

# THE STARDUST HOUSE

*Serving the South Ranch II community since 1999*

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### Neighborhood News

A monthly publication

Josie Vargas  
Lisa Reyes  
*Head Start Teachers*

Martina Sandoval  
*AmeriCorp Volunteer*

Jason Gitkin  
*Recreation Coordinator II*

Michael Gerardo  
*Recreation Leader*

Francisca Montoya  
*Executive Director*

## South Ranch High School Seniors Receive Scholarships



*Perla Frias is excited at moving onto college and deliberating whether to attend Phoenix College or go straight to ASU on a four-year President's scholarship.*



*Blanca Arredondo has already made plans to attend South Mountain Community College. Her older sister has helped navigate the system and making the transition easier for Blanca.*

The South Ranch II Scholarship recipients for the 2004-2005 Scholarship Fund are Perla Frias, Blanca Arredondo and Uriel Rodriguez. Each student will receive a scholarship in the amount of \$1,800 towards their college expenses beginning this fall. The students receive a \$500.00 scholarship for each of the two semesters to help pay for college tuition and fees. Upon completion of 36 transferable college credit hours they become eligible to receive \$800.00 towards the purchase of either a home or lap top computer.

The change was instituted as an incentive measure to encourage students to continue their studies and complete their Associate of Arts degree at the local community college then transfer to the university.



*Uriel Rodriguez has decided to attend South Mountain Community College this fall and take general studies classes before deciding on a career or major area of study.*



# Sisters on Road to Success!



*Candis and Shontel Dixon pose with diplomas from South Mountain Community College and Arizona State University-West respectively. Shontel received her BA Degree in Elementary Education while her sister Candis completed an AA Degree in Communication and is transferring to ASU.*

Shontel is glad to have school over and reflecting on the long hours of school and study she says “It’s good I went to school, it takes a lot of time and effort but most of all it takes lots of motivation. You have to set goals so you know where you’re going. It feels like a big success and a major personal accomplishment.”

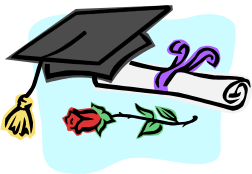
On the other hand Candis, who has been on a fast track graduating early from South Mountain High School in 2003 and now graduating from South Mountain Community College, now has time to slow down a bit before transferring on to Arizona State University West Campus this fall. “I feel great! At times when I felt I wasn’t going to be able to make it, I pushed myself and finished. I feel good knowing that I’m accomplishing something” says Candis.

In Angela Dixon’s household there was reason to celebrate twice in the month of May. First was the graduation of her oldest daughter Shontel Dixon who received her Bachelor of Arts degree from Arizona State University-West Campus in Elementary Education with English as a Second Language Endorsement. Then Candis Dixon, her youngest daughter, followed with her graduation from South Mountain Community College with an Associate of Arts Degree in Communication.

The books and making time to study are not quite over for Shontel as she is spending a lot of time to prepare to take the AEPA Teacher Certification exam to become a certified elementary school teacher.

These Dixon sisters are an example of the success that is taking place with South Ranch young adults who are deciding to go to college and moving on to greater things in life. We are proud of them.

## Congratulations to South Ranch Graduates!



### College Graduates

*Shontel Dixon*-BA Elementary Education, Arizona State University

*Candis Dixon*- AA, South Mountain Community College

*Maria Cardenas*- AAS-Nursing, Gateway Community College

*Eloisa Garcia*,-AA, South Mountain Community College

### High School Graduates

*Blanca Arrendondo*, Central High School

*Perla Frias*, South Mountain

*Mario Rios*, Carl Hayden

*Anna Marie Diego*, South Mountain

*Uriel Rodriguez*, South Mountain

*Valerie Salinas*, Wilson





# Michael says Goodbye



Michael Gerardo has been a valuable staff member of The Stardust House since he first came to us in September of 1999. Since that time he has worked with the after-school program for the past four and one half years and has done an outstanding job.

Michael is the type of employee that takes the time to help youth and cares about his work. He assists youth with their homework as well as play board games with them. He has seen many of the youth grow into young adults and start their journey to achieve success in their lives.

Michael Gerardo moves on as he starts a full-time position with the Maricopa County Attorney's Office. The Stardust House and the City of Phoenix Parks and Recreation Department as well as the South Ranch II neighborhood would like thank Michael for all of his time, dedication and hard work to the youth in this community.

Commenting about his work Michael says, "I will carry a part of The Stardust House everywhere I go. The experience working here has helped me be patient, understanding, and become a more caring individual. I enjoyed being able to interact with the kids



*Michael Gerardo, a Recreation Leader in the after-school program takes a quick break to smile for the camera as he says goodbye to the staff and youth of South Ranch. Michael will be missed by everyone. We wish him much success!*

on a personal level, hearing them talk about their hopes and dreams and helping them take small steps. Something unique I see at South Ranch is the youth are community oriented, they're supportive of one another, most know each other and play together, I find this to be different from other neighborhoods."



*AXA Advisors LLC selected The Stardust House as the local community organization to partner with on a community service project. Over 20 company employees volunteered to coordinate and plan the festival. A big thanks to AXA Advisors! LLC for a wonderful and fun event!*

## AXA Advisors LLC put on "Festival at the Park"

On Friday, May 28<sup>th</sup>, the Stardust House and AXA Advisors LLC, sponsored a "Festival At The Park". The event was organized for the families that live in the South Ranch II neighborhood. It was a very successful event with over 250 participants. The day's events included a BBQ, cake walk, water balloon toss, balloon animals created by a clown, slip and slide, arts and crafts, and basketball games. The Stardust House PAC Program would like to thank AXA Advisors LLC for sponsoring and volunteering their time to make the event a success. In addition to the festival AXA Advisors LLC will be donating \$3000 to The Stardust House for program support and supplies. Thank You !!!

# Stardust Head Start Activities



*Kith & Kin Spring class graduates smile for a photo on the last day of class. Front back row left are Martha Arbayo, Griselda Calderon, Lucia Willem, Juana Luna, Olivia Pena, Claudia Vargas & Martha Godoy. Front row left are Gisela Tejada, Consuelo Hernandez, and Magdalena Arredondo.*

The Kith & Kin Project sponsored by the Arizona Association of Supportive Child Care celebrated the completion of the second group of graduates on Thursday May 20, 2004 at The Stardust House.

The 14-week long class was a major commitment for the class participants. Child care was provided and this made it easier for parents to attend and participate and take time to learn the many aspects of how to properly care for children.

Olivia Pena, Kith & Kin Project Coordinator did an excellent job preparing and presenting the curriculum and was well received by all the students. A special thanks goes out to Elvira Jimenez and Maria Isabel Rodriguez for providing child care services for the project. A job well done.



*A group of Stardust Head Start students and parent take a short break to view and enjoy the spiral foundation in front of the Phoenix Symphony after the mid-morning concert. For many students this was their first visit to the symphony hall.*

Stardust Head Start students and parents were treated to a free concert at The Phoenix Symphony on May 13, 2004. The students and parents enjoyed listening to the symphony play as they incorporated music art into the production.

The music art production featured children's drawings, paintings, and pictures. A big thank you to The Phoenix Symphony for the free concert.



*Parents & staff attend the annual volunteer recognition dinner at Phoenix City Hall. Left-Martina & Raul Sandoval, Josie Vargas, Lisa Reyes, (top) Veronica & Benjamin Moreno, and front right Lincoln Metzgar & Leticia Almanza.*

The City of Phoenix-Head Start Grantee Operated Program honored several parents in recognition of their outstanding volunteer efforts.

Martina Sandoval, Notre Dame AmeriCorp volunteer and parents Leticia Amanza, Lincoln Metzgar, and Veronica Moreno received certificates in appreciation of the numerous hours they have volunteered in helping with program activities throughout the year.