

Sahuaro Hosts the 4th Annual TUSD Guitar Festival

The 4th Annual Tucson Unified School District Guitar Festival and Guitar Competition will be held on March 1st and 2nd, 2027 at Sahuaro High School. Started in 2024, the festival offers an opportunity for guitarists to spend multiple days on Sahuaro's campus and participate in workshops and classes with leading classical guitar professionals.

Organized each year by Dual Enrollment Music teacher Philip Hemmo (Sahuaro '86), this year's festival is shaping up to be one of the largest high school guitar festivals in the United States. This year we have opened the festival up to schools state wide. We expect 400 students to participate in workshops and concerts one would normally find on university campuses.

On Monday March 1st at 7 PM, University of Wisconsin-Madison professor and international performing artist Rene Izquierdo will present a recital in our Little Theater (suggested donation of \$10 per ticket - limited to 135 seats). Tuesday offers workshops from professional guitarists from all over the US. The day culminates in a free public concert (6 PM) in our Sahuaro High School Auditorium. In addition, the 4th annual

Guitar Competition will take place simultaneously. This year, a generous donation from Guitar Salon International in Santa Monica allows for over \$4,000 in prizes to the top 3 competitors. This event is completely funded through tax donations and private/corporate contributions. For sponsorship information or tickets, please reach out to Philip Hemmo (philip.hemmo@tUSD1.org).

4th Annual TUSD Guitar Festival and Competition Sahuaro High School | March 1 and 2, 2027

- Rene Izquierdo Recital: Monday, March 1, 7 PM, Little Theater. Suggested donation of \$10 per ticket; limited to 135 seats.
- Guitar Workshops: Tuesday, March 2. Sessions led by professional guitarists from across the US.
- 4th Annual Guitar Competition: Tuesday, March 2, running alongside the workshops. Over \$4,000 in prizes for the top 3 competitors.
- Free Public Concert: Tuesday, March 2, 6 PM, Sahuaro High School Auditorium.

For tickets or sponsorship information, contact Philip Hemmo at philip.hemmo@tUSD1.org.



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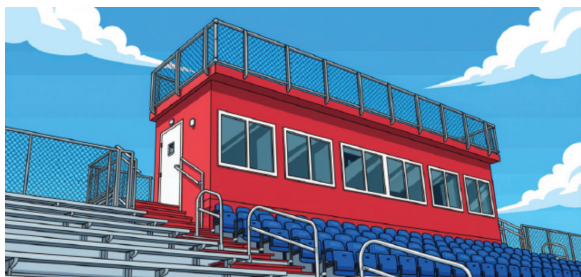
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Sahuaro High School is one of a few local high schools without a press box. With your support we can change that! Please help by making a donation or purchasing Jim Click Raffle tickets from the Cougar Foundation. Your donation of any size will help us reach our goal of \$100,000.

www.sahuarocougars.org



Board Members Wanted!

The Sahuaro Cougar Foundation is seeking new board members. The foundation's mission is to perpetuate the history, traditions, and spirit of Sahuaro High School, to support the activities of its students and staff, to provide services to the Alumni, and to invoke a system of honors and awards that recognize the achievements of the students, staff, and alumni.

More information about the Sahuaro Cougar Foundation is available at sahuarocougars.org - those interested in board service should contact board President Jeffry Gardner at jeffry@sahuarocougars.org.



Share your news

Upcoming reunion? Have a story to share with past and present Cougars?

Send your reunion announcements and story ideas to the Editor: ed@sahuarocougars.org

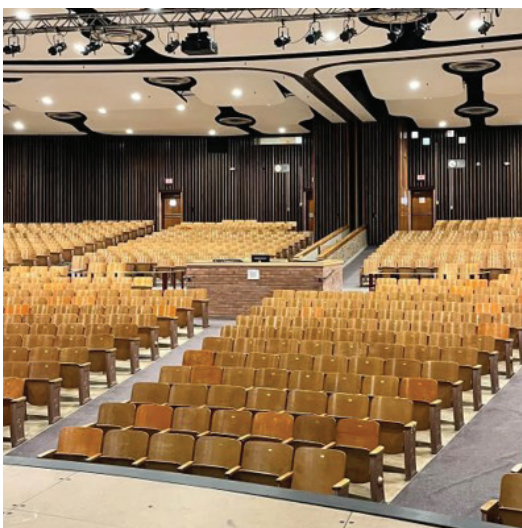
TUSD Bond Improvements at Sahuaro

When voters passed the Tucson Unified School District Bond in 2023 improvements were promised to schools throughout the district. Sahuaro was recently able to receive several improvements because of this bond including:

- New LED lighting in the auditorium with an improved sound system coming soon.
- New plumbing, sewer and sprinkler lines in the weight room.
- Remodeled restrooms and new water fountains with bottle filling stations.
- A new turf field along with a new scoreboard provided by ICCU.

The Sahuaro Cougar Foundation thanks the TUSD Bond Committee for their work making amazing improvements happen throughout the school district.

(Pictures courtesy of the TUSD Bond 2023 Facebook Page)





Sahuaro High School Cougar Foundation

Hall of Fame Breakfast

Saturday November 7, 2026 Sahuaro High School Auxillary Gym

We're honoring three outstanding Cougars on November 7. Meet them below:

Dr. Danyelle Bossardet, Class of 1991, Educator

Dr. Danyelle Bossardet is an award – winning theatre educator, director, performer, and arts advocate. Danyelle graduated from Sahuaro in 1991 where she discovered her love for the arts under the direction of Lela Freiman and Dr. David Ashcraft during her years at Sahuaro she appeared in every play/musical possible. Through her performances she learned confidence, leadership, compassion and a belief that the arts have the power to change lives.



After graduating Danyelle earned a Bachelor of Fine Arts in Musical Theatre from the University of Arizona. She initially pursued a professional performance career, notably portraying Belle on two national tours and playing multiple roles in Los Angeles productions of Disney's Beauty and the Beast. After many tours and parts in different productions Danyelle realized her true passion is in guiding others so she transitioned into education and has spent more than 17 years building vibrant, student-centered programs.

To deepen her impact on others, Danyelle earned a Masters of Arts in Teaching from the University of California, Irvine and a Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership from the University of Southern California. Throughout Danyelle's career she has directed over 40 theatrical productions, including spending more than a decade as the Director of Theatre Arts at Northwood High School. Moving to Grant Union High School afforded her the opportunity to serve a diverse Title I community as Theatre Production and Career Technical Education director and CTE Department Chair. With her guidance students have learned that no matter their background or circumstances there is a place for them.

Beyond the classroom, she has established herself as a leader in California arts education by presenting at statewide conferences, contributing to state CTE curriculum standards, and assisting teachers with integrating new technologies. Her extensive contributions to her field have earned her widespread recognition, including being named the Orange County Arts Teacher of the Year.

Matt Russell, Class of 1985, Public Relations Executive

Matt Russell, a 1985 graduate of Sahuaro, was a very involved student with the band and orchestra, where he was an award-winning percussionist. Matt is the Founder and CEO of Russell Public Communications. Through his company and with his knowledge Matt has become an accomplished public relations executive and strategic policy advisor with over 30 years of executive leadership spanning Southern Arizona and Washington D.C. After earning his B.A. in Political Science from the University of Arizona, he built a distinguished career advising Fortune 500 companies, federal agencies, and prominent leaders, including the 17th U.S. Surgeon General Dr. Richard Carmona.



Earlier in his career, Matt served as a federal lobbyist in Washington D.C., and co-founded the National Integrative Medicine Council alongside Dr. Andrew Weil. His deep understanding of government and legal affairs led to two gubernatorial appointments to the Pima County Commission on Trial Court Appointments. Beyond his agency work, he has maintained a strong civic presence in Southern Arizona, serving on numerous Boards including Big Brothers/ Big Sisters, KUAT, and the American Lung Association. Matt currently serves on the Tucson Presidio Trust for Historic Preservation Board.

Matt's professional expertise is frequently matched by his personal generosity, as demonstrated when he provides pro bono crisis communication support to local families during times of tragedy. His talents as a percussionist have led him to perform at many venues including Carnegie Hall. Matt has never forgotten his Sahuaro High School roots, and in 2012 he established the annual Russell Public Scholarship for one deserving Sahuaro graduating senior. He has continued this scholarship every year and stays involved with Sahuaro, most recently helping lead the Class of 1985 40th Reunion. Matt and his wife Nancy spend as much time as possible with their children Danny and Katie.

Todd LaPorte, Class of 1980, Healthcare Executive

Todd LaPorte, a 1980 valedictorian, scholar-athlete, and active student leader at Sahuaro High School has gone on to earn an accounting degree from the University of Arizona and an MBA from Arizona State University. He demonstrated his leadership early at Sahuaro where he helped found and run a student-led Junior Achievement radio company that earned a national award.



He began his career as a CPA with Ernst & Young, where he served clients across healthcare, technology, and consumer services, before taking on the CFO role at Employees Dental Services. In 2001 he joined Scottsdale Healthcare as CFO and played a pivotal role in guiding the complex, high-stakes merger that created HonorHealth. Recognized as CFO of the Year in 2012 by Financial Executives International, Todd was promoted in 2017 to become the 10th CEO in HonorHealth's 150-year history. Under his visionary leadership as CEO and Chief Strategy Officer, HonorHealth has expanded into a multi-billion-dollar company with over 20,000 members and 12 hospitals serving more than 3 million patients annually. Honored nationally as a "Great Leader in Healthcare" by Becker's Healthcare and listed among Arizona's 50 most powerful business figures, he also serves on the Region 8 Board of the American Hospital Association.

Beyond his executive responsibilities, Todd has chaired Boards for organizations such as Big Brothers/Big Sisters, the Scottsdale Aquatic Club, and Experience Scottsdale. When Todd is not working he is an active mentor in CEO peer advisory groups where he shares lessons learned with rising young professionals. Throughout his career he has been known for his servant-leadership, quickness to share credit, personal humility, and deep dedication to his faith and family. Todd and his wife Kelly have four daughters Paige, Lindsey, Jennifer and Grace.

