



around town

By Marcy LaRont  
Submitted photos



The kids love ICAN.

In 1991, Chandler resident Henry Salinas was distraught after a gang-related shooting put his young relative in prison. Believing that young people in his community had little chance for success as things were, Henry took action. He started simply by getting young people off of the street in his personal vehicle and planning after-school activities. Soon, ICAN—the name highlighting positivity and empowerment—was launched. Almost 30 years later, ICAN continues to build on its success. ICAN focuses on helping kids overcome the cycle of poverty through an after-school program, in-school programs for older students, and family and community education. Their programs are based upon the Five C's: confidence, character, contribution, competence and connection, and work to involve all family members as much as possible to achieve the most positive outcomes. ICAN's dynamic and passionate CEO, Shelby Pederson, believes that it all starts with confidence. "When we aren't comfortable in our skin, we make bad choices and are more open to things that may be harmful to us. Being sure of yourself is the best way to live your life."

Just after my arrival at ICAN's beautiful Morelos Street facility, nearly 200 CUSD elementary students descended to take advantage of classrooms, a computer room, library, and cafeteria. Recently named "Outstanding Afterschool Program" by the Arizona Center for Afterschool Excellence, these elementary-school-aged children are given a snack, some downtime, followed by a curricu-

lum-based activity and then help with homework before they're provided dinner and sent home to their families.

As for the older, arguably more at-risk set, Chandler Junior High and High Schools are hand-delivered ICAN curriculum which is taught throughout the district. The center provides motivational speakers and education on tactical life skills for these young pre-adults. And there is drug education, starting at age 12, focused on prescription and opioid abuse, a pivotal program in the ICAN repertoire. Finally, there is Hill Academy, part of the Chandler Unified School District—a non-traditional school for students who have dropped out or are at risk of dropping out of high school.

At the end of this month, ICAN will be holding its large annual fundraiser with a vintage circus theme, Under the Big Top, at the Sheraton Wild Horse Pass Resort and Spa. With a contortionist, a roaming magician and dueling pianos, it promises to be an amazing night. If you are interested in attending or supporting, please visit [www.icanaz.org/dreambig](http://www.icanaz.org/dreambig) or contact Courtney Taylor at (480) 874-7575, email: [courtney@icanaz.org](mailto:courtney@icanaz.org).

We love to feature your favorite fall fundraisers. Send your nominations and photos to [jen.petz@m2pub.com](mailto:jen.petz@m2pub.com)



The ICAN gala's theme was Havana Nights for 2017.



Guests will have the opportunity to bid on unique live auction experiences.



Shelby Pederson, Chief Executive Officer, with ICAN kids



Library volunteers



Making friends at ICAN



100+ Women Who Care Valley of the Sun members make a collective donation to strongly support the mission of ICAN.

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