



ICAN STAYS CONNECTED

TO CHANDLER FAMILIES WITH ACTIVITY KITS

THE ORGANIZATION LAUNCHED THE KITS IN RESPONSE TO THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

ARTICLE ALISON STANTON | PHOTOGRAPHY PROVIDED

WHEN ICAN CLOSED ITS TRADITIONAL AFTER SCHOOL PROGRAM IN MID-MARCH DUE TO THE COVID-19 GLOBAL PANDEMIC, THE TEAM WAS FACED WITH A CHALLENGING DILEMMA—HOW TO CONTINUE OFFERING THE ICAN PROGRAM TO COMMUNITY YOUTH, IN A TIME WHEN THEY NEEDED IT MORE THAN EVER.

As Shelby Pedersen, CEO of ICAN notes, the team quickly came up with an innovative idea to remain connected to the area's youth: ICAN Kraft Kits.



"ICAN Kraft Kits were basically 'ICAN To-Go,'" Pedersen explains, adding that each free kit included educational enrichment activities and supplies to keep kids active, busy, and engaged with fun, weekly themes, all while continuing ICAN's program philosophy of positive youth development.

Because most of ICAN's families do not have access to technology, Pedersen says the ICAN Kraft Kits, which were launched in April, included all of the supplies needed to complete the activities; for example, printed sheets, crayons, glue sticks, and other craft supplies.

ICAN's team distributed the kits in conjunction with Chandler schools' free lunch distribution at local Title 1 schools, Pedersen says.

"ICAN staff set up a station during the distribution and handed out the kits. ICAN youth were thrilled to see ICAN staff, even for a brief moment," she says.

To say that the ICAN Kraft Kits were popular is definitely an understatement. The first week they were distributed, Pedersen says the team put together and handed out 100 kits.

"They were such a hit that the next week they did 250 kits, and the third week they did 500 kits. The ICAN

team continued to distribute 500 kits weekly for the remainder of the Arizona shutdown," she says.

Once schools re-opened, Pedersen says ICAN altered the kits to become "Me & My Family" Kits, and began distributing them on a monthly basis.

"Since we are not able to offer our family program activities currently, the kits serve as a way for ICAN to reach families with activities they can complete together," she says.

The first Me & My Family Kit, which was distributed in September, was a group art project for the family. Pedersen says it included a blank canvas, paint, tape, brushes, and instructions.

"Families divided the canvas into quadrants with the tape, so that each family member was in charge of one part of it. Each member used their creativity to paint their portion, and then they removed the tape to reveal one cohesive family art project," she says. "Families enjoyed the activities and sent ICAN lots of pictures of their artwork."

The October kit was a Halloween scavenger hunt with activities that led to clues and special treats at the end, and the November kit has a Thanksgiving theme.

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All of the monthly kits incorporate ICAN's "Positive Youth Development" focus, with a strong emphasis on family bonding, communication skills, and self-confidence, Pedersen says.

"Each kit is compiled with all age groups in mind, and has a little something for the teens, as well as younger children."

Pedersen is immensely proud of the team from ICAN, who produced, assembled, and distributed 4,600 kits between March and August.

Now that the kits are family-focused, ICAN is distributing between 40 and 60 per month, she says.

While the kits are free for ICAN families—85% of ICAN families live below the poverty line, Pedersen says—the community is welcome to support ICAN's Me & My Family Kits by subscribing to receive them for their own family.

"The cost for a kit is \$50 a month. For every paid kit we sell to the community, ICAN is able to provide two free kits to families in ICAN's service area," Pedersen says, adding that ICAN plans to continue the Me & My Family Kits at least through Spring 2021.

Pedersen says she and the team from ICAN were encouraged and delighted by the positive feedback they received.

"All summer long we were receiving tremendous feedback from families with their gratitude for ICAN in providing these activities," Pedersen says. "Families were sending in photos of their kids working on the projects, and notes of thanks. We also received many photos from the September Me & My Family Kit, it was so fun to see how all of the art pieces came out so differently."

To subscribe to a monthly kit from ICAN, contact Becky Hinds at 480.874.7578 or becky@icanaz.org. Kits will be delivered within the Chandler area; families who live outside of Chandler should contact ICAN directly. ICANAZ.org

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Our expansion is finally complete!



We are proud to announce Animal Medical Center of Chandler now has the first and only feline specific medical center in Chandler! Our new feline wing has a dedicated lobby, treatment area, and exam rooms exclusively for kitty's to help continue our mission to provide comprehensive and stress-free visits for our feline friends!



Andrea Stockland, DVM Kristy Sorenson, DVM Laura Dillo, DVM Chelsea Daniel, BVMS, MRCV



270 W. Chandler Heights Rd., Ste. 1 | 480.339.0406 | myvet@amcofc.com
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