

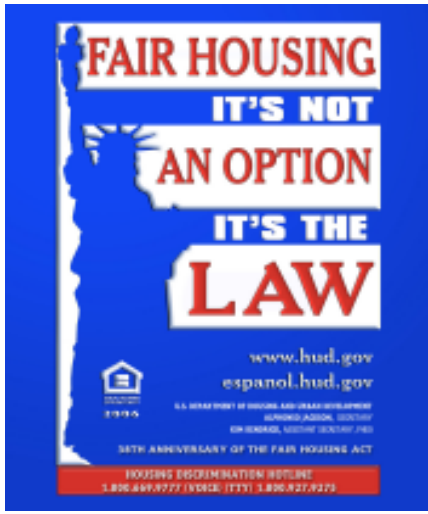
# Fair Housing Workshop Offered In AJ

Learn your rights- Merrill Gardens, Mar. 24

By Kathy L. Hall  
The News

Do you feel you have been treated differently while trying to buy or rent a place to live? The law does not allow housing providers such as landlords, sellers, lenders and insurance agents to discriminate because of their race, color, national origin, religion, sex, familial status or disability.

If you'd like more information or help in such a situation, attend the workshop being put on by Southwest Fair Housing Council at Merrill Gardens, March 24, from 2-5 p.m. Merrill Gardens is located at 2080 S. Ironwood Dr., Apache Junction. Space is limited so call tollfree for a reservation at 1-888-624-4611. Please mention that you are interested in the Apache Junction meeting.



# Liberty Mutual Award Presented To AJ Unit

“Firemark Award” for heroics



Josh Chartrand, of Liberty Mutual Insurance, presents the company's Firemark Award for heroics to (left to right) Captain Mike Farber, Engineer Mark Blackstone, Firefighter Paul Garcia and Firefighter Mark Gomez, crew members from Station #263, C Shift, which was involved in rescuing a grandmother and three of her grandchildren from a second-story apartment fire on January 1, 2006. Not pictured is Firefighter Paul Gruetzmacher, who took part in the rescue. The company makes ten such awards annually. Chartrand was joined by Sales Manager John Walters in nominating the team and ultimately making the award.

## from Fire District, A-1

was unique to Apache Junction Fire District.

Under the directive, all information received by an Apache Junction board member from district personnel, except in an open meeting or grievance procedure, must come from the chief or his designated appointee. All other employees are forbidden to communicate on pain of disciplinary actions, including losing their jobs.

Former district employees also allege the policies of the district have been applied inconsistently. While some firefighters reputedly have survived the disappearance of union funds, purported steroid and other illegal drug use, others have been forced to resign for lesser infractions.

Another example former employees cited involved an AJFD crew that responded to a helicopter crash on December 14, 2004, for which district employees subsequently received numerous awards for heroic action. Reportedly, the rescuers were later ordered to take a three-day stress leave which was docked from their sick pay. One of the rescue crew actually lost pay because he did not have enough accumulated sick leave.

The Apache Junction Fire District's turnover rate is near twice the national average. Tim Hill, an official of the Professional Fire Fighters of Arizona, said last week that the national turnover rate for fire departments is 2% or less per year. Hill also said it is rare for firefighters to voluntarily leave their positions. However, nine of thirteen employees who have left the Apache Junction Fire District over the past five years have done so voluntarily.

The overall turnover rate in AJFD in the five years between 2001-2005 has averaged 3.637%. However, in 2004 it was 4.110% and in 2005 it was 8.219%, more than four times the national average.

Most of the district's voluntary departures in the last five years involved firefighters leaving behind

rank and seniority, taking a pay cut and losing accumulated vacation and sick leave. The majority had five or more years of employment in the district, some nearing their 20-year retirement mark.

The district's pay scale for emergency personnel is currently competitive with other fire service departments in the Valley. In a survey prepared by the United Mesa Firefighters, in which Apache Junction members have a chapter, starting wages for the position of firefighter in AJFD is \$38,440 and is on par with the combined average starting wage of Chandler, Gilbert, Mesa, Phoenix and Tempe at \$38,410. Apache Junction firefighters actually start off higher than Chandler and Phoenix firefighters. However, at AJFD a Fire Engineer starts at \$43,491, significantly lower than the average of the other departments at \$47,846.

Compensation of administration officials has been questioned recently. Whether or not they compare with other departments is unexplored at this point, however the positions which seem to be drawing the most fire are:

- Fire chief - \$121,761.75, which includes an annual contracted \$8,000 in special payments to a retirement fund.
- Deputy Chiefs (2) - at \$204,555.79 for both
- Battalion Chiefs & Fire Marshall - up to \$92,094.26
- Personnel Officer - \$93,352.88

When contacted for comment, Chief John Flynn "did not feel it would be productive or in the best interest of the organization to respond in the newspaper to what he feels are anonymous allegations."

# RedZee Raises Bar for 'Kid-safe' Internet searches

(Syndicated News) Major search engines have opened up an enormous variety of resources for kids and teens of all ages to find almost anything they search for. Unfortunately it has also created a new avenue for kids and teens to access pornography through these major engines. According to the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children, every year one out of every five children is sexually solicited online. One of the more common incidents on the Internet involves children searching for explicit topics that send kids to pornographic Web sites.

Major search engines allow unfiltered results and that can be a problem, especially if kids are doing the searching. This is raising concern across the nation for schools, parents and even the government. Major search engines could install filters that would stop users from typing explicit topics. Unfortunately, pornography is one of the most searched for items and this would impact their user base and their bottom line.

The Bush administration is trying to pass an Internet child protection law to stop pornographic Web sites from showing up on computers that children are using. In the process, they recently requested records from Google to see what people search for. Although Google refused to release the information, the goal was to see how often a search resulted in a pornographic

link. That protection law was struck down just two years ago leaving parents, schools and teens to find ways to get good clean search results. ISE Corporation created RedZee

Search (www.RedZee.com), a possible solution to this problem. RedZee, a new search engine, filters out pornographic results while delivering accurate relevant searches. "We are filling the desperate need for a quality search engine that offers clean, yet still accurate results," says John Stewart of ISE Corporation. RedZee offers fast search results that are targeted correctly to what people are looking for. Searches for explicit or pornographic related words do not have a result. With the peace of mind this company is offering they have quickly become popular with parents, teens and schools across the country. "We take pride in knowing that people count on us to help in the struggle to clean up Internet searching as we know it," says Stewart.

The government may never be completely successful at passing any laws to keep pornographic search results away from children. In the meantime, RedZee's quality record sets them apart and continues to push their company to success. That's why their mission is "to be the most accurate and the most reliable for adults, and at the same time, think of the children."



## Letters to the Editor continued from page A-4

away from the Restaurant) are also not aware of the ongoing problem at the Mining Camp Restaurant with sewage odor & noise from sewage treatment motors. We who live nearby think that what the business supporters call a 'respectable business' would install a modern sewage treatment system before it asked for a variance that would, by its own claim, increase the amount of sewage treated in ways that cause at present noise 24 hours a day and odor more than half the year!

It is our understanding that Mr. Fugate has offered to sell the restaurant and this failure to modernize the sewage treatment plant behind the building is an economy measure, as is the application for the cheaper liquor license.

Of course we have no idea what a new owner might do with the precedent of an unrestricted liquor license.

With these concerns in mind we ask all residents of the Foothills to refuse to sign the petition supporting an Unrestricted Liquor License for the Mining Camp Restaurant.

Beth Boesen  
Apache Junction

**Thank you**  
We would like to thank the local merchants for their support and making a "Fun Day Luncheon" for the Gold Canyon Golf & RV Resort Ladies Golf League, full of wonderful surprises. You are appreciated: Ancient Visions Rustic Furnishings, Bashas' Market, Blockbuster Video, Blooms By Betsy at Gold Canyon, de la Cruz Mexican Grille, Desert Dazzle Beauty Salon, The Garage Pub & Pizza, Gold Canyon Golf & RV Resort, Gold Canyon Golf Resort, Jack In The Box, Lenny's Gigglin Gecko, Mail Boxes Etc, Open Range Steakhouse, Red Sage Restaurant, The Salon At Gold Canyon, Sherry's Country Clippers, Subway, The Wooley Warthog, Zona's Grille.

Ida Buckner, Chairperson Ladies Golf League  
Gold Canyon Golf & RV Resort  
Gold Canyon

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## First Step

**What:** Central Arizona College's First Step Program allows high school students an opportunity to get an early start into college by taking courses during the summer.

**Who:** The program is for Pinal County high school students who meet in-state residency guidelines and have completed their sophomore, junior or senior year of high school.

**How Much:** Students can take up to seven credits FREE. Students are responsible for the cost of their books and transportation.

**When:** Registration is underway. Call today. Summer courses begin May 30.

For more information, call Shari Eddy, 480-677-7732

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