

## It's back to school for Ajo students



At top, from left, Lindsey Leon, Erika Salcido, and Cassandra Coyle of Ajo High School's Student Council offered an engaging greeting to Open House attendees last Friday.

Above, the Red Raiders scrambled in the Red & White scrimmage that followed the open house.

At left, AUSD Principal Brian MacKenzie and Dr. Lauren Carriere with a new crop of science students in new Ajo teacher Gabriel Gilbert's class. On Monday, a total of 461 students, from pre-K to 12th grade, were back in school.

Photos by Lito Castillo, Kattie Allen, and John Peck



## Tax rate based on AUSD will drop nearly 40%

The report earlier this month that the state department of education found significant improvement based on Ajo Unified School District scores in general and the high school in particular was good news for students, parents, faculty, and administrators. Last week's school board meeting brought more positive news for Ajo property owners: the 2012-13 property tax rate is going down by almost 40%.

"Because the state is funding schools less, because no dollars are being levied for capital projects, and because we've been successful in funding ways to carry our cash balance forward, and because assessed values are going up," Dr. Robert Dooley told the board, "the property tax rate based on the school district will drop from 5.674% to 3.5338% per 10% of assessed valuation."

Dooley also reported on summer activities which included the math boot camp, middle and high school credit-recovery programs, and elementary school jump start. He also told the board that the school had provided up to 300 meals a day for the summer feeding program in Ajo and on the Tohono O'odham Nation. In a follow-up to previous discussion about interscholastic sports, Dooley said that he, business manager Patty Spencer, AUSD principal Brian MacKenzie, and athletic director Brian English were looking at ways to deal with approximately \$12,000 in additional funding requirements for sports programs.

A substantive part of last Tuesday's study session was focused on a new faculty and principal evaluation process which the board approved the following

night. The new process will be heavily weighted by improved student performance and intensive classroom observation. "This will totally change the evaluation process for us," said Dooley. The new process will be in place by October of this year, and it will be the subject of a separate news story.

Viv Satori of Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument reported on the local certified wildlife habitat project begun four years ago, asking the school to become a part of it. Satori said that Ajo was within 8 points of the necessary 250 to become the 62nd certified community in the country, and that the school district's participation would count for five of the needed points.

In personnel matters, the board:

- Accepted the resignations of teacher's aides Sarah Spitzer and Nancy Brett-Lopez, cafeteria worker Carol Trevino-Jerez, and custodial worker Hipolito Montijo;
- Approved the hiring of teacher's aide James Havins, and cafeteria worker Martha Benavidez;
- Changed to temporary volunteer the status of Henry Robles; and,
- Approved a variety of extra-pay positions.

The board also designated Dooley and MacKenzie as qualified evaluators of certified staff, approved the disposal of obsolete, non-working media equipment, approved out-of-state travel to a September AVID conference in Denver for Dr. Lauren Carriere, and accepted a plethora of technical policy changes instigated by the Arizona School Board Association.

## Process to fill JP vacancy decided by county board of supervisors

The Pima County Board of Supervisors is accepting letters of interest, resumes, and financial disclosure forms from individuals interested in being considered for appointment to fill the current vacancy of Pima County Justice of the Peace, Precinct 3 in Ajo.

To be eligible, individuals must be 18 years of age or older at time of appointment, must be a resident of and registered to vote in the precinct; and must be a member of the same political party as the person vacating the office, in this case a Democrat.

The financial disclosure form and instruction manual are available on the Pima County homepage at [www.pima.gov](http://www.pima.gov), by emailing the Clerk of the Board at [COB\\_Mail@pima.gov](mailto:COB_Mail@pima.gov), or by calling 520-724-8449.

The names of individuals seeking appointment will be posted on the Pima County homepage as submissions are received. Comments in support or concern may be submitted to the Clerk of the Board at 130 W. Congress, 5th Floor, Tucson, 85701, or by email at the above address.

The position was vacated by Maria Alviljar after auditors from the state commission on judicial conduct found "significant record-keeping and case processing deficiencies" according to the Arizona Supreme Court's administrative office.

The Pima County Board of Supervisors will make the appointment at its September 4 board meeting. The individual appointed will serve the remainder of the term through 2014.