

JANUARY 2010 NEWSLETTER COLUMN

Happy New Year everyone! I know that y'all are busy thinking about your resolutions for the coming year but the one fervent wish I hear expressed more often than not is: "Here's to 2010 – it HAS to be better than 2009!" Will this New Year be better? I, for one, am cautiously optimistic; however, my crystal ball is still at the dry cleaner's so your guess is probably as good as mine.

So what would we all like to see in a new and improved 2010? A greatly improved employment picture, a steady influx of new residents (buying to own homes as opposed to renting), a stronger more optimistic local economy, and a state legislative session that is focused on solid and balanced (reduced spending as well as increased revenues) solutions for the state's budget crisis. I, and undoubtedly many others, would also be very pleased if the legislative session was a lot less rancorous and exhibited lots of statesmanship replete with bi-partisan cooperation rather than the power politics that were the hallmarks of 2009's sessions.

Why, you may ask, am I hoping for more new residents in Pinal County? First of all, they'll bring "new" money into our local economies. Secondly, new long-term residents will begin to deplete the huge inventory of housing units that are sitting empty – when that inventory (estimated to be in the vicinity of 75,000 units statewide) drops to around the 20,000 unit level, the housing industry will see a resumption of meaningful activity. Third, new residents usually presage a heightened interest in the region on the part of those who work with industries looking to relocate and/or expand their national footprint – and we can definitely use more employment opportunities in Pinal County!

But let me be frank: I do not expect nor want the hyper growth that dominated the first decade of this century. Although that was a time of excitement and "opportunity," it was also setting the stage for the woes and challenges of today. At the risk of evoking Aesop's about the tortoise and the hare, slow and steady growth is far better in my book than hyper growth. We can easily plan for and accommodate steady, balanced growth and development in terms of infrastructure (*i.e.* schools, roads, public facilities such as libraries and parks, telecommunications such as cable and/or phone, etc.).

I also believe that our ability to manage our natural resources (air quality, water, etc.) is better done at a slower pace so that we avoid making misassumptions or errors in calculations leading to limited options for future generations. From the communities' viewpoint, a slower and more modest infusion of families allows an easier and less traumatic change to local cultures (*e.g.* civic and community organizations, long range plans capturing a community's vision for its future, etc.). Slower growth and development allows the forces of acculturation to mitigate the stresses and traumas of hyper growth – we can "grow into" our new selves.

OK – enough philosophy. But before I totally leave the topic of the lingering effects of 2009, I'd like to put in a plug for those of us still afloat (economically speaking that is) to consider embarking on a regimen of regular contributions of non-perishable foodstuffs,

clothing, and/or money to a local food bank or thrift store of your choice. Our food banks are operating at maximum these days and their clientele often consists of folks who were contributors of food and money just a year or so ago. As the consequences of our continually challenged economy continue to ripple through our communities and unemployment stays in excess of 11%, the need for some assistance for our friends and/or neighbors remains. Think of it as paying ahead.

In closing, here are two things for your calendar. The Greater Casa Grande Chamber of Commerce is holding its Home & Health Show at the Pinal County Fairgrounds on Saturday, 23rd from 10 a.m. until 5 p.m. In addition to showcasing local businesses and products, the Pinal County Attorney's Office and the County Sheriff's Office are collaborating in an effort to collect old and unused prescription drugs (from 10 until noon). By the way, there'll also be lots of beautiful cars and motorcycles on display at the Fairgrounds as part of the Chamber event for all you Motor heads! And don't forget the 24th Annual Agri-County Bluegrass Jamboree at the Fairgrounds over the following weekend. For more information, go to <http://pinalcountyaz.gov> and click on the County Fairgrounds link.

David Snider, Supervisor
Pinal County District 3