

The Indio Sun

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FRIDAY, APRIL 10, 2009

High school performers breathe life into classic 'Cinderella'

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Indio-based all-girls robotics team blazes trail at contest

OUR SCHOOLS,
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Police get OK to apply for grant

Department aims to hire more cops with federal funds

BY ALDRICH M. TAN
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A new federal grant boosted by the economic stimulus plan could bring more equipment and officers to Indio.

The Indio Police Department plans to apply for a \$163,872 Edward Byrne Memorial Competitive Grant from the U.S. Department of Justice.

"The money keeps flowing out, and we are going to keep applying for the money that is in the best interest for our community in terms of public safety," Indio police Chief Brad Ramos said.

The Indio Police Department received the green light from the City Council April 1 to apply for the grant.

Some city officials, however, are concerned about the city's ability to find future funding to keep any new officers hired.

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CRYSTAL CHATHAM THE INDIO SUN

Elisa Aguirre, 76, was the first resident of the Horizons at Indio senior community. Aguirre, photographed in her living room on Tuesday, holds a sample of the quilts she now stitches in her spare time and donates to the homeless. Aguirre said she makes five or six quilts a month. Before moving into Horizons at Indio, Aguirre lived with her granddaughter and great-granddaughter.

FUTURE AT HORIZONS

A year after opening, low-income housing project for seniors filled to capacity, in running for award

BY ALDRICH M. TAN
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Lydia Garcia, 72, never thought about retirement.

For nearly 30 years, she worked picking grapes, onions, carrots and green beans in Indio and Coachella and raised 10 children.

"I just worked and worked, and I never thought how I was going to retire," she said in Spanish.

But when Garcia lost her Coachella home through a foreclosure, she suddenly felt the world coming down on her. That was until she moved into Horizons at

Indio, 45-405 Monroe St., last year.

The \$18.7 million housing project opened last year to provide quality low-income housing and special community programs for retired farmworkers and low-income seniors in Indio.

Urban Housing Communities and Heritage Community Housing developed Horizons with the aid of the city. Rent ranges from \$459 to \$795.

Since it opened last June, the low-income retirement facility has grown to full capacity and houses 112 people, including many retired farmworkers like Garcia.

"I thank God every day that he had a place for me every day here," she said.

The development in Indio that has provided a safe

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3 THINGS YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT

Activity 'Eggstravaganza' on tap

The Desert Recreation District will host an "Eggstravaganza" from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Saturday at the Indio Community Center, 45-871 Clinton St. It will include face painting, potato sack races and hula hoop contests, according to officials. Information: 347-3484

Easter Bunny helps group

The Easter Bunny is scheduled to make an appearance from 1 to 5 p.m. Saturday at the Indio Fashion Mall, 82-227 Highway 111. The event is a fundraiser for the Coachella Valley Lions Club, said Dave Peterson, club president. Pictures cost \$5 for Polaroids and \$10 for digital photos, Peterson said. For more information, call Peterson at 399-6538.



JEFF CHRISTENSEN THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Recording artist Bow Wow will be in Indio for U-92.7's birthday event.

Performers help station celebrate

Bow Wow and Warren G are set to headline the Palm Springs U-92.7 radio station's 11th birthday celebration at noon on Saturday at the Riverside County Fairgrounds.

Other performers include The-Dream, Baby Bash, Mims and Frankie J.

Tickets are on sale for \$35 in advance and \$40 on the day of the show, said Sara Regalado, marketing director.

Tickets can be purchased at any Video Depot location in the Coachella Valley or by going to www.927kkuu.com or www.starticketsplus.com.

Heritage festival revives old-time trades

Event allows a glimpse into valley's history

BY ALDRICH M. TAN
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The Coachella Valley Museum and Cultural Center celebrated the valley's heritage on Saturday.

The weather was calm despite high winds the day before, which delayed setup for the festival, said Allison Fedrick, coordinator of exhibits and public programs.

More than 200 people attended the Heritage Day Festival, which featured an antique car display, performances, vendors and demonstrations.

It also included the third annual Mexican-American Pioneer Showcase, which included exhibits and demonstrations that focused on the city's Mexican-American pioneers.

John Kashuba demonstrated how the Coachella Valley's earliest blacksmiths shaped metal without wireless drills. He stuck metal rods together, then used a hand crank to blow air onto soft

at a glance

Mexican-American Pioneer Showcase

When: Through April 19

Where: Coachella Valley Museum and Cultural Center, 82-616 Miles Ave.

Information: 342-6651

Witness the past

More photos from the Heritage Day Festival await at mydesert.com/photos



PHOTOS BY ALDRICH M. TAN THE INDIO SUN

Heritage Day Festival volunteer Rebecca Caldwell helps Corina DiBello, 6, of Cathedral City with a craft project.

photos and heirlooms of at least 25 families.

The latest addition to the showcase is a digital slide show of the families and their history at the entrance of the building.

Cathedral City resident Rosa DiBello said her family is part of that exhibit.

"It is a great way for the

children to see how their grandparents came here and how their Hispanic heritage was part of the foundation of the Coachella Valley," she said.

The exhibit will be on display until April 19, with lectures, performances and cooking demonstrations throughout the month.



John Kashuba of Ontario teaches Ramiro Corona, 13, of Indio how pioneer blacksmiths worked with metal during the Coachella Valley Heritage Day Festival at the Coachella Valley Museum and Cultural Center in Indio.

HORIZONS: Project offers low rent to seniors and retired farmworkers

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and dignified place for low-income residents to retire has also been nominated for the Charles Edson Tax Credit Excellence Award, which is issued by the Affordable Housing Tax Credit Coalition based in Washington, D.C., for the most outstanding low-income housing developments in the nation.

Residents at Horizons have access to a pool, computer lab, cable television, video games and exercise equipment, as well as community programs and services like the Indio Senior Center's Meals on Wheels program, CVS Pharmacy flu shots, and Nueva Clinica's blood pressure checks and diabetes exams, officials said.

At least half of the residents are retired farmworkers who were not prepared for retire-



PHOTOS BY CRYSTAL CHATHAM THE INDIO SUN

Horizons at Indio resident Esperanza Cantu, 84, talks about the senior community in her living room on Tuesday. Cantu moved in to her one-bedroom unit in July. She previously lived in an Indio apartment with no air conditioning. Cantu spent much of her life as an agriculture worker in the east valley.

ment, said Merilee Langdon, communications director for Urban Housing Communities.

The average annual income

for a farmworker is \$23,000, but the reality is that most farmworkers make much less than that, Langdon said.



The Horizons at Indio clubhouse is filled with living room-style furnishings and a flat-screen television. The clubhouse and swimming pool area are centrally located in the development and host activities for the community's residents.

And it's not enough money for a retirement fund, said Adelicia Gonzalez, 78, a retired farmworker and resident at Horizons. All her money was going toward food, housing and

educating her children.

"Some of us had worked really, really hard to make an everyday living, but not enough to be set aside in the future," she said.

As a result, many of these older farmworkers either share residences with their children and grandchildren or move into low-quality, low-income housing, said Cesar Delgado, executive director of Heritage Community Housing, which helped develop Horizons.

Farmworkers are not the only people driven to the development. Other residents were victims of the economic downturn.

Harrison Wimbish, 65, a sales engineer for 30 years, lost his Bermuda Dunes home and life savings in a divorce. Since the economy crashed, Wimbish has been working low-income seasonal jobs.

"There was always the fear of winding up on the street," he said. "But I know for sure that I am not going to be on the street."