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New leader at the district helm
Pages 6-7

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The blood drive committee is sponsored by National Honor Society, led by advisors Sharon Fonzo and Jenifer Meadows. Pictured from left are: top, Logan Hatch, Elizabeth Ardila, Jessica Broxson, Alayna MacDonald, Imani Nettles; middle, Cambree Carner, Mariahrose Manell, Jemima Ampadu-Siaw, Jordan O'Brien, Amanda Chek, Jennifer Hessler, Katheelna Chek, United Blood Service Rep Sharon Ryan; front, Martina Borquez, Samantha Sabarra, Eyerus Zenebe, Eseta Dilo. Committee members not pictured: David Barraza, Megan Clark, Nolan McNeil, Vianca Neiswanger, Taylor Strupp, Vanessa Vega.

PBHS hosts epic blood drive, to be honored at Diamondbacks game

Poston Butte High School can stand tall and proud!

The March 2 blood drive was the most successful blood drive in Poston Butte history. The United Blood Service collected 145 units from Poston Butte donors, beating the previous record of 133 units. According to United Blood Service, one donation can help as many as three people. So PBHS blood donors may have saved as many as 435 lives!

And if that's not enough, Poston Butte won in its division of the United Blood Service's High School Challenge! The school competes against schools of similar size and UBS named Poston Butte the winner! As winner, the school will receive a division banner from United Blood Service at Chase Field. The banner will be presented at the opening ceremonies on Wednesday, May 10, at 6 p.m. at the Arizona Diamondbacks game against the Detroit Tigers. The PBHS Blood Drive Committee has been invited to participate on the field!

"It is a true honor to be able to organize and set up blood drives because I know how important it is for people to receive blood in life-threatening situations," said Blood Drive Coordinator Jessica Broxson (Senior). "It is also inspiring to hear stories of how happy recipients get when they hear how we educate those who donate. I hope to see our drive continue to grow and that we create experiences that our donors continue to give throughout their lives."

National Honor Society advisor, Sharon Fonzo, is proud of the committee and all the donors. "It is a wonderful feeling to be recognized by United Blood Service and the Arizona Diamondbacks for our accomplishments," she said.

Poston Butte's next blood drive is Thursday, May 4th. Kindly contact Sharon Fonzo or Jenifer Meadows if you would like to donate. All donors receive one complimentary ComiCon ticket.

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General Dynamics Outreach Program gives

By **Andrew Luberda**
STV Daily PRSS

Eighth-grade students at Circle Cross Ranch (CCR) K-8 STEM Academy witnessed what their futures could be like when three representatives from the General Dynamics Mission Systems Engineers Week Community Outreach Program recently visited the San Tan Valley School.

As part of the visit, Deputy Program Manager of Engineering Tracy Hendry presented UX Engineering – Early Experimentation with Creative Mock-Ups, which included a slide show of various products designed by General Dynamics for land, air, sea, and space. Hendry also detailed to students different engineering jobs and encouraged them to continue exploring opportunities available within the Poston Butte High School STEM Diploma Program.

The presentation was beneficial for students, especially as they plan to transition into high school.

“Part of the STEM Implementation Plan is having our junior high students sign up for a STEM Cohort group which means they are on track to enroll in the PBHS STEM Diploma Program,” said CCR Principal Rebecca Hendry, adding that the school is in its second of a three-year implementation plan. “Those students will get priority for specific STEM electives offered at CCR and it requires them to take a specific number of STEM electives.”

UX designers Blaine Adams and Brad Shoyer continued the presentation, showing students how General Dynamics develops a “prototype” for its customers. The designers brought a sample prototype – a drone – and explained the process of design and development from start to finish.

Students had the opportunity to experience the work of an engineer when they were tasked with working through the development process. Engineers gave them an idea for a “Futuristic User Experience,” which was a collaborative effort among the students.

A short discussion period ended the engineers’ visit. Students were briefed on a paid internship program, which students can start during the summer after high school graduation, and the STEM Diploma Program at Poston Butte.

“(We) hope to gain stronger partnerships with General Dynamics in the future and assist Poston Butte’s STEM Diploma Program students with contacts for this program as well,” Rebecca Hendry told the

STV Daily PRSS.

CCR has written almost 60 grants and received nearly \$50,000 in STEM resources. With assistance of a \$2,000 grant, the academy will build a school garden in the third and final year of its implementation plan.

“We will continue to eagerly search for grant opportunities so that our program grows and we can bring a variety of resources and opportunities for STEM Education to our staff and students,” the principal said.

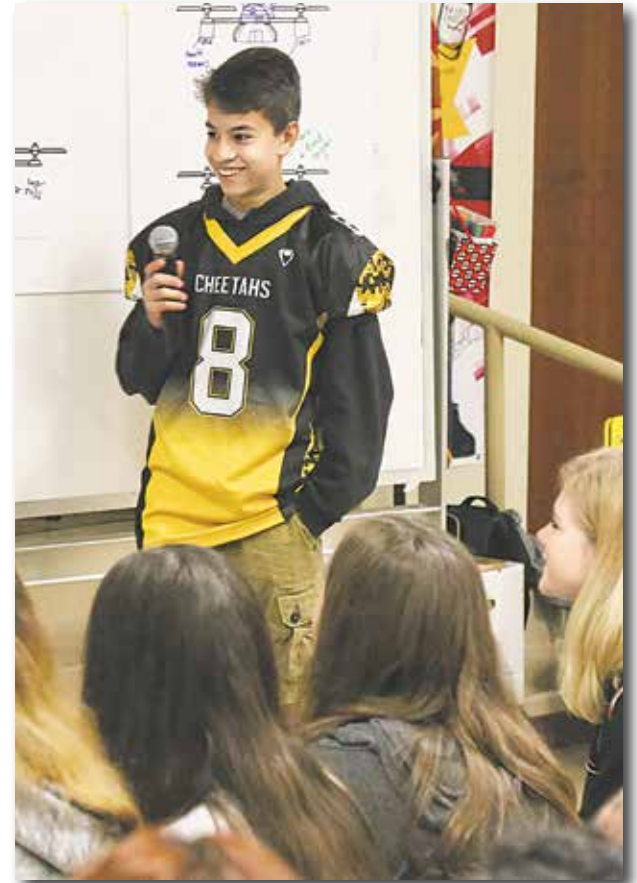
The future of the CCR K-8 STEM Academy

will benefit from creating relationships with local businesses.

“We gained a partnership with General Dynamics this year,” she said. “We hope to grow our connections and partnerships with (more) STEM Related Businesses in Arizona.”



CCR students glimpse at potential futures



New FUSD Interim Superintendent: 'It's all about Leadership'

By Andrew Luberda
STV Daily PRSS

The Florence Unified School District Governing Board appointed Chris Knutsen as the interim superintendent following the Mar. 7 resignation of Dr. Amy Fuller, who served as the FUSD superintendent for the past four years.

Knutsen, the former Florence High School principal, most recently served as an assistant superintendent in the district for a term equivalent to Dr. Fuller's. His responsibilities are about to change and it appears he has a clear understanding of what's expected as the "instructional leader of the district."

"My job is to put the right people in the right leadership positions – it's all about leadership," Knutsen wrote in an email to *STV Daily PRSS*. "Leaders who know the formula for success will rejuvenate a school."

Knutsen added that proper leadership will build a culture that helps students gain confidence, which leads to winning and success in the three "A's" – academics, the arts and athletics.

"It becomes a snowball effect, where everyone wants to be a part of winning," he said.

FUSD high schools currently offer, or soon will, rigorous academic programs, including the International Baccalaureate Diploma Program at Florence, the STEM Diploma Program at Poston Butte, and the soon-to-be launched AP Capstone Program at San Tan Foothills.

In the area of the arts, the district wants the marching bands at all three high schools to compete at the highest level each year. And, of course, it also wants to win in athletics, at all levels.

Success in the three "A's" teaches important life-long skills.

"Through our extracurricular programs, our students learn important soft skills like teamwork, work ethic, dedication, perseverance, reliability, and time

management," Knutsen said. "These are important qualities that future employers are looking for when they hire."

Knutsen also wants to build a solid K-12 community education program.

"I feel it is something that is needed in our district," he said. "For example, I would like to bring club sports like youth football, basketball, soccer, and other activities under community education."



Chris Knutsen is serving as the Interim Superintendent for Florence Unified School District.



The Florence Unified School District Governing Board following the appointment of Chris Knutsen as Interim Superintendent. From left are: back, Steve Johnson (Vice President), Knutsen; front, Denise Guenther (President), Jim Thomas and Bob Dailey. Not pictured is Katrina Solis.

New administration named for district, schools

Since his appointment as Interim Superintendent last month, Chris Knutsen has made a spate of recommendations for other leadership roles in the district. All appointments are pending Governing Board Approval.

Adam Leckie has been named Assistant Superintendent for the district. He has served the Florence Unified School District as the Director of Exceptional Student Services



Adam Leckie

for the past four years and has been in the district since 2009.

“Mr. Adam Leckie is a proven leader in our district,” said Knutsen. “He has offered support for kids and always puts their interests above all others. He will make a great Assistant Superintendent and I am lucky to have him on my team.”

Leckie is looking forward to his new role with great optimism.

“I look forward to continuing the mission of putting Kids First by harnessing the talent of our teaching staff, the unwavering commitment of our district leaders, and the support of our wonderful community,” Leckie said.

He added that he is proud to point to FUSD as a district that serves all students.

Thad Gates has been named to succeed Leckie as Director of Exceptional Student Services. He will also take on the role of Director of Secondary Education.



Thad Gates

Gates has served the district as Principal of Florence Unified School District for the past four years.

“I am very excited for this opportunity to further support and spark the evolution and success of

the Florence Unified School District,” Gates said. “As the Director of Secondary Education and Exceptional Student Services, I will work diligently to facilitate and promote positive growth in all students, all employees and the community in which we serve.”

Knutsen noted that Gates has been a terrific leader at FHS. “I am grateful to have him on my team,” Knutsen said. “I look forward to all of the innovative opportunities he will provide for the kids.”

Jeff Cox has been chosen as the Director of Athletics-Community Education. He has been with the district for eight years and in education for 18 years. He has been serving as the Assistant Principal at Poston Butte High School and K-8 Athletic Director for the past three years.



Jeff Cox

“Mr. Cox is a dedicated education professional who has served the Florence Unified School District Athletics Department in an innovative way,” Knutsen said, adding, “I am confident in his ability to take Community Education to the next level while also managing our district’s athletics’ needs.”

Cox is excited for this new opportunity. “These past three years serving as Athletic Director/Assistant Principal at Poston Butte have truly been life changing,” Cox said. “I have been dedicated to this community, as well as the athletics within the district for the past eight years and look forward to using my experiences to help create positive relationships.”

Toby Haugen has been named to succeed Gates as Principal of Florence High



Toby Haugen

School. Haugen has been serving the district for the past four years as the Principal at Skyline Ranch K-8 and was the Assistant Principal at Florence High School for two years. He has been with the district for 13 years.

“My entire education career has been with FUSD. I’m proud to have been a part of positive culture changes and growth that FUSD has seen in the last 13 years,” Haugen said. “I am grateful to have had the opportunity to serve the school and families of Skyline Ranch K-8; equally, I am honored to be entrusted with the responsibility of carrying on the rich traditions of Florence High School.”

“Mr. Toby Haugen has been a great leader in the Florence Unified School District. His success and experience as an administrator will continue the tradition of excellence at Florence High School for years to come,” said Knutsen.

Eddie Lopez has been chosen to head Poston Butte High School as Principal. Lopez has been serving the district at Magma Ranch K-8 for the past seven years, serving as Assistant Principal for three years and Principal for four.



Eddie Lopez

“Mr. Eddie Lopez is a career educator and leader,” said Knutsen. “He has been committed to the Florence Unified School District for the past seven years and lives in our community. I am confident in his ability to continue the successful track record at Poston Butte High School.”

Lopez said that his children have grown up in San Tan Valley and his family plans to stay in the area for years to come. He has six children, five of whom attend FUSD schools. One is in preschool.

“We have seen the community grow and Poston Butte is ready to be the beacon of community spirit for all that resides in our area,” Lopez said. “We will continue to prepare well rounded students for the future of our great

nation.”

Other appointments made by Knutsen include:

• **Denise Erickson** was named as Principal of Skyline Ranch K-8. She has been with the district since 2008 and has been the Advanced Placement Spanish teacher at Florence High School; Master Teacher and Activities Director for K-8 schools; and Assistant Principal at Florence K-8, Florence High School and Poston Butte High School.



Denise Erickson

• **Janeane Candelaria** was named as Principal at Magma Ranch K-8. She has been serving as the Assistant Principal at that school for the past two years. She is also a former member of the Florence Unified School District Governing Board and was a teacher at Florence K-8.



Janeane Candelaria

• **Holly Dalby** was named as Principal of Circle Cross Ranch K-8. She has served the district in numerous roles including Assistant Principal at Circle Cross Ranch K-8.



Holly Dalby

• **Rebecca Hendry** was transferred to Walker Butte K-8 as Principal. She has served as Principal of the Circle Cross Ranch K-8 S.T.E.M. Academy for the past four years. She replaces Paul Hatch, who resigned from the position effective at the end of this school year. Hatch will remain in the district in a different role.



Rebecca Hendry

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PBHS's Nafziger steps down to pursue admin position

By **Andrew Luberda**
STV Daily PRSS

Poston Butte boys' varsity Head Coach Noel Nafziger recently announced that he was stepping down to pursue a position in school administration.

Nafziger, the only head coach to lead the Broncos' program since the school opened nearly a decade ago, leaves behind some big shoes to fill. During his tenure at the school, his overall record was 109 – 81. He led the Broncos to four state playoff appearances, including three-straight from 2011-13.

Twice his teams won 23 games in a season, which included the 2011-12 and 2012-13 seasons, when the Broncos' advanced to the second-round of the Division II State Playoffs in consecutive

years. His team finished 14 – 0 in sectional play and shared the Sectional Championship at the end of the 2011-12 campaign.

During a recent interview, Coach “Naf,” as his players called him, admitted there never really is a “right time” to resign, but considering he is completing his second master's degree in April and has a desire to work in school administration it seemed to be as good a time as any.

“It was a very difficult decision and one that I thought a lot about,” Nafziger said in an email to *STV Daily PRSS*.

Several other athletic programs at Poston Butte have experienced enough coaching turnover to limit their success, but that wasn't the case with the boys' basketball program, which Nafziger said is one of the things he was most proud of in building the

Broncos' program.

“I'm very proud that I was able to play a role in providing a lot of stability to the program,” he said. “Each sport at Poston Butte has gone through at least two head coaches, many sports quite a few more than two, and I feel very fortunate that I was able to do it for the last eight years.” Nafziger has coached his fair share of dynamic players, including several who went on to play at the next level. He wanted to teach them more than basketball and he was equally successful at teaching them life beyond the court.

“I'm also very proud and feel blessed that I had so many great kids let me coach them,” Nafziger said. “I always tried to hold them accountable, make them work hard, and push them to always try to be better players, students and men.”

Many times, we hear athletes, when they've played their final game, say they'll miss the locker room, the bus rides home, and just being with their teammates.

Nafziger was asked to name some of his favorite memories and, not surprisingly, his answer centered around the joy of victories.

“The greatest ones are just watching teams celebrate after a tough, hard-fought win, where they had to overcome adversity and battle for everything,” Nafziger shared. “When they stayed together and found a way to win, there is such joy and pride in winning games like that. I'm just very lucky I got to experience that quite a few times.”

Indeed.

And the Poston Butte basketball program was lucky to experience you too, Coach Naf.



Broncos' head coach Noel Nafziger talks things over with his team during a timeout.

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FUSD basketball players and coach garner All-Region honors

Several boys and girls basketball players from Poston Butte, San Tan Foothills and Florence high schools were named to the recently announced Arizona Interscholastic Association All-Region teams.

Additionally, Florence boys' Head Coach David Silvas was selected as the 3A Central Region Coach of the Year.

Poston Butte 6-foot-8 senior center Tyson Berringer was selected the 5A Sonoran Region Defensive Player of the Year after totaling 46 blocked shots, an average of more than two per game.

Florence 5-foot-9 junior center/forward Kayla Furman was selected the 3A Central Region Player of the Year

after averaging a double-double – 11 points and 18 rebounds – per game for the Lady Gophers. She also averaged almost two steals and more than a block per game.

The following is a list, by school, of all the local players and coaches who were recognized for their performances this season:

POSTON BUTTE BOYS

- AIA 5A Sonoran Region Defensive Player of the Year** – Tyson Berringer
- AIA 5A Sonoran Region 1st Team** – Tyson Berringer and Kevin Johnson.
- AIA 5A Sonoran Region 2nd**

- Team** – Jacob Mottley.
- AIA 5A Sonoran Region Honorable Mention** – Logan Hatch.

POSTON BUTTE GIRLS

- AIA 5A Sonoran Region 1st Team** – Tianna Bruce.
- AIA 5A Sonoran Region 2nd Team** – Daija Littleton.
- AIA 5A Sonoran Region Honorable Mention** – Isabel Garrido.

SAN TAN FOOTHILLS' BOYS

- AIA 2A Metro South Region 2nd Team** – Gabriel Martinez.

FLORENCE BOYS

- AIA 3A Central Region Coach of**

- the Year** – David Silvas.
- AIA 3A Central Region 1st Team** – Brock Parsons and Rarey Sommer.
- AIA 3A Central Region 2nd Team** – Jared Wood and Aaron Chapple.
- AIA 3A Central Region Honorable Mention** – Nick Tucker and Payton Turner.

FLORENCE GIRLS

- AIA 3A Central Region Player of the Year** – Kayla Furman.
- AIA 3A Central Region 1st Team** – Kayla Furman.
- AIA 3A Central Region 2nd Team** – Chaney Owens and Mikayla Flores.
- AIA 3A Central Region Honorable Mention** – Sielle Neal.

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George DeLaTorre returns to FUSD as head coach of the San Tan Foothills Sabercats.

George DeLaTorre returns to FUSD to lead San Tan Foothills' football program

By Andrew Luberda
STV Daily PRSS

The coaching instability associated with the San Tan Foothills football program has been well documented – four different coaches since May 2015. The Sabercats recently tabbed former Florence High School head coach and Mesa Schools' Hall of Fame member George DeLaTorre to be their next head coach, following the resignation of Ritchie Martin, who served as the Cats' head coach for just one season.

DeLaTorre, who most recently was the head coach at Dobson High School, just finished his 41st year of coaching football. During his career, he's been on the coaching staffs of four state championship football teams and two state championship track teams. As the head coach at South Mountain, he led the Jaguars to two-straight state semi-final games. In his four years as the Gophers' head coach his teams reached the state semis three times.

The multi-time Coach of the Year may finally provide the stability the Sabercats have been looking for.

"George DeLaTorre has a proven track record of winning on the field while

developing connections with students and families off the field," Florence Unified School District Interim Superintendent Chris Knutsen said in a statement. "We are grateful to have Coach DeLaTorre, pending board approval, join our staff to help our student-athletes succeed."

The Cats' new head coach is stepping into an enviable position considering their 6 – 3 record in 2016, including 4 – 1 and a second-place finish in the 2A Metro East Region, and several talented returning players. The Cats' figured to be a favorite to win the six-team region in 2017 before DeLaTorre's arrival. Now, with his "proven track record," they may be THE favorite.


DeLaTorre's own measure of success will go far beyond the field, however.

"I want our kids to competitive in the classroom, the field of play and their future with faith, family and careers," he said in a statement. "We want them to expect challenges and manage human vulnerability and the emotional inconveniences that they will experience as life-long learners in a rapidly changing global environment."

Sounds like the Sabercats may finally have the right man for the job.

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Mrs. Valencia Coppel, International Baccalaureate Coordinator at Florence High School with Mrs. Melissa Haugen, FHS Visual Arts Teacher who won the award.

FUSD Baseball & Softball Midseason Report

(As of March 31)

Poston Butte Baseball – The 19th-ranked Broncos own an 8 – 6 record with nine games remaining before the 5A playoffs begin. Their most significant win to date was a 12 – 7 victory against No. 12-ranked Sahuaro on Mar. 2. The Broncos pounded out 13 hits in the game, which included four players – Cameron Vercoe, Juan Navarrette, Grant Young and Garrett Gilchrist – with two hits apiece. Gilchrist hit two homeruns and drove in five runs to the lead the offensive attack. Vercoe (2), Navarrette, Young, Nolan McNeill, and Brandon Leyva combined to hit six doubles in the win. Starting pitcher Joshua Touhey benefitted from a seven-run third inning and picked up the win, going six innings and allowing five runs on eight hits with five strikeouts and a walk.



Poston Butte Softball – The 18th-ranked Lady Broncos are 17 – 5 overall – 2 – 0 in regional play – atop the Sonoran Region standings, and currently riding a 11-game winning streak, including five-straight to win the inaugural Youngker Roughrider Classic. The Lady Broncos defeated the host team in the championship game on Mar. 18, 16 – 0. Sophomore Lindsay Lopez and junior Taylor Strupp got it done at the plate and on the mound, where the duo combined to toss a one-hit shutout with four strikeouts and no walks. At the plate, Strupp doubled and drove in three runs. Lopez, who also doubled, went 3-for-3 with a pair of RBI while Ronni Sample, a junior, had two hits and three RBI. Megan Clark and Kayla Faust each had two hits in the victory.

Florence Baseball – The fourth-ranked Gophers' baseball team is 14 – 2 on the season after winning its first eight games of the year, including the Annual Joe S. Padilla Tournament Championship Game. The Gophers scored four runs in the bottom of the seventh inning of the championship game to defeat Estrella Foothills, 6 – 5. After dropping back-to-back games, the Gophers are now riding a six-game winning streak. In the win against Estrella Foothills, Walter Sommer had two hits and drove in three runs. Tyler Austin, a junior, had three hits and an RBI. Sommer combined with Mathew Olson and Brandon Formato to allow four earned runs on two hits with 12 strikeouts and eight walks.



Florence Softball – The 10th-ranked Lady Gophers are 11 – 7 overall, including 4 – 0 in the Central Region, where they are tied for first-place with Safford. After recently dropping four of five games played, the Lady Gophers have won two-straight against Benjamin Franklin and Globe. In a 17 – 3 victory at the Chargers on Mar. 28, Kolbi Cluff went 2-for-3, including a homerun and drove in three runs. Mikayla Flores and Jaycee Johnson each had three hits in the win. Jamela Copeland, Brianna Bane, Dani Johnson, Eliahana Avendano, and Jackie Cornett each had a pair of hits. Eight different players had at least one RBI against the Chargers. Cornett, who had two RBI to go along with her two hits, also starred on the mound, picking up her fourth win of the season after allowing three runs – none earned – on five hits with seven strikeouts and two walks.



San Tan Foothills' Baseball – After starting the season with one win in its first four games, the fifth-ranked San Tan Foothills' baseball team won eight of its next nine games, including the last seven in-a-row. The Cats have scored 10 runs or more during the seven-game winning streak, including a 14 – 2 win against San Carlos on Mar. 16. Freshmen Zachary Herrera and Trevyn Badger each had two hits, including a triple apiece, and drove in three runs in the lopsided win. The Cats swiped 10 bases as a team against the Braves – three by Herrera and two each by Norman Touey and Badger. Badger also shined on the mound, pitching a complete game to pick up his fifth win of the year. He allowed two runs – one earned – on four hits with seven strikeouts and a walk.

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What?! How COOL is this kid?



Evie Clair is the stage name for a student who attends Magma Ranch K-8 in the Florence Unified School District and who has had the opportunity to appear in front of the celebrity judges for the reality talent competition "America's Got Talent." Find out if the judges push her through to the next round by watching Season 12 premiering May 30, 2017 on NBC. Go Evie Clair!

Dain Thompson to be next PBHS football head coach

By **Andrew Luberd**
STV Daily PRSS

The Poston Butte football program is about to have its third head coach in as many seasons following the resignation of one-and-done head coach Cody Collette, who took over the Broncos' program when Paul Moro resigned after the 2015 season.

The irony here is that perhaps the right guy all along was right under Poston Butte's nose.

Dain Thompson, who joined Moro from Blue Ridge High School, served as the Broncos' Defensive Coordinator for the past three seasons and, pending board approval, will be their next head coach. The University of Arizona graduate, was a

member of the 1987 State Champion Blue Ridge team. He remained at Poston Butte after Moro left and is widely regarded as a quality coach.

Thompson's only other head coaching experience was at Holbrook High School. He also served as an assistant coach at Desert View in Tucson, Tucson Sahuaro and Blue Ridge.



Dain Thompson

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