

PINAL COUNTY LIFESTYLES

MAY 2010

We all know that “April showers bring May flowers” – but did you know that May is also National Asparagus Month? Did you know that the first week of May is National Postcard Week and that the third week in May is National Police Week? How about May 8th as No Socks Day? I’m confident, however, that everyone knows that May 9th is Mother’s Day – OK, I’m with you when we all say EVERY day is Mother’s Day! Of course, I’d be remiss if I didn’t call attention to May 15th Armed Forces Day so hug a veteran whenever you can or at least thank them for their service for our country.

Speaking of April showers, this year’s very wet Spring certainly provided us with an awesome landscape of desert grasses and wildflowers. Unfortunately this bonanza of visual delights will give way to our usual desert climate of high temperatures and very little moisture. This means that all those desert grasses and wildflowers are now dry fuel for any spark. And that’s why the Pinal County Air Quality Department has stopped issuing any open burn permits as of May 1st. The ban on open burning will stay in place until the summer monsoons bring back enough moisture to curb the danger of brush and grass fires.

We can all play a role in minimizing the danger of these fires. Don’t toss burning materials (i.e. lighted cigarettes or matches) out of a window. If you’ve been driving for a while, don’t park your vehicle in a place where weeds or brush can come into contact with the bottom of the vehicle. Keep your alleys (if you have one) free of weeds or if you don’t live in a subdivision, be sure to have a fuel-free perimeter of some 30 feet or more around your house and outlying buildings. Remember, aside from lightning strikes, most grass and brush fires are usually man-made so do your part to keep 2010 a fire-free year.

ASU’s Morrison Institute recently published one of its regular *Forum 411* reports, entitled “Domestic Violence in Arizona: Old problems, New Possibilities.” I’d like to quote from the introduction: “Nearly 40 years ago, Arizonans stood in the forefront of the modern campaign against domestic violence, one of the nation’s most common and destructive social ills. Today, Arizonans have an opportunity to again play an important role on the state and national stage. After four decades of struggle, setback, and success, the current challenge is to advance the campaign in ways that reflect a broader and more nuanced understanding of violence and abuse among intimate partners. Is our basic response to domestic violence – call the police after it happens – the best or only answer now?”

Not convinced that the problem of domestic violence is real? Here’s some sobering and chilling statistics taken from a report by the National Census of Domestic Violence as a snapshot of one Arizona day in September 2009. 1,286 domestic violence victims found refuge in emergency shelters or transitional housing provided by local domestic violence programs. 281 adults and children received non-residential assistance and services, including individual counseling, legal advocacy, and children’s support groups. Another 296 DV victims that day were turned away for various reasons – mostly due to budgetary constraints and/or insufficient resources.

The Morrison Institute's report, as usual, poses a panoply of thought-provoking questions and challenges. The answers and our responses to the challenge are, as usual, up to us. The *Forum 411* concludes: "This is hardly an auspicious time, in Arizona or elsewhere, to propose ambitious and expensive new programs. Budgets are being cut and cut again; human-service programs are among the most vulnerable. But some advances in the campaign against domestic violence and abuse can be made without prohibitive costs, even as the Arizona Coalition Against Domestic Violence and others work to preserve as much as possible of the considerable gains that Arizona has already made. Forty years of have brought Arizona to the point where a reassessment of its approach to intimate partner conflict presents an opportunity to make real progress in the prevention and reduction of this relentless social ill."

Now back to the month at hand – May. As I said at the top of the column, this month is many things. But above all, it's also the month of endings and beginnings. The promotion and graduation ceremonies celebrated in our schools are part of the cycle. To those who successfully navigated their eighth grade of education – "Congratulations on this, your first phase of learning." High school graduates and members of the Class of 2010: "Congratulations and all the best as you move on into the next stage of life and learning." To those proud graduates of college and university programs: "Kudos for all that you've accomplished thus far – don't forget how to learn as you move out into life." As Danny Kaye said: "Life is a great big canvas; throw all the paint you can at it."

David Snider

Pinal County Supervisor District 3