

MESA

Here's how Alice Cooper is involved with Mesa Mayor Giles' final State of the City address

**Maritza Dominguez**

Arizona Republic

Published 8:36 a.m. MT Feb. 13, 2024 | Updated 1:34 p.m. MT Feb. 13, 2024

Cue the lights and spaceship: Mesa's Mayor John Giles' voyage to his final State of the City address included help from an astronaut-dressed Sen. Mark Kelly to fend off Alice Cooper, dressed as a Star Wars villain, with a light saber.

The annual State of the City by the mayor, which serves as a check-in and a sneak peek at what's to come for the city, is always set with a theme and this year it was inspired by the aerospace development in the city. Last year's Back to the Future-themed speech won the city a Rocky Mountain Southwest Regional Emmy.

"We continue to dream big. And for this mayor, Mesa will always be, 'out of this world,'" Giles said during his speech.

Giles highlighted Arizona State University's presence downtown, partnerships with the four southern tribes and an expansion to the Mesa College Promise.

The program included pre-recorded remarks by Arizona State University President Michael Crow and a blessing from Salt River Pima Maricopa Indian Community President Martin Javier of Salt River.

The event marked Giles' final time giving the annual speech with his term as mayor reaching its final year.

"And it's been my honor to serve my hometown as mayor. ... But Mesa's best days are ahead of us, and we're only getting started. Mesa is taking off," he said, closing out the State of the City.

Here are three takeaways from Tuesday's speech.

Naming restoration plans for Native American temple ruins

Among the announcements at Tuesday's event included the restoration the name of the Mesa Grande ruins.

The action is part of a larger movement for the city to restore and repair its relationship with the four southern tribes, Giles told The Arizona Republic.

The temple mound sits in the middle of an urbanized city along Date and 10th Street that was constructed more than 600 years ago — between 1100 and 1400 — by the Hohokam. It's one of three major Hohokam ruins in the state.

In the 1980s the city purchased the six-acre property to preserve it.

The site has had some city improvements through the years to maintain it. "The thing we need to do now is correct the name," Giles said.

The city, leaders from the tribes and the Museum and Cultural Advisory Board will do the due diligence to choose and restore that name, he said.

Coming: ADOT spends \$38.5M on Main Street upgrades in east Mesa

Mesa College Promise

A city program that helps pay for graduating Mesa high school students' tuition at Mesa Community College is expanding.

Giles announced adult learners who live in Mesa will soon be able to tap into the scholarship funding.

It's been the easiest part of Giles' job to raise money for the program because "everyone rallies behind it."

The program's success attracted First Lady Jill Biden to visit Mesa in February 2023.

Applications for adult students will begin in March. Here's what is needed to qualify:

24 years of age and older (at the time of application)

City of Mesa resident

Demonstrating financial need through FAFSA completion and supporting documentation

High school diploma or GED

Not previously attended college or some college/no degree
Enrolling in a minimum of six credits
Registering for a financial-aid-eligible program

ASU expanding

Arizona State University's footprint is expanding, Crow announced in a pre-recorded video.

The Mesa campus is being branded as the ASU Center for Creative Technology where it will expand programs related to animation, filmmaking and video game design.

The university will expand into the current post office when the lease ends in June 2025.

The city plans to retain service at the downtown post office. Other city property has also been earmarked for future ASU expansions.

Reporter Maritza Dominguez covers Mesa, Gilbert and Queen Creek and can be reached at maritza.dominguez@arizonarepublic.com or 480-271-0646. Follow her on X, formerly Twitter: @maritzacdom.

On the way: Once the symbol of a failed land grab, Mesa's \$90M 'gateway to downtown' taking shape