

PINAL COUNTY LIFESTYLES MARCH 2011

Welcome to March – its time for the last minute rush to collect receipts and file those income taxes. It's a month without holidays (well, holidays that result in a day off from work or the classroom) and if you believe the Farmer's Almanac, this month's showers should bring May flowers. It happens here too – on occasion but not always,

There are several things about the month of March – flora and precipitation notwithstanding – that are also constants: most municipal budget preparation processes are in full swing by now, 4-H and FFA groups are putting the final touches on livestock for the Junior 4-H Livestock Auction and other competitions, and the Wuertz's (fabulous) Gourd Fest is now just a memory but already focused on next year's extravaganza.

First, the budget process. As most of you Gentle Readers know, the Board of Supervisors enunciated its budget philosophy in a January meeting: there will be no increase in the County's property tax rate, the hiring freeze will continue, no new programs or services will be approved (unless they're cost-neutral to the County), and the so-called Rainy Day (or budget balance/stabilization) Fund is reserved for purposes of bonding capacity and possible program/cost shifts to the County by the State Legislature.

The Board has also clarified its commitment to public participation in the budget process. Budget documents will, as usual, be posted on the County webpage (<http://pinalcountyaz.gov>) and virtually every Board meeting from now until August will involve discussion on some part of the budget. These sessions will also provide the public time for input to the Board; and, of course, the usual avenues of phone calls, private meetings, and/or email are also available.

On the revenue side of the budget equation, our sales tax receipts are expected to continue to be sluggish, and given County Assessor Paul Larkin's projection of a continued decrease in assessed valuations, property tax revenues will generate fewer General Fund revenues. The State Legislature is expected to continue to shift costs and programs to the county side of the ledger, making less money available for transportation road construction, mass transit, health care, and the like.

On the somber side of things, there are some very terrifying and sobering statistics as part of the 2009 Domestic Violence Counts report which is the result of the 2009 National Census of Domestic Violence Services – on 9/15/09, 90% of Arizona's local domestic violence programs participated in this 24 hour survey. On that day: a total of 1,567 victims found refuge in an emergency shelter or transitional housing provided by local DV agencies; 199 DV hotline calls were answered (*i.e.* about 8 calls an hour); 266 victims were unable to get services or assistance and most of those unmet needs involved access to emergency shelter or transitional housing.

In FY 2009, the number of police reports generated by violations of domestic violence (ARS 13-3601) and orders of protection (ARS 13-3602) was 48,935. In Pinal County,

there are two shelters providing 48 beds in total. These shelters served 494 clients in 2009 and 557 in 2010 – the 2010 client breakdown was 290 adults and 267 children. There were 420 unmet requests for shelter in 2009 and 233 similar requests in 2010. I share this information with you by way of reminder that the agencies that work to provide comfort, shelter, and counseling for these unfortunate abused women can use all the help they can get. If you don't know how to reach out to them, contact Against Abuse, Inc. (520.836.1239) or go to <http://aardvarc.org/dv/states/azdv.shtml>.

And finally – since everyone loves a good county fair – here's a reminder that the 55th Pinal County Fair gets underway on Wednesday, March 16th. There will be rides, musical and other entertainments, amusements, deliciously decadent food (you know ... all the stuff your doctor warned you not to eat!), displays of home baked and decorated goodies, and an incredible array of animals that have been pampered, raised, and groomed to within an inch of their lives just so they could show off for you. The Fair events kick into high gear on Saturday the 19th as the county's youth prepare for the Junior 4-H Livestock Auction. The funds realized during the auction go to the educational funds of participating 4-H young people. The Fair and the Auction are worth the price of admission so dust off your boots, round up the kids and grandkids, and come on over the County Fairgrounds!

In the meantime, I hope to see you around the County this month,

David Snider

Pinal County Supervisor, District 3