

PINAL COUNTY LIFESTYLES
FEBRUARY 2010

Gosh – is it February already? It seems like it was only yesterday that I took down the Christmas decorations and took the final boxes of non-perishable foodstuffs to the Food Bank. Oh well – guess I'll dig out the 2009 receipts and start working on my tax returns. Sigh.

Speaking of things-to-do on my checklist, I've started looking for my 2010 Decennial Census form and I hope you all are doing so as well. Why am I looking for the census form? It's because there's so much riding on this inventory of who's residing in our cities, counties, and country. What's at stake? Quite a lot when you consider that some \$400 billion worth of federal funding is distributed on an annual basis to state, county, and other local governmental agencies (including schools) – based on population data.

In fact, there's quite a lot of state funding for counties, cities and towns, and school districts that is also driven by population-based formulae – although that amount of state funding is currently being affected by today's downturned economy. Revenue streams such as state-shared sales taxes, Highway User Revenue Funds, etc. continue to be critical to both local governments as well as community agencies like hospitals, job training centers, senior centers, and a variety of public safety entities.

The short form questionnaire will be mailed to most homes in March and the sooner the form's returned, the sooner these deserving agencies will be better positioned for a more accurate distribution of these federal and/or state funds. For more information on the process, go to <http://pinalcountyaz.gov> and click on the hot link for US CENSUS 2010 – information in both English and Spanish is available via the website.

Let's move on to some transportation-related issues since transportation facilities are something that we all use daily. Pinal County planners have been hard at work over the last 18 months – in consultation with the cities and towns and Indian communities of our county – to put together the first phase of our Transit Regional Feasibility & Implementation Study. As we get ready to move forward with the next steps, an analysis of existing transit infrastructure and market demand projections (based on current and projected population estimates) is being fine-tuned. Pinal County is taking the leadership position in planning for and coordinating this critical element of future transportation. I'll have more to report in the coming months.

Several months ago I recently had the good fortune to ride along in the cab of one of Union Pacific Railroad's engines in order to observe conditions at local road crossings, from the train engineer's perspective. This educational program, called Operation Lifesaver, is part of a nationally funded (by all railroad companies) program to educate public officials, public safety and public works representatives, school bus operators, and others who regularly cross rail lines as a part of their regular business.

Nationally, a collision occurs between a train and vehicle or a train and a pedestrian nearly every two hours with about half of all crossing collisions occurring at highway-rail intersections with flashing lights and/or gates. And since the train always “wins” those confrontations, it’s in everyone’s best interests to take those flashing lights, ringing bells, warning train whistles, and lowered guard-arms as seriously as possible.

OK – pull out your calendar and make room in your schedule to visit the Pinal County Fairgrounds at 11 Mile Corner Road and SR 287 (aka Florence Blvd.) for a really fun event this month. The 7th Annual “Running of the Gourds” festival takes place on February 5, 6, and 7 and features thousands of locally grown gourds in all sizes and shapes. Grown and hosted by the Wuertz family, some are hand painted while others celebrate the artistic beauty of naturally grown gourds. It’s quite an event and lots of fun for everyone.

Speaking of fun for everyone, don’t forget to set aside March 17 through the 21st – the 2010 Pinal County Fair will be offering up a panoply of fun things for everyone: arts, crafts, rides, musical entertainment, exhibits by the county’s 4H and FFA organizations, an awesome junior livestock auction that generates scholarship funds for local youth, and some of the best fair fare in the state. Because as everyone knows, you haven’t really lived until you’ve wandered through the midway with a turkey leg the size of a baseball bat in one hand and a towering cone of cotton candy in the other!

See you around Pinal County!

David Snider

Pinal County Supervisor, District 3