



**14th Annual
PINAL COUNTY
TOWN HALL**

2001 Official Report

April 25-27, 2001

Best Western
Gold Canyon Inn and Suites
Kings Ranch Road and Highway 60

PINAL COUNTY TOWN HALL

Intellectual Capital - Tomorrow's Dividend

EDUCATION FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

**OFFICIAL
REPORT
2001**

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Summary Report

“Pinal County has more potential and more opportunity than any other county in the state.”

Eddie Basha



SUMMARY REPORT OF THE 14th ANNUAL PINAL COUNTY TOWN HALL

April 25-27, 2001

I. Overview

One hundred thirty five delegates from throughout Pinal County attended the 14th annual Pinal County Town Hall. The delegates met at the Best Western Gold Canyon Inn and Suites in Gold Canyon, Arizona. Discussion at the Town Hall focused on the theme **“Intellectual Capital – Tomorrow’s Dividend – Education for the 21st Century.”** Participants heard from a variety of speakers and panelist including the Keynote speaker Mr. Eddie Basha. In addition, delegates heard speakers on the subject **“Arizona Partnership for the New Economy a Regional Partnership.”** Further, a number of local projects and personal stories were showcased under the subject of **“Cradlecare to Medicare: The Literary Challenge.”** Among those in attendance were twenty-two youth delegates representing area high schools, Central Arizona College, and the University of Arizona. The third annual **Pinal County Outstanding Youth of the Year** recognition program recognized seven outstanding youth nominated by their high schools. The students recognized from the participating high schools included: Jessica Garcia – Apache Junction, Kyle Sharp – Coolidge, Melissa Pieper – Casa Grande, Dalen Snow – Maricopa, Roberto “Bobby” Lopez – Kearny, Michael Sledge – San Manuel, and Angel Preciado- Superior. **Judges selected Michael Sledge as the 2001 Pinal County Outstanding Youth of the Year.** All honorees received a medallion and engraved pen, while the outstanding youth of the year also received a \$500 scholarship to be applied to future education and training. Assisting in the presentation of the awards was Suzanne Peterson, the 2000 winner and currently a student at the University of Arizona.

The fifth annual **Constellations Awards** with the slogan of **“It takes a Constellation of Stars to Make a Community Shine”**, were presented to three recipients from Pinal County. Each honoree received from Janet Beronio, General Manager of Harrah’s Ak Chin Casino, and Delia Carlyle, Chairwoman of the Ak-Chin community, a limited edition crystal star and a check for \$2,500.00. in charitable donations made in their honor. The winners and categories included:

- **Reliant Energy** which was honored for its contribution to the community through new business development, entrepreneurship, workforce training and creation of new jobs. Accepting the award was Plant Manager Dick Dusenbury, who indicated the \$2500.00 award would be donated to the **Boys and Girls Club of Casa Grande.**

- **Creative Cafe**, a non -profit restaurant in Casa Grande, was honored as a non-profit organization that has made a significant contribution to the quality of life in the community. Accepting the award were owners Tesa and Jim Machelor, who donated the \$2500.00 to their organization called **Creative Labor Services.**

- **Janice Rapp** from San Manuel received the award for an individual who has demonstrated through volunteerism that one person can make a difference. In accepting the award, she donated the \$2,500.00 to the **Untied Way of Pinal County**.

The Constellation Awards are sponsored by Harrah's Ak Chin Casino, Casa Grande Valley Newspapers, Inc. and Pinal County Town Hall.

The Pinal County Town Hall Advisory Committee presented a special recognition plaque to the **Coolidge Rotary Club** for its outstanding and ongoing contribution to youth leadership. Specifically, the award recognized the club for its financial support for student delegates to Pinal County Town Hall over a seven- year period. The award was accepted on behalf of the Rotary Club by its' President, Mary Ann Amerson.

II. Background Information

Prior to the 2001 Town Hall registered delegates received selected resource materials as well as seven "white papers" written by Pinal County citizens. Each of the writers addressed the topic "**Charting Our Future: Education for the 21st Century – Issues and Opportunities**". A special notes of appreciation and thanks is due the following individuals who took the time, thought, and effort to put their views in writing:

- Pinal County School Superintendents' Office
Dr. Jack Harmon, Pinal County School Superintendent
Ms. Yvonne Billingsley, Associate Superintendent
Ms. Orlenda Roberts, Assistant Superintendent
- Mr. Ron Thielenhaus, Plant Manager (Casa Grande)
Abbott Laboratories, Ross Products Division
- Dr. Barry Sutter, Superintendent, Apache Junction Unified School District
- Mr. David P. Snider, Director of the Casa Grande Public Library and Chairman
Casa Grande Elementary District School Board
- Collective representatives from Pinal County Juvenile Court Services, Pinal
Count Sheriff's office and Adult Detention Service.
- Ms. Lacy Gambee, student at the Aravaipa Campus of Central Arizona College
- Mr. Bill Ludeke, Executive Director of the United Way of Pinal County

While the individual papers are not made a part of this report, they have been retained as part of the overall records of the 14th Annual Pinal County Town Hall.

One of the special features of this Town Hall was the opportunity for delegates to tour the **Technical Education Center** at Apache Junction High School. The Center, which has been recognized nationally, provides a “hands on” look at the various ways technology enhances the educational program, services, and communication within a local school district. In addition to the tour, delegates were treated to breakfast by the Schools Culinary Arts Department.

III. Consensus Group Report

A. Process

Town Hall participants were divided into six (6) discussion groups. A facilitator led each group and a recorder compiled notes during each breakout session. The listing of the respective facilitators and recorders is included at the end of this report.

Each group utilized a written discussion guide, which called for the identification of strengths and challenges relating to education in Pinal County. The second half of each groups’ time was allocated to identification and prioritization of activities and initiatives which would lead to specific action plans. Individual action plans were reviewed by the consensus group and agreement reached as to a priority order. The top six issues and action plans were developed and presented to the total delegate body by the “consensus survivors” who competed for delegate support for their respective issues. Prior to concluding the consensus report session each delegate was asked to complete a personal commitment form that indicated which one or more of the action plans they would volunteer to support.

B. Identified Strengths in Pinal County (among many)

- A sense of the greater community
- Collaboration between school districts and other entities
- Support from community members, industries and developers
- Support from the Pinal County Board of Supervisors and municipal councils
- Strong school leadership
- Good teachers, administrators, and students
- Community based technology centers
- Small schools that personalize education
- An affordable and flexible community college
- Four year college classes
- City-school partnerships
- Industry – school partnerships
- Distance learning and e-learning opportunities
- Extensive early childhood, adult, and community educational opportunities
- Tuition reimbursement programs offered by employers

C. Issues and Actions Plans

The consensus group compiled the following issues and action plans which are listed in priority order. The first six action plans were identified as ones that could get underway immediately.

1. To establish improved recruitment and retention of teachers through an initial three step process

- a. Holding a forum for Pinal County teachers during the 2001-2002 school year
- b. Utilizing business/education leadership partnerships
- c. Establishing home loans incentives for teachers

2. Establish an educational resource capacity within Pinal County for child/family services

First Six Months

- a. Identify a lead organization and/or committee
- b. Determine funding and accountability
- c. Get underway

Next Three Months

- d. Compile list and promote organizations
- e. Create awareness of the entity through advertising

3. All county schools explore modified school schedules

First Two Years

- a. Research data for publications for consumption
- b. Distribute information to stakeholders
- c. Conduct county wide meetings on the topic
- d. Conduct county wide workshops
- e. Promote and share success stories

Third Year

- f. Conduct parent surveys, tabulate results, and take to board of directors for action

4. To provide family members time off work to participate in school functions, classroom, and extra curriculum activities*

First Year

- a. Newsletter sent out to government leaders, business leaders, and parents
- b. Presentation made to interested parties
- c. Face to face meetings between school boards and interested businesses
- d. Conduct a six month test period and evaluation

Second Year

- e. Full implementation, with changes made (if any offered or needed). Full reporting of results to media to highlight those entities and applaud them for their leadership in the area. Recognize volunteers for their work

* Casa Grande has a model that could be adopted.

5. Expand effectiveness of \$200.00 education tax credit

- a. Publicize that taxpayers can donate as much as \$200.00 to a school and deduct the full amount from their state tax bill.
- b. Distribute information to organizations and entities that deal with the public and taxpayers, i.e. tax accountants, etc.
- c. Pinal County Town Hall delegates commit to spreading the word and making a donation for 2001.
- d. Schools make available a list of activities and needs where the donations could be utilized.
- e. Investigate the possibility of a payroll deduction plan.
- f. Consider legislation that might increase the amount that could be donated.

6. Utilize citizen volunteers in each school district

Two to Three Years

- a. Determine agency/ entity to organize effort for utilizing citizen volunteers
- b. Survey stakeholders for needs and available resources
 - Manual (procedures already developed)
 - What volunteer activities are needed
 - Activities volunteers willing to do
- c. Establish data bank of volunteers
 - How to recruit volunteers
 - How to connect volunteer with need
 - How to reward
 - Consider developing web-site to network effort
- d. Establish office/center for continuing effort

The following thirteen (13) issues/action plans were also considered very important and in need of fully developed action plans. Some are receiving attention already, while a number will need special committees or activities to coordinate the efforts.

7. Develop school partnerships with business/industry leaders

8. Establish a systematic approach to utilize technology in support of the educational process

9. Create a county wide marketing program to emphasize education

10. Promote life skills/character education in schools

- 11. Increase personal/individual communication between teachers/parents**
- 12. Allow school districts sales tax exemption**
- 13. Standardize teacher pay throughout the state, based on excellence/experience/education**
- 14. Lower dropout rate via older students mentoring younger students**
- 15. Establish high quality teacher standards statewide to enhance "Professionalism"**
- 16. Establish after school programs in each community**
- 17. Establish scope of CAVIT to all county schools**
- 18. Legislature not mandate schools changes without dollars to implement**
- 19. Provide school-based prevention/intervention programs**

IV. The Next Step

Delegates were asked to complete and sign a form as to what they can personally commit to do during the next twelve months to enhance educational opportunity in their community and/or Pinal County. While responses varied greatly, a good number indicated they would be donating \$200.00 to individual school districts. A number of individuals volunteered to serve on specific follow-up committees, while others agreed to provide leadership in their communities and/or organizations to encourage and pursue the respective action plans.

Student delegates volunteered to encourage mentoring programs, and services for troubled teens in their schools and communities. One student indicated, "I am going to do everything in my "minuscule power to make my school a better school in any way I can. Whether it involves reviving school spirit or working to make my teachers feel appreciated, I'll do it."

In an effort to further encourage individual and group follow-up activities, the following action will be taken:

- A. Each delegates personal commitment form will be reproduced and returned to the individual, as a reminder of his or her commitment.
- B. Delegates will be contacted around March 1, 2002 to assess personal and/or organizational progress on commitments.

C. An overall update report, verbal and/or written, will be made available at the 2002 Pinal County Town hall.

D. Formulation of an Education Resource Capacity Clearing House for Pinal County.

Initial membership will be composed of the following volunteers:

- Discussion group three will convene the working group under the direction of Dr. Bonnie Palmer
- Sandie Smith
- Denise Keller
- Melinda Larson
- Elaine Brideschge
- Cheryl Foster
- Jillian Kolossa
- County staff (Terry Doolittle)
- Others as interest dictates

E. Formulation of a county wide task force to promote “Education Counts” - marketing program.

Individuals interested in working on this program should contact Karl Peterson or Wayne Gerken.

F. The Town Hall report, as is customary, will be mailed to all delegates, and community and business partners. In addition, reports will be made available to libraries, chambers of commerce, non-profit organizations, schools, colleges, and other interested groups. The report will also be included on the Pinal County Town Hall web page at www.co.pinal.az.us/PCTH

V. Conclusion

The Pinal County Town Hall of 2000 focused on “**Charting Our Future**” and in doing so identified the key ingredients in turning our vision into reality. The number one ingredient, by a large margin, was the education of our citizens. It therefore, was appropriate and important to “seize the moment” by concentrating our efforts at the 2001 Town Hall on the topic “**Intellectual Capital- Tomorrow’s Dividend**” **Education for the 21st Century.**

Delegates are to be commended once again for their commitment and openness in the “give and take” of the town hall process in trying to find common ground on the respective issues and solutions. It is clear from the deliberations, that while delegates found many strengths and opportunities to build on, there exist also some serious issues and limitations that need our specific attention in the months and years ahead. Many excellent ideas and suggestions spun out of the discussion groups and hopefully will not be forgotten or put aside in the months ahead.

Please consider this report as a reminder as to the work to be done and the commitments we must meet if our vision for education is to be realized.

“ The best way to predict the future.....is to create it.”

DISCUSSION GROUPS

The Pinal County Town Hall Advisory Committee extends its appreciation and thanks to the following individuals who served in the capacity of discussion group facilitators and recorders.

Group 1

Facilitator: *Dr. Sherry Ulmer, CEO Pinal/Gila County Child Services – Coolidge*

Recorder: *Rayna Palmer, Executive Director, Apache Junction Chamber of Commerce*

Groups 2

Facilitator: *Curtis Shook, City Manager, City of Apache Junction*

Recorder: *Brenda Mitchell, Teacher, Coolidge Unified Schools*

Group 3

Facilitator: *Dr. Bonnie Palmer, City Council Member – Coolidge*

Recorder: *Frank Davidson, Superintendent, Casa Grande Elementary School District*

Group 4

Facilitator: *Lori M. Gary, Executive Director, Greater Casa Grande Valley Economic Development Foundation*

Recorder: *Bridget Shea, Senior San Manuel High School*

Group 5

Facilitator: *Lacy Gambee, Sophomore, Central Arizona College – Aravaipa Campus*

Recorder: *Gene Hensley, District V ESA Program Manager, Employment Security Administration*

Group 6

Facilitator: *Cheryl Foster, Associate Vice President for College Development Central Arizona College*

Recorder: *Harold Christ, President, Paladin Group – Gold Canyon*

Consensus Group

Facilitator: *Karl Peterson, Summit Professional Leadership – Casa Grande*

Recorder: *Linda Yarrington, Planning & Development Director, Pinal/ Gila Behavioral Health Association*

Partners in Economic Progress

“Alliances are the way to get things done. You need to be open to partnering with your competitors to accomplish goals.”

**Liska Danka, Director of
Communications, Arizona
Department of Commerce**

PARTNERS IN ECONOMIC PROGRESS

It is through the collective efforts of both the public sector and the private sector that the Pinal County Town Hall has been made possible. The Town Hall Advisory Committee expresses appreciation to the following organizations for their financial support of the Fourteenth Annual Pinal County Town Hall as well as their participation and interest in this county-wide endeavor.

PINAL COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

Special appreciation is extended to the Pinal County Board of Supervisors for its' continuing commitment to and financial support for the Pinal County Town Hall.

COMMUNITY PARTNERS

MAJOR:

City of Apache Junction*
City of Casa Grande*
City of Coolidge*
City of Eloy*
Town of Florence*
Town of Queen Creek

SUSTAINING

Apache Junction Chamber of Commerce*
Arizona City Chamber of Commerce *
Copper Basin Chamber of Commerce *
Eloy Chamber of Commerce*
Greater Casa Grande Chamber of Commerce*
Greater Florence Chamber of Commerce
Pinal/Gila Behavioral Health Association, Inc.
San Manuel Chamber of Commerce & Economic Development
Visitor Center
SMOR Tri-Community Chamber of Commerce *
Town of Kearny*
Town of Superior *

CORPORATE AND BUSINESS PARTNERS

MAJOR:

Abbott Laboratories, Ross Products Division*
Arizona Public Service*
Casa Grande Valley Newspapers, Inc.*
Casa Grande Regional Medical Center*
El Dorado Holdings
Harrah's Ak-Chin Casino
SaddleBrooke Development Company
The Remington Group

SUPPORTING:

Goodman Ranch Associates
Gold Canyon Resort
Pinal County Federal Credit Union
Pulte Homes
SunWest Educational Associates, Inc.*
The Paladin Group
The WLB Group
Your Broker Connection Real Estate

SUSTAINING:

Adecco Employment Services*
Arizona Water Company*
ASARCO, Inc. - Ray Complex*
Best Western Gold Canyon Inn & Suites
Cindy's Workforce*
DBK, Inc.
the Dolly Steamboat
Fast Stop Convenience Stores*
First American Title Insurance Agency*
Goldfield Ghost Town & Mine Tours, Inc.
Lee's Apparel*
The Mahoney Group*
Mining Camp Restaurant and Trading Post*
Pro Plaques of Arizona
Shope's IGA
Southwest Gas Corporation*
Sunstate Bank*
Tortilla Flat
TRICO Electric Cooperative, Inc.
Wells Fargo Bank of Arizona - NA

* Partners for ten or more years

DOOR PRIZES

Appreciation is extended to the following organizations and individuals for providing this year's delegate door prizes.

Abbott Laboratories, Ross Products Division

Arizona City Golf Club

Goldfield Ghost Town and Mine Tours, Inc.

Marana Skydive

SaddleBrooke Resort Community

SunWest Educational Associates, Inc.

The Dolly Steamboat

The Little Barrel – Donna Kerr

Tortilla Flat

Delegate Directory

**“Overall it was great to focus on the youth
and education. It gives the delegates
confidence in the county.”**

**Delegate comment
taken from Evaluation
Form.**



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Pinal County Town Hall

The Pinal County Town Hall began in 1988 due to the interest of a number of individuals and organizations to bring together a cross-section of Pinal County leaders in a town hall framework to study and discuss issues of importance to Pinal County and its citizens. From the beginning, the town hall has focused on issues relating to economic development. The Pinal County Development Board sponsors the town hall and has been supported in its planning by a county-wide advisory committee which meets monthly throughout the year. The town hall receives financial support from the Pinal County Board of Supervisors along with delegate fees and corporate/community support. **The supporters in this public-private partnership are identified as "Partners In Economic Progress".**

Each spring, approximately 130-150 delegates come together for two days to deal with a specific topic that impacts the county as a whole and its respective communities and citizens. Topics over the fourteen years include:

- 1988 A Symposium on Economic Development
- 1989 Pinal County Futures: Tomorrow's Vision - Today's Plan
- 1990 Horizon 2000: Strategies For Action
- 1991 An Inside Look at Pinal County Government: Taxes Vs. Services-A Delicate Balance
- 1992 The Year For Action: Implementing a County-Wide Economic Development Plan
- 1993 The Changing Workplace: Education's Challenge
- 1994 Today's Crisis: Confronting Juvenile Crime In Our Communities
- 1995 Pinal Tomorrow: Building Healthier Communities
- 1996 Volunteers in Service to Communities: People Making A Difference
- 1997 Environment and Growth: The Delicate Balance
- 1998 Aging of the Population: A Public and Private Challenge
- 1999 Pinal's Commitment To The Future: Meeting The Needs Of Our Youth
- 2000 Charting Our Future
- 2001 Intellectual Capital-Tomorrow's Dividend: Education for the 21st Century

An annual report, which includes recommendations and/or suggestions, is prepared after each town hall, and distributed to delegates and partners and is monitored during the year for progress and action by members of the advisory committee. While the town hall possesses no official power or authority, it is significant to note that many of the delegate recommendations and/or ideas have been implemented over the thirteen year history of town hall.

SunWest Educational Associates, Inc. has served as the "administrative arm" in working with the advisory committee to plan, organize, and implement the Pinal County Town Hall. For more information contact, Wayne G. Gerken, SunWest Educational Assoc. Inc. 1182 E. Bonita Pl., Casa Grande, Az 85222 (520-836-2065) or co.pinal.az.us/pct.h.

Special Acknowledgement

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**2001
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**PINAL COUNTY TOWN HALL
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Pinal County Town Hall is an assembly of annually convened delegates that identifies critical issues facing Pinal County, creates the forum for education and exploration of the topic and fosters networking and collaboration among its participants. By drawing upon Pinal County's diversity of citizens the Town Hall process promotes public consideration of these issues, builds consensus, and supports implementation of the resulting outcomes.

