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## Mesa mineral show a gem for Valley enthusiasts



Chuck Kominski and his son Harris, in a mine north of Phoenix, are excited about this weekend's rock and mineral show in Mesa.

Brian Beck

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**By Coty Dolores Miranda**  
 Special for The Arizona Republic | azcentral.com  
 Wed Jan 2, 2013 10:19 PM

St. John Bosco sixth-grader Harris Kominski loves Christmas, but what he's really looking forward to now is this weekend's Flagg Gem and Mineral Show at Mesa Community College.

Kominski, 12, has a sizable rock and mineral collection at his Ahwatukee Foothills home. He began collecting after finding a geode on a camping trip at age 3.

He and his father, Chuck Kominski, a chemical engineer, are members of the Flagg Mineral Foundation, the non-profit hosting this weekend's three-day show, the Valley's largest.

"I really like going to the show," Harris said. "It's fun to walk around and meet people, and it's fun to help with it."

Also assisting at the Flagg Mineral Foundation's largest fundraiser is Desert Vista High School senior Alison Richardson, 17, and her sister Erica, 14. Daughters of longtime Flagg member and current foundation Chairman Phil Richardson, the sisters are competitive rock and mineral exhibitors.

"Promoting earth sciences and targeting juniors, as we call them, are two of the main driving forces behind our organization," said Phil Richardson, a registered structural engineer and 11-year Ahwatukee Foothills resident.

Both Richardson and Chuck Kominski became interested in rock and mineral collecting as children.

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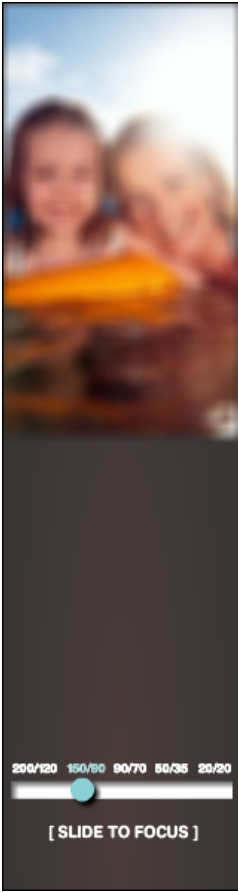
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"I became interested at about age 11, when I was going for my Boy Scout geology merit badge," Richardson said. "I still have the specimen from the Bingham Canyon Copper Mines given me by my grandfather, who worked there. I studied geology and engineering at the University of Utah, and my first job was at the same mine."

Chuck Kominski recalls childhood winter vacations in Arizona with his San Diego family.

"We'd visit Jerome and Bisbee, and I became fascinated," said Kominski, a foundation board member. "Years later, my friend Brian Beck, a mining geologist, invited us to go out with him, and it became an all-consuming hobby."

His home is filled with beautiful and unusual rock and mineral specimens from around the world collected by him and sons Charlie, 16, and Harris.

The Flagg Mineral Foundation celebrated its 50th anniversary last year, but the show started in 1970 as the Superstition Mountain Mineral Festival. It was held at various sites, including the Arizona State Fairgrounds, until 1987, when it moved to Mesa Community College.

The free show is a family-friendly tailgate affair that includes children's activities such as fossil digs and a "build your own egg-carton mineral collection."

The Flagg Gem and Mineral Show is open 9 a.m.-5 p.m. Friday through Sunday at the western MCC parking lot on Dobson Road near Southern Avenue. Gems, minerals, fossils, beads, jewelry and lapidary supplies will be available for purchase.

For more information: [FlaggMineralFoundation.org](http://FlaggMineralFoundation.org).

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