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Eloy News

CCA entertains families and recruits for new jobs at weekend groundbreaking ceremony

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La Palma prison being constructed in Eloy. From left to right, Vice-President of State Customer Relations Tony Grande, Project Manager for JE Dunn Construction Doug O'Neal, CCA President and CEO John Ferguson, Eloy Mayor Byron Jackson, Associate Director for Calif. Dept. of Corrections Terri McDonald, State Congress Representative Pete Rios, Eloy Vice-Mayor Frank Acuna, CCA Vice-President of Business Unit One Brian Collins, La Palma Warden Chuck DeRosa, and Managing Director of Div. 7 Daren Swenson.

Though the morning started out a little raw and chilly, Corrections Corporation of America (CCA) held a successful Community Day last Saturday, Jan. 19, overlooking the new correctional facility going up in Eloy.

La Palma is the largest prison to be built in Pinal County, with 3,060 beds. Its new warden just started this week, Mr. Chuck DeRosa, who is coming from a federal contract CCA prison in California. He has over 25 years of experience in the corrections industry, and a good portion of those years as warden. He has worked with several large population prisons, and has prior experience in the opening of a new facility.

The free event was open for adults and children alike, from 9 a.m. to noon. CCA supplied a free breakfast, which included burritos, Danishes, muffins, fruit juice, and the much-coveted hot cup of coffee. After speeches and the official groundbreaking photo op by Eloy city officials and CCA company representatives, musical entertainment came in the shape of the Santa Cruz

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high school mariachi band. Law enforcement officers were onsite to give safety presentations, and Eloy Fire had a fire truck open for the public to look at and explore. The Pinal County Sheriff's Office (PCSO) also had an information booth.

There were fair games, hot air balloon rides, jump castles, and balloon animals for the kids, and a job fair provided for parents who could possibly fill the over 300 positions open at the new correctional facility.

Warden DeRosa himself started as a corrections officer, and made his way up to warden, as there was always a prison that needed his experience somewhere in the U.S. Looking into a career in corrections, DeRosa says, is pretty "recession-proof."

CCA is the biggest employer in Pinal County, and one of the largest in the state. Right now, there are positions all over the charts that are open, from nurses and healthcare professionals, to maintenance at the La Palma facility. It will open in phases, with its first phase slated to open in June. All positions should be filled before the first inmates arrive in July or late August. Correctional officers are needed. Inexperienced officers start off at \$16.50 an hour, and training begins in March.

"You can be promoted through the ranks at different facilities without ever having to leave the area," DeRosa added as another positive. Though he'd moved up through the ranks at a swift pace himself, he'd also been shipped from state to state. But there are six prisons alone in Arizona, giving Arizonians plenty of opportunity for local area lateral promotions.

"CCA cultivates careers," Eloy Vice-Mayor Frank Acuna said during opening remarks, "not just jobs."

In fact, on account of the number of prisons, CCA has created a new district just for Arizona. Former Saguaro warden Daren Swenson has now been named Managing Director for all prisons in CCA's Arizona division. This kind of district is new for CCA, and never been done before for a single state.

Todd Thomas was named warden of the Saguaro Correctional Center this month. He previously served as warden of Coffee County Correctional Facility in Nicholls, Georgia for nearly four years.

Applications can be picked up at any of the area CCA prisons, or you can conduct a job search on their website at www.correctionscorp.com/careers.html.

The event drew on as many local businesses as possible for Saturday's event. Eva's Restaurant provided the breakfast burritos, Eloy Parks and Recreation Department donated time and materials for face painting, and Eloy's own High But Dry Balloons provided the tethered hot air balloon rides.

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