

# GILBERT REPUBLIC

WEEKEND, DECEMBER 13, 2008

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## GIVING BACK

### Sports stars show up to support Save the Family

Quarterback Matt Leinart is joined by Cardinals teammates and tennis star Maria Sharapova at barbecue and carnival in support of charity. **PAGE 11**

## Blogs keep family connected

Gilbert mom uses a blog to stay in touch as relatives disperse across country.

**PAGE 7**

## MARRIAGE

### Skids lead to breakdowns

Sometimes marriage feels like a car speeding down an icy road.

**PAGE 32**

## INDEX

Election .....	3
Public Safety .....	9
Business .....	12
SE Valley Living .....	22
News By You .....	26
Marriage .....	32
Holiday Events .....	34
Sports .....	37
Religion .....	40
Opinions .....	41



MICHAEL CHOW/THE REPUBLIC

Patterson Elementary School Principal Nonda Chomokos (center) looks over papers with his front office staff (from left) Brenda Strom, Nancy Boothe and Kerry Wright.

## The best place to work

Patterson Elementary earns accolades from 'Phoenix Magazine,' with teachers and staff members crediting a warm atmosphere.

**PAGE 6**

## LEGISLATURE

### GOP group poised to act

Plans to push massive spending cuts and sweeping deregulation when session begins next month, likely with a Republican governor.

**PAGE 4**

### Meet the candidates running for mayor

4 have lined up to challenge Berman for the town's top post, setting the stage for a heated campaign

**PAGE 3**

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# Patterson Elementary named a best place to work in Valley

By Emily Gersema

THE REPUBLIC | AZCENTRAL.COM

While waiting near the front desk of Gilbert's Patterson Elementary School, you could hear a boy singing to himself as he waits for the principal.

Two little blonde girls marched out of the nurse's office hand in hand. Principal Nonda Chomokos, a k a "Mr. C.," greeted two boys in the hallway, putting his hands on their shoulders and asking how they're doing.

Last month, Patterson Elementary was named one of the best places to work in the Valley by *Phoenix Magazine*. Teachers and staff members had filled out a survey about their school that led to the honor.

The school had earned similar accolades in a 2007 survey by the *Phoenix Business Journal* and BestCompaniesAZ. Patterson then ranked 16th out of 30 best work places.

What's the secret?

Teachers and staff members point to a warm atmosphere — and to Chomokos.



MICHAEL CHOW/THE REPUBLIC

Principal Nonda Chomokos gets a hug from third-grader Charis Han.

They credit him with setting an example to live by, as he offers teachers and students encouragement to succeed and support to try out new ideas or activities.

"This school in particular is very much about family and community," said Jerri Harrison, a sixth-grade teacher.

Patterson, near Lindsay and Guadalupe roads, has become a destination school for teachers and students.

Teachers try to squeeze in when open-

ings are posted, and several students living outside of the elementary school's boundaries attend through the state's open-enrollment option.

Harrison had worked there from 1998 until 2002, then left for another opportunity. But she missed Patterson and tried to come back. While waiting, she worked elsewhere in the district. It took her six years to get back on board.

"I love it. I love it here. I'm not ever leaving again," Harrison said.

Denise Gredler, the founder of BestCompaniesAZ, said she had encouraged teachers to fill out the survey for *Phoenix Magazine* because she recognized elements that made it a supportive environment while researching schools for her son.

Those characteristics included the district's strong philosophy for teaching the citizen-building program, Character Counts, which teaches kids about respect and compassion.

Gredler said her son Max, 10, now goes to Patterson, where he has thrived.

Gredler, Harrison and other staff

members said they believe Chomokos, who has worked at Patterson for 19 years, also is a key reason the school is so welcoming.

Chomokos knows every student, and visits classrooms every day. In the morning, parents and staff said, he greets families as they drop off their children for school.

"Kids will hug him while he's out on duty," said Brenda Strom, the school nurse.

She noted, too, that he allows teachers and herself to try out new methods or programs.

"Our principal is the type that he's so motivating, and so you'll just want to do the extra things, and do the things to keep everyone healthy," Strom said.

The school also has been deemed an "excelling school" — the top rank given to schools by the Arizona Department of Education based on AIMS test scores and other related factors. This fall, the school also met the federal standards for student improvement, known as adequate yearly progress.

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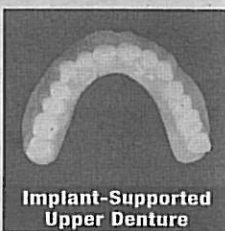
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**18 Years Experience** Arizona Center for Implant Dentistry has been limited to implants for over 18 years, with its founder Dr. Dane Robinson leading the charge bringing this technology to the public. Working in partnership with Dr. Robinson is Dr. Luke Denton, graduate of the University of the Pacific School of Dentistry. Dr. Denton has now taken the lead role as Dr. Robinson's focus has changed in a new direction. Dr. Denton selected implantology as a focus of intense study over general dentistry early on in his career. Because of this decision he chose Dr. Robinson as his mentor. Working side by side with Dr. Robinson, Dr. Denton has been awarded a certificate of completion of an Implantology Internship from Dr. Robinson.



**Who can benefit from dental implant treatment?** "Anybody with missing teeth or anyone who is unhappy with their smile," says Dr. Denton. "I am still surprised at how many people walk through our door who for years have had difficulty eating or are afraid to smile, but have never been given the option of dental implants." Through the combination of dental implants, porcelain crowns, veneers, or implant supported dentures a new smile can be created, and function can be restored. Dr. Denton places hundreds of dental implants each year. He also creates the teeth to fit over the implants, and places crowns and veneers on natural teeth to create beautiful smiles. "It is amazing what 10 porcelain veneers can do to completely transform one's smile," states the doctor. He is a graduate of the well known Hornbrook Group esthetics and occlusion courses and continues to keep up-to-date on the most current technology and methods through frequent continuing education.

For questions about implant or cosmetic dentistry, or to schedule an appointment, please call (480)491-1313. Through the month of December, consultations are now free of charge.

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