

try to enroll more students in their science and engineering programs.

"One of the most viable ways for students to get into the universities is through the community college," he said. "If we create a facility ... that is a signature place for people to start their education, we are doing good things not only for the community, but it's also a good thing for where the country is going."

The planetarium is part of a plan to construct a new \$20 million physical science building on the south side of MCC on Southern Avenue and Dobson Road.

SEE MCC • PAGE A2

By J. CRAIG ANDERSON
and JASON MASSAD
TRIBUNE

Fear of foreign threats, real and perceived, anger at the loss of America's post-9/11 unity, mounting apprehension about future security and prosperity: These served as the fuel.

A Mesa City Councilman's simple protest gesture was the spark.

The vitriolic public reaction to Tom Rawles' not standing and silence during the Pledge of Allegiance at Monday's council meeting now includes death threats that have prompted police to place him under 24-hour protection at work and home.

Still, even the latest development



JENNIFER GRIMES, TRIBUNE

FOR A CAUSE: Mesa Councilman Tom Rawles protests the Iraq war by not standing for the Pledge of Allegiance at a council meeting Monday.

should come as no surprise, given Arizonans' current unease about divisive issues such as illegal immigration and the war in Iraq, local historians say.

"You can't separate this out from the broader context of what's going on in the world," said Craig Allen, associate professor of media history at Arizona State University's Walter Cronkite School of Journalism and Mass Communication. "It's just one of those times when people are mad as hell."

Rawles has received a handful of death threats in the days since announcing he would not recite the Pledge during public meetings, meant as a show of opposition to the Bush administration's decision to deploy more troops to Iraq.

Mesa police spokesman Sgt. Chuck

SEE PROTEST • PAGE A2

Kids living by highways face health risks, study says

By THOMAS H. MAUGH II
LOS ANGELES TIMES

LOS ANGELES • Children living near busy highways have significant impairments in the development of their lungs that can lead to respiratory problems for the rest of their lives, University of Southern Califor-

nia-researchers have found in the largest and longest study of its kind.

The 13-year study of more than 3,600 children in 12 Southern California communities found that the damage from living near a freeway is about the same as that from living in communities with the highest

pollution levels, the research team reported Thursday in the online version of the medical journal *Lancet*.

"If you live in a high-pollution area, and live near a busy road, you get a doubling" of the damage, said lead author W. James Gauderman, an epidemiologist at USC's Keck School

of Medicine.

"Someone suffering a pollution-related deficit in lung function as a child will probably have less than healthy lungs all of his or her life," he said.

The greatest damage appears to be in the small airways of the lung, damage that is normally associated with the

fine particulate matter emitted by automobiles.

"This tells me that I wouldn't want to be raising my children near a significant source of fine-particle air pollution," said economist C. Arden Pope of Brigham Young University,

SEE RISKS • PAGE A2

COMICS, D6 • THE DISH, D8 • HOROSCOPE, D8 • LOTTERY, A2 • NATION/WORLD, A10 • OBITUARIES, A17 • OPINION, A18 • A19 • PUZZLES, D8, E10, E11 • 1



is a lack of money to outfit the facility.

While there is enough to actually construct the roughly \$1.2 million astronomy plaza,

"It's educational and it's also entertaining. It's a whole new experience. I think it will just add to the cultural enrichment for Mesa," he added.

Science Center in Phoenix.

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RISKS: Lung function impaired

FROM PAGE A1

an expert on air pollution and health who was not involved in the study.

The study was funded by the California Air Resources Board, the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences, the Environmental Protection Agency, the National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute and the Hastings Foundation.

There has been a growing body of research about the effects of air pollution on the lungs and cardiovascular system, but most have focused on short-term effects.

What is unique about this study is the large number of children involved and the length of time they were studied.

Gauderman and his colleagues recruited groups of fourth-grade students, average age 10, in 1993 and 1996. Their schools were scattered from San Luis Obispo to San Diego counties.

The team collected extensive information about each child's home, socioeconomic status and other relevant facts.

Once each year, the team visited the schools and measured

the children's lungs, assessing both how much air could be expelled in one breath and how quickly it could be expelled.

Results from the study reported in 2004 indicated that children in the communities with the highest average levels of pollution suffered the greatest long-term impairment of lung function.

In the new study, Gauderman and his colleagues found that, by their 18th birthday, children who lived within 500 yards of a freeway had a 3 percent deficit in the amount of air they could exhale and a 7 percent deficit in the rate at which it could be exhaled compared to children who lived at least 1,500 yards from a freeway. The effect was independent of the overall pollution in their community.

The most severe impairment was observed in children living near freeways in the communities with the highest average pollution.

About a third of the children moved during the course of the study, but stayed in the same community. Lung impairment was smaller among those who moved farther from the free-

ways.

The finding is important "because it shows that within communities some children are at higher risk than others," wrote Dr. Thomas Sandstrom and Dr. Bert Brunekreef in an editorial accompanying the paper. "Thus, environmental equity is an issue of local rather than regional dimensions."

The results were also independent of the children's initial health and whether they were smokers.

The researchers conceded that there is little that can be done to mitigate the effects of the traffic pollution now.

But when local governments are planning new schools and new housing developments, Gauderman said, "this should be taken into account."

CORRECTION

In Thursday's Tribune, a Page A5 story on protests over the new boundaries of Riggs Elementary School should have named Ruth Truman as a Shea Homes representative.

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