



# Education Matters

Monthly Newsletter of the Gila County School Superintendent's Office

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## Upcoming Events

June 4, 2015 (5:30-7:30 PM)  
AZ School Superintendent Comes to Globe for her "We Are Listening Tour"  
Gila County Courthouse  
Board of Supervisors  
Meeting Room

## Contact Us

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## A Heart-Felt Thank You

It has been said that teaching is the one profession that creates all the others. Visit any given classroom and you will find students learning so much more than ELA, math or science. Teachers encourage budding individuals to express themselves through words and art. They inspire blossoming thinkers to apply theoretic principles to solve real-world problems. Teachers are planting the seeds of our future voters, lawmakers, healthcare providers, engineers, artists, parents, and – yes – the next generation of educators.

As one education blogger phrased it: "Teachers affect eternity."

The teaching profession, while a rewarding one, is not always given the respect it deserves. Few professions are so often caught in the crossfire of politics, economics, and social justice debates like educators. Too seldom are teachers given society's gratitude for all they accomplish despite these distractions.

As we all continue to invest our dedication and passion in the effort to provide Gila County students with a quality education, please know that you are sincerely appreciated. It is with these thoughts of gratitude that the staff of the Gila County Schools Office wishes you all a rejuvenating summer so that you may return to work in the fall with a renewed inspiration to be shared with your students.

Have a wonderful summer!

Sincerely,

*Linda O'Dell*



## AZ School Superintendent Diane Douglas comes to Globe as part of "We Are Listening" tour

Arizona Superintendent of Public Instruction Diane Douglas is hosting a public meeting on Thursday, June 4, from 5:30-7:30 PM, in the Gila County Board of Supervisors Meeting Room inside the Courthouse in Globe. The meeting is part of her "We Are Listening" tour, which is slated to visit 14 cities across the state. Each public meeting location is open and free to the public, is not restricted to specific school districts, and has been coordinated in an effort to be as centrally located to multiple school districts

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## Archives

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as possible. The Department of Education invites the public to attend any of the meetings and voice concerns or comments regarding educational issues in Arizona. Comments can also be made by emailing [HearingEveryVoice@azed.gov](mailto:HearingEveryVoice@azed.gov) or by joining the conversation on Twitter [@azedschools#HearingEveryVoice](https://twitter.com/azedschools#HearingEveryVoice). For a full list of the cities on the “We Are Listening” tour, please visit [www.gilacountyesa.org](http://www.gilacountyesa.org) and see “Upcoming Events”.

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## Rowena Bilgera named 2015 Teacher of the Year

Gila County School Superintendent Linda O’Dell is happy to announce that Ms. Rowena Bilgera of the BiyaaGozhoo Education Center (BGEC) in San Carlos has been selected as the 2015 Gila County Teacher of the Year. Ms. Bilgera teaches reading, writing, and math to students in grades 5-12 at the San Carlos Juvenile Detention and Rehabilitation Center. She has been a teacher for 25 years, five of which have been at the BiyaaGozhoo Education Center, which is part of the Gila County Regional School District.



Superintendent O’Dell, who began the Gila County Teacher of the Year program in 2011, congratulates Ms. Bilgera on being selected by the judging panel for this prestigious honor. “The Gila County Teacher of the Year program provides an opportunity to acknowledge outstanding teachers in our region. Day after day, Gila County teachers strive to provide experiences that support student success and academic growth. Our Teacher of the Year program provides the chance for us to highlight professional accomplishments and thank teachers for their commitment to our young people,” she explained.

Superintendent O’Dell would also like to congratulate the top finalists for 2015: Heidi Goebel of the Tonto Basin School District, Alison Nordquist of the Payson Unified School District, and Dan Hill and Sammy Gonzales of the Miami Unified School District. Your service does not go unnoticed! Finally, thank everyone who nominated a Gila County teacher for this award which serves to honor the hard work and dedication of our communities’ educators.

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## 4<sup>th</sup> Annual STEMfest in Globe/Miami is huge success

The 4<sup>th</sup> annual Gila County STEMfest in Globe/Miami was a huge success, attracting more than 500 people from Globe, Miami, San Carlos and out-of-town. Thanks to our engaging exhibitors, festival visitors of all ages could experience an array of demonstrations, games, and hands-on activities offered at 40 booths. This year’s event took place at and in collaboration with the Bullion Plaza Cultural Center



and Museum in Miami. Also new this year was the introduction of STEM pep rallies, hosted by our local elementary and middle schools and in collaboration with some of our STEMfest exhibitors. Even the Miami High School cheerleaders showed up with the Vandal mascot to do a few STEM cheers with the students of Charles Bejarano Elementary. Thank you to everyone who participated and made the inaugural STEM pep rallies a huge success! We look forward to continuing and expanding the many partnerships that foster the excitement of learning about all things STEM.

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## Payson High chemists host Chemistry Day for middle school students

Every spring, middle school students from Rim Country Middle School are treated to a day of explosive fun – sometimes literally – thanks to Mrs. Meena Rustagi and her high school chemistry students. On March 4, 120 Payson High School students showcased their chemistry knowledge for approximately 300 middle school students with more than 40 demonstration



stations. For two hours, the Longhorn Dome was bubbling and brewing with science. Chemistry Day not only sparks the curiosity and critical thinking mechanisms of the middle schoolers, it also gives the high school students the perfect opportunity to test their own knowledge and presentation skills in front of an eager-to-learn audience. This popular event leaves a lasting impression on all who participate and is something the students look forward to each year.

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## Year in Review

### **MSP GRANT**

The Gila County Education Service Agency (GCESA) secured a federal Mathematics & Science Partnership (MSP) grant, funded through the Arizona Department of Education, in the amount of \$626,000. The project will provide professional development training in science for up to 80 Gila County teachers of grades K-8 who have expressed interest in participating. GCESA will partner with the Center for Science Teaching and Learning at Northern Arizona University to conduct the 'Energy' and 'Organisms' courses of the *Making Sense of Science* curriculum developed by WestEd. We are happy to offer ongoing opportunities for professional development to Gila County teachers.

### **STEMPATHS CONFERENCE**

On February 18, students from Globe, Miami, San Carlos, and Liberty high schools, as well as the Globe Education Center, attended the first STEMPaths Conference. More than 500 students had the opportunity to select three sessions (from a total of 10 career areas) based on their personal career interests. In each hour-long session, three

professionals with STEM-related jobs spoke to students about job opportunities, educational requirements, salary ranges, and career benefits and challenges. In a follow up survey, students rated the event as having provided them with valuable information and indicated that they would be interested in seeing the program expanded to include even more career fields.

### **GILA COUNTY STEM FEST IN PAYSON**

The 2<sup>nd</sup> annual Gila County STEM Fest in Payson was held under beautiful blue skies on October 4. Thanks again to the many community organizations and individuals that volunteered their time and expertise, the festival featured 37 exhibits, demonstrations, games, and competitions. STEM Fest boasted everything from bearded dragons to spaghetti towers. A special 'thank you' goes out to all the teachers, students, and administrators that added to the great success of the STEM Fest in Payson!

### **GILA COUNTY SPELLING BEE**

The 2015 Gila County Spelling Bee featured 30 of Gila County's best spellers. Held in the beautiful Payson High School auditorium on February 19, this year's spelling bee lasted 14 rounds before 6<sup>th</sup> grader Colton Justice of Rim Country Middle School in Payson took top honors. Second place went to Tonto Basin's Alayna Dinges. Chris Provideo of Globe and Kristopher Klindt of Miami went head-to-head for an additional six rounds to determine the third place winner. At the end of the excitement, Provideo succeeded in out-spelling his rival for third place. Colton represented Gila County on March 21 at the Arizona Spelling Bee. Congratulations to Colton for a job well done!

### **GILA COUNTY REGIONAL SCIENCE FAIR**

The 2015 Gila County Regional Science Fair boasted 93 projects from 138 students. The quality of the projects was astounding, proving that Gila County is alive with science! More than 30 volunteer judges – all experts in the category they judged – spent the morning of March 5 reviewing boards, reading research logbooks, and interviewing the student scientists before selecting the winning projects. Twenty-seven projects received top honors at the regional science fair, thereby qualifying for the Arizona State Science and Engineering Fair held in April. At the state competition, 12 Gila County students received honors: Alyssa Boerst, Shelby Dixon, Amanda Branch, Meghan LaBadie, Novally Reid, Bladimir Benitez, and Alex Hagan from Rim Country Middle School; Abby Cleary of Julia Randall Elementary; Anthony Charles Patten of Rice Elementary; Jerusha Paine of Pine-Strawberry; and Taylor Wilson of High Desert Middle School. Congratulations to all the students on their hard work and to the science fair coordinators and project mentors for their time and dedication!

### **SOUTHERN GILA COUNTY WATER FESTIVAL**

The 2<sup>nd</sup> annual Southern Gila County Water Festival was held on March 26 at Bullion Plaza Museum in Miami. More than 380 4<sup>th</sup> grade students from Copper Rim, Leonor Hambly, Rice Elementary, and Lee Kornegay participated. More than 60 volunteers from the community hosted the hands-on learning stations for the students.



## **STEM PEP ASSEMBLIES**

Gila County is leading the way in Arizona by hosting the first STEM-themed pep assemblies. The STEM pep assemblies were held in conjunction with the Gila County STEMfest in Globe/Miami. Four schools piloted the idea this year by inviting the Gila County Schools Office and STEMfest exhibitors to speak with their students, host demonstrations, and get students excited about learning and everything connected to STEM. Thank you to Destiny School, Charles Bejarano Elementary, Lee Kornegay Intermediate, and Copper Rim for hosting the inaugural STEM pep assemblies.

## **GILA COUNTY STEMFEST IN GLOBE/MIAMI**

The Gila County STEMfest in Globe/Miami experienced its largest turnout yet on April 25! Those who came enjoyed beautiful weather, loads of fun, and a large variety of exhibits. Students also received a STEMfest activity booklet to take home with them so that the learning can continue long after the festival. Thank you to the schools that offered rewards to their students for attending STEMfest and thank you to everyone who came out to support and enjoy the event!