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Wednesday, December 10, 2025

Sen. Kelly sponsors bill addressing social media

By Isabella Gomez / Cronkite News

WASHINGTON – Lawmakers have struggled for years to regulate social media platforms in ways that tamp down misinformation and extremism. Much of the criticism has been aimed at algorithms that feed users more and more of whatever they click on – the “rabbit hole” effect blamed for fueling conspiracy theories, depression, eating disorders, suicide and violence.

Federal law shields social media platforms and internet providers from lawsuits over content posted by users. First Amendment rights make it hard for Congress to regulate speech.

The latest effort comes from Sens. Mark Kelly, an Arizona Democrat, and John Curtis, a Utah Republican, who have teamed up to fight political violence since the Sept. 10 murder of conservative activist Charlie Kirk.

SEE SOCIAL MEDIA, Page 3

Holocaust survivor to speak in Holbrook

By Linda Kor

The community of Holbrook will have the rare opportunity to meet with World War II Holocaust survivor and author Dr. Dirk van Leenen who will be speaking at 5 p.m. on Tuesday, Jan. 13, at the Holbrook Library, located at 403 S. Park Drive.

Van Leenen, who now lives in Mesa, was just three years old when Nazi Germany invaded the Netherlands during World War II. His father became the head of the Dutch Resistance and together their family worked to hide more than 1,000 Jewish people beneath the floorboards of their home. Those who stayed with the van Leenens were quickly moved to other hiding places, more than 90 in total, before eventually reaching safer territory.

To keep so many alive, van Leenen explained that his father distributed counterfeit ration cards and fake IDs, often traveling by bicycle. Dirk rode with him, carrying the papers in hidden pockets sewn into his clothing. If stopped at checkpoints, the young boy would cry to distract the German soldiers, a tactic that allowed them to slip through time and again.

Dr. van Leenan also witnessed the brutal conditions of Nazi concentration camps such as Westerbork, the only Dutch concentration camp, where he and his family were eventually imprisoned. He recounts memories of prisoners boiling shoe leather for food and the typhus outbreaks that claimed countless lives, including Anne Frank’s at Westerbork.

Fortunately, van Leenen was rescued by British officers after a very short stay at the camp because his family was actually imprisoned after much of the Nazi regime fell. His presentation includes a slideshow of historical photos and documents and afterward he will answer questions from the audience. Signed copies of his four books will be available for purchase, including *Resistance on a Bicycle* and *The Americans Are Coming*, which chronicle his family’s story of resistance and survival.

Photo by Shawn White

Dr. Dirk van Leenen will offer rare insight into his personal experience as a Holocaust survivor on Jan. 13. Dr. van Leenen has authored books including *Resistance on a Bicycle* and *The Americans Are Coming* on the subject.

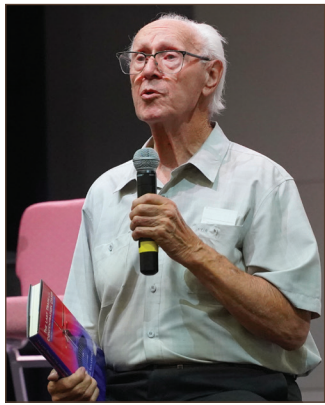


Photo by Shawn White

Holbrook hosted its annual Christmas tree lighting last Friday at Gillespie Park. The event brought out families and friends to stand beneath the glow of the freshly lit Christmas tree, taking in the holiday scene. More photos on Page 10.

Romo’s holiday toy drive brings joy to hundreds of local children

By Shawn White

Mark Romo has always believed that small towns show their character in the moments when no one is watching. A Holbrook resident and the operator of Romo’s Mexican Grill at the Winslow Airport, Romo didn’t set out to run a regional toy drive this year. He had simply been approached by motorcycle group in the White Mountains he sponsors who was organizing one for Show Low and Pinetop. He asked if they could do one for Winslow, Holbrook and Joseph City and the group said logistically it would be too hard for them to organize the drive so late in the year. After that he decided to do it himself for the children in the communities of Holbrook, Joseph City and Winslow.

He put the word out, expecting maybe a handful of volunteers. Instead, the response came like a flood. Romo said what really got the momentum going early on was large donations from Kiersti Hancock with the Navajo County Probation Department, immediately donating bags and bags filled with toys. Soon the list of supporters grew to include the 3Cs Auto Body, Tri-R Towing, Coach Art Griffith, Richard Oliver, Oxendale Auto Outlet, Bojo’s Grill and Sports Club, Hatch’s Quick Stop, Mr. G’s Pizzas and Soda Shop, and many individuals. Once people saw the growing number of toys in Romo’s restaurant, more and more people got involved. “These are tough times economically,” Romo said. “I’ve just had so many people reach out asking how they can get



Photo by Shawn White

Mark Romo stands in front of hundreds of donated toys, only a fraction of the total collected, through the regional holiday drive he organized for families in Winslow, Holbrook and Joseph City.

involved. I told my wife, this is why we moved back from Phoenix.”

Romo and his family started the drive just after Halloween. The needs became clear immediately: 132 families in Winslow, 49 in Joseph City and 51 in Holbrook. Most requests were simple, just age and gender, but Joseph City’s list stood out with a large number of older kids between 12 and 17 — a group often overlooked in holiday drives and are usually a bit harder to shop for. Romo says he thinks he did a really great job accommodating children of all ages, not just with the toy donations but picking things out from Walmart with the money that was donated.

One of the surprises has been how quickly the community has given. In one day alone, Romo collected \$1,400 from one group and then a couple hours later \$900 more came in. Romo quickly gathered the team from the restaurant and had a great time with employees

picking out toys for everyone on their list, and the running total has passed 500 items. What isn’t matched directly to a family will go to Catholic Charities, which

handles foster placement for Navajo and Apache counties so foster children around northeastern Arizona will be connected to toys from this drive as well.

SEE TOY DRIVE, Page 3

Supervisors hold retreat to discuss various topics

By Talaina Kor

The Navajo County Board of Supervisors held a retreat on Wednesday, Dec. 3. During the retreat, the board reviewed the County Roads 101 webpage demo and discussed future improvements to it. Progress on broadband installation and commercial marketing was also presented.

The board also reviewed the county facility in Taylor including branding/signage, county complex maintenance, future plans and software challenges for assessor and treasurer were touched on as well.

The board also discussed data venture industry inquiries, along with the development agreements and the impacts those would have.

A review of the annual budget development process was tabled. A discussion on the possible roles and options the county could play in workforce development and affordable housing was tabled as well. Following their discussions, the board held a lunch session with Northland Pioneer College President Dr. Von Lawson and Holbrook Mayor Kathleen Smith. No action was taken during the meeting.



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