



**SPORTS:**

St. Johns cheerleaders to perform at Citrus Bowl

See PAGE B1

**GET OUT:**

Halloween activities

See PAGE A12



# Summit to break ground on \$45M project

Construction of 3 new buildings to begin this month

BY LAURA SINGLETON  
*The Independent*

SHOW LOW — Summit Health-care Regional Medical Center will

break ground later this month on Show Low’s largest-ever building project. On Oct. 3, a resolution was unanimously approved by the Show Low City Council and the Industrial Development Authority, allowing Summit to move forward with a proposed the \$45 million expansion project. This means that construction will soon begin at the proposed site located at 4951 S. White Mountain Rd.,

(formerly Pine Shadows Mobile Home Park). NexCore Group is the general contractor and one of many other companies and subcontractors that will be involved in the various stages of the project. The plan includes three separate structures, the largest of which will be three stories high and 105,000 square feet in size. The three-story building

will serve as a combination medical office/outpatient services building. The second structure will be a 16,000-square-foot ambulatory surgery building which will house four operating rooms and a special procedures room. It will be attached to the second floor of the medical office building via a covered walkway. The third structure will be a 54,000-square-foot, two-story, admin-

istrative services building that will combine administrative functions that are currently “scattered” in the hospital and throughout other buildings on the existing campus. “Summit Healthcare is excited about the three building projects,” CEO Ron McArthur said. “The Outpatient Pavilion and Ambulatory Surgical Center

See **SUMMIT**, Page A7

# Report: Man shot by Eagar cop had drugs, BB pistol

BY TRUDY BALCOM  
*The Independent*

EAGAR — The man who was killed in July by an Eagar police officer in the parking area of a fast-food restaurant had drugs in his car and a felony record. But the gun officers say he pointed at them was found to be a BB pistol. The story of how the events of that night led to the shooting death of Mark Allen Smith, 36, of Colorado Springs, are detailed in an investigation report written by Detective Sgt. Mike Butora, of the Show Low Police Department,

and obtained by the *White Mountain Independent*. Butora served as lead investigator into the incident. The shooting occurred July 18 in the parking area near the rear of the Sonic Drive-In. Smith was killed when officers fired on him after he pointed what appeared to be a semi-automatic handgun at them. The incident began after midnight when Eagar Police Officer Walker Richardson responded to a request from a shift manager at the restaurant. Misty Hooper spoke to Richardson

See **REPORT**, Page A7



Trudy Balcom/The Independent/

A Springerville police car was among numerous law enforcement vehicles parked outside of Sonic Drive-In Restaurant at 640 N. Main St. in Eagar the morning after an Eagar police officer shot and killed a man with a gun behind the drive-in.

# SJ interim chief retiring

BY MIKE LEIBY  
*The Independent*

ST. JOHNS — Starting Nov. 13, Apache County Sheriff’s Office Drug Enforcement Commander Lance Spivey will be the new St. Johns chief of police. The St. Johns town council voted him in to replace interim Chief Bill Johnston at their last meeting. Johnston said the only thing yet to get out of the way is Spivey’s standard background check. After that, Spivey will take over as chief. Johnston will retire with more than 41 years in law enforcement. He arrived in St. Johns a little more than three years ago after leaving the Phoenix Police Department as a lieutenant. Johnston said he was called on by the community to be part of law enforcement once again and, true to his character, answered in the affirmative, diving into investigations. He said that, for the short term, he has a long list of “honey-does” that his wife wants him to complete at their



Chief of Police William Johnston

home. He said they plan to settle into being high-country horse people who love riding their paint horses in the local forests. Johnston said he had some hurdles to overcome as chief of police in St. Johns, such as getting everything that needed done with a staff of sometimes only two officers and a secretary. He said the department is, at this time, looking to hire an officer. As for the quality of the St. Johns Police Department and community, Johnston said it is top notch. Johnston said most, if not all, communities have a certain amount of crime. But, he said, it is how the community and local law enforcement come together when times are tough that can have a big impact on morale. He pointed to a couple of recent officer-involved shootings, during which St. Johns citizens came out with food, coffee and support as investigators looked into what happened and officers stood guard over their community. Johnston took over as top lawman in St. Johns when Dan Brown left the job last May 19 to take a position as the city of Winslow’s chief of police. Brown became chief of the St. Johns PD in 2014.

Reach the reporter at mleiby@wmicentral.com



Bob Martinson/The Independent

Show Low High School Cougars soccer fan Oliver Martin was watching the boys varsity game Wednesday at Blue Ridge High School against the Yellowjackets, when Renly, the puppy, came up and gave him a kiss. The boy responded accordingly and gave the puppy a kiss back.

# Funeral homes endure burial delays

State’s new electronic death registry system suffers setbacks

BY MIKE LEIBY  
*The Independent*

WHITE MOUNTAINS — A new state system — Database Application for Vital Events, or D.A.V.E. — is supposed to make it easier for people to order vital records, including birth and death certificates. Instead, Arizona’s new electronic death registry system appears to have suffered some setbacks and is causing delays in funeral burials. “It is just a matter of data entry,” Tim Livingston, owner and director of Owens-Livingston Mortuary in Show Low, said. “Everyone (funeral directors, doctors and others certified to get death certificates) needs to be entered into the system.” D.A.V.E went online Oct. 2, and the Arizona Department of Health Services’ Licensing Bureau of Vital Records is asking physicians (medical certifiers) use the system to certify the cause of death on death certificates. Livingston said, as he understands it, staff at state vital records offices have been unable to get all of the thousands of people’s names in Ari-

zona certified to get death certificates entered into D.A.V.E. yet. “On paper, it looks like it will be a user-friendly system and will make the registration process for death certificates smoother,” Livingston said. “But right now, it has so many kinks in it.” He said funeral directors and doctors in the state began getting notice of the requirement to sign onto D.A.V.E. months ago, but for whatever reason don’t appear to have taken it to heart. So now the system is backlogged with requests for death certificates from doctors not in the system. Because those death certificates cannot be issued, bodies cannot be buried and sit in funeral homes awaiting final disposition.

certificate were being gathered. Livingston blamed the kinks mostly on the people who are supposed to sign into D.A.V.E, but have yet to do so. But, he said, state vital records staff is partially to blame because they are not entering names quickly enough. He said when he attended training session in Phoenix concerning the new system, only a handful of doctors and/or funeral home owners/directors attended any given session. “In the long run, I think it will be a good thing,” Livingston said. “We at Owens-Livingston appreciate the patience of our clients.” He said Navajo County Vital Records staff is doing all they can to help with the transition to the new system, but they, too, are bound by it and must work within its requirements. Jason Brubaker, owner and director of Silver Creek Mortuary in Taylor and Pinetop, said he also thinks the new system will work well and expedite the entire birth and death certificate process. But he also thinks it was rolled out too quickly, given that doctors and funeral directors were not overjoyed with it from the beginning. He said it might have been different if they had been involved in the process from the beginning, which was about three years ago.



Livingston said his funeral home has had some delays because of the new system. He said they had a burial scheduled for early October but had to delay it because, under the new system, a disposition permit must be in hand before a burial can take place. The old system allowed a burial permit to be obtained and the burial to take place as final bits of information for the official death

See **D.A.V.E.**, Page A7