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Sports
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Business
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SECTION
The Fountain Hills
TIMES

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Phone books are here; Parkinson's

The new phone books are here!

Once again I get to use a line from one of my favorite movies, Steve Martin's "The Jerk."

Yes, you could receive yours this weekend. Or then again, it could be on any one of the next three weekends, depending on where you live in the community.

This year's phonebook cover features a family's visit to Fountain Park with Four Peaks as a backdrop.

I'm not going to sugar coat this, because it is a reflection of the economic condition in our community and across the country. This is the first year we have gone down in the number of pages from the previous year since we started the phone book in 1977.

There are a total of 288 pages in the 2009 phonebook, compared to 306 pages last year.

The number of white page alphabetized names and numbers remained the same at 70. There is actually one more page of Verde Communities listings. Where the big difference occurs is in the comparison of the Yellow Pages. We're off by 20 pages. And since that is where we make our revenue from the book, it's going to be another less profitable year.

Many of our advertisers say the Fountain Hills Telephone Directory, our version, is still the best source of leads for new business that they have. Just as you do, we take delivery on a variety of phonebooks each year. But compare ours to the other ones and I think you'll come to the same conclusion. There is only one book that contains advertising that is mostly from Fountain Hills and that is ours.

We also hear the comments on television that printed newspapers and printed phonebooks are dinosaurs, a thing of the past. I consider our book to be a Tyrannosaurus Rex, a powerful devourer of the competition.

Its format makes it easy to use, you don't have to download anything and you can pick it up and take it with you.

But, we also know there are those of you who only want to deal with everything on-line. For you, we also have our on-line version of the phonebook. The address for the on-line book is www.fhtimes.com/phonebook.

So, be looking for your phonebook and if you have any questions, please call our office and we'll get you an answer.

I attended the 2009 Mo Udall Symposium on Parkinson's Disease on Friday, Feb. 27 at the Scottsdale Senior Center.

The program was presented by the Muhammad Ali Parkinson Center. About 25 members of the Fountain Hills Parkinson's Support Group attended, making us one of the largest contingents there. Total attendance was about 250.

Most of our group had on their red polo shirts with the Fountain Hills Parkinson's Support Group's logo on them. The members were approached throughout the day with comments from others saying that they had heard the Fountain Hills group was very active.

We have been innovative and influential under the leadership of Bruce Florence. His "Pennies for Parkinson's" idea is spreading nationwide, I understand. There were collection jars in the exhibit area outside of the large room where the symposium took place.

For me the best speaker of the day was one of the first, John Ball, national co-chair of Team Parkinson, stressed the need for regular exercise for those who have Parkinson's. He was diagnosed to have Parkinson's 37 years ago. Last year he ran six marathons, completing the last one in just four hours and 23 minutes.

I can attest to that. I have felt considerably better since I started riding a stationary bike in the morning and evening.

Ball said, "We can still make plans and set goals. We just have to scale them back."



"We are a superior band."
- Ryan Hanford



Band instructor Lynn Truby joins the FHHS 2008-09 All-Region musicians JJ Kuchan, Mark McKenna, Kenny Barry and Ryan Hanford as they prepare to compete for All-State honors.

"It's the only creative outlet I've ever had."
- Mark McKenna

The Incomparable Marching Band Unit earns 'superior' state rating, four musicians 'all-region'

By Ryan Winslett
Times Reporter

Months after the final football game half-time performance, members of the Fountain Hills High School marching band are continuing to earn accolades for one of the best received programs in the state.

Performing music from Cirque Du Soleil, as well as building this year's performance around the eccentric circus, everything from tight-rope walking and hoola-hoops managed to get crammed into the 2008 FHHS marching band show. The payoff was large.

On Oct. 11, the band hit the road for Basha High School where the kids took second overall along with special awards for outstanding band front, musical performance and general effect.

On Nov. 4, the boys and girls of the local band took part in the annual Band Day event hosted out of Northern Arizona University, earning a rating of "excellent" in the process.

Next up, the band was off to state where the Falcons nabbed the top "superior" rating as well as a special caption award for outstanding musical performance.

The band program has grown over the years and, this year, a total of four musicians have managed to prove their talent at the regional level on an individual basis as well.

Kenny Barry (French horn), Ryan Hanford (trumpet), JJ Kuchan (trumpet) and Mark McKenna (tuba), all recently tried out for and made the all-region band.

Part of the central region, the boys were tasked with learning and performing a set of etudes at a massive audition. Out of roughly 500 auditions, only 80 would be selected to take part in the regional band. Four of those 80 came from Fountain Hills.

These four young men took part in a special performance in Tucson recently and all said they have plans to try out for the all-state competition later this month. Since no musician from Fountain Hills has made all-state yet, these four boys have quite a bit riding on their shoulders.

No matter what happens at the state level, though, all have plenty to be proud of with their acceptance to the all-region program.

"This is my first year on the all-region group after three years of attempting," Hanford said. "It's a personal victory for

me and a good note to end high school on."

Barry, perhaps the most unlikely all-region musician of the lot due to his instrument of choice, managed to overcome great obstacles in order to claim his spot.

"This is my second year trying, so it means a lot to me as it is also only my second year playing the French horn," Barry said. "I used to play trumpet, but there are a lot of people in that area. I decided to try something different and it worked out."

McKenna, on the other hand, is joining the all-region ranks for the second time. He said it's a lot of fun and a big honor as he is planning a career in music. Kuchan, the seasoned vet of the all-region group, is in his third year with the program.

"It's been an honor," Kuchan said. "I've increased in chair (ranking) every year so that means I'm getting better. That's a good sign."

Looking back over the season, the boys said earning their second superior at the state level with their fellow Falcon Marching Band participants was a big deal, as it proved the first go-round was not just a fluke.

"We are a superior band," Hanford said.

Considering the past four

years of playing all over the state, McKenna said pinpointing his favorite moments was an easy task.

"For me, the best part is the overall feeling you get right after a performance," McKenna said. "The whole band is tired and panting and then there's this incredible roar of the crowd in the stands. It's an amazing feeling."

Barry agreed. "After four years in band, I can graduate and honestly feel like I didn't leave anything behind," Barry said.

All agreed, after four years, they have only seen the band get better and better.

"It's a great feeling knowing we made a difference," Barry said.

Hanford jokingly added he has always said, if he wasn't involved with music, he'd probably be one of those kids out on the streets doing drugs or under the stands throwing rocks every Friday night.

For Barry, though, music has provided a much-needed sense of stability.

"I moved around a lot in my life," Barry said. "My family and music are the only consistent things. They've always been there for me."

Kuchan said he thinks music

is special because it allows him to share so many things with so many people. McKenna seconded the sentiment.

"It's the only creative outlet I've ever had," McKenna said. "Without music I wouldn't be doing anything... Maybe I'd be with Hanford under the bleachers throwing rocks."

All of FHHS' all-region band members said they owe a great deal of gratitude to their bandmates and especially director Lynn Truby. Truby also had some kind words to share about the boys.

"They are the cream of the crop FHHS has to offer," Truby said. "They have incredible dedication, they are great musicians, they achieve academically and they're basically made of good fiber... They just seem more caring about things than most kids."

Truby said Hanford, Barry, Kuchan and McKenna have each served as pillars on which the band has stood over the past four years. All have taken their leadership roles seriously and instilled a sense of pride in the younger musicians.

Truby said when these boys graduate, they will leave a legacy behind.

(cont. on page 10B)

Chuck Tompkins

Businessman's book: How to survive in the trenches

By Barb Charzuk
Times Reporter

Chuck Tompkins happens to be the owner of an independent insurance agency with \$12 million in premiums in North Dakota.

The advice he shares in his book, "The Insurance Wars: An Independent Agent's View from the Trenches," applies to any small to medium-size business. He explains his "tell-it-like-it-is" guide is designed to spare business owners the pain he faced and avoid common pitfalls.

"The book talks about how we started the company, how I got it in trouble and how I pulled it out. I wish I had a book like that," he said.

Tompkins started Western Agency, Inc. in 1976 in North Dakota. The \$27 million company specializes in farm, crop, commercial and contract coverage in North Dakota and insures more than 800 farms to rank it third or fourth in size in the state.

Tompkins is now licensed in Arizona because many of his clients have purchased real estate in the state. He and his wife, Linda, bought property here to be closer to two of their children.

"It was hard spoiling the grandkids when we were so far away," he said.

"Everyone tells you how to

make a million dollars. No one tells you how to survive," Tompkins explained for writing the book.

"I named it wrong," he said, referring to the title. "Everyone says I should have named it 'The Business Wars.' My business just happens to be insurance."

"You can get in trouble so easily. You can get overextended and upside down. It sneaks up on you. And then one day, somebody cuts your credit line, and everything hits the wall."

Tompkins speaks from experience. He remembers the day his \$90,000 incoming commission checks weren't enough to convince a small-town banker he was worth a loan.

"There we sat with a vibrant, excellently managed independent insurance business, moving ahead with strong sales, at a time when all other agencies in town were reeling and losing premium, and this stupid, cold-hearted fool was turning me down for a loan," Tompkins writes in the book.

He turned to his father-in-law to borrow \$10,000, and paid him back in 39 days with interest.

"Most companies quietly bleed to death," observed Tompkins. "It's like you've got 10,000 mosquitoes leeching on you."

The situation escalates because the business owner lacks a will to remedy the problem.

"Once you are in trouble, you really have to have an honest and frank discussion with your self to put the company back on track, Tompkins writes.

Firing staff that aren't carrying their weight and reducing operating costs should be the first steps to stop the hemorrhaging.

"It was my lack of will that left commissions, wages and expenses too high for too long. When I look back over the years, so many times it has been lack of will on my part that let a situation get out of hand," he said.

"As a manager, when you have a problem, for God's sake, fix it."

Personality profile tests are administered to prospective applicants to determine if they have aptitude for the job and are compatible with the firm. Employee retention is a key to a successful business.



He preaches that developing a personal relationship with an insurance agent is a far more valuable asset than saving \$10 a month from an online business.

Insurance quotes may be low, which he said corresponds with the level of service and coverage

in times of need. "When bad things happen, an insurer wants a person in his corner who is not a brand," said Tompkins.

"Independent agents understand the insurance product and

(cont. on page 10B)



Chuck Tompkins, CEO of Western Agency, Inc., one of the largest independent insurance agencies in North Dakota, wrote "The Insurance Wars," a first-person account on surviving and growing a business.