten we constantly play music in the background during class,” Barry said. “The students can sing the songs and hear them, so that the songs become internalized before they learn to play them.”

Once a week, students in groups of 10 meet with Barry for 45 minutes to learn and play the violin. She makes sure to adapt to special-needs students, and emphasizes the importance of participation.

In order to promote the process of learning, the students are rewarded for small steps during the two years that they take to adequately learn how to play “Arizona Hodgey,” a variation of “Twinkle-Twinkle Little Star.” It may seem like a long time to some, but the reward, Barry said, is worth it.

“Violins” continues on page 6

Obstáculos Con el Aumento de Salario Mínimo

Por Megan Briggode

Los pequeños negocios en el Sur de Tucson tendrán que afrontar decisiones difíciles en el próximo año con respecto al nuevo mandato del estado de aumento del salario mínimo y no queda claro como recuadrará el aumento de $1.65 la hora.

Durante una década, el salario mínimo estuvo congelado en $5.15 la hora. La Proposición 202, que fue pasada en noviembre, aumenta los salarios alrededor de 30 por ciento fue pasada en noviembre, aumenta la hora. La Proposición 202, que mínimo estuvo congelado en $5.15 y no queda claro como recuadrará el aumento del salario mínimo pero los proyectos de ley han fallado.

Los partidarios del aumento de salario mínimo cuestionan qué sucederá con los negocios pequeños que no pueden pagar el nuevo aumento y a lo mejor tendrán que despedir a empleados o cortarles las horas de trabajo.

“El aumento definitivamente creará una rata para los negocios pequeños de bienes y servicios,” dijo Tomás Leon, presidente y gerente general de Tucson Hispanic Chamber of Commerce (Cámara de Comercio Hispana de Tucson). “Aumentan el precio de productos o cortan los beneficios de salario.”

Según el Employment Policies Institute (Instituto de Pólizas de Empleo), una organización de investigación sin ánimo de lucro, los aumentos de salario mínimo llevarán a cabo un aumento en los precios y desempleo y casi un 70 por ciento de las personas ganan el salario mínimo forman parte de familias que están arriba de la línea de pobreza en Tucson.

Varios negocios pequeños en el Sur de Tucson han reportado a la Cámara de Comercio Hispana que apoyan el aumento del salario mínimo y creen que sus empleados se recuperarán de la diferencia, según Leon.

“Tendrá un efecto positivo en la comunidad porque personas que no podían ahorrar antes podrán guardar dinero de sus ganancias adicionales,” dijo Leon.

“Pero necesitamos más investigación sobre el continúo efecto de largo plazo. Queremos continuar a crear oportunidades para los hispanos para que puedan conseguir trabajos y sueldos más altos.”

Algunos residentes de Tucson están convencidos de que el aumento de salario afectará a cada residente en la comunidad de manera negativa porque los consumidores tendrán que pagar más por el mismo producto o servicio.

“Si los trabajadores de puesto más bajo pudieran vender más producto, sería otra historia,” dijo Jack Camper, el presidente de el Tucson Chamber of Commerce (Cámara de Comercio Metropolitana de Tucson). “Algunos tienen que aguantar el aumento sin valor adicional.”

Está proyectado que 1,283 trabajadores serán perjudicados en el área metropolitan de Tucson, según el Instituto de Pólizas de Empleo, y los costos más altos serán pasados a los consumidores a través de precios más altos o las ganancias serán reducidas para las compañías.

Para reportar a un empleado, contacte a la Industrial Commission of Arizona (Comisión Industrial de Arizona) al www.wca.state.az.us. No todos los empleados califican para el aumento de salario.

En Breve

● Arizona es el 23 estado que paga más del mínimo requerimiento federal.
● Los trabajadores de Arizona no ha tenido un aumento en salario mínimo en casi una década.
South Tucson Grant Allows Brownfields Money for Cleanup

By Maayan Katz

When Sal Pedregon heard from a friend that a South Tucson program would pay for an environmen tal site assessment on his three-acre busi ness property, he went straight to the city government to see how he could get started.

Property owners like Pedregon are referred to as brownfields, which are abandoned properties where there is real or perceived contamination, hindering their prospects for commercial or residential development.

“I knew if I ever wanted to get a loan for improvements or sell the property, that I would have to get this done for the bank,” said Pedregon, co-owner of A&S Paving on 12th Avenue just east of Interstate 10.

The property houses the company’s office, paving facilities, an adobe-style convenience store built in 1939 and three massive, above-ground gas tanks.

Pedregon and his business partner Al Seehaver, also of A&S Paving, are one of several participants in an Environmental Protection Agency grant awarded to the city in 2005.

City officials sought the $200,000 Brownfields Assessment Grant in hopes of changing the opinions of prospective developers who shied away from investing in properties perceived to be contaminated by petroleum products.

The city targets auto-related brownfields along the main commercial corridors, which include Sixth, Fourth and 10th avenues and 29th Street. These sites include salvage yards, vacant lots, tire shops, gas stations and are estimated to make up 21 percent of South Tucson’s total land.

Pedregon and Seehaver hope to one day tear down the convenience store and gas station to make way for a new full-service gas station with a mini-mart and modern gas pumps.

If the site is determined safe for development by the city, they’ll show the bank their “clean bill of health,” given to them by the city, which will increase their chances of getting an approval for a loan.

“It’s going to boost South Tucson if I build something here,” Pedregon said.

“This whole program is going to spur economic development,” said Joel Gastelum, city planning coordinator. “Once it starts getting around to the developers and the bigger people out there and they start communicating in their circles, they can say, ‘That place is not contaminated. That perception is false.’”

Because South Tucson doesn’t own a lot of property, Gastelum said the city faces the additional challenge of having to solicit private property owners to participate in the grant.

Once a property owner agrees to participate, the city, along with Phoenix-based consultant Allwyn Environmental, conducts a Phase I assessment that includes looking for signs of stained soil, researching historical records and aerial photos and interviewing the property owner.

Based on the Phase I findings, the consultant may decide to conduct a Phase II assessment, in which soil samples are taken and sent for testing.

Gastelum said while the grant does cover the expenses of Phase I and II, it does not pay for cleanup costs should high contamination levels be found.

“That might make people want not to participate because they think, ‘If it comes back on us, how are we going to deal with this?’”

On the other hand, Gastelum added, if there are no negative findings, property owners get a “clean bill of health” and a copy of the report to show potential buyers.

Since October 2005, the city conducted 12 Phase I assessments, three of which required Phase II assessments.

An additional three sites are currently in the Phase I process.

Two of the three Phase II assessments have been completed and neither have contamination.

The third, the A&S Paving property, is still waiting for testing.

So far, the city has spent nearly $86,000 on the assessments and an additional $25,000 to $30,000 on supplies and outreach material that includes letters, brochures and posters, Gastelum said.

Although no major commercial developer has invested in a property, participants like A&S Paving and others are showing promise.

Gastelum said one of the major advantages of the program goes to property owners looking to sell their property and whose banks require them to complete a Phase I environmental assessment before they sell.

“If they don’t know that we have this program to offer them, they can spend anywhere from $4,000 to $6,000 out of their own pockets,” Gastelum said.

With the upcoming I-10 closure that will shut down exits from Prince Road to 29th Street, Gastelum said more traffic will come to South Tucson.

“I think a lot of developers are going to start seeing the need for new businesses along our commercial corridors,” Gastelum said. “People are going to see it’s not a dirty place and they’ll say, ‘It’s not some place that’s just thrown there. It’s a nice-looking place.’”

Project Will Expand Old Pueblo Roads

12th Ave. Project Almost Complete; Valencia’s Begins

By Maayan Katz

The end is near for one South Tucson road improvement project while another is just breaking ground.

The 12th Avenue Gateway Intersection Project, at 10th and 12th avenues and 44th Street near Pueblo High School, will open without speed limit restrictions this May, according to Louis Gonzales, a spokesman for the Pima County Department of Transportation.

The new traffic signals will allow drivers access from all directions. Previously, east and westbound drivers on 44th Avenue had to wait for nonstop north and southbound traffic.

Gonzales said the project includes a new landscaped park with art, lighting, pedestrian sidewalks and bike lanes. The speed limit is 25 mph.

Construction for the Valencia West project, on Valencia Road between Mark Road and Camino de la Tierra, began Feb. 5 as workers began moving ground utilities and transplanting cactuses.

The $12.9 million project will expand the mile-long road to two lanes in each direction with a center turn lane, pedestrian sidewalks, a bike lane and landscaping.

Traffic in each direction will remain open with a 25 mph speed limit. The project is expected to be complete in early 2009, Gonzales said.

Meanwhile, the addition of a third lane and bus pullouts to east and westbound directions on Valencia Road from Mission Road to Interstate 19, also known as the Valencia East Project, will be completed in October, Gonzales said.

For more information on road construction, call the Pima County Department of Transportation at 206-6410.

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**Gizmo Factory Owner Spends Free Hours Helping Community**

By Meghan Martin

Edward Lopez, The Gizmo Factory owner, shows the screen he uses for a client’s motorcycle company.

“**My business motto is ‘No order is too small.’**”

**— Edward Lopez**

The Gizmo Factory owner

Edward Lopez works 60 hours a week in his silk screening factory, and in his free time he stuffs backpacks with school supplies for organizing a group that calls itself “a friend of children.” His home is directly across the street from the church’s cooling system. Repairs for the roof have been estimated at $500,000. Lopez said.

Lopez’s factory is piled high with shirts from all of his clients — firefighters, police officers, eques-

trian groups, disc jockeys, soldiers and business owners. They man-

aged to find The Gizmo Factory through word of mouth, said Lopez, as he has never advertised and the factory’s phone number is unlisted.

The people of South Tucson always know how and where to find Lopez. His home is directly behind the factory and people often come to him when they need help, because “Lopez rarely says no.”

After working a full day, it’s not uncommon that someone will knock on Lopez’s door and ask for some help, he said.

“He is the go-to guy,” said Daniel Barrios, Grand Knight of the Knights of Columbus. “He will lend a hand with anything. He helps wherever it is needed. As a former fire marshal he helps plan events like the Family Fiesta, the church’s biggest fundraiser. He also helps out by providing uniforms for students. He is a great person and he knows what is good.”

Lopez proudly shows his heap of supplies gathered in a corner of his factory. Tidying piles of binders, folders and batteries for calculators have accumulated, ready to be deposited inside back-

packs for needy children.

He and his wife Teresita were asked to makeRECEIPTS for patients staying in the Veterans Hospital over Christmas and it’s a tradition he said he will continue.

Lopez said he would like to see the city return to the way it used to be when people were friendlier, everyone knew each other and the businesses of South Tucson had personality.

“My business motto is ‘No order is too small,’” and I try to help everyone because I know I can,” he said.

A few lasers, some mirrors and about 20 middle-school students interested in science is the recipe for Hands-On Optics, a 12-session science program held every Friday night at the Holmes Tuttle Boys and Girls Club on 36th Street.

The National Optical Astronomy Observatory (NOAO) is partnering with the Holmes Tuttle Boys and Girls Clubhouse to get students exposed to science early. The program is funded through a grant from the National Science Foundation.

It’s a way to expose kids to the fact that learning science is going to be fun,” said Rosemary Badian, a Boys and Girls Club volunteer. “But it’s not meant to be a school course.”

Activities include learning how lasers bounce off mirrors and field trips to Kitt Peak Observatory.

The field trip is a nightly observing program where the kids watch a short documentary, listen to astronomers, take a tour of telescopes and, if the weather is clear, Lopez can use the telescope to observe objects in the sky,” Peruta said.

During class, students build objects and learn about different areas of science.

“We shine lasers into the fish tank,” said Alisha Mohler, 9, from Southside Community School.

“Like the lasers,” said Lissette Fuentes, 9, from Los Ranchitos Elementary School. “I like when they put the spray on it and you can see the laser.”

Other students are not sure if they want to go into science when they grow up but think the class is interesting.

“We do science and play with the lasers,” said Jose Cota, 11, from Pueblo Gardens Elementary School. “I want to be a soldier. I like science so maybe I will be a scientist. I like science because you get to do experiments.”

Hands-On Optics is an after-school program that started in the Tucson area last summer. NOAO has teamed up with the South Tucson and Tohono O’odham areas to bring science to under-represented children, said Doug Isbell, NOAO director of public service.

“The program has been set up about three years ago and is used in museums and schools now,” said Carol Peruta, 22, NOAO team member and UA physics and astronomy graduate. “We give out kits and booklets, which outline activities for kids.”

A team of UA under-

graduates majoring in physics, optics and biology take turns to help with teaching the program. Some are also Spanish speaking. There are about 15 to 20 children in the classes with three UA student helpers, which allows for one-on-one and hands-on opportunities, according to Connie Walker, NOAO astronomer and science education specialist.

“‘The club is a completely open door,” Badian said. “We want students to come to most of the Hands-On Optics classes to be consistent.”

To join Hands-On Optics, students should be at least 8 year old and be able to read. Priority is also given to students who have signed up or have attended the classes before, Badian said.

“Kids come up to me and say ‘Are we doing sci-

ence today?’” Badian said. “I think it’s great. It’s a great opportunity for the kids.”

The class is held every Friday from 5:15 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. until April 21. The Holmes Tuttle Boys and Girls Club is located at 2585 E. 36th St.

**Kids Getting ‘Hands-On’**

By Uma Goyal

In the game of basketball there is only one thing that can make up for lack of size.

Heart.

The Sunnyside High School boy’s basketball team isn’t that tall, but it has more heart than any other team, according to head coach Guillermo Mendoza. Mendoza has been coaching basketball at Sunnyside High School for eight years. He is current-

ly in his second season as the head coach of the varsi-

ty team after coaching freshman basketball for five years and junior varsity basketball for one year.

Mendoza played forward for Sunnyside when he was in high school and graduated in 1985. Jaime Ferguson, who played center on the same team, gradu-

ated in 1986 and has been helping the team since.

“He’s the brains behind the operation,” Mendoza said.

According to Mendoza, the lack of height has been the biggest obstacle for his team.

“They don’t grow them that big down here,” Mendoza said. “We’re never the tallest but I think we have the biggest hearts out there.”

One of the players on the Sunnyside team that helps make them special is senior Daniel Fajardo. He plays small forward and has been playing varsi-

ty for 2 1/2 years.

Fajardo began playing basketball 10 years ago because his father played.

Next year he plans to attend Pima Community College, where he wants to try out for the basketball team.

Fajardo said he truly enjoys playing the game.

“It’s just fun,” he said.

Another player that contributes to the Blue Devils is Francisco Munguia, also a senior. Munguia, like Fajardo, plans to attend Pima Community College and try out for its basketball team.

Munguia began playing basketball in sixth grade, and now plays power forward for the Blue Devils.

“I just love it,” said Munguia.

Mendoza ran a relaxed shoot-around last week after watching a film to get the players ready for their game against Buena High School. A win will send the Blue Devils to the state tournament.

**Love of Basketball Makes Up For Lack of Size at Sunnyside**

By Greg Haber

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**BICAS Builds More Than Just Bikes**

By Nathan Olivarez-Giles

When Ignacio Rivera de Rosales walked into the basement of an old warehouse four years ago, he thought BICAS was going to build a bike. But he got much more than a bike. “This place has treated me good,” Rivera de Rosales said. “I’m at my life because of this place. I met my wife here, I got a job here and I get to teach here. This is home to me.”

The basement, tucked behind a chain-link fence on the northeast corner of Ninth Avenue and South Street, is home to the Bicycle Inter-Community Action and Salvage, or BICAS.

River de Rosales’ hands are black, covered in dirt and oil from working on bicycles all day, but the grin stretching across his face makes it obvious there is nowhere he would rather be. As BICAS, Rivera de Rosales is one of eight members who make up a collective and together run the community center.

There are no bosses, no official titles at BICAS; each member of the collective is simply a member, with equal ranking and input on how the organization runs.

This is not a bike shop; everyone is both a student and teacher, Rivera de Rosales said.

“We will teach you how to build a bike, we will not do it for you,” he said.

The goal of BICAS is empowerment of the community through education, Rivera de Rosales said.

By teaching people how to build and maintain a bicycle, people are shown that they can produce their own transportation — sustainability.

In 1994, the collective broadened their outreach to the community, not just the homeless, with a shift in focus to bikes and community sustainability and self-sustaining transportation. BICAS was born.

A shift in focus to bikes for anyone willing to learn also allowed for a larger community to grow at BICAS, Rivera de Rosales said.

Just as Rivera de Rosales found more than a bike at BICAS, Don Villarreal said he found community and empowerment as a member of the collective.

“Everyone here does a little bit of everything, and if I can’t help you there is always somebody around who can,” Villarreal said.

“I found hidden talents I might not have found otherwise because of this organization,” he said. “It turns out I’m pretty good at explaining something complex to people and helping people out.”

The concept that each member of the collective has a voice in every decision made is a quality that Villarreal said is absent in most of the world.

“Just that feeling of being important — knowing I helped make some of this happen and that I was involved is an amazing feeling,” Villarreal said.

Cassidy Raeber, 21, first came to BICAS to change a flat tire. Wanting to learn more, she enrolled in the “build-a-bike” class. Raeber, who was recently accepted to an art school in Prescott, plans to take what she has learned in the BICAS class to teach others up north.

Raeber said she was told the girls at her future school who worked at a Prescott bike shop as part of a work-study program, couldn’t do more than repair a flat, something she intends to change.

“Don Villarreal BICAS member”

**Literary Festival to Feature Food, Film and Fun**

By Sam Scheunich

Nuestra Raíces Literary Arts Festival, celebrating Mexican-American arts, culture and literature, will feature Texas Christine Garcia this year, author of “Brides and Sinners in El Chaco,” who will read from her book Saturday, March 3 at 4 p.m. at the Joel D. Valdez library.

The annual event offers writing workshops, films, music and book readings.

“We need festivals that celebrate different cultures,” said Maya Castillo, library associate and head member of the Nuestra Raíces Festival Committee.

The six-day celebration festival will kick off this weekend.

Friday, March 2 at 7 p.m. with a screening of the feature film “Las Lonely Boys: Contrabanditos and Crossroads,” by Hector Galán at the Screening Room at 127 E. Congress St.

Saturday, March 3 at 7 p.m. with a folkloric performance by the Tardeada Dance, led in the “build-a-bike” class.

Sunday, March 4 at 3 p.m. at the Joel D. Valdez library.

The festival will wrap up with a writing workshop for teenagers facilitated by Silviana Wood, Tucson playwright, actress and director, on Wednesday, March 7 from 2 to 4 p.m. at the Sam Lena-South Tucson Branch Library.

“Mi nombre soy yo?” (“Who am I?”) is a bilingual journal writing workshop that will challenge teens to write on their feelings about their unique culture.

For a complete listing of other writing workshops for children and adults, check the Web site: www.tptl.org.

Nuestra Raíces is sponsored by the Friends of the Pima County Public Library and REPOR-MA, which promotes library and information services to the Spanish-speaking community.

**Min. Wage Increase Challenges Small Tucson Businesses**

By Megan Brigode

Small businesses in South Tucson will face tough decisions regarding the new state-mandated minimum wage increase in the next year and it’s unclear how they will recreate.

For a decade, the minimum wage was frozen at $5.15 an hour. Prop 42, which passed in November, increased wages about 30 percent, raising the minimum wage to $6.75 an hour. Beginning in January 2008 wages will be adjusted according to inflation.

In the last 10 years several attempts have been made by state legislators to pass minimum-wage initiatives, but failed.

Supporters of the wage increase question what will actually happen to small businesses that cannot afford the increase and may have to lay off workers or cut working hours.

“The increase will definitely create a challenge for small Hispanic-owned businesses,” said Tomas Leon, president and CEO of the Tucson Hispanic Chamber of Commerce. “Do they raise product prices or do they cut health benefits?”

According to the Employment Policies Institute, a nonprofit research group, minimum-wage hikes lead to increased prices and higher unemployment. Nearly 70 percent of those earning minimum wage are families who are above the poverty line in Tucson.

Many small businesses in South Tucson have reported to the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce that they support the wage increase and think their employees to be responsible, not sure how they will make up for the difference, Leon said.

“It will have a greater effect on the community because those who were not able to save before can put away a little more savings,” Leon said. “But we need more research as how the long-term effect will play out.”

We want to continue to create opportunities for Hispanics to get higher paying jobs.”

Some Tucsonans are convinced the wage increase will affect every resident in the community negatively because consumers will have to pay more for the same product or service. “If entry-level workers could sell more product it would be a different story,” said Jack Camper, president of the Tucson Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce.

“Someone has to endure the raise for no additional value.”

A projected 1,283 jobs will be lost in the Tucson metro area, according to the Federal Reserve. Other costs will be passed on to consumers through higher prices or profits will be reduced for companies.

To report an employer for failure to comply with new wage laws, contact the Industrial Commission of Arizona at www.ica.state.az.us.
Compensando por Tamaño: Corazón

By Greg Haber
Traducido por Guadalupe Zamora

En el juego de baloncesto solamente existe una cosa que puede compensar por la falta de estatura. El corazón.

Los miembros del equipo de baloncesto de la Preparatoria Sunnyside no son muy altos, pero tienen más corazón que cualquier otro equipo, según el entrenador Guillermo Mendoza. Con un récord de 12 victorias y 16 pérdidas, los Diablos Azules llegaron a la eliminatoria entre los mejores equipos y solamente están a un partido de llegar a la eliminatoria del grupo 5A.

Mendoza ha sido el entrenador de baloncesto de la Preparatoria Sunnyside por ocho años. Actualmente está en su segunda temporada como entrenador principal del equipo universitario, después de haber sido el entrenador del equipo de estudiantes de primer año por cinco años y del equipo universitario júnior por un año.

Mendoza fue delantero del equipo de Sunnyside cuando estuvo en la preparatoria y se graduó en 1985. Jaime Ferguson, quien fue miembro del mismo equipo, se graduó en 1986 y ha estado ayudando al equipo desde entonces.

“Él es el cerebro detrás de la operación,” dijo Mendoza.

The Just Trade Business Development Center, an extension of Just Coffee, will set up the quest for work,” she said.

“Es muy divertido,” dijo Fajardo.

Otro jugador que contribuye a los Diablos Azules es Francisco Mungía, también está en su último año. Mungía, igual que Fajardo, tiene planes de asistir a Pima College para ser parte de su equipo de baloncesto.

Mungía comenzó a jugar baloncesto en el sexto año y ahora juega la posición de delantero para los Diablos Azules. “Me encanta,” dijo Mungía.

Mendoza tuvo un entrenamiento relajado la semana pasada después de haber visto una película para preparar a los jugadores para su partido contra el equipo de la Preparatoria Buena. Una sola victoria mandará a los Diablos Azules al torneo del estado.

Director of Just Coffee, Ari Cifuentes, holds freshly harvested coffee beans that will be packaged and shipped to Agua Prieta, Sonora.

Coffee Company Supports Chipas Growers

By Sean Morris

The parishioners of Southside Presbyterian Church slowly filter into their seats for a bilingual Sunday service. Together they sing a hymn titled “Canto de Esperanza,” or “Song of Hope,” in both Spanish and English.

“May the God of justice speed us on our way, bringing light and hope to every land and race,” they sing.

Members of the south side church are working to bring that “light and hope” to people south of the border through many social justice and border programs they are involved in — one of those is Just Coffee.

Just Coffee is a coffee-grower cooperative that was founded to create living opportunities for the coffee growers of Salvador Urbina, a small town of 7,000 in the southern state of Chiapas, Mexico.

Frontera de Cristo, the section of Presbyterian Border Ministry based in Agua Prieta, Sonora, and Douglas, Ariz., created the coffee-grower cooperative to help struggling Mexican-coffee growing families make an honest living so they don’t feel compelled to immigrate to the U.S.

According to its Web site www.justcoffee.org, the mission of the cooperative is “to provide the training and resources to create sustainable small-scale international coffee company that is owned and controlled by the coffee growers, thus shifting or redistributing the profits from large international non-local companies to the members of the community.”

The Presbyterian church is one of 26 in Tucson that sells Just Coffee after Sunday services. About 300 churches across the U.S. sell the coffee, said Tommy Basset, co-founder of Just Coffee.

Green coffee beans are first shipped from Chicapa to the border town of Agua Prieta, in Sonora, Mexico, where they are roasted and bagged.

Then, the beans are shipped across the border to Douglas, Ariz., and distributed in the United States. The coffee sales from the Just Coffee program support about 35 families of Salvador Urbina.

The goal of Just Coffee is to build a self-sustaining company, but the motivation behind the cooperative is to provide humanitarian aid.

Tommy Basset said he helped create Just Coffee after he saw migrants dying in the desert while crossing the border.

Others involved in the project expressed how the organization is part of their philosophy of giving.

“There is a diversity of theologies among the members of our church, but sometimes it’s the want to help people that brings us together,” said Stanley Cudd, Southside Presbyterian Church manager of Just Coffee sales. “I believe the best way to serve God is to help other people.”

Joanne Myers, Just Coffee salesperson at Our Lady of the Valley in Green Valley, said the U.S. government needs to refocus its funding in its fight against illegal immigration.

“If the government spent one-fourth of the money it would cost to build a wall on the border to help the people of Mexico, they would never even have to think about coming here in the quest for work,” she said.

Just Coffee has been around for several years, but now people are buzzing about how it is planning to expand.

The Just Trade Business Development Center, an extension of Just Coffee, will set up more coffee-grower cooperatives, including communities in Veracruz, Mexico and Haiti this summer, Basset said.

There is no middleman, so all the money from coffee sales goes back to the cooperative.

“This is a new concept,” Basset said. “Normally from the time coffee is produced and the time it gets in your cup there may be four intermediaries.”

Co-Founder Mark Adams looks toward Eller College to see what retail niche our coffee will fill in.” Adams said “Just Coffee isn’t going to replace Folgers — the coffee is more expensive and gourmet.”

Customers can purchase Just Coffee directly from participating churches or the Tucson Community College to see what retail niche our coffee will fill in.” Adams said “Just Coffee isn’t going to replace Folgers — the coffee is more expensive and gourmet.”

To order a pound of coffee for $8 plus shipping, go to www.justcoffee.org. Justcoffee.org should not be confused with justcoffee.net — they are separate companies.

KNOW IF YOU GO:

Residents born before 1950, must apply to State Office of Vital Records in Phoenix for a Certified Birth Certificate. Certified Birth Certificates are available online at www.vitalcheck.com Orders can be placed online or by fax. To download applications, go to the Arizona State Department of Health Services.
Music teacher Laura Barry assists Marco Rivera, a first grader at Drachman Montessori Magnet School, with his violin. Rivera is one of the students who has been able to practice at home because of the music-lending policy.

**Everybody Has Musical Talent at Drachman**

**How it Works:**

The Violin Program is made possible by funds from the desegregation budget and tax credit dollars. The Arizona Tax Credit Program, which gives tax credit in return for donations to schools, is what has enabled Drachman Montessori Magnet School to provide students with student-tailored instructional programs like the Violin Program.

**Violins’ continued from page 1**

"Because they learned so early, the students have wonderful ears and can memorize easily," said Barry. "But third, fourth and fifth grade their ears are well enough acquainted with the sound that they can pick up most songs that they hear without ever having learned them."

Barry said second-grader Mario Durán has greatly benefited from the integration of music and language that the program offers.

"Never too shy to speak, Mario begs Barry to sing his favorite song, "Somos El Barco," with him or let him play the "bam," a tool for students to learn to play specific notes."

We have our students play solos in order to build their confidence in playing the violin and their comfort in playing in front of an audience," Barry said.

"We try not to be too serious and laugh at our mistakes," she said. "We are teaching them not to be afraid and that mistakes are a normal part of learning."

In another effort to facilitate learning through practice, Drachman’s principal, Dr. Jesús Celaya, lends out violins for the entire school year to students who are taking private lessons at home. "As a magnet school, we provide students with something out of the ordinary," said Celaya about the success of Drachman’s violin program.

Marco Rivera is one of the students who took advantage of the violin-lending policy. As a kindergartner last school year, Marco was one of about eight children who signed up to be tutored by students from the University of Arizona string program. He was loaned a violin from the school and was able to practice at home. "You know you’re doing it right when there’s a line on your finger," he said.

Fifth-grader Hector Zepeda attended Drachman from kindergarten to third grade but spent fourth grade at Carrillo Magnet School. After Drachman changed to a K-6 school, Zepeda transferred back. For Zepeda, the hybrid Drachman and Suzuki method of teaching violin proved its success when he returned after not playing violin for nearly a year. He picked it back up easily and said that it was not difficult to remember how to do it.

"I like learning new songs and using them during our performances. I’ve played for different events," Zepeda said. Zepeda, whose favorite song to play is Beethoven’s “Ode to Joy,” comes from a musical family and enjoys talking about his grandfather’s shared interest in music. "I want to keep playing the violin," Zepeda said. "I’m also learning how to play the drums, and my grandma wants me to learn mariachi!"

Drachman provides an environment where children can be children without interfering with their academics, Barry said. The benefits of the magnet school make it so that each student has at least five different people who see them regularly and care about them. "It’s a school that kids like to go to," Barry said. "The students have a good attitude, are respectful and are happy to be at Drachman."

Tess Baze, a second-grader and member of the Fiddle Club, is now at the age where all of the violin lessons are coming together. She is confident in her ability to play violin and expresses a genuine love for it. Someday she wants to be a professional violinist, she said.

The lessons that students learn here extend beyond the music room, said Barry, who uses music-related words to help her students learn to read and spell. The overall goal is to facilitate an environment where students can learn on their own.

"My favorite day of the week is when I get to play the violin!"

- Hector Zepeda, student

**TUSD Offers Dollar-for-Dollar Tax Deduction**

Students in Tucson Unified School District will be able to participate in field trips, after-school programs, tutoring, music education and sports thanks to a program that allows donations to be made for tax credit.

The Arizona Tax Credit Program makes possible a wide variety of opportunities that students in the district might not otherwise have, all while giving the donor a dollar-for-dollar reduction of the actual tax owed to the state of Arizona.

The tax credit can also be taken as a donation on a federal tax return.

Although the limit for donation reimbursement is $400 for couples filing jointly and $200 for single filers during one calendar year, donations of any amount are appreciated. Donors can also designate the specific extracurricular activity the donation will support.

Those who pay no income taxes either through withholding taxes or tax due at the time of filing a tax return are not eligible for the tax credit.

To participate, fill out the tax credit form on the TUSD Web site and attach a check made payable to the school.

Credit card payments can also be used by filling out the online tax credit form.

Completed forms can also be mailed or hand-delivered to the selected school.

Those choosing to submit donations using the online form will be given a printable receipt. For the donation to be sent directly to the school, the school will provide a written acknowledgement of the donation.

All receipt information must be kept to complete an Arizona tax return.

People who wish to donate do not have to live within the TUSD, but must pay Arizona quick fenders,” Zepeda said.

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Strengthening Families Through Literacy

By Mercedes Garcia

Larry Haynes recalled that during his youth his parents lacked the educational background to guide him in school. But others stepped in and encouraged him to read and work hard to achieve success.

Today Haynes, director of Tucson Unified School District’s African-American Studies Department, is dedicated to creating an environment based on literacy as the key to improving the lives of African-American children.

Haynes was instrumental in launching the Family Reading Initiative, a program created in a joint venture by TUSD and three Pima County public libraries to help local African-American children improve their reading skills and to bring families closer together.

“I had a vision to create a program like this,” Haynes said. “I recalled my upbringing and how if it wasn’t for someone else’s support I would not have reached the goals I have.”

The school district and three Pima County libraries, including Quincke Douglas Branch Library, will follow 36 African-American families whose children are attending 16 TUSD schools. They will observe them for a one-year period to examine whether reading at least 15 minutes per day will help boost reading skills among children.

“Even though African-Americans are dispersed throughout Tucson, we want to have a common understanding that it takes a village to raise a family,” Haynes said. “And reading is a fundamental element of success in school is being able to read.”

Elva Smithwhite, a TUSD student and family mentor, said the yearlong program will be a year of building and strengthening students’ reading habits.

“We want to remind people that the gains we [African-Americans] have made are because of education and reading,” she said.

The program, which was launched on National African American Read-In Day on Feb. 4, has been a work in progress since 2006, Haynes said.

Elva Smithwhite, managing librarian at Quincke Douglas Branch Library, 1985 E. 36th St., said she became involved because of the studies that show African-American children are behind in reading. The Education Trust’s 2006 report on Arizona education states that while African-American fourth-graders had reading proficiency scores compared to their Latin and Native American counterparts, they still trailed their Asian and Caucasian counterparts by 13 percent and 11 percent, respectively.

“We wanted to create a program that would help the children within our community,” she said. “And we wanted to involve the entire family.”

Sarah Johnson, mother of 9-year-old Joshua Jones, a student at Holladay Intermediate Magnet School, said she hopes the program will help her son improve his reading abilities.

“I’ve always told Joshua if you don’t learn anything in this world, learn to read and understand what you’re reading,” Johnson said. “I want him to get into reading because he’s not into reading.”

Each family participating in the year-long program has committed to reading at least 15 minutes every day, aside from the required reading students must do for their classes.

Family Reading Initiative, a program created in a joint venture by TUSD and three Pima county libraries to help local African-American children improve their reading skills and to bring families closer together.

“No one is left out."

Giving the Gift of Words to South Tucson Students

By Rachel Allocco

"Learn to read, read to learn."

That is the motto of both the Reading Seed Center and the Dictionary Project, two local programs striving to raise the literacy rate of elementary school students in Southern Arizona.

The Reading Seed Center, 1920 E. Silverlake Road, sponsors a mentoring program throughout Pima County to improve the literacy skills of first through third grade students. The center, founded in 1995, trains volunteers to visit schools and read with struggling students.

The program is designed not to teach the students to read, but rather to encourage children to read on their own. When teachers identify students falling behind, they can request a mentor to come in and work with students for 30 minutes once a week.

“Our program is designed to inspire kids to love reading,” said Allan Tractenberg, the center’s director. Tractenberg worked as a mentor for seven years before becoming the program’s director in 2005 when the Rotary Club of Tucson decided to help fund and enter the program.

“They built us the lending library and the donation library for kids to take books home,” Tractenberg said.

The center is less than a mile from South Tucson, which is one of the most in-need areas and also one where it’s difficult to place volunteers. The center is holding an information session for parents in hopes they will volunteer in their child’s school.

“Maybe placing the parents in the schools will be easier since they don’t have to undergo the same kind of background checks,” Tractenberg said.

The center lacks Spanish-speaking volunteers for students who are non-English speaking. The center also needs volunteers fluent in European languages like Romanian and French to help tutor refugee students from Eastern Europe and Africa.

In addition to receiving mentors from the Reading Seed Center, some South Tucson schools are receiving dictionaries from the Kino Rotary Club, through their literacy project that gives dictionaries to third grade students.

“It really helps the students improve their skills in reading to get their own dictionary,” said Connie Curnett, Kino Rotary Club president.

Kino Rotary sponsors three elementary schools: Drexel, 801 E. Drexel Road; Miller, 6951 S. Camino De La Tierra, and Ochoa, 101 W. 25th St.

“By giving them this tool it will help the students become better readers, better spellers, better writers and hopefully it will increase their skills as they advance,” Curnett said.

The Kino Rotary Club also sponsors the Kindergarten Round-Up program, which gives every kindergarten student at participating schools a packet of storybooks, crayons and other supplies. The goal is to encourage children to read with their parents so they can begin the literacy process early on.

Parental involvement in the process is important, said all three directors. Tractenberg said, “I've heard from parents that some immigrants are unable to read in their native language, much less English.

We know that there are many parents who don't have access to books, but also help build better family relationships.

‘Every three months we'll have parties to offer encouragement and rewards,’ she said. ‘All the rewards will be literary-based, like magazine subscriptions and books. We want to build literacy leaders within our community.’

Johnson said in just the two weeks she and her son have participated, the program has already helped her son read better and has brought them closer together.

“I’m already learning more about Josh,” she said, “and I’m going to make sure the program works for him. We’re going to keep up with the activities.

Janice Carroll, mother of four children participating in the program, said she thinks most if not all program participants will complete the program.

“It’s more important that the kids want to do it because they’re the key factor,” she said. “Parents are there to encourage the kids but the kids have to want to be a part of something that is going to benefit them and make them successful.”

At the end of the year, students’ test scores will be compared to previous AIMS tests to measure improvement. TUSD will do this fall 2008 when students take the AIMS test in fifth grade, Kunnie said.

Programs like the Family Reading Initiative have been proven to work elsewhere.

The 100 Book Challenge, a program similar to the Family Reading Initiative, was a part of a two-year study. From 2002 to 2004, the 100 Book Challenge in Philadelphia tested elements similar to the Family Reading Initiative among first through third grade students.

Students read for 30 minutes every day under teacher supervision at school and for 30 minutes every day at home with their parents.

The study found that the results closed the achievement gap between Caucasian and African-American students by 71 percent, dramatically increasing African-American children’s performance.

Kunnie said she hopes the program will have similar results in Tucson.

“We do our part to support the families this year, to help change their lives,” she said.
Rodeo Parade is Feb. 22. For more information visit www.tucsonrodeo.com

Butterfly Magic
Come construct your very own car to compete with others in this Santa Rosa Neighborhood Center event, which is part of the Santa Rosa Saturday Specials. Entry is free and open to everybody. It will start at 12:30 p.m. and end at 2:30 p.m. at 1080 S. 10th Ave. Call 791-4589 for more information.

13th Annual Southwest Indian Art Fair
Feb. 24
Tucson’s premier Southwest Indian Art Fair will be filled with art and culture. There will be singers, storytellers and native dancers, as well as artists selling authentic creations. This fair art will go from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Saturday and from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Sunday. Single day admission: $8 adults, $3 children 12-16 (no cost for children 11 and under). UA and Pima CC students: free with school ID. For more information go to www.statemuseum.arizona.edu

Bilingual Storytime
March 1
This is a free service of the Pima County Public Library that gives parents and their children a chance to read together in a fun way. Children can read, sing songs, and do crafts that promote the learning of language as their parents participate. This event is free and open to all ages. It will be in the Sam Lena-South Tucson Library, 1607 S. Sixth Ave. The classes start at 11 a.m. and end at 11:30 a.m. For more information call 791-4791.

Southwest Indian Pottery Tile Exhibition
March 16
“Clay 2: Southwest Indian Pottery Tiles” will be displayed at the Arizona State Museum for a few months starting in March. This exhibition will highlight the tile-making traditions of the Puebloan peoples of the Southwest. Work by artists such as Pat and Kim Messier will be on display, as well as Arizona State Museum’s own collection. For more information call 621-6302 or visit www.statemuseum.arizona.edu.

Writing Workshop
March 7
Nuestra Raices will hold a writing workshop titled “Quién soy yo?” or “Who am I?” with Tucsonan Silvana Wood, who is a playwright, actress and director. This is a bilingual journal-writing workshop for teens with exercises that will reinforce their feelings about their culture. It will focus on the language and history of the Arizona-Sonora desert as well as the family and its traditions. It will take place at the Sam Lena-South Tucson Library, 1607 S. Sixth Ave., from 2 to 4 p.m. For more information call 791-4791.

Fashion Show
March 12
On the 2nd Saturday of every month, at the Tucson Botanical Gardens, 1607 S. Sixth Ave. It starts at 2 p.m. and ends at 6 p.m. The show is free to the public.

Men’s Pride Fashion Show
March 17
At the Tucson Botanical Gardens, 1607 S. Sixth Ave. It starts at 10 a.m. and ends at 11 a.m. The show is free to the public.

Southwest Indian Pottery
March 21
A demonstration of traditional southwestern pottery will take place at the Arizona State Museum, 1380 N. Stone. It starts at 1 p.m. and ends at 3 p.m.

St. Patrick’s Day Parade
March 17
Twenty Years O’Growin’ is the theme for this year’s parade. There will be activities for kids including jumping castles and train rides. The event is organized by the St. Patrick’s Day Parade Committee of Tucson. The festival starts at 10 a.m., while the parade will begin at 11 a.m. at Armory Park.

If you have an upcoming event to tell El Independiente readers about please contact us at elindyua@gmail.com