



2026 Higher Education and High School Graduates Celebrated During Recognition Event



L to R: Lisa Chavez, Louis Hunter, Larissa Rascon, Kylie Gardner, Joanna Peters, Richard Joaquin, Xavier Garcia, Aaliyah Alvarez, Alyssa Wind, Julia Dickerson, Tristianna Antone, Auciana Miguel, Owen Santiago, Desiree Cara, Ronin Gloria, Janelle Deloney, Siann Ugalde.

Story and photos by Megan Quintero

The Ak-Chin Education Department held their Annual Student Recognition celebration at Ak-Chin Circle Elements Center on May 7, 2026, beginning around 5:30 pm.

The evening began with Nicole Carlyle-Coester, Community Services Manager, opening up the event, and introducing Dr. Mario Molina, Education Director, who gave a welcoming speech. Once Dr. Molina was done, Nicole then

welcomed Lerline Peters and Doria Garcia from the Ak-Chin Language Program for a prayer and song. Dinner was then provided by Ak-Chin Elements Center.

After everyone was done with dinner, keynote speakers Kylie Gardner and Auciana Miguel, both Maricopa High School graduates, went up to the stage together to speak.

Kylie and Auciana both shared an inspiring speech, titled,

“The future is not a matter of chance, it is a matter of choice.”

“Our future is constantly shaped by the decisions we make both big and small. Whether it’s deciding if you want to go to class or work, or proactively clearing up your tasks to avoid blockage, or to lie to yourself and say I will get it done later and procrastinate. These final decisions we make have a huge effect whether it’s our education, our career paths, our relationships, and

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NARF Executive Director John Echohawk presents Board Member, Robert Miguel, with a Pendleton blanket at the conclusion of Miguel's final meeting after six years of service.

Miguel Honored At Final NARF Board Meeting

Story by Robert Miguel, photo by Gayla Hoseth

Six years ago, I received a phone call from John Echohawk, Executive Director of the Native American Rights Fund (NARF), to potentially seek my interest in sitting as a member of the Board of

Miguel continues to Page 5



Grandfather and Grandson, Samuel Atrawi and Yael Ramirez celebrate following the Championship Game.

Ramirez's Soccer Season Ends with Good Things

Story and photos by Kristen Villegas

At all ages, your likes and dislikes play a huge roll in your life, as they are your source of dopamine or in the case of dislikes, the bane of your existence. But what stands out are your likes as they can grow into passions and for some,

Good Things continues to Page 7

TEAGAN DELMA PHOTOGRAPHY



Sarah Delma is escorted by an Apache Crown Dancer as she prepares for the last day of her Sunrise Ceremony at Juniper Tanks on the San Carlos Apache Reservation, May 3.

Sarah Delma Completes Apache Sunrise Ceremony

Story and photos by Runner Staff

Ak-Chin member, Sarah Delma, age 12, just completed her Apache Sunrise Ceremony, a sacred four-day traditional ceremony that has been performed by young Apache girls for centuries, symbolizing the transformation into womanhood.

Sarah and her family began preparing for the ceremony about a year ago, selecting her Co-sponsors, Medicine Man and those who would help support Sarah's Camp. Meanwhile, Sarah began training; running to build up her stamina, learning how to

make four traditional types of bread, creating her own wikiup and building her physical and emotional well-being.

On Friday, May 1st, Sarah and her partner Amaya made the four different breads that were shared among the camps for her Godparents and Medicine Man Tero Hinton, during the food exchange.

Later that day, Sarah's godmother Kelly, would come

Sarah continues to Page 10



Kylee holds her masterpiece creation.

Kylee's Art Show

Story by Megan Quintero, photo by Diana Carlyle

Kylee Carlyle's art piece was selected to be featured at the Legacy Traditional Schools East Regional Art Festival. On Saturday April 18th, her piece was shown on

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Elder moms embrace Mother's Day activities

The Ak-Chin Him-Dak hosted their annual tea party at the Ak-Chin Mission School on Thursday May 7.

Delicately decorated, the Mission School transformed into a perfect tea party setting with small appetizers, salads, sandwiches, desserts, tea and lemonade.

The cutest craft was also provided, as tiny canvases and easels were given out for all to paint and decorate with dried flowers.

Afterwards everyone played Bingo and won! To end the day everyone was also gifted a bag of goodies.

Friday, May 8, Ak-Chin Elder Program also offered a lovely day of activities for their moms, starting with

Momosas – an orange juice drink, with fresh pureed strawberries, a splash of club soda and blueberries, along with a charcutier cup filled with yummy meat, cheese and fruits.

While everyone enjoyed their drink and snacks, they were also able to decorate their own flower pot with paints, which was then filled with their very own planted flowers.

The day included a delicious lunch.

To all the mothers - grandmas –aunties – sisters – and all the pet moms– we thank you all for your compassion, wisdom, patience and friendship, day in and day out – everything you do for your families you do with love – Happy Mother's Day to All!

Stories and photos by Raychel Peters



Elders enjoy Cinco De Mayo lunch and Lotería

On May 5 th, Cinco De Mayo, the Ak-Chin Elder Center celebrated with a Mexican-themed lunch of carne asada tacos, corn elote, beans, Mexican pastries and a super refreshing (and super sweet) bottle of Mexican made Coca-Cola!

After lunch, everyone was invited to the conference area to play a few rounds of Loteria.

Elders had fun listening to the Spanish names for the Loteria cards and searching for the pictures to

mark on their cards.

After many rounds of the Mexican-Bingo game, prizes were awarded to many lucky winners!



May Elder Calendar

| SUNDAY | MONDAY | TUESDAY | WEDNESDAY | THURSDAY | FRIDAY | SATURDAY |
|--|--|--|--|---|--|----------|
| <p>Breakfast Served from 7 AM to 8:30 AM Lunch Served 12 noon to 1 PM</p> <p>Craft Room is OPEN from 8 AM to 3 PM</p> <p>Menu Subject to Change without Notice</p> | | | <p>For Transportation Call Georgia at 520-568-1760 Call After Hours 24/7 520-858-5043</p> <p>Calendar is Subject to Change & Cancel without Notice</p> | | <p>5/15 Potato Casserole, Scrambled Eggs, English Muffin, Fruit & Yogurt</p> <p><i>Elder Day Trip to Ghost Ranch Exotics Zoo & Lunch, Marana, Bus Departs at 8 AM</i></p> <p>Pinto Beans, Beef & Barley, Carrots, Corn Bread, Apple/Orange</p> | |
| | <p>5/18 Oatmeal, Boiled Eggs, Toast, Banana</p> <p><i>Goodwill Shopping, Leaving @ 8:30 AM</i></p> <p>Angel Home Health w/Erin Kariuki 12PM</p> <p>Split Peas w/Ham, Beef & Vegetables, Butternut Squash, Crackers, Tropical Fruit</p> | <p>5/19 Breakfast Sandwich, Hashbrown, Fruit Salad</p> <p>Broccoli Cheese Soup, Turkey Sandwich, Green Leaf/Tomato, Pickle</p> | <p>5/20 French Toast, Scrambled Eggs, Sausage, Mixed Berries</p> <p><i>Elder Talking Circle 9:30 am</i></p> <p>Hamburgers, Baked Beans, Cole Slaw, Ambrosia Salad</p> | <p>5/21 Cream of Wheat, Boiled Eggs, Toast, Fruit</p> <p>Squash Casserole, Romain Salad, Wild Rice, Crackers</p> | <p>5/22 Scrambled Eggs, Hashbrown Casserole, Bacon, Fruit with Cottage Cheese</p> <p>Chicken Fried Steak, Mashed Potato, Green Beans, Biscuits, Jell-O</p> | |
| | <p>5/25 Center Closed - Memorial Day</p> | <p>5/26 Oatmeal, Boiled Eggs, Toast, Banana</p> <p>Bar-B-Que Ribs, Plain Ribs (D), Corn on the Cob, Carrots, Romain Salad, Corn Bread Muffins, Pears</p> | <p>5/27 Potatoes with Chorizo, Refried Beans, Tortilla, Fruit & Yogurt</p> <p>Chicken & Sweet Potato, Over Brown Rice Bowl, Broccoli, Avocado, Fresh Cut Fruit</p> | <p>5/28 Cereal, Boiled Eggs, Toast, Fruit</p> <p>Black Eye Peas, Beef & Barley Soup (D), Cauliflower, Moon Bread, Mexican Wedding Cookies</p> | <p>5/29 Bacon, Scrambled Eggs, Potatoes, Avocado, Fruit Salad</p> <p>Tilapia or Baked Chicken, Acorn Squash, Peas, Plums</p> <p><i>Elder Dinner & Movie Night 5:30 pm at Elder Center</i></p> | |
| | <p>6/1 Beef Fajitas, Mexican Rice, Refried Beans, Watermelon</p> | <p>6/2 Egg Salad Sandwich, Pasta Salad, Chips, Fresh Pears</p> | <p>6/3 Creamy Pork Chops, Sauteed Spinach, Butternut Squash, Whole Wheat/White Rolls, Apple Sauce</p> | <p>6/4 Turkey w/Stuffing, Mashed Potato, Green Bean Casserole, Sweet Potato Casserole</p> | <p>6/5 Northern Beans, Baked Chicken (D), Quinoa Salad, Moon Bread, Tropical Fruit</p> | |

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The "Runner" is delivered to all residents and departments of the Ak-Chin Indian Community, as well as surrounding community businesses, interested groups and subscribers.

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ANNOUNCEMENTS
 Announcements and wishes may be dropped off, phoned in, or e-mailed.

ARTWORK, LETTERS, STORIES
 The Ak-Chin O'dham Runner is a Community Newspaper and encourages Community involvement.

If you have artwork, photos, poems or a great story that you would like to share, please contact us so we can include it in "YOUR" newspaper.

If you have suggestions or comments about "YOUR" newspaper, please let the Runner Staff know that too.

All submitted letters MUST be signed by the author and are limited to 200 words.

Authors must also include their name, address, and phone number. Names can be omitted by request. Anonymous submissions will not be accepted.

We reserve the right to edit all submitted material for clarity, grammar and good taste. All submissions should be received as typed or non-cursive writing. Please do not submit UPPERCASE or formatted paragraphs.

Submitted pictures need a return address and brief description. Pictures with no address will remain on file. Allow 2 weeks for return.

SUBSCRIPTION RATE
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AK-CHIN INDIAN COMMUNITY

NEXT DEADLINE
 Don't forget the DEADLINE for the June 5 - 18, 2026 issue is due by **FRIDAY, MAY 29TH**

Please submit all announcements, wishes, etc. no later than **FRIDAY, MAY 29TH**

Material submitted after the **MAY 29TH DEADLINE** cannot be guaranteed placement. If appropriate and relevant, it will be included in the next issue.

Moms get pampered in the Community for Mother's Day

As a way to show love and gratitude to all the mothers in the Community, many departments hosted an arrangement of beautiful activities geared to celebrate all those we call mom!

All moms deserve to be treated like queens and Ak-Chin Community did a great job of providing many opportunities for everyone to enjoy!

Mother's Day Craft at Him-Dak

Story and photos by Megan Quintero

On May 6th, from 4:30 pm to 7:00 pm, the Ak-Chin Him-Dak Art Program held a Mother's Day themed craft night. There were quite a few crafts to choose from, such as, bouquets, bracelets, and wind chimes.

one on the vase. It's always a fun time going to make crafts, whether it's with family, friends or by yourself in your own creative space, so be sure to check out the next craft night!

If you have any questions, please contact the Him-Dak Museum at (520) 568-1350.

The craft pictured is an example of a bouquet with a painted-on picture of oneself or a loved



Crafternoon- Mother's Day Edition

The perfect gift comes from the heart, right? And from making it with your own hands.

With Mother's Day soon approaching, the Ak-Chin Indian Community Library had their regularly scheduled Crafternoon on Saturday, May 9, 2026 for those who wanted to complete their last-minute gifts for their moms.

Up for creation was a recycled book flower vase, that is not only beautiful but eco-friendly.

Using a well-loved hardcover book, scissors, and tape in some instances, you will cut and fold the pages inward to make a slot for your flowers to fit.

Not only is this craft simple, it can be done up extravagantly with many flowers and colors in your arrangement.

Story and photos by Kristen Villegas



The Ak-Chin Library has art-related programs and activities every month, check out their monthly calendar in the Runner or contact them at 520-568-1675.



Preschool Luncheon for Mother's Day

To honor the mothers, grandmothers, aunts, and Godmoms; the Ak-Chin Early Childhood Education department hosted a Mother's Day Luncheon on May 8.

raffled of centerpieces donated by Ak-Chin departments.

Rebecca Springstroh shared via email, "We wanted to thank all the Departments that donated centerpieces to our Mother's Day Event. It was a huge success and the mother's loved the raffled off centerpieces they won!"

This event offered a moment for bonding between moms and kiddos, to share a meal, and accessorize with props at the photobooth, provided by the Ak-Chin Runner. To end the luncheon, the preschool staff

centerpieces; Central Plant, Library, Purchasing, Housing, IS, Education, Events, Courts, Enrollment, Planning and Development, Environmental Programs, Wastewater Operations, Drinking Water Operations, Utility Maintenance Operations, Sanitation, Him Dak, Archives, Security, Him Dak - Art, and Council.

they will love the photo keepsake to remember the day with their littles!

We also want to thank Events for borrowing us the tables and chairs, Public Works Department for bring us the tables and chairs! The event wouldn't have been possible without all of your help!

Thank you all for supporting our Early Childhood Department!

Story by Kristen Villegas, photos by Runner Staff



Ak-Chin Rec Pajama Party for Mother's Day



530pm to 730pm. delicious and nutritious smoothies from Health Education, DIY lip and body scrubs and some pampering items from Tera and Esther, with free haircuts/styling from Leslie.

Ak-Chin Recreation hosted a grand finale of events to kick-off Mother's Day weekend for 30 moms.

The event was a pajama themed evening, that included brushing, decorating,

Everyone who dressed in their PJs were also entered into a raffle.





It was a battle of Gila River teams in the Championship Game as Tribal Dynasty and B.T.B took to the hardwood for the opportunity to hoist the trophy.

Melin S-hodam Wua'i Basketball Tournament

Story and photos by Robert Miguel

It was a Gila River takeover on the hardwood as the Ak-Chin hosted the third annual Melin S-hod'am Wua'i High School Basketball Tournament on Friday, May 1st and Saturday, May 2nd at the Ak-Chin Recreation gymnasium.

Both Gila River boy's and girl's squads, which entered tournament field with identical names, Tribal Dynasty, were able to come out of the tournament with an unblemished record to the capture titles.

In the boy's bracket, Tribal Dynasty, was able to knock out B.T.B of Gila River in the championship game, while the Tribal Dynasty girls defeated NWT for the girl's title. Rounding out the placement teams, were, Az Ballers and Az Lady Warriors, who both finished in third place respectfully.

Ak-Chin boys and girls, played great games, but came up short, both losing out in two games. One of the better and encouraging games,

were that of the Ak-Chin girls, who were seeking their first win ever in tournament play, saw-sawed back and forth with Gila River until the final horn. Ak-Chin was within 30 seconds of their first win, but Gila River was able to control the final seconds, pinning a five-point loss on Ak-Chin.

Each bracket consisted of six teams, with most teams coming from local areas. Although, this years tournament hosted only a handful of teams, Ak-Chin Recreation staff is optimistic with the growth of the tournament field in the next couple of years.



Tribal Dynasty and NWT play in the Championship Game. Tribal Dynasty was able to come away with the win.



Runners make their way down the route during the 5k & 2 mile event.

May The 4th Be With You

Story and photo by Robert Miguel

In continued efforts to provide fitness opportunities and community participation, the Ak-Chin Health Education Program, supported another great event for the community, as they hosted the May the 4th Be with You, Star Wars themed 5k and 2-mile run/walk on Saturday, May 2nd.

The event starting point began at the Ak-Chin Service Center,

and began promptly at 7:00 am, immediately following registration.

Participants, babies, young and old individuals and even a few animals, made their way west on Farrell Road, and then south on Santos Road, before taking to the fields directly behind the Ak-Chin Sanitation/Public Works grounds.

This time, without the interference of wild

pigs, a smooth, calm and relaxing trot/jog/walk was welcomed by the many who participated.

At the conclusion of the event, those who participated, were treated to food, swag and raffled prizes inside the Service Center.

Look for more planned and coordinated events from Ak-Chin Health Education in the next couple of months.

NARF continued

Directors. Mr. Echohawk explained to me the purpose and drive of NARF for Indian Country, the mission statement, and other attributes and highlights of the organization.

Not being too familiar with the association prior to the call, I was really encouraged, interested, impressed and motivated by the comments Mr. Echohawk relayed, that I immediately accepted the offer without having to ask for some time to think about contemplating the request.

During my first meeting and visit to Boulder, Colorado during my orientation, we all gathered in the old NARF building; which was a two-story colonial home; and gave introductions and highlighted our respective communities' identities, priorities and location.

It was the start of not only getting familiar with some of the duties and responsibilities as a Board Member, but the opportunity to start a great friendship with Board Members throughout the United States, such as; Derik Valdo (New Mexico), Lacey Horn (Oklahoma), Kenneth Kahn (California), Rebecca Crooks-Stratton (Minnesota), Gayla Hoseth (Alaska), Jamie Azure (North Dakota), Louie Ungaro (Washington) and Camille Kalama (Hawaii).

Board Meetings were held primarily at the NARF headquarters in Boulder, Colorado, but rotated to other States of where Board Members resided. It allowed me to visit and get familiar with other traditions and cultures and issues of

Native communities from Hawaii, where NARF was assisting in the protection of sacred mountains within the island of Kaua'i.

Anchorage, Alaska was another place of interest as NARF was assisting in fish and wildlife subjects. The opportunity to experience the sightings of the Northern Lights was an extra highlight during our time in Anchorage. It is believed that Indigenous Alaskan cultures view the lights as spiritual manifestations, specifically the dancing souls of ancestors, of the deceased or animal spirits.

One of the meetings during my time, was held here in Ak-Chin. It was wonderful to host NARF and show them who we are, as farmers. The group was so excited to see Ak-Chin Farms and what we produce, especially the potatoes and pecans. A stop at the reservoir, was an intriguing area of interest, where they got to see where our water is received and how it is dispersed to the farm and community.

The stop at the reservoir was meaningful and a heartfelt moment for Mr. Echohawk, who was very familiar with Ak-Chin's Water Settlement back in the 70's. He credited Ak-Chin for paving the way for other tribes throughout the United States to fight and secure water settlements through the Federal Government. He acknowledged the late former Chairwoman of the community, Leona Kakar, for spearheading these efforts.

At Board Meetings, members are able to hear presentations and approve reports that included; financial, planning and

recommendation agendas.

During the formation of the Native American Rights Fund, a governing board was assembled and composed of Native leaders from across the country, those who were recommended and selected, were wise and distinguished people who were respected by Native Americans nationwide.

Since its inception, the NARF Board of Directors has continued to provide the organization their leadership, wisdom, and vision. Former NARF Board of Directors and current Gila River Indian Community, Governor Stephen Roe-Lewis, supported and recommended my nomination to replace him on the Board, when he termed out.


Being part of an organization who continues to hold governments accountable to their trust responsibilities and continues to fight to protect Native American rights, resources, and lifeways through litigation, legal advocacy, and legal expertise, has been one of the highlights of my time in leadership.

Although, I will not be attending meetings after six years, I will always be a part of the Native American Rights Fund (NARF) family/fraternity.

"We ask for nothing more, and will accept nothing less, than the U.S. government keeping the promises made to Native Americans." – NARF Executive Director John Echohawk.

Thank you, Mr. Echohawk, for the phone call six years ago and welcoming me into the family!

AK-CHIN INDIAN COMMUNITY
Capital Projects Office



April 08, 2026

PROJECT CONSTRUCTION NOTICE for WATER SERVICE LINE REPLACEMENT 266 HOMES, AK-CHIN INDIAN COMMUNITY RESIDENTIAL SUBDIVISIONS

Project Description:
This project will replace the water service lines between houses and the water mainline for 266 houses throughout the Ak-Chin Indian Community in Maricopa Arizona. The service waterline replacement will include new service tap connection to the water mainline and installing new water meters. The old service line will be disconnected and the old water meter will be removed. The disturbed areas within the construction limits will be resorted to original position.

Purpose of the Project:
This project will replace the old service lines with new more dependable water service lines and new water meters. The project will improve the water service quality to the houses by minimizing water line breaks and repeated repairs on the old service waterlines.

Safety Precaution:
During construction activities, residents should take extra precautions around the construction areas and keep clear from moving construction equipment.

Timeline of the Project:
The project started construction March, 2026, and will continue for 8 months. Currently working in Mesquite subdivision, and will start on Greasewood subdivision south, next. Water service lines for several houses were successfully replaced. Flyer notices will be distributed to the individual houses prior to starting construction on the houses' new water service lines replacement.

Project Team:

| | |
|---|---|
| Owner/Applicant: Carlton Carlyle, Water Operation Manager Ak-Chin Indian Community Phone: (520) 568-1148 | Design & Construction Engineer, Marcus Felter Indian Health Service Western Arizona District Office, Phoenix, AZ Phone: (480) 280-6341 |
|---|---|

**ATTENTION
Community Members
Past Due Fines/Restitution**

If you are delinquent on your fines/restitution, or not sure if you have an outstanding balance. Please contact the courts at (520) 568-1385 at your earliest convenience to avoid the following penalties:

- Withholding of Annual Distributions
- Garnishment of Wages for those working within the Community

You can void any of the above collections by the following:

- You may come and make a payment arrangement and must be consistent.
- You may come to the court and dispute the matter and request a hearing.

their livelihoods. For Ak-Chin brothers, Yael and Hezekiah Ramirez, soccer is what makes them happy.

Currently, playing for the City of Maricopa Copper Sky Soccer league, these boys have dedicated hours to the sport with their family being all the more supportive. The boys began playing as soon as they could walk and haven't looked back since.

Yael and Hezekiah come from a family of soccer players with their mom, Esperanza Miranda and uncle, Issac Miranda playing through their adolescence to teens.

Fortunately, the love for the sport spans from grandparents Sami Atrawi, who played throughout his life in Israel and Yolanda Miranda, who started later as an adult and played for the Maricopa Women's team.

At nine years old, Yael has been playing the game since he was five, starting originally with the Copper Sky league. Yael's participation in Soccer extends to the Maricopa United Football Club for boys and girls; where he has

been for three years now. Maricopa United FC is one of the programs that works on bringing competition and skill at an advance level to players.

As a striker, Yael's job on field is to focus on making goals and be ready to push the offense forward, look for openings to find a chance to score, and to go against the other team's defense. Yael's mother Esperanza also played this position during her time of playing soccer.

A team member of the Alpha Warriors and sporting the number 10, Yael has the pleasure of being coached by his grandfather Sami.

Through the coaching of Sami, the Warriors have built confidence during games and have utilized teamwork in every capacity. The first game of the season proved to be the test and ultimately showed that the Warriors meant business as the competitive game ended in a tie of 1-1.

Ending the season, the Alpha Warriors were brought up against the Copa Cobras in the championship on May 9, a team they faced in

the Semifinals a week prior. The sidelines were animated from the start; coaches, family, and fans were at the edge of their seats and through a battle of tit for tat, the Warriors claimed the win with a 2-1 score.

Commenting on Sami and the Warriors, Yolanda shared, "I watched Sami take players with different abilities and make each one of them a Champion. I'm really proud of the entire team."

Four-year-old Hezekiah is on his way to follow in the same suit as his older brother and family. Currently sporting number 22, Hezekiah also plays with the City of Maricopa with team Hedgehogs as an unofficial striker.

Though his age group is only shown the basics of the game, they have a score of 8-2 showing they are a force to be reckoned with.

These boys have great stepping stones to go far with the game of Soccer, and we can't wait to hear more about their achievements in the sport. Congratulations Yael on winning your championship game!

Ak-Chin Baseball opening game in Salt River

Story and photos by Kristen Villegas

Yondell Antone takes the mound in the Salt River Friendship League's opening game.



Opening games began for the Ak-Chin Indian Community Baseball team on Thursday May, 7 at the Von Hayes Little League Field in the Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community.

and stops, but the Empires maintained the lead. At the last inning the score was at 11-2 before Ak-Chin shortened the lead, making the final score 11-7.

Led by Coaches Jordan Gusse, Jacob Dickerson, and Skylar Nash; team Ak-Chin took to the field against the Empires at 6 PM. Throughout the game, team Ak-Chin made great hits

Though they obtained a loss, the teamwork and sportsmanship were a high for the team.

The next games will be at the same location on May 28 and June 4.



Ak-Chin Baseball season final games

Story and photos by Kristen Villegas

The season for the Ak-Chin T-ball and Coach Pitch teams came to an end on May 9th, at the Milton "Paul" Antone Memorial Park, with two rounds of games against Gila River.

to thank all of our T-Ball and Coach Pitch players, parents, and coaches for a great season here in Ak-Chin.

Though the weather was unsavory, it was nice to see the season closing with the kids giving it their all on the field.

It has been exciting to watch these kids grow throughout the year, learning the fundamentals of the game while building teamwork, confidence, and sportsmanship. We appreciate the parents and families for their continued support, encouragement, and dedication throughout the season. Thank you to all of our players for their hard work, positive attitudes, and effort each week."

Jordan Gusse, Ak-Chin Parks and Recreation Program Coordinator expressed, "The Ak-Chin Parks and Recreation Department would like



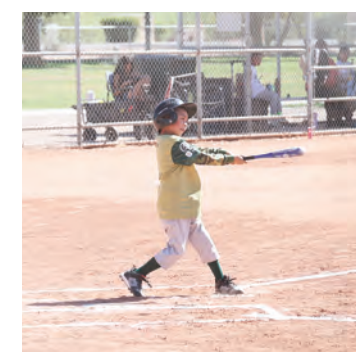
Photo from left to right were submitted by Yolanda Miranda



Above: Yael finds his opening and tries for a goal, helping the Warriors take the 2-1 lead.



Ak-Chin youth during Saturday morning games at Milton Antone Memorial Park.



Top: Team Warriors revel in the competitive win against the Copa Cobras. Bottom: Hezekiah, a lone hedgehog runs the ball to the net for a goal with the green team at his side.

Sorry, No Transportation Provided

June 1st - July 2nd
(5 weeks)

2026 Him-Dak Summer Art Program

(For Members and Residents)

Location: Art Building
(Please drop off kids north of the Art Building)

Time: 8:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m. (Mon.- Fr.)

Ages: K-12th Grade (For Members & Residents)

*Registration is also available at the Him-Dak Museum

*Breakfast, snack and lunch provided.

The Him-Dak Summer Art Program is broken down into four grade groups:
Grades K-1st, 2nd - 4th, 5th - 6th, 7th - 12th
(According to the 1-15 kids signed up per grade group)

For any questions call:
Ak-Chin Him-Dak Museum at 520-568-1350 or
Email Waylon at: wjantone@ak-chin.nsn.us

May the 4th be with you

Story and photos by Kristen Villegas

Star Wars is a highly popular Sci-Fi series of movies, shows, and books that follows intergalactic battles, eccentric characters, and stellar storytelling. Created by George Lucas, this franchise began in 1977 with the film "Star Wars," later changed to "Star Wars: Episode IV A New Hope."

In this first film was also when movie watchers were exposed to the iconic quote of "May the force be with you."

Every May 4th, you can expect Star Wars to be the topic for the day as its donned as the "May the 4th be with you," or National Star Wars Day.

The Ak-Chin Library celebrated the Star Wars franchise with crafting of identifiable Star Wars characters and props; the viewing of "Star Wars: Episode IV A New Hope;" puzzles; and the serving of blue milk.

The crafts were the main focus with stations to create and build characters such as R2D2, which was made using felt and a film canister. BB8 was simple, all you needed was ping pong balls, glue, and a sharpie to etch on its known markings. Grogu was designed with popsicle sticks, felt, glue and paint. Lastly, the lightsabers were constructed with pool noodles, duct tape, and metallic markers.

With puzzles and the movie playing, it was a great way to nerd out to all things Star Wars.

The Ak-Chin Indian Community is known for their celebration of obscure holidays, please check out the library calendar in the Runner or contact them at (520) 568-1675 for information on upcoming events.

Galaxy's Edge Inspired Blue Milk

- 1 cup coconut milk
- 1/2 cup rice milk
- 1 teaspoon of vanilla extract
- 2 tablespoons granulated sugar
- 2-3 drops of blue food coloring
- ice cubes



Top to Bottom: The lightsaber making was a popular craft; Kyla-Jae focuses on painting Grogu correctly; Olivia was just excited for all to see her Wookiee costume, she even received a prize for dressing up.

5th grade presents in Saddleback Wax Museum

Story by Kristen Villegas, photos by Bojana Uzelac, Ak-Chin Student Advisor

L-R: Elmaleen as Rosa Parks, Itzehl as Maria Tallchief, Rosa as Betsy Ross, Eleazar presenting on Alexander Graham Bell.



As a requirement for all the 5th grade students at Saddleback elementary; they were tasked with the job of picking a historical figure and/or famous person to research.

Learning about these icons in history, they would then prepare a presentation for their participation in the Wax Museum. With the preparation, they could don costumes that the person wore or that was related to the time of life then.

Four Ak-Chin scholars participated in the Wax Museum on April 29; through prepared speeches, they presented to all who stopped by their set ups with confidence.

Donning a Rosa Parks-esque outfit was Elmaleen Johnson. Rosa Parks, known as an active leader in the Civil Rights Movements, was most famously known for her refusal to sit in the designated seating arrangement for African American people on a bus; this act of defiance was a key factor in the start of the Montgomery Bus Boycott in Alabama.

Presented by Itzehl Trejo; Maria Tallchief was the first Native American to receive the rank of America's Prima Ballerina in the New City Ballet in New York City. Her ancestry is with the Osage Nation of Oklahoma.

Revolutionary era outfit and presented by Rosa Merriweather was Betsy Ross. A seamstress at the forefront, Betsy Ross was most famously known for her sewing of the first American flag. A known historical example of patriotism, she helped George Washington complete the design of the flag.

Eleazar Baptisto presented all things about Alexander Graham Bell. In his efforts to advance the telegraph beyond its capabilities, Alexander Graham Bell was famous for inventing the telephone in 1876. The first call Alexander made ever was to Thomas Watson, his partner.

Decked in an American Great work students!

THE DINOSAURS ARE COMING TO THE LIBRARY!

Submitted by Linda Brill, Librarian, Ak-Chin Indian Community Library

The theme of this year's state-wide summer reading program is 'Unearth a Story' and dinosaurs are invading the library! June 1st through July 31st there will be games, food, crafts, freebies and, of course, reading about dinosaurs. Sign up for the reading program to win prizes and chances for the grand prizes. Join us on Friday, June 5th from 4 - 6 pm for a dino-mite party to kick off the summer reading program.



Left: Angelo Luz, Library Clerk, and one of our resident artists, designed, drew, painted, and installed one of the dino doors. What talent!

Right: Here's another dino door done by Robin Vincent, Library Clerk and native artist. Soooo much talent in the library!



Special Olympics Torch Run hits Ak-Chin



The Ak-Chin Police Department brought the Special Olympics Torch Run back to the community on May 1. Bikers, runners, and walkers met at the Ak-Chin Justice Complex for a brief meeting at 7 AM to discuss the trek before heading to the starting point; the T-intersection of the 347 and Route 84.

At 8:30, all participants made their way down the 347 to Ak-Chin with Transit buses, Police and EMT vehicles following Close behind. Runner and bikers completed their journey at the enrollment building; this is where the walkers took over headed down Farrell Road and turning near the Justice Complex and down by Desert Willow subdivision.

Once the walkers completed, they were treated to lunch courtesy of the Ak-Chin Police Department.

FIXED ROUTE SCHEDULE

| PICKUP TIMES | BUS SHELTER | LOCATION | PICKUP TIMES | BUS SHELTER | LOCATION | | |
|--------------|-------------|----------|--------------------------|-------------|----------|---------------------|----------------------------|
| 10:15AM | 12:00PM | YES | WB-West of Carlyle Rd | 10:32AM | 12:17AM | Juan and Ross St | |
| 10:16AM | 12:01AM | YES | NE Elders Center | 10:33AM | 12:18PM | Juan and Hohokam St | |
| 10:17AM | 12:02PM | | Apartments | 10:36AM | 12:21PM | Coppersky | |
| 10:18AM | 12:03PM | YES | EB-Elders Center | 10:37AM | 12:22PM | YES | SB -Ak-Chin Circle |
| 10:20AM | 12:05PM | | Vekol Market | 10:38AM | 12:23PM | | Front of Ak-Chin Circle |
| 10:21AM | 12:06PM | | Library and Gym | 10:39AM | 12:24PM | | Front of Casino |
| 10:23AM | 12:08PM | | Lewis and Joaquin | 10:41AM | 12:26PM | YES | Harrahs Casino West Side |
| 10:24AM | 12:09PM | | Joaquin and Joaquin | 10:42AM | 12:27PM | YES | Harrahs Casino South Side |
| 10:24AM | 12:09PM | | Lewis at Park | 10:46AM | 12:33PM | YES | Peters and Nall at Milo |
| 10:24AM | 12:09PM | | Lewis and Manual | 10:47AM | 12:34PM | | Ak-Chin Govt. Headquarters |
| 10:25AM | 12:10PM | | Smith and Lewis | 10:47AM | 12:34PM | | Barley and Pecan |
| 10:26AM | 12:11PM | YES | Bureau of Indian Affairs | 10:47AM | 12:34PM | | Farm and Pecan |
| 10:27AM | 12:12PM | YES | Police Station | 10:56AM | 12:43PM | | Walmart |
| 10:28AM | 12:13PM | | Peters and Narcia | 11:05AM | 12:52PM | | Frys |
| 10:28AM | 12:13PM | | Pablo and Narcia | 11:11AM | 12:58PM | | CVS Pharmacy |
| 10:29AM | 12:14PM | | Pablo and Miguel | 11:14AM | 1:01PM | | ACE Hardware |
| 10:30AM | 12:15PM | | Ralph and Miguel | 11:15AM | 1:02PM | | Walgreens |
| 10:30AM | 12:15PM | | Ralph and Milton | 11:18AM | 1:05PM | | Bashas |
| 10:31AM | 12:16PM | | Ralph and Hohokam St | 11:23AM | 1:10PM | | Sprouts |

Transit will still be offering Free On-Demand door to door pickup in Ak-Chin that can be scheduled up to 7 days in advance. This new route is an addition to our current services. Residents can make unlimited On-Demand Reservations in addition to the new fixed route.

KEY
 WB= West Bound | SB= South Bound
 EB= East Bound | NB= North Bound
 Yes at bus shelter indicates the stop is at the bus shelter

TO SCHEDULE A RIDE:
 CALL: 520-568-1630
 TEXT: 520-340-0382



UNEARTH A STORY™

SUMMER READING PROGRAM

COMING SOON!

JUNE 1- JULY 31 2026





JOB OPENINGS

CURRENT JOB OPENINGS:

- Child and Family Therapist (part-time)
- Communication Officer
- Plant Electrician
- Plant Electrician & Instrumentation Technician
- Police Officer (non-certified)
- Police Officer (certified)
- Security Guard
- Therapist

Open to Enrolled Ak-Chin Members Only

- General Worker (Temp Worker)
- Museum Technician
- Oral Historian (part-time)

www.ak-chin.nsn.us

To review the full job description and apply visit www.ak-chin.nsn.us, Job Openings, and apply online. ALL positions close at midnight (12:00 p.m.) on the closing date. Great benefits. If you need assistance, please call the Human Resources Dept. at 520-568-1050.

Employee Birthdays

5/15 - 6/3

- | | |
|---|--|
| 5/15 Robert Martinez, Sanitation Graciela Ortega, Him-Dak Museum Ricardo Sierra, Police | 5/15 Victor Harer, EPD |
| 5/16 Waylon Antone, Him-Dak Museum David Henson, Fire Estrellalinda Reyes-Helpingstone, Education | 5/25 Delia Carlyle, Community Gov. |
| 5/17 Mauricio Chairez Velazco, Sanitation | 5/26 Edith Munoz, Finance |
| 5/18 Amy Batopis, Preschool Ashley Batopis, Police Rozenda Manuel, Vekol | 5/27 Brian Manuel Jr., TGA Colleen Mike, Transit Maria Tavena-Thomas, Social Service |
| 5/19 Leslie Carlyle-Burnett, Elderly | 5/29 Marla Antone, Human Resources Victor Diaz, I.S Elaine Peters, Him-Dak Museum |
| 5/20 Jose Arteaga Sr., Police Kenny Dan, Planning | 5/30 Jolie Smith, Vekol |
| 5/21 Brian Schaublin, Fire | 5/31 Christopher Hayes, Fire |
| 5/23 Tera Thornton, Education | 6/1 Tristin Martin, Police |
| 5/24 Deidra Carlyle, Planning | 6/2 Pamela Dallas, Contract & Grants Virginia Zepeda, Custodian |
| | 6/3 Abram Campos, Maintenance |

ZUMBA

Ak-Chin Service Center
Tuesdays - 6:00pm - 7:00pm

June.02.2026
June.09.2026
June.16.2026
June.23.2026
June.30.2026

Questions?? Please call Health Education at: (520) 568-1080
*Open to All Ak-Chin Community Members, Ak-Chin Community Residents, Employees and Employee Family Members

FOOD HANDLERS CLASS

TUESDAY, JUNE 09, 2026
AK-CHIN SERVICE CENTER
10 AM - 12:30 PM

Who Should Attend??
• Food Service Workers
• Volunteers
• Interested Community Members



Questions?? or to Sign-Up... Please call (520) 568-1083

AK-CHIN PARKS & RECREATION

SUMMER PROGRAM

JUNE 1ST - JUNE 26TH
MONDAY - FRIDAY | 1:00 PM - 4:00 PM

recreation@ak-chin.nsn.us or call (520)-568-1740

INFORMATION:

- OPEN TO: K-12TH GRADE
- MEMBERS, RESIDENTS, AND EMPLOYEES
- LUNCH: NOT PROVIDED
- DROP-OFF AVAILABLE STARTING AT 4:00 PM

Happy Birthday to our grandbabies!
From Gramma and Grandpa Ojay

Happy Birthday to my daughter Elaine Love, Mom

Happy Birthday to my granddaughters Amaya, Renee, Ariah, and Jolie and my grandsons Oscar, Henry, Daniel Jr., Aaron Jr., and Joseph Jr. Love, Grandma

Happy Birthday Brother Love your Family

Happy Birthday DJ Love, Bapa and Luma

Congratulations to our beautiful daughter Auciana!
Like you said choices...after graduation...you have all the choices, make them good. Always remember we are all behind you and here for you. We are so proud of you and may God continue to bless you and guide you on your path moving forward. Love you, Mom and Dad

WIC

Do you qualify for WIC?
• Pregnant
• Breastfeeding women
• Infants
• Children under the age of 5

WIC foods include: yogurt, fresh fruits & vegetables, baby foods and other favorites such as milk, peanut butter, cheese, cereal and eggs

Tuesday, June 02, 2026
8:30a-2:30p
Ak-Chin Service Center

Questions? Need to make an Appointment?
CALL: (520) 562-9698
Gila River Indian Community WIC Program

DINOSAUR Party

Friday June 5th
4pm-6pm

Kick-off summer reading with crafts, puzzles, food, and fun for all ages!

UNEARTH A STORY SUMMER READING

JUNE 1ST - JULY 30TH

"Unearth a Story" invites readers of all ages to dig into great books, discover new adventures and explore the power of storytelling. All community members, residents, and employees are invited to participate in reading 15-30 minutes daily throughout the summer. Beginning June 1, participants may register at the library (adults may register on Beanstack) and track their progress to earn prizes through July 31st (while supplies last).

Contact: (520)568-1675 or Library@ak-chin.nsn.us
Programs and events open to Ak-Chin members, residents, and employees. Minors under 16 must be accompanied by an adult over 18.

AK-CHIN INDIAN COMMUNITY MARICOPA, AZ

4TH OF JULY VENDORS WANTED

REGISTRATION DEADLINE: MAY 20TH, 2026

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT
BMARTINEZ@AK-CHIN.NSN.US OR (520) 568-1640

RESUME & JOB SEARCHING WORKSHOP

Print out a resume, find resources, and get started with finding a job. 5 spots available, call the library to RSVP. Lunch will be provided.

May, Thursday 28th 12-1PM

PROGRAMS AND EVENTS OPEN TO AK-CHIN MEMBERS, RESIDENTS AND EMPLOYEES
MINORS UNDER 16 MUST BE ACCOMPANIED BY AN ADULT OVER 18.
CALL US: (520) 568-1675 OR EMAIL US: LIBRARY@AK-CHIN.NSN.US

MAY 5/15 - JUNE 6/4 BIRTHDAYS

| | | |
|--|--|---|
| MAY 15 Abel Miguel Graciela Ortega Haley Miguel | MAY 21 Lisa Alejandro | Mikelle Sope Henry Garcia |
| MAY 16 Kristen Antone Yaretzi Montero-Zamudio Waylon Antone Morgan Miller Reannon Manuel | MAY 22 Christian Thomas Oscar Blackwater-Peters | MAY 29 Frederick Antone Elaine Peters David Stephens Carmen DeLeon Yvette Oliver Daniel Lozano Jr. Marla Antone |
| MAY 17 Jaxson Justin Daniel Thomas Amaya Rocha Lucianna Orona Renee Boehm | MAY 23 Avianna Andaverde Cecelia Norris | MAY 30 John Deloney Jr. Jeycee Zepeda Samantha Green Jolie Peters Isabella Antone |
| MAY 18 Emerson Antone Ashley Batopis Johnathan Enos Sienna Deleon Amy Batopis | MAY 24 Deidra Carlyle | MAY 31 Ryan Justin Santos Aguilla Aaron Peters Jr. |
| MAY 19 Johnnie Ormsby Jr. Kameron Hoffman Leslie Burnett | MAY 25 Desiree Carra Jose Miguel III Delia Carlyle | JUNE 1 Cruz Machado Jr. |
| MAY 20 Darrian Justin Ariah Thompson | MAY 26 Makenna Sope Elianna Mariano Zoe Susunkewa | JUNE 2 Astraya Warren |
| | MAY 27 Brian Manuel Jr. Mason Bowman Colleen Norris Maria Thomas Jayden Antone | JUNE 3 Kiandra Smith |
| | MAY 28 Lorenzo Mejia Janice Anderson | JUNE 4 Joseph Zabawa Jr. |

Library Hours

Mon-Fri: 9am-6pm
Sat: 12pm-4pm
Sun: Closed

5/2026 May Awareness Month

| SUN | MON | TUE | WED | THU | FRI | SAT |
|-----|--|-----|--|----------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------|
| | | | | | 1 | 2 |
| | | | | | | |
| 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |
| | THE WAY WE MAY THE 4 TH BE WITH YOU 4-6pm | | StoryTime 10-11am | | Fibers & Friends 4:30-6pm | Crafter noon 1-3pm |
| 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 |
| | | | StoryTime 10-11am Art Therapy 4-5pm | | | |
| 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 |
| | | | StoryTime 10-11am | | | Closed |
| 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 |
| | Memorial Day | | StoryTime 10-11am | Resume & Job Search 12-1pm | | |
| 31 | Closed | | | | | |

Call us: (520) 568-1675 or Email us: Library@ak-chin.nsn.us



The King of the Brown Sound, Little Joe Hernandez, and his band "La Familia" take to the stage at Harrah's Ak-Chin Casino's Events Center, as he performed hit songs from his seventy year musical career.

After 70 Years - The King of the Brown Sound, Still Delivering Great Shows

Story by Robert Miguel, photo by Kristen Villegas

The "King of the Brown Sound", Jose Maria De Leon Hernandez, better known by his stage name, "Little Joe", brought his tour to the Events Center at Harrah's Ak-Chin Casino & Resort on Saturday, May 9th.

Little Joe dedicated the show to all mothers in honor of Mother's Day which was the following day; introed with the popular "La Mananita's" song, much to the approval of the crowd in attendance. Following the intro, Little Joe sang hit songs "Se Lo Dejo a Dios", "Cuatro Balazos", "Buena Suerta", and "Red Mexican Boy", he then followed those up with additional hit

favorites.

Throughout the show, the Temple, Texas Grammy Award winner, kept the crowd entertained with not only his music, but with jokes geared towards his Mexican/Hispanic culture and heritage. He also shared stories of his upbringing and his direction into becoming an entertainer at the age of thirteen, he currently is eighty-five years of age, so a tenure of just over seventy years in the music industry.

At the conclusion of his show, Little Joe ended with his popular hit song, "Las Nubes", translated "Dark Clouds", before making his way off

stage, leaving concert goers thirsting for more.

Throughout his musical career, Little Joe has achieved a number of accolades, from becoming a Grammy Award Winner for nominated albums such as; Timeless, Que Paso and Celebration of Life to being a recipient of a 2023 National Heritage Fellowship, which is awarded by the National Endowment for the Arts, which is the United States government's highest honor in the fold and traditional arts.

Hernandez founded the Little Joe Diabetes and Prevention organization and has organized walk-

a-thons in San Antonio. The Temple Independent School District awarded Little Joe with the school district's first ever honorary high school diploma in October of 2022.

He had to leave school after the 7th grade for migrant work, and all of his education after that was gained through experience. "He wasn't able to finish school because he had to go pick cotton, and literally, drive his family around at 12-13 years old," said his son, Isaac Hernandez, who is also the assistant principal at Temple High School.

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PATIO VIEWS | DINE IN | ORDER TO GO
48456 WEST HWY 238 IN MARICOPA

MIMOSAS ALL DAY, YAY!
MOTHER'S DAY - MAY 10
\$24 BOTTOMLESS MIMOSAS

Must present coupon to server. Not valid with daily or Happy Hour specials. Cannot be combined with other specials or offers. One coupon per table, no split checks. Valid for one visit only. Non-transferable. Must be 21 or older to purchase alcohol. Offer valid Sunday, May 10, 2025.

MOTHERS DAY IDEAL

Proudly owned by the Ak-Chin Indian Community

NEW HOURS & SPACES!

ARROYO ON THE GO

MON-TUES 11AM to last golfer
WED-SUN 11AM to last #miniDunes golfer

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COME PAINT WITH US
WED. MAY 20 | 7 PM - 9 PM

in the Hollywood Room Inside Ten Pins Down

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16000 N. Maricopa Rd. Maricopa AZ 85139



Harrah's Ak-Chin Casino guests donated more than \$26,000 to local area nonprofits through the property's Caesars Makes Change NRT kiosk donations during Q1 2026.

Harrah's Ak-Chin Guests Donate Nearly \$26K to Local Area Nonprofits in Q1 2026

Harrah's Ak-Chin Casino guests donated more than \$26,000 to local area nonprofits through the property's Caesars Makes Change NRT kiosk donations during Q1 2026. The NRT kiosk machines provide an opportunity for guests to give back in a meaningful way by donating their \$0.99 or less change when cashing out their slot machine voucher. "At Harrah's Ak-Chin, giving back isn't just

something we do, it's a reflection of what matters most to us," said HERO Committee Chair Barbara Achten. "What makes it truly special is seeing our guests step up alongside us. The Caesars Makes Change NRT kiosks have shown that even the smallest gestures can add up to something meaningful, and time and again, our guests prove just how impactful generosity can be. We're deeply grateful for their

ongoing support." Organizations featured through the Caesars Makes Change NRT kiosks as donation recipients in Q1 2026 included:

- United Way of Pinal County
- F.O.R. Maricopa
- Meals on Wheels of America
- Valley Humane Society
- Veterans In Need Project

MAY 2026

| SUNDAY | MONDAY | TUESDAY | WEDNESDAY | THURSDAY | FRIDAY | SATURDAY | |
|---|---|--|---|--|--|--|---|
| <p>HONORING OUR HEROES</p> <p>To celebrate Armed Forces Day, visit a Promotional Kiosk on Saturday, May 16, 2026 to print your voucher between 10AM and 7PM, then come to the Caesars Rewards® Center to redeem a PATRIOTIC HARRAH'S AK-CHIN BOTTLE OPENER KEYCHAIN!</p> | | | | | | | |
| <p>1</p> <p>LEVEL UP WITH ONE TAP, DOWNLOAD THE APP!</p> | <p>2</p> <p>LIVE MARIACHIS</p> | <p>3</p> <p>SUNDAY SHOPPING SPREE</p> | <p>4</p> <p>MONDAYS NEED DUNKIN, TOO!</p> | <p>5</p> <p>TECH ESSENTIALS GIVEAWAY</p> | <p>6</p> <p>10X REWARD CREDIT MULTIPLIER FOREVER YOUNG STRIKE IT LUCKY</p> | <p>7</p> <p>YOUR CHOICE TO PLAY YOUR WAY</p> | |
| <p>8</p> <p>NEW GAMING SPACE GRAND OPENING HOT SEATS</p> | <p>9</p> <p>SPRING INTO FORTUNE LITTLE JOE Y LA FAMILIA CONCERT</p> | <p>10</p> <p>SUNDAY SHOPPING SPREE MOTHER'S DAY CELEBRATION</p> | <p>11</p> <p>TEE UP AT THE AK-CHIN SOUTHERN DUNES GOLF CLUB</p> | <p>12</p> <p>TECH ESSENTIALS GIVEAWAY</p> | <p>13</p> <p>10X REWARD CREDIT MULTIPLIER FOREVER YOUNG STRIKE IT LUCKY</p> | <p>14</p> <p>YOUR CHOICE TO PLAY YOUR WAY</p> | |
| <p>15</p> <p>LIVE ENTERTAINMENT AT THE LOUNGE WEDNESDAY, FRIDAY AND SATURDAY NIGHTS</p> | <p>16</p> <p>PATRIOTIC HARRAH'S AK-CHIN BOTTLE OPENER KEYCHAIN</p> | <p>17</p> <p>SUNDAY SHOPPING SPREE</p> | <p>18</p> <p>SERVICE STAR SPOTLIGHT</p> | <p>19</p> <p>TECH ESSENTIALS GIVEAWAY SERVICE STAR SPOTLIGHT</p> | <p>20</p> <p>10X REWARD CREDIT MULTIPLIER FOREVER YOUNG STRIKE IT LUCKY SERVICE STAR SPOTLIGHT</p> | <p>21</p> <p>YOUR CHOICE TO PLAY YOUR WAY SERVICE STAR SPOTLIGHT</p> | |
| <p>22</p> <p>SERVICE STAR SPOTLIGHT</p> | <p>23</p> <p>FRY'S FOOD STORES ELECTRONIC GIFT CARD GIVEAWAY SERVICE STAR SPOTLIGHT</p> | <p>24</p> <p>SUNDAY SHOPPING SPREE POOL PARTY LYNRYD SKYNYRD TRIBUTE</p> | <p>25</p> <p>MEMORIAL DAY</p> | <p>26</p> <p>TECH ESSENTIALS GIVEAWAY</p> | <p>27</p> <p>10X REWARD CREDIT MULTIPLIER FOREVER YOUNG STRIKE IT LUCKY</p> | <p>28</p> <p>YOUR CHOICE TO PLAY YOUR WAY</p> | |
| <p>29</p> <p>FOLLOW US ON INSTAGRAM, FACEBOOK & X!</p> | <p>30</p> <p>SUMMER PROJECT BOOST</p> | <p>31</p> <p>SUNDAY SHOPPING SPREE</p> | <p>MEMORIAL WEEKEND</p> <p>FRY'S® ELECTRONIC GIFT CARD GIVEAWAY SATURDAY, MAY 23, 2026 POOL PARTY • LYNRYD SKYNYRD TRIBUTE SUNDAY, MAY 24, 2026 MEMORIAL DAY PROMOTION DETAILS COMING SOON! MONDAY, MAY 25, 2026</p> | | | | <p>LIVE ENTERTAINMENT AT THE LOUNGE WEDNESDAY, FRIDAY AND SATURDAY NIGHTS</p> |

Valid only at Harrah's Ak-Chin Casino and must have a Caesars Rewards card and valid photo ID to participate. Management reserves the right to change or cancel these promotions at any time without prior notice. Must be 21 or older to gamble and take advantage of these offers. Know When To Stop Before You Start! Gambling Problem? Call 1-800-NEXT STEP or text "NEXTSTEP" to 53342. ©2026 Caesars License Company, LLC. See official rules at the Caesars Rewards Center for complete details.

Class of 2026 Ak-Chin Indian Community High School Graduates



Aaliyah Alvarez
Maricopa High School



Arianna Bandin
Desert Vista High School



Perla Corona
Maricopa High School



Xavier Garcia
Maricopa High School



Kylie Gardner
Maricopa High School



Hanola Gloria
Student Choice



Ronin Gloria
Maricopa High School



Nevaeh Johnson
Maricopa High School



Richard Joaquin
Ak-Chin/CAC HSE Diploma



Kylee Machado
Maricopa High School



Auciana Miguel
Maricopa High School



Baya Olivas
Desert Vista High School



Joanna Peters
Maricopa High School



Larissa Rascon
Sequoia Pathways High School



Jeffery Ruelas
Maricopa High School



Owen Santiago
Maricopa High School



Siann Ugalde
Maricopa High School



Carrieanna Villareal
Desert Vista High School

CONGRATULATIONS TO ALL OUR STUDENTS!! FROM THE RUNNER

Thank you to those who submitted photos - we appreciate your assistance.

Ak-Chin Indian Community Middle School Promotees - Class of 2026



Uriayzz Antone
Maricopa Wells



Ricky Attakai
Maricopa Wells



Kylie Hill
Maricopa Wells



Narin Lopez
Maricopa Wells



Cruz Machado
Maricopa Wells



Corianna Nevarez-Vallejos
Maricopa Wells



Aurora Peters
Maricopa Wells



Bella Ramon
Maricopa Wells



Amaya Rocha
Maricopa Wells



Parris Jade White
Maricopa Wells



Norissiyah Yarberry
Maricopa Virtual Academy



John Zabawa
Maricopa Wells

Gioni Pablo excels in Reading

Submitted by Mercedes Salcido

Ak-Chin member, Gioni Pablo was recently chosen as the only kindergartner at Maricopa Elementary School to read a chapter book. A video of his reading is also featured on the school's website.



This is a wonderful accomplishment for him, especially at only five years old, and it truly highlights his excelled reading abilities.

We are very proud of his hard work and progress.

Gioni is the son of Tashina Salcido and Irvin Pablo.

The Runner would like to share your graduation photos in the next issue.

If you are graduating from school this year, or know someone who is and would like to have a photo placed in the Runner, please send us an email with photo, name, school and grade.

Please email: runnernews@ak-chin.nsn.us or call us at 520-568-1375

Thank You, Ak-Chin O'odham Runner

Preschool Community Worker's Weeks

Story and photos by Runner Staff



Ak-Chin Preschool's three and four-year-old classes started their week off a bit differently than the usual, switching from their regularly scheduled programs to a two week-long series of department visits throughout the community; to get an idea of how the departments work and what their roles are.

Coordinated by Preschool teacher Mrs. Mary, the Community Worker's Week, began on Monday, April 20th, where the day started off with a visit from police officers Espinoza, Cozzens, and Gonzalez, where the kids were led outside to take a look at the inside of the police cars.

There was quite a bit of excitement, once the kids found the buttons for the sirens as well as the intercom. In the afternoon, the youth then made their way to the to the airport where they met Dale, Chris, and Christian, who showed them some of the planes and their engines. They even got to sit and see the inside up-close. Not only did they get to be in the plane, but they also got a free show to see a helicopter land and go. At the end, the children were given little collectible pins.

The next day, April 21 at 10 am, the kiddos took the short journey to the Ak-Chin Fire station where they were greeted by Fire Captain, Jennifer Boehm and the rest of the fire crew. Splitting into 2 groups, the little ones were shown the fire station's living quarters, exercise/training areas, and the inside of a fire truck.

Fire staff shared important equipment and tools used

in emergencies; here the kids were able to touch and hold the items and they soon realized how heavy these materials were. A life size dummy was a highlight for sure, as the youth worked as a team to pull "him" to safety. A few kids tried the challenge of pulling the dummy by themselves, which proved to be harder than anticipated.

Fire recruits then demonstrated how to put on the fire gear when the alarm was rung for an emergency; also highlighting the importance of each component of the gear. To end the visit, the kids were given plastic fire fighter hats, cookies, and high fives.

In the afternoon the youth made their way to GIS/Capital Projects where they were met by GIS/Capital Projects staff and given safety vests and hard hats on their way into the office, they were shown around the office, and were given a presentation on what kinds of things Capital Projects works on. Honestly, I think their favorite part was knocking and stomping on the steel toed boots that were being shown. The kids were also given goodie bags on their way out.

Following a break of the department visits for the Earth Day celebration, the preschool students were greeted at the Ak-Chin Parks and Recreation gymnasium staffers on April 23. Each member of staff introduced themselves, before being split into boy/girl groups for a tour.

During the tours,

Recreation Coordinator, Jordan Gusse shared his job duties, the main one being the overseer and organizer of the sports through Parks and Rec. The groups got a kick out of seeing the pool and the anticipation for its opening for the summer was apparent.

After tours, the Parks and Recreation staffers organized activities that included batting practice, football drills, and basketball shooting. The highlight for the students had to be playing with the multicolor parachute together, they couldn't contain their excitement. The Parks and Recreation staff also gifted them goodie bags full of fun stuff.

Later on, around 1 pm, the children got a visit from Lt. Tanner Wear from Ak-Chin Detention, where he told the kids what his role in the community was and showed them different tools he might use in certain situations. He gave time for the kids to ask any questions. When he was done, he left the kids snacks for the teachers to distribute.

To end week one, April 24th, at 9 am the kids began their day with a tour of their school's kitchen with Mr. Terry. He started off by showing the kids the walk-in refrigerator/freezer, while explaining what he does, along with showing them the pantry, and the rest of the kitchen, and how the industrial dishwasher works.

The main highlight of the tour was the sudsy bubbles that came from the dishwasher when Mrs. Emma turned it

on for the kids to see. Then at 10 am and 1 pm the 3 and 4-year-old classes made their way to the Ak-Chin Runner Department, where Runner staff greeted them and took their class picture before going in. Both age groups were split up in two groups during their visit.

One group went with the graphic team, Eliza and Diana to the print room where they explained a little about their jobs and what the printers do. The other group went with new staff, Bob and Raychel to the office area, where they explained what their jobs were and how the cameras worked. They also did a little Q&A activity, once they were done, staffer Megan took their pictures so the kids could put them on their little journals that they received. Snacks and goodie bags were also provided during their visit.

To start off week two of the kiddos' adventures of the community, Monday April 27th, the preschoolers made their way to the new Purchasing building where they met Purchasing staff, Kathy and Aaron. The two explained their jobs and then took the kids on a tour around the new building. Everyone was in awe once they saw how massive the new space was. The main attraction of the day was the walk-in freezer, the kiddos went in and out of the freezer with big smiles and excitement.

Tuesday April 28th, the

children ventured to their next destination, Ak-Chin Circle. There they met up with staffers David and Brittney. The kids were split into two groups, the first group went with David who took them to the concession stand and showed the groups how to work the popcorn machine. While the other group went with Brittney to the dining area at 347 Grill, where they had lunch while the first group finished up their activity, then vice versa.

Later on, around 1pm the children got a visit from Ranger Grizzle and his dad, where they showed the kids a presentation about the different animals that can be found in the desert. They also had a couple deer skins, a ram horn, deer antlers, and some taxidermed animals on display. After they were done with the presentation, they gave the kids time to go up and touch the things on display.

After a short break, the kiddos started their ventures once again on Thursday April 30th, to start the morning off they made their way to the Ak-Chin Him-Dak Museum where they were greeted by Him-Dak staff and classes were split into two groups. The first group went with the art building staff to go do a few crafts and the other group went with the museum technicians to see the recent exhibit. When both groups were done with their activities, they then switched to

do the other activity. Friday, May 1st, was the last day for the two week-long department visits. To end the week off their last stop was to Ak-Chin Tribal Courts, where they met Courts staff Marcela, Brittany, and Cruz, who took the little ones on a small tour around the building.

The kids were shown to the courtroom, where staff told them their roles in the courtroom. The kids got to try on the judge's robe and hold the gavel. After they were all done the first class went down the hall to see the holding cells, judges' office, and the administrator's office, while the other classes were waiting patiently for their turn.

Once all the classes got done with the tour, they then went back to the lobby where Cruz then showed them his x-ray machine and showed the kids his hand-held metal detector, which the kids seemed to be really excited about.

As they were on their way out the teachers were given goody bags to distribute to the kids.

The day had ended off with a small dance session with music provided by the Akimel Waila Band, back at school from 1230 pm to 2 pm. The kids got to show some moves, and dance their little hearts out!

Until their next adventure to who knows where?



Graduates continued from Front

our daily habits. We need to realize that we are in control of our lives, we control our own decisions, we control our actions, our thoughts, and the outcomes for those who build our destiny, and our realities." Auciana shared.

"Through trial and tribulation how we respond is a choice and defines the directions of the future, don't wait for opportunities when given take action before, because we are in control of how we shape our future, our success will always be a result of the consistent choices we have made throughout life and we must continue to make these consistent

choices." Kylie shared. After the two were finished, Desiree Cara was invited up to speak, where she spoke on her journey from her educational beginnings to now.

Following the keynote speakers, Nicole Blackwell, Ak-Chin High School Counselor presented the 2026 high school graduates with recognition certificates. Once she presented all the high school grads with their certificates then Lenny Dempsey went up to present all 2026 post-secondary graduates with their certificates.

Closing remarks were provided by Ak-Chin Community

Councilmembers, Chairman Gabriel Lopez, Vice-Chairman Delia Carlyle and Councilmember Lisa Garcia.

"The Ak-Chin Education commencement was a resounding success. It was inspiring to honor the achievements of every graduate. Our high school recipients demonstrated remarkable dedication, earning distinguished honors through sustained effort and perseverance. Warm congratulations to the entire graduating class for their outstanding accomplishments this year." Nicole Blackwell shared.

Ak-Chin Child Development

Accepting applications for
Preschool 2026-2027 SY
Deadline is July 13th, 2026

Our office is open
8am-5pm
Monday-Friday
Register now!
First day of Preschool is
August 10th, 8:30am-2:00pm

Enrollment is based on availability and children are selected in the following order:

1. Child is an enrolled member of the Ak-Chin Indian Community.
2. Child is a non-enrolled member, but he/she is the legal child of an enrolled member of the Ak-Chin Indian Community.
3. Child is living within the Ak-Chin Indian Community boundaries.
4. Child is living outside of the Ak-Chin Indian Community boundaries and is enrolled with another federally recognized Native American Community.
5. Child of a parent who is an employee of the Ak-Chin Indian Community.
6. Non-member children based on availability.

Ak-Chin Child Development offers:

- A High Quality Early Education Experience
- Health/Developmental Screenings
- Disability Services (Through M.U.S.D.)
- Kindergarten Readiness
- *Story Time (Provided by Ak-Chin Library)
- *Cultural Activities/Events (Provided by Language Program/Cultural Resources)*
- *Physical/Nutrition Education (Provided by Ak-Chin Health Ed. Program)
- *Fire Safety Education (Provided by the Ak-Chin Fire Department)*
- *Field Trips/Fun activities throughout year*
- Health and Safety Protocols in Place

Transportation provided for children living within the Ak-Chin Community boundaries.

Pick up a 2026-2027 Enrollment Packet at Ak-Chin Child Development.

Please bring in the following documents to be considered for enrollment

- Completed Application
- Certificate of Degree of Indian Blood (CDIB) if applicable
- Child's Certified Birth Certificate
- Child's Current Immunization Record

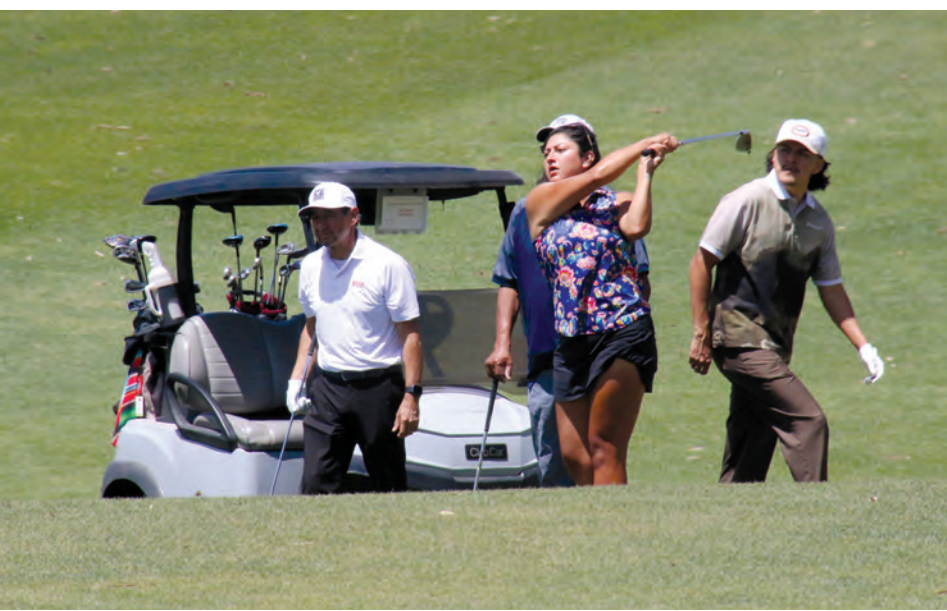
(returning students only need the current Immunization Record and a completed Returning Student application)

Only completed applications with required documents will be accepted. Children registering must be three (3) years old prior to September 1st of the current year.

If you have any questions please contact the Preschool at

48251 W. Farrell Rd.
Maricopa, AZ 85139
(520) 568-1700
Ak-ChinChildDevelopment@ak-chin.nsn.us

Ak-Chin Hosts Successful Him-Dak Golf Tournament



Morgan Peters takes a good swing in hopes of placing her ball into a great position during the Him-Dak Golf Tournament at Southern Dunes. Looking on are teammates Robert Miguel, Cecil Peters and Tommy Jensen.

The Him-Dak staff would like to thank all sponsors,

team participants, Government and Southern Dunes staff, volunteers for making this happen. Ak-Chin Community



Edward Farrell prepares to putt as his teammates, Mae Donohue, Ak-Chin Chairman Gabriel Lopez and John Donohue make their way to the hole.

Story and photos by Runner Staff

Despite the renovation and upgrade construction ongoing at the Southern Dunes Golf Club, the Ak-Chin Him-Dak Museum held their annual golf tournament, with a sellout of over one hundred teams participating.

Following a "Welcome" by Ak-Chin Tribal Chairman, Gabriel Lopez, carts made their way through the course and to their respective starting holes. At registration, each golfer was given a voucher to purchase merchandise and gear, which featured; golf gloves, hats, golf balls, bags and other goods.

All teams worked together to get the best scores possible, from teeing off from a par 5 or a par 3, the opportunity to eagle, birdie, or par was the goal. If a bogey

was met, you were in trouble and playing catch up. For some, teeing off and driving to their best of their abilities, was an opportunity to showcase their long drives, while others focused on their short drives, chipping and putting.

There were contests set up throughout the course. If you were lucky, a hole in one was the ultimate prize winner, and if you got closest to the hole or making a long putt, you also were guaranteed to walk away with a good gift. Choice gifts were offered as raffle items, along with a 50/50 raffle, with the winner taking home a pretty nice chunk, with proceeds dedicated to the Him-Dak Museum Endowment fund.

Mini-sliders were offered at the turn and a late meal was catered for

all golfers following the tournament. While golfers enjoyed their meal and a well-deserved break, the top three teams were announced, as well as raffle winners.

Overall, it was another wonderful event at one of the more challenging golf courses in the State, which is ranked the #5 golf course to play.

Managed by Troon and designed by professional golfer, Fred Couples, the course has hosted numerous tournaments and events since it celebrated its opening in 2002, serving as an annual U.S. Open qualifying site. The PING Southwest Section PGA Section Championship, several top collegiate Men's and Women's golf tournaments, and home of early-state Korn Ferry Tour Qualifying School.



Him-Dak staff: Waylon Antone, Florinda Peters, Jeannette Peters, and Director Elaine Peters, enjoy a little break during the tournament.

Kylee continued from Front

display at the Mesa campus from 12pm to 3pm. She also received a certificate of recognition from the school. Kylee shared with us how she came up with her sculpture.

"Personally, for me, thinking about a concept for my clay sculpture was difficult at first.

In the beginning, I was originally going to make a few random fruits. Until I saw one of my classmates making a pie. From my original idea and taking inspiration from my classmate, I decided to make a fruit cheesecake.

The overall process of making the actual sculpture was a bit

difficult with making sure everything stayed together and didn't fall apart. The painting process was a bit less tedious as I had an overall color pallet to follow. In the end, the sculpture turned out great in my opinion, even though I faced some difficulties, the end product was worth it."



UNITED IN PROTECTING ARIZONA'S WATER FUTURE

COALITION FOR PROTECTING ARIZONA'S LIFELINE

Arizonans depend on the Colorado River, which is threatened due to drought and a desire by Upper Basin states to use more water from a shrinking river. Join mayors, along with business and tribal leaders, to protect and defend Arizona's lifeline.



Ak-Chin Indian Community – Chairman Gabriel Lopez | City of Apache Junction – Mayor Chip Wilson | Arizona Chamber of Commerce and Industry

Arizona Water Company | City of Avondale – Mayor Mike Pineda | City of Buckeye – Mayor Eric Orsborn | Town of Carefree – Mayor John Crane

City of Casa Grande – Mayor Lisa Navarro Fitzgibbons | Town of Cave Creek – Mayor Robert Morris | City of Chandler – Mayor Kevin Hartke | City of Coolidge – Mayor Jon Thompson

East Valley Partnership | City of El Mirage – Mayor Alexis Hermosillo | City of Eloy – Mayor Andrew Sutton | EPCOR | Town of Florence – Mayor Keith Eaton

Town of Fountain Hills – Mayor Gerry Friedel | Town of Gilbert – Mayor Scott Anderson | City of Glendale – Mayor Jerry Weiers | City of Goodyear – Mayor Joe Pizzillo

Greater Phoenix Leadership | City of Peoria – Mayor Jason Beck | Greater Phoenix Chamber of Commerce | Town of Litchfield Park – Mayor Thomas Schoaf

Town of Marana – Mayor Jon Post | City of Mesa – Mayor Mark Freeman | Town of Oro Valley – Mayor Joe Winfield | Pascua Yaqui Tribe – Chairman Julian Hernandez

City of Phoenix – Mayor Kate Gallego | Pinal Partnership | Town of Queen Creek – Mayor Julia Wheatley | Town of Sahuarita – Mayor Tom Murphy

Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community – President Martin Harvier | City of Scottsdale – Mayor Lisa Borowsky | Southern Arizona Chamber of Commerce

Southern Arizona Leadership Council | City of Surprise – Mayor Kevin Sartor | City of Tempe – Mayor Corey Woods | Tohono O'odham Nation – Chairman Verlon M. Jose

City of Tucson – Mayor Regina Romero | Valley Partnership | Town of Youngtown – Mayor Michael LeVault | West Valley Regional Chamber | WESTMARC

Learn more about the Coalition for Protecting Arizona's Lifeline at ProtectingArizonasLifeline.com

to her campsite to dress her for the ceremony. She wore a traditional handmade buckskin dress with adornments, an abalone shell and eagle feather tied into her hair, a T-necklace intricately beaded with her name, the Virgin Mary, Hummingbirds and the Man in the Maze that was tied around her neck. She also received a cane with a bell and feathers, all important items to give her strength, protection and spiritual blessings throughout the four days.

Friday night, Sarah would be led to the ceremonial grounds for the first night of social dancing, where she would dance to 32 songs, sung by the Medicine Man and his singers.

Saturday, Sarah was up before sunrise, to go to the ceremonial grounds for her next round of social dances. As she faced east, towards the sun, she danced, keeping beat with her cane to the drumming and singing.

At one point, she would begin dancing on her knees, while her godmother helped raise her hands towards the sun and sway her from side to side, giving her guidance and support. Once Sarah completed the dance, her godmother would then help Sarah lay down on her stomach, still facing the sun, and then give her a massage.

Afterwards, Sarah, her partner and godparents were instructed by the medicine man to run to different distances marked by her cane, and to the four directions. Everyone was also allowed to join in the run, that was followed by a giveaway.

Sarah was then blessed by everyone with pollen and cornmeal. Some also requested for Sarah to bless them; guided by the medicine man; she shared her strength and healing powers.

There was a long break for lunch and for Sarah to get rest for the evening's social dance.

Just before sunset, an Apache Crown Dancer came down the mountain-side from the west, to let everyone know that the other crown dancers, also known as Ga'an (Mountain Spirit) Dancers were coming to the dance.

Sarah and her partner were joined by three more young women who came to dance with Sarah and the crown dancers. As the crown dancers began to dance around the fire, Sarah and the other girls soon joined them, following the crown dancers as they wove and spun around the fire.

There was an area just west of the ceremonial grounds where a house was set up. The crown dancers, Sarah and young

women moved from dancing around the fire to dance around the house, until late in the evening.

Sunday, May 3rd, was day three of the ceremony. During breakfast, the same crown dancer came into Sarah's camp once again to let everyone know they would be starting the morning ceremony.

As everyone made their way to the ceremonial grounds, men began to line up in front of the crown dancers, with handfuls of pollen, used to bless the crown dancers. The women lined up next for the blessing.

Afterwards, Sarah began to dance near the entrance of the house, with her godparents and partner, as the crown dancers danced around them. Soon after, the painting ceremony began.

During the painting ceremony, Sarah was led into the house, where each of the crown dancers began to paint her. With branches covered in the white clay paint, she was painted from head to toe. Her godfather also painted her.

After they finished painting Sarah, her godmother was allowed to wipe the clay-paint from her eyes, signifying her eyes opening to her new womanhood.

Sarah and her godfather were then led by the crown dancers around the circle of family and friends that formed. As they danced inside the circle, the godfather blessed everyone with a spraying of the clay paint.

Once the painting ceremony was completed, everyone was allowed to join Sarah as she walked through her house, going in each of the four directions to bless it. The line entered from the east then went south, west, north, and then everyone did a spin to the right, to conclude the blessing.

Everyone then made their way back to the campsites for lunch, followed by the gift exchange where both camps journeyed to the other bearing gifts of housewares, food and specialty gifts for the family. Once the gifts were divided and shared, many started their journey back home.

On Monday, the last day of the ceremony, Sarah was taken to the creek to cleanse, while the campsites were taken down.

Sarah's family would like to thank everyone who came out and supported, not only Sarah, but the family as well. "Special thanks to our moms, Uncle Johnny, BJ, Alice, and everyone who supported us to help make this possible."

Trash to Treasure – Bloom Where You're Reused!

May is all about sunshine, growth, and getting your hands a little dirty, in the best way possible! This month, we're turning everyday "trash" into something beautiful and useful for your home and garden.

Before you toss that item in the trash, ask yourself: Can this bloom into something new?

Recycled Planters with Personality
Instead of throwing away plastic bottles, tin cans, or milk jugs, transform them into colorful planters!

- Supplies (Use what you have!)**
- Empty containers (plastic bottles, cans, cartons, boots)
 - Paint or markers
 - Scissors
 - Soil & seeds (herbs, flowers, or veggies)



- How It Works:**
1. Clean and dry your container
 2. Cut openings for planting
 3. Decorate with fun colors or designs
 4. Add soil and your favorite plants
 5. Place in a sunny spot and watch it grow

Why It's a Great "Trash to Treasure" Project?

Living in the beautiful desert means being mindful of our resources. Repurposing materials:

- Reduces waste in landfills
- Saves money
- Supports creative thinking
- Helps protect our environment

Even small actions, like reusing a bottle, can make a big difference over time.

Use this Trash to Treasure? Please email photos to Brandy Nelson at BNelson@ak-chin.nsn.us at Environmental Programs with results.



Saturday, May 2nd, in the early morning, myself and a few others made our way to Sarah's camp, it was day two of the four days she had been at her home away from home.

It was a first-time experience for all of us to see in person. We all thought it to be very intriguing to see how they do certain practices, like getting up early before the sun rises to go dance and being ready to dance by the time the sun sets.

It was nice to learn all kinds of different things from the people around me instead of just running straight to technology, not that technology is bad or anything plus I didn't have any service anyway, but it was just nice to pick at everyone's brains and being in the moment. – *Meg*

Although we've seen short videos and or documentaries of the ceremony on social media or have educated ourselves a little or were told about it by someone who's seen the ceremony first hand, so we kind of had a bit of an idea about what we're going to see, but whatever we might've seen online wasn't exactly what we actually saw in person, there was a lot more to it.

We were also amazed at the fact that she was able to dance for so long and that she made her own wikiup. Also thank you Sarah and Nikki and the rest of your family for allowing us to be a part of something so special. – *Toka Team*

What I learned is that it takes a lot of hard work and sacrifice to make a ceremony like this one happen. It made me feel happy for her, I heard with ceremonies like this one it's something that tests you mentally, physically and emotionally.

Seeing Sarah made me feel good for her, seeing her play on the Toka field I knew she would be a strong girl when going through this. It was really interesting and memorable.

Very refreshing as well to be disconnected from the world even if it was just for a day. I've seen something similar and that was attending a coming-of-age ceremony on the Tohono O'odham Nation when I was in middle school. Other than that, this was my first time attending an Apache sunrise ceremony.

I would like to see the process of how the girls build their little "home" for



their ceremony. I found that really neat that they build their own "home" for their ceremonies. – *Daria Garcia*

Honestly, what I've learned from this experience is that having a strong foundation and support system goes a long way when it comes to preparing for Ceremonies.

Everyone works together with a strong heart and a strong mind. It made me feel very good and happy. She took on each task with such strength and grace.

There was a moment when she was dancing all night, she was beginning to feel tired. It made me feel sad seeing her tired, but I had to remind myself that this is going to give her all the strength she needs as she ventures on with her life, each dance is with a purpose and that is what makes her stronger.

It was a very awesome and unique experience! It really made me think a lot. Reflecting on myself and the stuff I take for granted, let alone, being present and enjoying each hour, minute, and second of the day. It felt very refreshing to be away from technology and to be isolated away from the city, enjoying nature all around. I am also very happy that my mom, Dad, and sister got to experience this ceremony.

It brought us together and made one another take the time to reflect and enjoy each event that happened during Sarah's doings.

I would love to learn about her dance partners and their roles when they were

dancing alongside Sarah and behind the Crown dancers, I found that very interesting and curious about the significance behind that particular moment.

I would also love to learn about their social dancing, I guess you could say something along the lines of social dance etiquette. I wouldn't mind learning how to dance as well! – *Doria Garcia*

First off, a huge thank you to Sara, Nikki, Willard Delma and family for inviting our family to Sara's Sunrise ceremony. We were very honored to witness Sarah go through her traditional ceremony, as well as seeing she was showered with so much love, support and encouragement from her family, extended family, godparents, friends and invited guests. Sara showed great strength, commitment, determination, and so much pride for her traditional and cultural beliefs.

We will say that one of the nights during her dance with her support of dancers and crown dancers, she definitely brought out some bright stars and moon, which was such a beautiful sight.

At one point, the stars looked like they were twinkling along with the beat of the drums, like they were dancing along with her. That showed us the blessings she had brought upon everyone present.

Sara, you were tremendous and placed your heart and soul into it all! – *Thank you, Davis and Dorissa Garcia and family*



TEAGANDELMA PHOTOGRAPHY

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