March 15, 2016 Issue

- Crane School District Eyes Contract For Mobile Data
- Learning Center: Campus Offers Opportunities
- The Force Is With County Science Fair Winner
- Tower Crane At YRMC To Be Taken Down
- Construction Work In Yuma Better Than Expected Last Year
Crane School District Eyes Contract For Mobile Data

The Crane Elementary School District governing board may approve entering into a contract with the AT&T Solution for ConnectED for mobile data services at its regular meeting Tuesday.

The AT&T Solution for ConnectED is a program in which AT&T will donate to Crane schools, under the agreement, mobile data services for students’ Apple ConnectED devices and other designated users of the district, according to the agenda packet from the district. The measure is set to be considered under the board’s consent agenda.

The board will also hear a presentation from Executive Director of Management Services Dale Ponder on Arizona school district spending for the fiscal year ending June 30. The data is collected and produced by the Arizona Office of the Auditor General.

The governing board may also discuss and consider approval for the Arizona School Board Association to conduct a superintendent survey to the community, parents and staff about specific attributes that they would like in the district’s next superintendent. The ASBA plans the survey period to begin March 9 and run through April 22. Current Crane Superintendent Robert Klee is slated to retire in June of 2017.

The governing board meeting will be at 5 p.m. in room 607 of Crane Middle School, 4450 W. 32nd St. The board will begin with an executive session for a student discipline hearing before moving on to other agenda items.

The winners of the Yuma County Spelling Bee, MathCounts competition and the Yuma County Science and Engineering Expo will also be recognized at the board meeting.

By Amy Crawford, Yuma Sun staff writer
Those looking to earn a bachelor’s degree or higher don’t have to travel beyond the county limits to do so.

While Yuma County may not have an actual four-year university campus, it does have a “university learning center,” said AWC Vice President for Learning Services Dr. Linda Elliott-Nelson, referring to the hundreds of higher education pathways available to students at AWC. This is due to partnerships the community college has formed over the years with Northern Arizona University and University of Arizona, and most recently with Arizona State University.

Elliott-Nelson shared that all three state universities teach classes on site now with the January launch of ASU’s new Yuma bachelor’s degree programs in criminal justice/criminology and organizational leadership.

ASU’s criminal justice/criminology program prepares students for a career in law enforcement, probation, parole, corrections, private security, legal offices, victim advocate agencies, or as court personnel. Its organizational leadership program helps build up leaders for businesses, nonprofit, and government agencies.

A secondary education program through ASU will also start in Yuma in the fall. This will train educators in specific subject areas to teach in middle or high school classrooms.

A partnership that was formed in 1988, NAU-Yuma Branch Campus offers over 120 bachelor’s, master’s, doctoral, and certification/endorsement programs – some of which are available in-person, online, or through a blended format.

One of NAU-Yuma’s newer programs is a bachelor’s degree in social work with a specific focus on U.S. and Mexico border issues and populations. Another fairly new addition is a bachelor’s degree in industrial technology management, a program which provides leadership and management training for those who have already received an associate’s degree in automotive technology, welding technology, or industrial technology.
Other degree programs through NAU-Yuma consist of business and administration, elementary education, nursing, science, logistics, and criminal justice. Another collaboration that has existed for several years, the UA-Yuma Academic Center offers bachelor’s degrees as well as master’s degrees and certificates, with almost all of their programs offered solely in Yuma. According to UA-Yuma’s website, people can obtain a bachelor’s degree in agriculture technology management, sustainable plant systems, family studies and human development, systems engineering, and civil engineering. Master’s degrees can also be earned in fields such as nursing, agriculture sciences, agricultural education, systems engineering, engineering management, and education.

With several degree options to choose from, Elliott-Nelson commented that not only do these partnerships provide more opportunities for people to stay in Yuma to pursue their education at a lower cost than a four-year university, they also provide employers a chance to hire more locally educated and trained workers as well. “What I’m hearing more and more is that we have companies that want talent from our area, because they know that employees from the Yuma County area will stay because their family is here, they love the region, they like living on the border, and they like the heat and the desert climate,” she said.

“When employers recruit from different areas around the country, maybe the employees will stay one or two years and then they’ll leave, and (the employer) will have to recruit someone else.”

Higher educational opportunities also create chances for people to achieve higher paying jobs as well, said Elliott-Nelson.

“We know the higher the quality of the education, the better the learning and the more successful the students will be, which then leads to a good paying job.”

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, an average Yuma salary is less than $20,000 a year, while the statewide average is a little over $25,000.

“A bachelor’s degree can help double or triple a person’s salary. It benefits them, it benefits their family, and it benefits the community,” said Elliott-Nelson.

**Paths to the future**

Arizona Western College now offers a variety of educational opportunities, thanks to partnerships with universities across the state.
For more information about the NAU-Yuma Branch campus, people can visit www.yuma.nau.edu or call 317-6400.

People can learn about the UA Yuma Academic Center by visiting www.uayuma.arizona.edu or by calling 271-9560. For more information about ASU's Yuma programs, people can visit www.transfer.asu.edu/awc.

Additional information about advisement services through AWC, 2020 S. Avenue 8E, can be found at www.azwestern.edu/student_services/support_services/advisement_services/ or by calling 344-7624.
The force was with Quinn Nemeth at the Yuma County Science and Engineering Expo on Feb 5.

Her science project, “Science Wars: The Lorentz Force Awakens,” was named grand champion overall for more than 400 student projects in the county-level expo. She and about 50 other Yuma County students are competing in the Southern Arizona Regional Science and Engineering Fair (SARSEF) this weekend in Tucson. “Competing was very exciting,” the Gowan Science Academy sixth-grader said, “although there was a lot of waiting and anticipation involved.”

Nemeth’s project focused on the Lorentz Force.

“What I think is the most unique about my project is that I investigated how I could alter the effects of the Lorentz Force (the Lorentz Force is the force that operates upon a charged particle moving through an electric and magnetic field),” she said.

The high school winner, Connor Takesuye of Gila Ridge High School, did an experience with quantum flux and superconductors, called “The effect of different quantum flux patterns, using neodymiuan magnets, on a super conductor at critical temperature.”

“The uniqueness that my project beholds is that I used liquid nitrogen to freeze my Type II super conductors down to 77 Kelvin (-196 Celsius),” Takesuye said. “I was also given the chance to experiment with and observe the phenomenon the Meissner effect (quantum locking). The Meissner effect is where the quantum flux emitted by the magnet, is blocked by the superconductor or, locks the superconductor in space.”

Science and Engineering Expo winner
The overall winner of the Yuma County Science and Engineering Expo Quinn Nemeth (center), a sixth-grader from Gowan Science Academy, holds her certificate at the expo’s awards ceremony Feb. 17 at Yuma High School. On her left is a representative of Jacob's Technology. To the right is Julie Rodriguez, chairwoman of the expo and director of education services for the Yuma County Education Services Agency.
“The competing portion was more interesting than I had initially thought,” Takesuye said. “I enjoyed looking at what other individuals brought to the table.”

The middle school winner, Emma Gwynn, did not comment in time for this article. Five-hundred sixty students from 30 Yuma area schools competed with 440 projects in this year’s science and engineering fair, said Julie Rodriguez, director for education services for the Yuma County Education Services Agency, and the chairwoman of the event.

Students compete in science fairs in their schools in seven categories: chemistry/biochemistry; Earth and environmental science; zoology; botany; engineering and technology; health, medicine and microbiology; and physics. The top three winners in each category advanced to the county level expo held at Arizona Western College. Students who are in the top three at their school are also eligible to participate in the SARSEF in Tucson.

The awards night for the Yuma expo was Feb. 17 at Yuma High School. The guest speaker was Julie Engle, President/CEO Greater Yuma Economic Development. “We gave out over $5,000 in cash and prizes,” Rodriguez said.

Large donors for this year’s science and engineering expo were BOSE, Jacobs Technology, Inc., Arizona Public Service and Arizona Western College.
Tower Crane At YRMC To Be Taken Down

Posted: Tuesday, March 8, 2016 8:41 pm
By Rachel Twoguns @Rtwoguns

Photo: Randy Hoeft/Yuma Sun

**McCarthy Building**
Companies’ giant tower crane lifts a 60-foot section of copper pipe during construction of the new Yuma Regional Medical Center Emergency Department.
The tower crane over Yuma Regional Medical Center, one of the tallest machines of its nature to ever visit Yuma and one that has graced the hospital’s skyline for a little over a year, will be coming down at the end of this week.

McCarthy Building Companies, Inc. handles the current construction at YRMC. The crane itself sets beams and is part of a long-standing construction project for the hospital’s new Emergency Department. Presently, the new ED is expected for completion this fall in October, YRMC said, and will double the current ED bed capacity.

Raymond Gomez, the crane's operator, said the company has been to Yuma in the past. "This is actually the second crane. We were here for a project before probably two years ago. This is the second tower crane in Yuma and I believe this is the tallest crane to have been in Yuma."

On a typical workday, Gomez said he is up in the crane from early morning until the early evening. "I spend about ten to twelve hours a day up there." Gomez's day begins in the crane at 6:30 a.m. and ends at around 5:30 or 6 p.m., during which time he does not come down that often, he said.

From the start, Gomez dived in and became a crane operator after deciding that was the job he wished to obtain. "I just decided that's what I want to do, so I was fortunate just to get in and start doing it. Now we have apprenticeship programs through the union and you just go from there to get hired on with a contractor of course."

Though Gomez has been a crane operator for over three decades, he notes that he still feels like he can continue this line of work. "I have been doing it for 37 or 38 years now, since 1978 and maybe (another) four or five more years, I still feel pretty good. Be careful what you wish for because once you are in you are pretty much locked in. It’s a good career though."

Construction at YRMC
A load of pipe is moved by the McCarthy Building Companies giant tower crane, being used extensively for construction of the new Yuma Regional Medical Center Emergency Department. The crane is scheduled to be coming down soon.

Randy Hoeft/Yuma Sun
Originally, Gomez is from Detroit and moved to Arizona in the late 60’s. During his career, Gomez has been all around the country and has seen many sights from atop the cranes he has operated. "You can see all of it (Yuma) that’s for sure, you can even see into Mexico I reckon," he chuckled. "I like the view at night and the military base flying over every once in a while, that’s pretty cool. I had a Huey (helicopter) come in the other day really close and that was exciting."

When setting beams, Gomez communicates with the rest of the team to get them precisely in the right place. "You get a lot of help from the guys on the ground signaling you, but I have a load cell that gives me footages so once I reach an area I know say it’s 120 feet away. If I got to go set another beam there I can pretty much get it really close that way and then they tune you in up there, usually pretty close within a foot or two."

In Yuma, Gomez has had to deal with not only the heat during the summer, but the wind as well. "Monday it was really windy and today it was 20 miles per hour. The news usually tells you that’s it’s fifteen miles an hour and it’s usually probably a good ten miles an hour strong riptide. The other day it was gusting at 35. I shut the crane at 42 miles per hour."

As for the heat, Gomez said that the cab he works in is air conditioned, and even has a small refrigerator and a microwave so that Gomez may have food should the need arise. Up next, Gomez will be traveling to Chandler for another job and his next tower crane to operate is already set up and waiting for him, he said.

On Friday, the process of taking down the crane will commence, and it will take a total of two days for the crane to be completely taken down from the YRMC horizon.

**The tallest tower crane**
The tower crane that has graced the YRMC skyline for a little over a year will be taken down at the end of this week. At 200’ feet at the tower top, the crane is believed to be the tallest tower crane to visit Yuma.

*Courtesy of John Kovesdy with McCarthy Builders*
Construction activity in the city of Yuma during 2015 was even better than anticipated, confirmed Building Safety Official Randy Crist.

And so far, 2016 is shaping up to be a good year as well if the current level of building activity continues.

By nearly every measure, building activity within the city was up in 2015 over the previous year.

City of Yuma Community Development staff members were certainly busy, conducting 22,600 building inspections – up from 20,000 in 2014.

Meanwhile, the city issued a total of 5,829 permits in 2015, compared to 4,695 in 2014. There were increases in every category across the board, including both residential and commercial projects and a significant number of solar projects, Crist reported. “There was a nice, gentle increase throughout the spectrum,” he said.

Especially satisfying, he said, is the mercantile activity in the city, signaling an uptick in retail development that bodes well for the community’s recovering economy. Residential building activity also has been brisk.

And, of course, there’s the construction now well under way of the hospital’s long-awaited new Emergency Department as the grand finale of a flurry of building activity over the last couple of years at Yuma Regional Medical Center. The new state-of-the-art ED, scheduled for completion this fall, will double the current ED bed capacity. Two additional shelled floors will provide room for future expansion as the community continues to grow. And an underground floor provides room for a new cafeteria in the future.

Hospital projects aside, the number of commercial permits issued in 2015 was up about 10 percent, with a significant increase in permits for business offices, Crist said.
He highlighted one office project, the renovation by Hardknocks Limited of the former accountant office at 190 S. Madison Ave. in Yuma’s historic downtown area though a development agreement with the city.

“He took a dilapidated building, an historic building, and did a nice job,” Crist said of developer Scott Spencer, who has since moved his office there.

Other office projects completed in 2015 include the shelled two-story medical building at 2500 S. 8th Ave., continued building activity at Tuscany Professional Plaza off Avenue B and a variety of tenant improvement office projects scattered across the city.

What Crist is really excited about, though, is the retail building activity. He reported valuations of $10.5 million for retail projects permitted in 2015 versus $3 million the previous year. “When we see that, it shows a healthy economy.” The retail list includes some noteworthy projects, one being Hobby Lobby, long a fixture on the Yuma Sun’s annual Christmas Wish List for desired new businesses. That new store opened just in time for the holiday season.

Other retail activity in 2015 included completion of two new retail buildings at Yuma Mesa Shopping Center that house Dunkin Donuts and Dog Haus among other businesses, opening of C.A.L. Ranch in the former Mervyn’s store, a new Discount Tire at Yuma Palms Regional Center, a new Fisher Dodge Chrysler Dealership, Sprague’s new Truckmates building, a new home for U-Haul, Yuma’s second dd’s Discounts going into the vacant Staples at 500 W. Catalina Drive, and Napa Automotive moving into the old Goodwill on 4th Avenue – previously a Safeway for those whose memories go back that far.

There also were a number of smaller projects that included additions to and renovations of existing stores such as Buffalo Wild Wings, Kay Jewelers and Liquid Eyewear and tenant improvements to Cielo Verde Retail Center as well as the new Press Sandwich Shop that went into a long vacant building at 121 E. 24th St.

This is just a sampling of commercial projects in 2015 that also included completion of the new home for Yuma Mortuary, construction of the new Desert View Academy (a $6.3 million project), and alterations to an existing cooler for Custom Ag Pak, a new salad processing plant at 2591 S. Brown Ave. off Gila Ridge Road that was completed just in time for this winter’s vegetable season.

As for residential activity, the city saw a significant upswing in building activity for new homes, Crist reported. The city issued 382 permits for single-family homes during the year, up from 305 in 2014.

“That’s encouraging,” Crist said.
Crist said the three major home builders in the city currently include Elliott Homes, with activity at Araby Crossing and the Terraces as well as some building in the county; Hall Construction, whose major projects include Park West at Avenue C and 24th Street, Sunset Mountain Townhomes and Desert Oasis and Saguaro subdivisions; and Kammann Development at Livingston Ranch and Sierra Montana.

The city also saw a huge increase in solar projects, issuing a total of 777 such permits for the year, mostly for homes. That compares to 150 permits for solar projects in 2014. That’s a trend Crist sees continuing, with 120 permits for solar projects already issued this year in less than two months.

Likely the most popular construction project in 2015 as far as the public is concerned was the rebuilding of the Stewart Vincent Wolfe Playground at West Wetlands Park. The rebuilt playground, destroyed by an arson fire just before Christmas 2014, opened to an enthusiastic crowd on Dec. 19.

The only building measurement for the city that decreased in 2015 was for valuations – the value of a building project, not including the cost of the land. Valuations for 2015 totaled $122 million, down from $150 million in 2014.

Crist attributed the previous year’s higher valuation to the number of major “make way” projects by YRMC in 2014 as it prepared for the construction of the new Emergency Department. That impressive “make way” list included a new parking garage, new administration building, Parkview Loop ring road and several major renovation projects as well as construction of the YRMC Cancer Center.

“Those were big ticket projects,” Crist said. And it shows in the grand total for 2014. He explained that the city issued permits last year for YRMC projects with a total valuation of $55 million compared to $14 million this year, most of which is for the new Emergency Department.

While still cautious about the future, Crist believes 2016 will continue on the same path as 2015 with continued recovery of the construction industry.

The recovery of the housing market looks to continue this year, with 73 single family permits already issued by mid-February, a 70 percent increase over this time last year he said.

As for commercial projects, this year’s list includes several major projects that already have been completed or are under way. Among them were the opening in January of the Walmart Grocery Store on 8th Street and Avenue B, completion of Farley’s Market (which sells Costco brand products) in Las Palmillas Center and completion of the Amelia Earhart Hangar at Yuma International Airport.

Other just completed major projects are the new home for Amberly’s Place, an addition to Healthsouth Rehab Hospital and conversion of a former hotel at 2600 S. 4th Ave. to create Veterans Home of Yuma.
Other projects around the city now under way are a major remodel of Albertson’s Grocery Store at the Big Curve, an addition to El Buen Taquito at 810 S. 13th Ave., renovations to a Main Street property for Yuma County offices and a new building to house the Valentin Guzman insurance and real estate offices on 4th Avenue and 20th Place (where Famous Sam’s was located until it burned down several years ago). The former Knights of Columbus on 4th Avenue Extension is being converted to a new home for Legacy Church, plans have been approved for renovations to the former Logan’s for Hooter’s and permits are ready to finish the interior of the shelled second building at Mission Valley Plaza located at the corner of 24th Street and Avenue C that had sat vacant since 2008.

Meanwhile, work is well underway at Gomez Plaza that will transform 17.5 acres on the south side of 16th Street into a new commercial center. Already under construction there is a building for Native Grill and Wings and building plans have been submitted for a second tenant, Freddy’s Frozen Custard and Steakburgers, he said.

“That’s a prime property that’s been vacant a long time,” said Crist. “It will be nice to see it getting filled.”

As is true as well for other long-vacant properties around the city.