



A new three-day event is coming to the fairgrounds  
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Final route selected for north-south freeway  
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## HISPANIC LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE

# Group plans next round of classes

**Graduates serve their community**

By MELISSA ST. AUDE  
 Staff Writer

ELOY — Over the past 15 years, with the exception of this year, the Hispanic Leadership Institute has turned out hundreds of community leaders.

And the organization plans to soon recruit for its next round of training programs to create a new generation of people tasked with

making positive changes throughout the area. The Latino Familia Initiative will begin its 15th Hispanic Leadership Institute — Pinal training program in the spring of 2022.

“We’re totally delighted to have produced so many leaders and servants for the community,” said Ralph Varela, chief executive officer for Pinal Hispanic Council, a former Casa Grande City Council member and one of the trainers for the HLI program.

Graduates of HLI-Pinal are serving on boards, commissions and councils throughout Pinal



**SPECIAL SECTION** Fiestas Patrias is coming back to Eloy. | **Inside**

County. Casa Grande, Eloy and Coolidge city councils all have HLI-Pinal graduates who are currently serving or have served.

“It’s very rewarding to see so many people giving back to the

community. That’s one of the goals of the program — to encourage people to give back and pay it forward by paving the road for the future,” Varela said.

Throughout the 10-week class, HLI-Pinal participants are introduced to business and policy leaders to better understand the role culture plays in a variety of circumstances, with attention given to the influence of Latinos in Arizona and the distinctiveness of Pinal County.

Class sessions focus on ethics, cultural and personal identity, community issues, public/media

relations skills, board and commission service, meetings and protocol, among other topics.

COVID-19 made an impact on the program. In 2020, classes were held but were done virtually to keep attendees and staff safe from COVID.

Rather than conduct the training virtually again this year, program organizers decided to wait until 2022 to hold another class.

“Holding the program virtually was not the same as the in-person classes,” Varela said. “There are

— Leadership, Page 6

## SANTA CRUZ VALLEY HOME OPENER



David Church/PinalCentral

Senior running back Wyatt Ogle scores a rushing touchdown Friday against Highland Prep in Eloy.

# Undefeated Dust Devils cruise in home opener

**Trio of running backs lead way for team still battling COVID**

By DAVID CHURCH  
 Staff Writer

ELOY — After a strong season opening performance against San Tan Charter, Santa Cruz Valley Union showed up even stronger in their home opener against Surprise Highland Prep. The Dust Devils jumped out to a 36-6 lead at halftime and never looking back, taking down the Honey Badgers 50-6.

Santa Cruz took the first step in defending its 2A state championship a

week earlier when the reigning state champs handled business on the road, beating Gilbert San Tan Charter 36-6.

Santa Cruz had its backs against the wall before kickoff. There was a COVID outbreak that left the team with only two of its freshman, none of its sophomores, and only half of its juniors.

However, despite being shorthanded with only 17 eligible players, the Dust Devils rallied and defeated their fellow 2A rivals by double digits.

Last week the COVID-19 outbreak at the school still left the Dust Devils understaffed, with only 23 players suiting up for the team’s first home game.

Despite the limited numbers, the Dust Devils were once again anchored by a heavy run offense that pounded the opposing defense.

“These guys that are out here, they are warriors for playing both sides of the ball,” coach James Fitzgerald said. “It really is a testament to their conditioning and how hard they push themselves.”

The win brings the team to 2-0, and it is riding a lot of momentum going into

— Dust Devils, Page 6

## CIVIL AIR PATROL

# Group aims to produce leaders for tomorrow

Aviation classes offered

By DAVID CHURCH  
 Staff Writer

ELOY — Civil Air Patrol Squadron 131 was established in Eloy in 2018. With the vision of being an outlet for the youth of Eloy, as well as helping to build tomorrow’s leaders, CAP offers plenty of programs and classes on the topics of aerospace and astronomy.

Squadron Commander Kevin Rattey is a retired member of the Air Force. He decided to get involved with CAP and was instrumental in making it what it is today.

“I was working as a volunteer at the Eloy Junior High. Then I found out that the Civil Air Patrol was very much in line with what we were doing at the school,” Rattey said.

— Air Patrol, Page 6



Courtesy of Kevin Rattey

A student trains on a flight simulator provided by the Eloy Civil Air Patrol.

# I was flying a plane, sort of

By DAVID CHURCH  
 Staff Writer

ELOY — I never thought I would ever be behind the controls of an airplane and be able to fly it, but now I can say that that has been accomplished. Well, in a way.

Recently, I visited the Civil Air Patrol building in Eloy. The CAP is a program for kids ages 12-18, and offers opportunities and experiences in Aviation, Air Force, Astronomy and of course, the chance to fly in a flight simulator and see what it is like to be in control of a plane.

The building’s main room has about 10 different simulator stations; Kevin Rattey is the commander of the squadron. He asked if I would like to try my hand at flying in a simulator. I cautiously said yes, hoping to not embarrass myself in front of an Air Force veteran.

The simulator was very engaging and detailed with screens on your left and right, with the center screen being your cockpit. I flew a standard fighter jet, with the simula-

— Flying, Page 6

# Owens Corning to restart production

Eloy facility has been closed for more than decade

Staff Reports

ELOY — Owens Corning has announced plans to restart production at its insulation manufacturing plant in Eloy that has been closed for more than 10 years.

The 42,500-square-foot facility at Eloy Industrial Park is expected to be fully operational in the first quarter of 2022 and will bring more than 50 jobs to the area in a wide range of categories, the company said in a press release.

Owens Corning manufac-



Lindsey Gemme/PinalCentral (2010)

The Owens Corning facility on Battaglia Road was one of several sites to be closed by the company in 2010 due to the slow construction market.

tures insulation, roofing and fiberglass composite materials. The Eloy facility will produce fiberglass insulation for building applications.

“I’m thrilled by this announcement, which will provide great jobs for our residents just as the city of Eloy and Pinal County are experiencing a significant increase in new home starts and an influx of new investment,” Eloy Mayor Micah Powell said. “Owens Corning has been a part of the Eloy industrial landscape for many years and this announcement comes at a time when our economic development efforts are starting to yield results.”

The slumping national hous-

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