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Inside This Week



NEWS2

Frantic parents explore carpooling
amid EVIT dispute.



COMMUNITY30

Ahwatukee woman's book reflects
Black history through her family.



BUSINESS38

Ahwatukee dog boarding and
training business was both in the
pandemic.

COMMUNITY.....30

BUSINESS.....38

OPINION.....41

CLASSIFIEDS.....44

E-bikes, motorized bikes menace Lakewood

BY PAUL MARYNIAK
AFN Executive Editor

As East Valley cities begin cracking down on reckless e-bike riders and other motorized two-wheeled vehicles, some Ahwatukee residents are seeing and feeling the need for the same thing in their backyards.

Lakewood residents have voiced concerns about children and teenagers riding e-bikes, motorized scooters and gas-powered minibikes at high speeds near playgrounds, walk-

ing paths and residential streets – intimidating young families and ignoring pleas to obey the law.

David Smigielski, vice president of the Lakewood Homeowners Association and chairman of its Safety and Security Committee, said complaints have increased noticeably over the past six months.

“It’s really gotten out of hand,” Smigielski said. “I’m getting more and more complaints.”

According to Smigielski, many complaints

involve groups of riders traveling through the community’s greenbelt system, which includes a playground, walking paths and gathering areas frequented by families with young children.

Residents have reported near misses involving pedestrians, excessive speeds and riders ignoring requests to slow down or leave restricted areas, he said.

Smigielski said one woman told him she

SEE E-BIKES PAGE 10

TU students take graduations worldwide

BY PAUL MARYNIAK
AFN Executive Editor

When Tempe Union High School District officials decided to bring graduation livestreaming in-house this year, they didn’t hand the job to a professional production company as they had in the past.

They handed it to the teens who will one day follow the students they were filming May 28.

Over 30 juniors and sophomores in Tempe Union’s Film & TV Career and Technical Education programs at its six high schools spent months preparing to produce and broadcast the district’s graduation ceremonies.

The result?

SEE GRADUATIONS PAGE 14

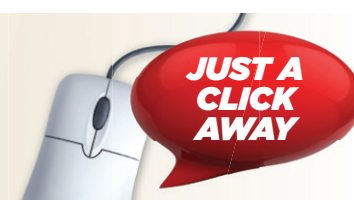


The Desert Vista graduation film crew monitored recordings from three on-field cameras for the May 28 commencement. (Courtesy of Tempe Union)



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Community

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Author's family history reflects Black America history

BY PAUL MARYNIAK
AFN Executive Editor

For most of her life, M. Lisa Scinto heard the story repeated around family gatherings.

Her father had been 13, living in rural Louisiana in 1916, when a simple greeting to a white girl allegedly put his life in danger.

The consequences, family members said, were immediate and terrifying.

His family fled.

Over a century later, that family story has become the foundation of Scinto's first book, "Sentenced to Death at Thirteen: A Multigenerational Journey from the Louisiana Cotton Fields to the Aerospace Industry—and Beyond," a sweeping account that traces her family's path

through slavery, the Jim Crow South, the Great Migration, military service, higher education, aerospace engineering and educational leadership.

The Ahwatukee resident spent approximately four years researching and writing the book, though she says the project really began much earlier.

"In one sense, it took a lifetime because I listened to these stories as a child over and over again," Scinto said.

Those stories came from parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles and other relatives who preserved family history through storytelling rather than written



records. As older generations passed away, Scinto began to worry those stories might disappear with them.

What began as an effort to preserve family memories evolved into an extensive historical investigation.

Scinto combed through census records, military documents, newspaper archives, genealogy databases, family photographs and oral histories, searching for evidence that could verify stories she had heard since childhood.

She wove her findings through the

lens of a devoted daughter and sibling as well as a passion for African American history.

"My father had a sixth-grade education, while my mother earned a high school diploma. Both were passionate about their children's education, yet they could never have imagined that one day their son would become a lawyer, their youngest daughter a college counselor, and I, their eldest daughter, a design engineer in the aerospace industry," she said.

"This book shares the story of everything that happened in between."

"As we approach Juneteenth, I am especially mindful of the generations whose sacrifices made our opportuni-

SEE **AUTHOR** PAGE 32

Service is a constant for new Legion post head

BY AFN NEWS STAFF

When John Augustyn looks back on his life, a common thread runs through nearly every chapter.

Whether serving aboard a Coast Guard cutter on the Great Lakes, patrolling Phoenix streets as a police lieutenant or helping fellow veterans through the American Legion, service has remained a constant.

Now Augustyn is beginning a new chapter in that service as commander of American Legion Post 64 in Ahwatukee.

The Chicago native, who has lived in Ahwatukee since 1983, recently was elected to lead the post after five years as a member and more than 25 years in the American Legion.

"I just felt a duty to it," Augustyn said of accepting the leadership role. "I know the legacy that Pete Meyer left behind, and Brenda Small, and Tamma Notaro, and I wanted to see good leadership

there."

Notaro, the immediate past commander, will remain part of the post's leadership team as judge advocate. Small, her predecessor, moved to Prescott and Meyer passed away last year.

Augustyn's commitment to service began nearly six decades ago.

At age 18 — just one day shy of his 19th birthday — he reported for Coast Guard boot camp after taking the advice of an older brother who served in the U.S. Public Health Service.

The year was 1966, and with the Vietnam War escalating, military service was very much part of the national conversation.

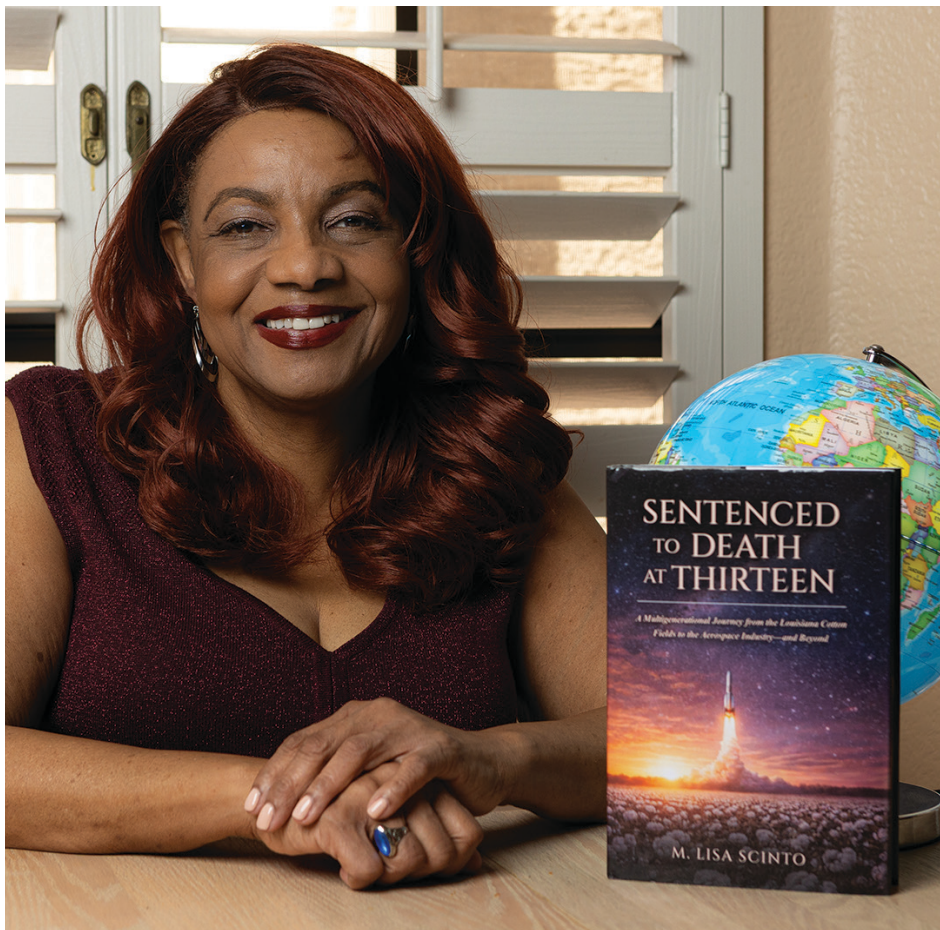
"I was going into the military whether I liked it or not," Augustyn recalled of those days when the military draft was in full force.

During his four years in the Coast



After serving for a year as American Legion Post 64 commander, Ahwatukee veteran Tamma Notaro congratulated John Augustyn as her replacement last month. (Spenser Lee/Staff Photographer)

SEE **LEGION** PAGE 34



Ahwatuee author M. Lisa Scinto has just published a book that gives a sweeping view of the Black American experience over the last 100 years through the lens of her family and her own professional experience. (Spenser Lee)

AUTHOR FROM PAGE 30

ties possible. Their story deserves to be remembered and shared,” Scinto added.

“I also wanted the book to reflect the broader historical journey of African Americans in this country. From slavery to the present day, I use my family’s experiences as a lens through which to understand larger moments in American history and how those events shaped everyday lives.”

One of the biggest surprises, she said, was discovering how often family lore matched the historical record.

“Stories I had heard since childhood were confirmed through census records, military records, newspaper accounts, and other historical documents,” she said.

Now retired, the mother of two grown daughters and a grand mother of four even took a DNA test “to better understand our roots.”

The resulting book spans more than a century.

It begins in Louisiana cotton country and follows her family’s journey through some of the defining chapters of American history, including the Great Migration, when millions of African Americans left the South seeking opportunity elsewhere.

The narrative also explores a little-known chapter of Canadian military history.

Scinto’s father, Bryant Greene, served in the Canadian Army during World War I and was assigned to guard an internment camp that held people classified as enemy aliens. Researching that service required Scinto to examine Canadian military records and historical accounts documenting the camps and their operation.

My parents and relatives also shared stories about life in Detroit during the Great Migration.

“They spoke about the opportunities created by Henry Ford’s famous \$5-a-day wage, industrial work in the automobile factories, life in Detroit’s Black neighborhoods, and the challenges and opportunities faced by families seeking a better future in the North,” she said.

The book’s journey eventually reaches Scinto herself.

Born and raised in Detroit, she earned a degree in packaging engineering from Michigan State University and began her career as an engineer for the lead manufacturer of the Space Shuttle program. Later she became a chemistry and phys-

ics teacher before spending nearly two decades as a high school principal.

Those experiences also helped shape her motivation for writing.

As an educator, Scinto said she often found that students learned relatively little about African American history beyond slavery and the civil rights movement. She also grew frustrated by books that focused primarily on crime, gangs, violence or victimization.

“I wanted to tell a different kind of story—one rooted in perseverance, education, resilience, family, and achievement despite extraordinary obstacles,” she said.

Moreover, she said, her research left her “surprised by how much history I had never been taught in school.

“As I researched my family’s story, I uncovered the contributions of African Americans in fields ranging from military service and industry to science, engineering, education, and public service.

“Those discoveries reinforced my belief that there are still many important stories that deserve to be told.”

For Scinto – who, along with writer and speaker, is founder of North Star Legacy Book Publishing – the book is ultimately about more than her own family.

“What I had always thought of as family stories turned out to be connected to slavery, the Jim Crow era, the Great Migration, military service, industrial employment, higher education, the Space Shuttle Program, and public education,” she said.

That realization led her to a conclusion she hopes readers will reach as well.

“Perhaps the greatest surprise was realizing that this was not simply my family’s story,” she said. “It is also an American story.”

The book is available at Amazon, Barnes & Noble and other booksellers as well as at her website, Mlisascinto.com.

She will be speaking about her book at the Maricopa Junteenth Festival June 13, 2-6 p.m., at Central Arizona College, Maricopa Campus Buildings A101 and A102, 17945 Regent Drive, Maricopa.

Scinto also will be holding a book signing 4-6 p.m. July 10 at Barnes & Noble SanTan Village, 2150 E. Williams Field Road.

She also is available for presentations to schools, churches and community organizations and can be reached at her website. ■

Watch Your Pets



Ahwatuee resident Eileen Marfe is reminding residents to keep a watchful eye on their pets if they’re in the backyard after spotting this bobcat June 4 on the Ahwatuee Golf Course between Ahwatuee Drive and East Kiowa Street. “Two years ago, our chihuahua was attacked by a coyote in our yard,” she said, though a lot of love and expensive medical care saved it. (Photo by Mary Marfe)