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Arizona legalizes same-sex marriage

Maricopa couple at heart of legal fight 'longed for this day for years'

By SARAH RUF
Staff Writer
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A lot can change in 24 hours. If a gay couple stopped by the Clerk of the Superior Court in Pinal County on Oct. 16 to pick up a marriage license, they would have been turned away. One day later, all it took was \$76 for marriage-bound gay and lesbian couples here to obtain a marriage license. Odette Apodaca, case management director of the Clerk of the Superior Court, said once she

receives the news from Arizona Attorney General Tom Horne (whose staff did indeed send out the go-ahead email Friday morning), her office is prepared to issue marriage licenses to same-sex couples. "We have our forms ready," Apodaca said. Just after the office opened for business on Friday morning, the clerks received the first call from someone asking if they could come on down for their license, Apodaca said.

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Joey Chenoweth/Coolidge Examiner (above) and submitted photo Clerk of the Court employee Denise Sowers, left, and Madison Desoto were the first same-sex couple to wed in Pinal. At left, Maricopa residents Terry Pochert and Joe Connolly are seen during their first attempt to obtain marriage licenses in Arizona.

Longtime clerk's office employee first in Pinal to marry same-sex partner

By JOEY CHENOWETH
Coolidge Examiner

FLORENCE — When number X825 was called to Window 1 in the clerk's office of the Pinal County Superior Court, a couple walked forward with unlocked arms, ready to obtain a marriage license. It's a scene that has played out countless times in that room, but when this couple reached the window, a large crowd was already waiting behind the clerk's desk, waiting for when they could erupt in celebration. And when the license was finally presented, the onlookers cheered and Madison Desoto and Denise Sowers became the first same-sex couple to be married in Pinal County. The San Tan Valley couple had a hard time containing their emotions on what they called a day that was a long time coming, a day where Arizona Attorney General Tom Horne announced he would not appeal a decision by the 9th Circuit court declaring the state's ban on gay marriage unconstitutional, making Arizona the 31st state in the country to recognize same-sex marriage. It was a decision that came as a shock to Desoto and Sowers, who during their three-and-a-half

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MARICOPA MUSIC FEST



Music festival seeks social calendar spot

By SARAH RUF
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Another festival is on the rise locally, and organizers intend to make it a must-attend event for years to come. The Maricopa Music Festival is the brainchild of Chrystal Allen-O'Jon. She operates Urban Royalty Entertainment & Artist Management from her Maricopa home, which she moved into in 2011. "I thought it would be really nice to have some arts and entertainment here so we wouldn't have to drive to Chandler or wherever, so I thought, 'Gosh, I could bring something,'" Allen-O'Jon said. Great memories of bringing her kids to the UCLA Jazz Festival helped inspire Allen-O'Jon to launch a local music fest. "That was a great experience for me and my kids," she said.

The fun begins at noon Saturday, Oct. 25 at Copper Sky Regional Park and wraps up about 7 p.m. Allen-O'Jon, 52, wanted to bring her background in entertainment to a community function, spending \$20,000 of her own cash and obtaining sponsors to put on a good show for her neighbors. Admission consists of one nonperishable food item for the F.O.R. Maricopa and Mountain View Community Church food banks. As a military wife, Allen-O'Jon said she knows many local military families are struggling. "I know this is a huge military family town and a lot of them are the ones going to get those items," she said. The food banks will also benefit from a portion of the proceeds

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Howard Waggner/Maricopa Monitor (right) and ROTography Local singer/songwriters Joanna Joy (left) and Laura Walsh are two of the featured acts at the Maricopa Music Festival.

stateofthecity

UA to offer local engineering degrees

Price announces partnership between City, MUSD, UofA in annual speech

By BRIAN WRIGHT
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In the past, mayor Christian Price has talked about bringing a world-class technology college to Maricopa. That's still on his radar, but until then, the city has something else it can celebrate. Thursday night during his State of the City address, Price announced that the City and the Maricopa Unified School District have partnered with the University of Arizona to bring four-year engineering degree programs to Maricopa. He said the city will soon offer other four-year degrees through Central Arizona College. But engineering is a field that can bring high-paying technology jobs, and that's exactly what Price is targeting for the city. "There is a projected future shortage of scientists and engineers throughout the greater Phoenix region and the United States," he said in a statement. "We believe Maricopa has the potential to fill a critical niche by developing talent locally." According to a MUSD press release, the City and the school district had a conference call with representatives from UA to discuss bringing those engineering programs to Maricopa. On Nov. 4, staff and faculty from UA will be at Maricopa High School to introduce the initiative to students and faculty. Fifty MHS students will then travel to Tucson on Nov. 10 to tour the UA campus and College of Engineering. "This partnership is a great example of how the high school is becoming a college and career preparatory academy," MUSD superintendent Steve Chestnut said in a statement. "I believe this partnership will provide some wonderful opportunities for our students."



Howard Waggner/Maricopa Monitor

Mayor Christian Price gave the annual State of the City address on Thursday night at City Hall. As part of his address, Price announced a new partnership between the City, the Maricopa Unified School District and the University of Arizona to bring four-year engineering degrees to the city.

Female students will have an opportunity to attend an overnight program with the UA College of Engineering on Oct. 19-20. The event is for MHS junior and senior girl students, and the program is called Suite with SWE (Society of Women Engineers). The cost to attend the event is \$10, and the students will see engineering labs, take a campus tour, shadow classes, spend the night in a residence hall and talk to engineering students and professors. At Thursday's State of the City address, Price said any city that wants to attract good, high-paying technology jobs must have an educated talent pool of prospective employees. He said these engineering degree programs will help attract quality tech businesses to the city, and at the same time, students won't ever have to leave Maricopa to get the education and training they need to fill those jobs.

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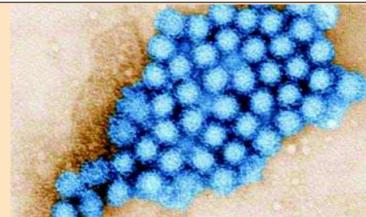
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