

Neighborhood NEWS

THE STARDUST HOUSE

Serving the South Ranch II community since 1999

Volume 7
Issue 7

July 2004

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Neighborhood News

A monthly publication

Minerva Benigno
Lisa Reyes
Head Start Teachers

Martina Sandoval
AmeriCorp Volunteer

Jason Gitkin
Recreation Coordinator II

Patty Pagliuca
Jill Bittering
Recreation Leaders

Shaun Sells
Recreation Instructor

Anthony Flores
Recreation Aide

Francisca Montoya
Executive Director

Maria Wolfe
Director of Family Resources
Arizona Family Housing Fund

UNIVISION 33 Hosts Partnership Recognition Reception



Debi Bisgrove, Stardust Foundation and Francisca Montoya, Stardust House Director pose with the awards presented to the partner organizations in recognition of their support.



Ramon Pineda, Univision General Manager served as host and welcomed the guests at the Stardust House Partnership Recognition Reception.

The evening of Thursday June 17, 2004 was a special one for the staff and supporters of *The Stardust House* as they celebrated the 5th year anniversary of the neighborhood center.

The celebration brought together representatives from over 23 organizations that have worked closely with the center providing an array of programs and services to the families of *South Ranch* over the past five years.

Each organization received an award as a token of appreciation for establishing a partnership and for bringing resources to help meet the needs of the *South Ranch* neighborhood and families.

Ramon Pineda, General Manager of Univi-

sion Channel 33 served as host for the reception and Mary Rabago as Mistress of Ceremony. Guests enjoyed tours of the incredibly beautiful facility including the production studios, executive offices and gallery in the building.

Many thanks to all the partners for helping make *The Stardust House* a success and a fun place for families to play and learn.



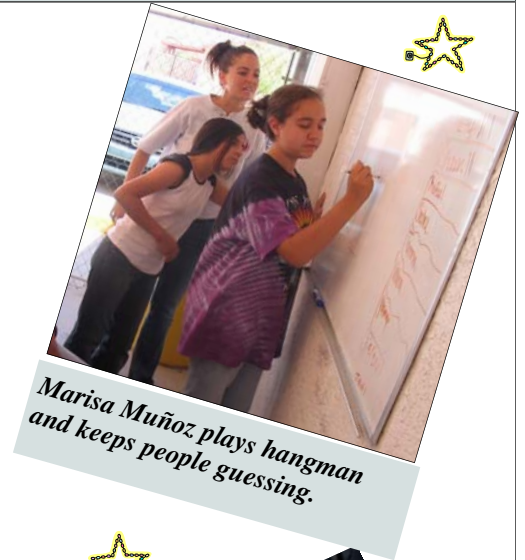
Summer Program In Full Swing



Adam Gitkin demonstrates a few exercises kids can do to keep fit.



JD, Owner of YouthFit presents information on exercise & nutrition to Stardust hip-hop dance team.



Marisa Muñoz plays hangman and keeps people guessing.



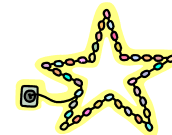
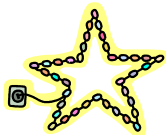
Tammy Hurt, Community Program Officer explains safety issues.



ADAPT representative teaches kids important basic desert survival skills



Items on display of the AZ Desert Animal Heat Team presentation



Wendy, Sasha, Giovanni, Omar and Jason show their new toy invention before leaving to the National Toy Challenge competition.



The Stardust Toy Challenge teams demonstrates the game to Univision cameraman as he tapes a segment for the news program.

Arizona Cardinal visits youth



Students enrolled in the Stardust Summer Day Program pose for a photo with Arizona Cardinal Levar Fisher after his presentation. Levar shared inspirational stories about his struggle to become a professional football player.

Chrissy Mauck, azcardinals.com

Cardinal's linebacker Levar Fisher visited *The Stardust House* on Wednesday, June 2 and addressed a group of children about the importance of gaining an education and staying in school.

The Stardust House serves South Ranch, a low-income neighborhood built by Habitat for Humanity, offering both adult and youth programming including their popular after-school programs.

Fisher addressed a group of children currently enrolled in the Stardust House's summer program which runs Monday through Friday from 12:30 to 5:00 p.m. and serves as an extension of the after-school program.

Summer PAC Program

June was a busy month for Summer Day Youth Program. The youth attended various field trips to museums and Tempe Town Lake.

They listened to guest speakers from the Phoenix Police Department, Buddy Bear from Aquatics, and

"We want to provide a safe and fun environment for the youth in this area," said Jason Gitkin, one of Stardust's Recreation Coordinators. "We will be involved in a summer reading program and we also have several field trips planned for the summer including two museum trips. The trips are paid for by a sponsor so these kids are able to experience things they might not have a chance to otherwise and we feel that is important."

Fisher shared his own personal success story, coming from a small town in Beaufort, North Carolina and achieving this dream to play in the NFL even though during most of his childhood, people told him it couldn't be done.

"My whole life people told me I couldn't do this or couldn't do that," recalled Fisher. "So, when someone tries to limit what you can achieve, just walk away and do what you can to prove them wrong. I was lucky to have the kind of parents who believe in me and supported me, but anyone can make it, you just have to be willing to do the work."

Fisher also fielded questions from the kids and signed autographs.

"It is great to have an athlete like Levar come in and show our kids that they can reach their goals and also show them what is out there for them," said Gitkin. "If they stay in school and they work hard they can achieve any number of possibilities in their life. We tell them that all the time but I think it is good for them to see a success story."

a physical fitness trainer. In addition, the summer program is participating in a reading program with the Arizona Diamondbacks and the Phoenix Library Department. When the youth read so many books, they are eligible for great prizes.



Stardust Head Start Program



Josie Vargas is looking forward to a new position with the City of Phoenix Head Start Program as the Lead Head Start Floater Teacher. It will give her an opportunity to share her talent and skills with other teachers in the program.

Josie Vargas, the lead Head Start teacher is moving on in a new position and will soon become the Lead Floater Teacher for the grantee-operated Head Start programs with the City of Phoenix.

Josie will have the opportunity to serve as a mentor to other teachers in the areas of organization and classroom management, curriculum development, and will work closely with the Head Start Director, Lisa Eversole assisting with special projects.

“I am looking forward to mentoring and sharing my knowledge and experience with other staff, I believe I have a lot to offer to help teachers improve and enhance the classroom. This new position will give me an opportunity to learn and expand my knowledge of various computer software programs which I am really looking forward to learning and using in my new job. I will also be responsible for providing staff trainings and presentations. I’m excited,” says Josie.

Josie has spend the past three years in charge of the

Stardust Head Start Program. While reflecting on her work Josie said, “I can say that in my experience here I felt like I was part of an awesome family. I learned a lot about being part of a team that is truly focused on helping the community.”

What Josie has enjoyed most about her job is working with the children. She adds, “It’s great to see the children learn new things and to watch them grow. They are truly very good kids, very intelligent and the best is that they come to the program prepared with a good foundation and ready to learn.”

While Josie may be moving on in her career with Head Start she will not be far away, Josie will continue to provide support to the Stardust Head Start staff and the classroom.

Her future aspirations are to continue her education and to work towards obtaining a Bachelor’s Degree in Elementary Education. Congratulations to Josie and we all wish her the best.

Minerva Benigno is the new Lead Teacher for the Stardust Head Start Program for the 2004-2005 academic year which starts in mid-July.

Minerva comes to Stardust after having taught for the last three years at the Head Start Program at the Pappas School for Homeless Children. She brings with her a lot of experience in early childhood education. Minerva will be graduating soon with a Bachelor’s Degree in Elementary Education. Prior to coming to the City of Phoenix Head Start Program Minerva worked with Native American communities.

Everyone will feel comfortable with Minerva and she expects to communicate with the new students as well as their parents. She is bilingual and fluent in both the English and Spanish languages.

To Josie we wish her well in her new position and to Minerva we extend a warm welcome.