

Hopi Indians, South Jordan Rotary Form Bond

By Rhett Wilkinson

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A student helps the Hopi tribe near Tuba City, Ariz. The South Jordan Rotary and Hopi are enjoying a seven-year relationship. Photo courtesy Shaun Michel. Inset: Oraibi, a Hopi village that dates back to 1200 A.D. The South Jordan Rotary Council assists the Hopi. Photo courtesy Shaun Michel



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Patty Johnson, SME Steel

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By Rhett Wilkinson

It's not Squanto and the Pilgrims. But the Hopi Indians and South Jordan Rotary have a rather unique relationship.

A teenage girl's efforts seven years ago means that, today, the club visits a primitive village at least once every year.

The Hopi Indians need water, fixed roofs, firewood and seeds. Annually for eight years now, 25 students have the opportunity to help in Oraibi, the Hopi village, near Tuba City, Ariz. Oraibi is the oldest inhabited city in North America – it dates to 1200 A.D.

"It's about as third world as I've seen – and I've been around most of the world," said Shaun Michel, the Rotary-Hopi liaison and governor of the Utah Rotary district. "The people have lived there for generations, in the middle of a Navajo nation."

That's because the Hopi choose to live that way, the way their ancestors live. They are concerned that modern conveniences will corrupt their young people. In some cities, there is no electricity nor water. And when the Hopi gather water, they lose three-quarters of it because of the holes in their buckets. That has proven difficult to one lady who Michel met that is 5 feet, 89 pounds and loses her water after walking 2,000 feet to get it.

The Hopi need corn. A lot of it. Because of their religious values and traditions, some spend 80 percent of their time growing corn. That's why 20 members of the Brighton Interact



Young people from various schools helps the Hopi tribe each year at the oldest inhabited city in North America. Photo courtesy Shaun Michel

Rotary, a club for persons 12 to 18 years old, brought corn seeds in 2008, after Michel's daughter Jerika wanted to do a service project. That was because the Rotary is non-denominational – true to their motivation to avoid being uncorrupted from their way of life, the Hopi does not allow religiously-affiliated groups to visit for any reason.

"That's a privilege afforded us strictly because we are Rotarians," Michel said. "It's a gift to us to be able to interface with others, but we get a chance to see who they are. That will be lost, especially as the old generation dies off. There is a lot of culture and heritage that goes on. If we preserve that

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in our children, those stories won't die."

This year, young people who attend school from Brighton, Herriman, Bingham and Timpview high schools visited Oraibi. ✦

A member of the Hopi Indian tribe at Oraibi, a village that dates back to 1200 A.D. Photo courtesy Shaun Michel



Mayor's Facebook Post Sparks a Firestorm

By Rhett Wilkinson

A debate on a recurring national issue has hit South Jordan after the city council and mayor spoke out about it in a letter and on Facebook.

City council members Steve Barnes and Chuck Newton told the South Jordan Journal that they disagree with Mayor Dave Alvord on the handling of the letter. And two posts on the letter on Alvord's mayoral Facebook page have generated controversy. On the first, hundreds replied; on the second, multiple persons reported that comments were deleted. Reports were also that a resident had to do with the letter.

In the wake of the national Planned Parenthood controversy, the council sent a letter dated Aug. 18 to U.S. Congresswoman Mia Love, Gov. Gary Herbert and state legislators representing South Jordan.

"As the South Jordan City Council, we represent more than 64,000 residents in one of the fastest growing cities in the country," the letter reads. "We feel that abortive services and abortion generally are inconsistent with the values of many, if not most, South Jordan residents. We join with other elected officials across the country in requesting that ... you support any legal opportunities which exist or may arise to defund abortive services."

As of noon Tuesday, Alvord's first post with the letter attached generated 105 shares, 382 likes and 521 comments. Alvord's second post expressing gratitude generated two shares, 71 likes and 25 comments.

Councilmembers Steve Barnes and Chuck Newton expressed concerns. Barnes said that it should have been made clear that the council alone was voicing their viewpoint. Newton said that the council shouldn't wade into national issues.

"The problem is that these letters rarely have an impact," Barnes said. "We did a grandstanding gesture."

The U.S. House of Representatives had gone to recess the previous week and the town should focus on issues having to do with public works, police and parks and more, Newton said.

"He needs to deal with the here and now, not the stupid and useless," he said. Why doesn't he call Mia and say "Hey Mia, why don't you do something about this ... before leaving Washington?" Unfortunately, sometimes his focus has taken our focus away from where it has needed to be."

FACEBOOK POST CONTINUED ON PAGE 21



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South Jordan Property Taxes Hold Steady for Fourth Year

By James Luke

This year, Utah residents will all pay five cents more in state tax on every gallon of gas. Utah property owners will all see an increase in their state property tax payments in 2015. For the fourth straight year, though, South Jordan residents enjoy a steady local property tax rate.

It's tax adjustment season statewide, and nearly three dozen municipalities see property tax increases in their futures. Cities and other entities with taxing authority, such as school districts and special services, fire or water districts, are required by state law to notify residents of changes to the property tax that will cost them more money in taxes.

Thirty-three municipalities throughout Utah have given notice, by means of scheduling "Truth in Taxation" hearings in August as required by law, that residents in their tax districts will pay more in property taxes next year. Many of the leaders responsible for increasing the property tax collection figures deny that they are raising taxes, though.

Salt Lake City authorities call the property tax bump a "tax stabilization" to even out revenues. Because of an increase in assessed home values recently, some municipalities are actually lowering the tax rate, but are collecting more in property tax revenue nonetheless. The Utah Taxpayers Association notes that it "certainly is a tax increase" when residents pay more on their yearly tax bill, regardless of how the tax is described.

Many school districts point to the effects of HB119, which requires revenue sharing with charter schools in the school district, as the need to replace funds that will be lost under the new state law. School districts seeking property tax increases include Salt Lake City, Granite, Murray and other districts statewide.

The Jordan Valley Conservancy District, from which South Jordan receives water, has requested an increase in the revenue that they receive in property tax. Pointing to recent costly projects including Straw-

berry and Central Water Projects, the water district has requested an amount equal to about \$3 per home valued at \$265,000 in the taxing area.

Tax increases are often viewed with some skepticism by the taxpaying public. Many of the taxing authorities who are seeking increases point to a combination of causes for the need to increase property tax revenue, including some increased personnel costs for insurance and retirement benefits and the lingering effects of the recent recession that hit many local governments hard, requiring cutbacks or deferred spending for some years.

"Property tax revenue in the city generally funds only about 70 percent of the costs of police and fire service," a South Jordan councilmember noted recently. The remainder of the costs, plus other city services like recreation, parks, roads and administration, must come from other sources. Property tax rates are just one part of a complicated government-funding equation. ✦

Playground Philanthropy: South Jordan Rotary Helping the Disabled

By Rhett Wilkinson

The South Jordan Rotary is on the move towards a playground that disabled and non-disabled children alike can use, with a major function to boost the necessary funding.

The rotary hosted the MiniGolf Thursday, August 27 at 6:30 p.m. at Mulligan's Golf & Games in South Jordan.

The Rotary needs \$250,000 to make South Jordan Rotary PlayGarden a reality. So far, it has raised \$117,000. The goal is to have it installed for next summer.

From Thanksgiving dinners to the homeless to helping the Hopi Indians, the Rotary has proven to be "especially unique," said Patty Johnson, a volunteer for South Jordan Rotary.

"They are incredibly giving and service-oriented and think about who needs the most help and where can they serve," Johnson said. "We're hoping to create a future in which people are lifelong humanitarians."

Johnson's career helped her see how beneficial all-inclusive playgrounds are. Through her work as marketing director for SME Steel, she saw how phenomenal the San Jose Rotary PlayGarden was, she said.

Johnson is "completely confident" that folks will donate enough money to make South Jordan's version possible, she said.

"I believe there are enough people out there who are like-minded and socially conscious enough to want to create something for generations to come," she said. "There are a lot of people who are aware and socially conscious enough to care. We're only strong when we come together."

The PlayGarden would be found at East Riverfront Park.

Another fundraising event, a barbecue, will be held Sept. 18 from 4-8 p.m. at Dickie's Barbecue Pit. ✦



Brent Haupt (near) looks on during a Rotary fundraiser by the South Jordan PlayGarden. Another fundraiser, a MiniGolf event, will be held Thursday at Mulligan's. Photo courtesy Patty Johnson