

# West Valley View

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

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## The year's top stories

View report

Sometimes it's hard to remember everything that's happened during the course of a year. Fortunately, you need not possess the best memory. The *View* went through its files to dig up some of the big stories that we felt impacted the Southwest Valley and the people who call this region home. Here are the top newsmakers the *View* reported on in 2010.

### January

- Eighteen town of Buckeye employees were laid off - the third such reduction in force for the town. Early retirement incentives and the reductions were used to address continuing revenue shortfalls which have caused multi-million-dollar budget deficits to the town. The cuts amounted to about \$8.8 million.

### February

- Federal judges threw out the confession offered by an Avondale youth in the 1991 slaying of nine people at a West Valley Buddhist temple.

The decision by the 9th Circuit U.S. Court of Appeals cleared the way for Johnathan Doody to be set free or to face a new trial in the case.

In a 106-page opinion, the appeals court said the confession was obtained by Maricopa County sheriff's deputies in violation of Doody's right to remain silent.

Doody, who was a 17-year-old Agua Fria High School student at the time of the killings, was sentenced in 1993 to 281 years in prison after confessing to the murder of six months, a nun, a monk-in-training, and a temple worker at Wat Promkunaram, 17212 W. Maryland Ave. Another Agua Fria student, Allesandro "Alex" Garcia, was convicted separately from Doody and was sentenced to nearly 300 years in prison for first-degree murder and other crimes related to the Buddhist temple massacre.

Prosecutors argued at Doody's trial that robbery sparked the killings and that the nine victims were put to death by Doody and Garcia for cameras, electronic equipment, and \$2,790 in cash.

- In a move to reduce city expenditures by about \$5 million, Avondale terminated the use of traffic enforcement cameras and laid off seven employees, in addition to a

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number of other cuts

With the elimination of mobile vans with speed cameras and the red-light cameras at the intersection of Dysart and McDowell roads and at Dysart Road and Van Buren Street, the city saved about \$425,000, the single largest budget reduction in the city.

The city also laid off seven employees, adding to the 28 employees that got the boot when revenue began declining in 2008. In addition to the seven cuts, another 6.5 positions were eliminated through unfilled vacancies, voluntary separations or early retirements for almost \$1 million in savings.

## March

- Prosecutors said they would file a petition with the U.S. Supreme Court, asking to reinstate a confession offered by then-17-year-old Johnathan Doody in the 1991 massacre of nine people at a West Valley Buddhist temple.

The decision to file the petition marked an effort to prevent Doody's murder conviction and 281-year prison sentence from being overturned.

A federal appeals court in February had tossed out the 1991 confession, citing that Doody's right to remain silent had been violated.

- Since Cancer Treatment Centers of America's Western Regional Medical Center in Goodyear opened in late 2008, more than 600 patients have received specialized care.

Those patients weren't just receiving good care, they were receiving the best care in Arizona. In March, CTCA was named the leading medical center in the state by the *Arizona Business Magazine*.

The medical center competed among all types of hospitals - private and public - to earn the accolade. The award is part of the magazine's annual Healthcare Leadership Awards program.

- Avondale completed its largest capital improvement project to date: a \$40 million water resource center named for former Councilman Chuck Wolf.

Water used in homes and businesses is treated at the plant and sent to a recharge facility six miles away, where it is sent back into the ground aquifer. The plant incorporates the latest methods for creating a completely renewed water resource. Wolf played a key advisory role in managing Avondale's water resources.

## April

- Like most municipalities, the city of Avondale was looking at balancing a budget with less money coming in than it would like to spend. In the end, Avondale approved a \$157.5 million budget.

The budget was down from a \$225 million budget the year before, which was already down 21 percent from the 2008-09 budget.

The budget was balanced without requiring an increase in taxes, but did borrow \$3.5 million from the city's \$19.5 million fund balance, which is essentially a balance of unspent proceeds the city has saved.

- Just months off completing its first season of art walks on Western Avenue, Avondale continued to make progress in Old Town Avondale. As part of the revitalization process, the city knocked down a collection of 40-year-old multi-family housing units long considered an eyesore and hotbeds for crime on Hill Drive between Third and Fifth streets.

The city took over the properties in 2008 in an effort to control the area crime rate better. The Old Town Avondale Revitalization Area is about 2½ by 1½ miles with a population of about 11,000 people. It's considered one of the city's main priorities.

## May

- Voters passed Proposition 100, a temporary 1-cent sales tax increase that went into effect June 1 and is expected to raise almost \$1 billion each year until it expires May

31, 2013.

Two-thirds of revenue generated will fund K-12 and higher education and the other one-third will go to health and human services and public safety.

- Goodyear's City Center project, including construction of a new City Hall and library, was deferred for up to 36 months. The City Council narrowly approved the deferment by a vote of 4-3.

Postponing the construction required Goodyear to return \$500,000 of a \$1 million deposit back to developer Lankford and Associates.

- The city of Avondale took over as the official caretaker of Goodyear Farms Historic Cemetery. SunCor Development Co. had owned the land that the cemetery sits on. The developer, however, was in financial hardship and needed to divest of the property.

Goodyear Farms Cemetery is the final resting place for many of the campesinos - or farm workers - who labored the land that is now known as Avondale, Goodyear and Litchfield Park.

## June

- Goodyear and Litchfield Park agreed to share fire and emergency medical services.

The intergovernmental agreement provides Litchfield Park with municipal fire protection, emergency medical service and a part-time residential and commercial fire inspector, courtesy of Goodyear.

- Tolleson joined a lawsuit against Senate Bill 1070, citing the potential for racial profiling and an unfair burden placed on cities already strapped for funding. The City Council voted unanimously to do so, accompanying other municipalities, including Flagstaff, San Luis and Somerton, in their opposition to the controversial state immigration law.

## July

- Air Force officials announced Luke Air Force Base as its top contender to land the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter.

The Glendale base, which is the largest F-16 training facility in the world, is one of five sites being considered as a training site for the new jet.

While Luke has pushed ahead as the favorite, an official process must be followed to continue evaluating all sites. The final decision won't be announced until next summer.

- A three-day boycott was launched over a social networking site by the United Goodyear Firefighters Association and the Goodyear Police Officers Association.

The groups posted on their separate Facebook accounts a message informing their members of their rights to "choose to patronize businesses that we would consider are supporters of public safety," said Steve Gilman, president of the firefighters association.

The posting was made on a Tuesday after a City Council meeting was held the previous evening and which included several public comments from Goodyear business owners who opposed the budget.

Business owners collected more than 340 signatures of those who opposed Goodyear's budget, which included motions to continue a uniform allowance for the departments and \$1.5 million in vehicle and fleet maintenance and replacement.

## September

- The Goodyear City Council agreed to authorize and direct City Manager John Fischbach to execute a job creation and training agreement with Sub-Zero, a leading refrigeration manufacturer.

Sub-Zero bought the 440,000-square-foot Palm Valley 303 building located northwest of Loop 303 and Indian School Road.

About 100 employees from Madison will relocate to Goodyear along with 288 employees

from Phoenix.

- The Goodyear Police Department in conjunction with volunteers rolled out You Are Not Alone or YANA.

The free program offers welfare checks, either in person or by the phone, to residents age 55 and older.

## October

- The U.S. Supreme Court ordered a new round of hearings in the case of Jonathan Doody, 36, who is serving a 281-year term at a Buckeye prison for the murder of nine people at a westside Buddhist temple in 1991.

In a brief order issued in October, the nation's highest court directed the Ninth Circuit U.S. Court of Appeals to reconsider its February ruling disallowing a confession obtained from Doody, which could have led the way for Doody to be set free or face a new trial.

The order in the Doody case thus opened the door to a new wave of appeals on whether his Miranda rights were violated by Maricopa County sheriff's deputies, as claimed by the San Francisco-based court.

- The Union Elementary District came out of financial receivership after three years under the watchful eye of the state.

Receivership came about after Union's previous administration overspent the district's budget by a total of \$2.5 million between 2005 and 2007.

It was given nine years to pay back the debt and has already made two 5 percent installments, plus an additional \$400,000 to the state last year. It still owes \$1.6 million, but is on the track to recovery.

- Goodyear expanded its foreign trade zone to include a 198-acre parcel owned by Duke Realty Corp.

The motion to approve the land and designate it as general purpose within the Greater Maricopa Foreign Trade Zone or GMFTZ was a unanimous decision made by the City Council.

In total, Goodyear has 663 acres within a foreign trade zone, which allows businesses to import or export raw materials or end products without being taxed because they are deemed as located outside of the country.

- Avondale voiced outrage over a proposed freeway alignment. The latest development in the State Route 801 saga involves an alteration to the so-called southern alignment, which the city had preferred to other options. The alteration pushes the southern alignment even further south, abutting the Gila River. In doing so, valuable development opportunities are lost to the south side of the freeway. The City Council decided to move forward with its own vision for the area and let the freeway work itself out later on down the line. As it stands, the freeway won't be built until sometime in the 2030s.

- Avondale considered annexing a county subdivision that would increase the city's population by about 4,000.

Wigwam Creek South, which had previously been denied annexation by Litchfield Park, asked Avondale to take them in. Members of the Avondale City Council generally were OK with the idea, but many logistics need to be worked out and an economic impact study needs to be conducted. Wigwam Creek residents will have to wait. The entire annexation process can take upward of a year.

## November

- The Buckeye Town Council unanimously approved hiring Stephen Cleveland as its permanent town manager. He previously held the position in an interim capacity.
- Goodyear Vice Mayor Georgia Lord resigned just three days after Mayor Jim Cavanaugh resigned because he was dissatisfied with the council.

Lord's decision to resign was based on the state law, which requires her to resign in order to seek election of a new office - the mayor's.

- Avondale's much anticipated Northwest Public Safety Facility opened at **Estrella Mountain Community College**.

The \$3.8 million facility allows for quicker response times should an emergency occur in the city's northwest quadrant.

- Avondale dreamed in color, and its dreams are now a reality. The big, colorful youth and amateur sports facility along Avondale Boulevard opened for business.

The 83,000-square-foot American Sports Centers Avondale @ Randall McDaniel Sports Complex includes two indoor soccer fields, four basketball courts, six volleyball courts, a multipurpose room and a food court.

The facility is expected to bring in the numbers necessary for legitimizing the rest of Avondale's 400-acre urban development known as the Avondale City Center, which the sports complex calls home, and which the city is banking on for transforming Avondale into a destination location.

- Tolleson says no to fireworks. The City Council rejected the use of such consumer explosives within its jurisdiction, citing safety issues and limited resources.

Approved by the state Legislature during the last session and signed into law by Gov. Jan Brewer, the law prohibits local jurisdictions from taking action that would interfere with the sale of consumer fireworks, but does allow cities and towns to restrict the use of fireworks within their jurisdictions.

- The Avondale City Council gave its economic engine a jump start by approving the first steps necessary for what could eventually be a \$100 million development project at Phoenix International Raceway. By approving facility improvements and extension of public utilities at the race track, the city ensured it was facilitating PIR's greater development goals, and thereby, Avondale's.

Officials hope to create a mixed-use mecca - a regional and national destination that could include such uses as restaurant and entertainment venues, hotels and resorts, as well as racing-related facilities for research, development, and testing of race vehicles.

- The Tolleson Fire Department moved into its brand new \$6.3 million fire station. The department's 27 firefighters now have nearly 17,500 square feet to roam about, a substantial increase from their previous headquarters. The old facility, built in 1983, was structurally unsound and only 6,000 square feet.

- A new landmark center viewed as a catalyst for redeveloping downtown Tolleson broke ground. La Entrada Tolleson is a 45,000-square-foot mission-style **community** and retail plaza that will include the city's first major grocery store as well as an outdoor amphitheater to stage various events.

- Avondale voters resoundingly passed Proposition 406, altering the City Charter so that city elections will be held in the fall of even-numbered years. City elections had previously been held in the spring of odd-numbered years.

City officials claimed the change in Avondale's election cycle would save the city a great deal of money and allow for greater voter turnout.

Current City Council members now tack a fifth year onto their present terms.

## December

- The Saddle **Mountain** Unified District emerged from financial receivership after three years.

Veriti Consulting was appointed by the state in June 2007 to oversee the district after it overspent its budgets by more than \$5.1 million.

In addition to already having paid back 25 percent of its debt, Saddle **Mountain** has operated within its budget for the last three fiscal years and had carryover each year.

- Goodyear City Councilman Joe Pizzillo was appointed as the interim vice mayor and

will also fill the roles and responsibilities of the mayor until the March 2011 election.

- Avondale joined a growing list of Arizona municipalities - including Goodyear, Tolleson, and Buckeye - in banning the use of consumer fireworks within city limits.

Approved by the state Legislature during the last session and signed into law by Gov. Jan Brewer, the law prohibits local jurisdictions from taking action that would interfere with the sale of consumer fireworks, but does allow cities and towns to restrict the use of fireworks within their jurisdictions.

- The Tolleson Police Department moved into its brand new \$10.4 million public safety facility. The 40-member force now finds itself in a spacious 22,000-square-foot station, which replaces an outmoded structure that was only about 3,500 square feet, and had been in use since at least 1964.

- Marie Lopez Rogers, mayor of Avondale, was selected to serve as the second vice president on the National League of Cities, an organization that represents municipal governments throughout the United States. The position puts her in line to be elected the group's president in two years.

The NLC is the country's oldest and largest organization devoted to strengthening and promoting cities as centers of opportunity, leadership and government. The organization serves as a resource and advocate for 19,000 cities, towns and villages, representing more than 218 million Americans.

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