



# West Valley VIEW

The community newspaper of Avondale, Buckeye, Goodyear, Litchfield Park & Tolleson, AZ  
Phone (623) 535-8439

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## Phone home

*Cell phone drive helps troops keep in touch*

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Your old, out-dated cell phone can actually be quite valuable.

A program called Cell Phones for Soldiers offers a system for recycling phones and provides pre-paid calling cards for troops serving overseas.

The Beta Alpha Xi chapter of Phi Theta Kappa International Honor Society at Estrella Mountain Community College in Avondale is holding a phone drive to support the cause.

"One of our members found this over the summer and we said, yes, this is definitely something we want to do," said Annette Wilson, chapter president.

Any cell phone may be donated at the campus security office in Komatke Hall at the college, which is at Dysart and Thomas roads. Donations are tax-deductible.

Phi Theta Kappa members also will collect cell phone donations from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Oct. 18 during a fundraising yard sale at the college.

Wilson, who is in the honor society for her second year, said Cell Phones for Soldiers is an easy way to help the troops and it benefits the environment.

"Everyone wants all the bells and whistles now. Our phones have almost become an accessory to our wardrobe," she said, explaining how that leaves plenty of older phones behind. "And we're also keeping electronic waste out of the landfills."

ANNETTE WILSON spearheads the Phi Theta Kappa honor society's Cell Phones for Soldiers drive at Estrella Mountain Community College. Donated mobile phones are refurbished or recycled and the money buys pre-paid calling cards, which are given to troops serving overseas so they can call home.

Cell Phones for Soldiers was started by two teen siblings in Massachusetts four years ago. Their family has maintained the project and seen it grow beyond their dreams, they said.

"It's fabulous. It's heart-warming and tremendously motivating," said Bob Bergquist, president of Cell Phones for Soldiers.

The program has raised more than \$2 million for servicemen and women to be able to call their families. Between June 2007 and June 2008 alone, 1.7 million phones were donated.

The phones are sent to a company called ReCellular, which pays Cell Phones for Soldiers for each donated phone. It's enough to provide an hour of talk time to a soldier abroad.

About half of the phones ReCellular processes are reconditioned and resold to wholesale companies around the world. Phones and components that cannot be refurbished are dismantled and recycled.

"The phones go to the company in Michigan, but everything else goes through our house," Bergquist said. "It's tremendously time consuming, but worth it."

Cell Phones for Soldiers tries to make sure that locally based troops receive the benefits of a cell phone drive such as the one at EMCC.

"It's the groups like that that make this happen," he said.

One weekend in October, Cell Phones for Soldiers sent 25,000 phone cards to five camps in the Middle East, Bergquist said.

The phone drive at the college is planned to last through Nov. 15, and may be extended if there is continued interest.

"We will take as many as we can get," Wilson said. "We may run this again. Or we may say we'll keep it going until the troops come home."

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