

## FEBRUARY 2009 NEWSLETTER COLUMN

Wow – what a month! I don't know about you but it does seem to me that every organization, agency, group, and other entity in western Pinal County has a mind to do something during the next eight months! In fact, I may need to take a nap after writing this column due to exhaustion from having talked about only a fraction of what's going on. Well, enough anticipation – let's get on with this month's offering. For those of us who love a great parade, there are two classic parades on tap – one right after the other.

Saturday, February 14th is our world-famous O'odham Tash parade which helps celebrate the cultures and accomplishments of our Native American neighbors, the O'otham peoples. You may know our friends and neighbors better as members of the Tohono O'odham Nation, the Ak-Chin Indian Community, the Gila River Indian Community, and the Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community. The O'odham Tash celebration was established to honor them and give us all a chance to better appreciate our commonalities and differences in this County of Pinal. It's a great parade and a great weekend of things to do.

A week later, the Ira B. Hayes post of the VFW hosts the 64th Annual Celebration of the landing at Iwo Jima with a dinner, parade, and Pow Wow over the course of the weekend of the 20th. The pageantry is picturesque and I can attest to the fact that the assemblage of proud veterans and prouder still families is awe inspiring. I've had the great fortune to participate in this event for some years and look forward to this year's events. Sandwiched in between these grand events is the American Indian Music Fest (Feb. 13-15) at the Casa Grande Ruins National Monument. It's the first ever of its kind here in Pinal County and will showcase an incredible array of Native American cultural talent – including the Akimel O'dham Basket Dancers plus the Native Spirit Dancers, led by hoop dancer Brian Hammill. For more information on this wonderful event, go to <http://www.nps.gov/caqr>.

In the meantime, Pinal County employees have hooked up with the United Way of Pinal County to collect non-perishable food items for the county's nearly depleted food banks. There are collection boxes in most County complexes (including Building A at the County complex at 820 E. Cottonwood Lane in Casa Grande) for general donations. Food items given to the drive will be distributed to the nearest food bank serving that community. The recent holidays have seen an enormous run on food bank supplies but the demand is not going away. Please consider a donation so that our local food banks can help make the difference between a family going hungry or surviving to turn the corner to self-sufficiency.

A quick look in the rearview mirror: congratulations and kudos to the various award winners as recognized by the Casa Grande and Maricopa Chambers of Commerce! Dick Powell, Jim Norris, Nancy and Michael Jackson, and Sandi Hennessey in Casa Grande were feted for their near century of collective volunteerism and activism on behalf of the Casa Grande community. The Maricopa Chamber roundly celebrated the contributions of Courtney Tyler, Wendy Webb and the F.O.R. Maricopa Food Bank toward the well-being of our County's newest city. All of these individuals have labored long in the fields of our communities without a thought for recognition or recompense: they've been focused on the goal of making our western Pinal County area the best it can be and they've quietly helped people beyond count. Congratulations and thanks everyone – job well done!

On a final note, I'd like to note in particular the passing of two special people – among the many that have left us this past month. Sherry Jackson-Cameron devoted herself to her family and education, among many other pursuits. After a long career with the Mountain Bell phone company (now better known as Qwest), she dove into substitute teaching in the Sacaton Elementary School District with the same kind of gusto she brought to every endeavor. Sherry went to a better place early in February after a long battle with illness – she'll be missed but fondly and lovingly remembered by many. Randy Edmond died suddenly at the beginning of February. He was the face of water for the Pinal Active Management Area on behalf of the Arizona Department of Water Resources for nearly thirty years, serving as the AMA Office's Director for the last ten years. He worked tirelessly to shepherd the area's water resources and shaped the public policy debate locally to do his best to ensure the preservation of water resources for future growth and development and generations to come. My friend was also a teacher – spending countless hours explaining the complexities of water law, policies, and history to reporters, elected officials, planning commissioners, and the general public. Just before his death, Randy began a campaign to adopt the McCartney Elementary School with an eye to collecting funds and supplies for the school's classrooms. Folks interested in helping out can contact Patricia Smith at 520.423.2944 for more information.

**David Snider**, Supervisor  
Pinal County District 3