

# Neighbors

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## Mount Everest climb honored fallen heroes here

BY KRISTINE CANNON  
Progress Staff Writer

Scottsdale Fire Chief Tom Shannon was embarking on the last 1,000 feet ascent up Kala Patthar — a landmark located in the Nepali Himalayas that boasts jaw-dropping, panoramic views of Mount Everest, Lhotse and Nuptse — when he was overcome with emotion.

Shannon was alone — the rest of his team wasn't too far behind him — and gassed from the physically demanding nine-day hike.

"All I could think about was the fight that our firefighters endure to battle cancer and how David [Grefka] fought so hard to be there for his family," Shannon said. "I was good to let out some emotion before the rest of the Trekkers arrived and then we tied off the flags."

Last month, Shannon and the rest of his team completed their 80-mile hike up and down Mount Everest, known as Peck's Trek, in memory of two very important



Chief Tom Shannon and former Scottsdale firefighter Jim Dooley tied off hundreds of prayer flags at Kala Patthar in Nepal. (Tom Shannon)

people to Shannon.

They included his nephew Austin Peck, an 11-year firefighter for Goodyear Fire

Department who died in 2019 to adenocarcinoma, a rare form of occupational cancer that he battled for four years; and

David Grefka, the former manager of the Dubliner Irish Pub and close friend of the firefighters who lost his battle with cancer shortly after Peck passed.

It took Shannon's group nine days to reach Kala Patthar and just under four days to get back to Lukla, Nepal, where they started their journey.

Upon reaching Kala Patthar, they tied off hundreds of prayer flags and sentiments from the families of fallen firefighters, law enforcement personnel and supporters of public safety in Arizona that were collected over the past two years.

"Austin, aside from being my nephew and godson, was a firefighter's firefighter in that he loved the service and loved to help people," Shannon said.

"Our trek hoped to not only memorialize Austin and David and all those mentioned in the prayer flags, but also to bring to the forefront of the public's

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## Scottsdale educator authors early reader books

BY KRISTINE CANNON  
Progress Staff Writer

"I want to read a quote to you," author Lee Jenkins said from his Scottsdale home. "God is in the business of strategically positioning us in the right place at the right time."

It's with this quote from American pastor and author Mark Batterson that Jenkins describes his 30-year friendship with "Brown Bear, Brown Bear" author, the late Bill Martin Jr.

He not only became a dear friend of Jenkins' for 30 years, but an author who inspired Jenkins' latest literary project: writing and publishing two collections of books based upon Bible stories and Aesop fables for early readers.



Scottsdale resident and author Lee Jenkins is the author of a growing number of books based upon Bible stories or Aesop fables for Early Readers. He started publishing them last summer, and he has five more slated to publish this year.

(Pablo Robles/Progress Staff Photographer)

"I have combined two ideas — Bible and Aesop fables with early readers," he explained.

"There are hundreds of Bible and Aesop books to read to children or for them to read once they learn how to read," he continued. "To the best of my knowledge, there are no other books based upon Bible stories or Aesop fables that are designed with early reading in mind."

Jenkins is a speaker, consultant and author of "How to Create a Perfect School," among other education books.

Children's book author is yet another addition to Jenkins' resume detailing 50 years of experience as a teacher, principal, school superintendent and university professor.

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# Scottsdale DAR pays tribute to WWII veteran

PROGRESS NEWS STAFF

The Scottsdale Piestewa Peak Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution participated April 21 in a celebration for a WWII veteran who turned 100.

Working with the DreamCatchers Foundation and other organizations, the DAR celebrated with Stella Sgro, who during the war was a drill sergeant and air raid warden in the Army.

"The DreamCatchers Foundation organized a beautiful tribute and birthday celebration with a drive by parade," a DAR spokeswoman said.

Also participating in the celebration were Tender Little Hearts Mini Tales and Equine Mini Therapy horses, representatives from Veterans Affairs and the American Legion, the Arizona Patriot Guard Riders, Arizona Military Vehicles Collectors Club and hot rod cars.

Lydia McLaughlin, Sgro's daughter, said her mom is still called "Sergeant Stella."

McLaughlin became emotional think-



Maserati of Tender Little Hearts Equine Mini Therapy, with founder Terry Holmes, wish Stella a happy 100th birthday. (Courtesy of DAR)

ing about the parade and people coming out to celebrate her mom:

"My mom has never been honored or acknowledged for her service, so this would be a dream come true for her," she said. "Everyone loves her and she has always thought of others."

When McLaughlin asked Stella why

she served in the war, she replied, "I did it for the love of my country."

Stella was presented a DAR WWII Commemorative Certificate by Chapter Regent Joyce Layton Bertilson in recognition of her valor, service and sacrifice during World War II.

Honorary Regent and retired Army

COL Sandy Lanter Raynor also wished her a happy birthday and thanked her for her service.

Sgro was struck by lightning at the age of 12 – which the centenarian said made her stronger and turned her into a rebel.

Her family says they are most proud of her service to our country, her involvement in civil rights marches like the Selma to Montgomery March and her great kindness.

The event was organized by the DreamCatchers Foundation at Grand Canyon University.

The DreamCatchers Foundation, an Arizona-based nationwide nonprofit, is a network of high school and college student clubs dedicated to fulfilling the end-of-life dreams of hospice patients in their communities.

The National Society Daughters of the American Revolution was founded in 1890 to preserve the memory and spirit of those who contributed to securing American independence. To learn more about the work of today's DAR in Arizona, visit [arizonadar.org](http://arizonadar.org).

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Since last summer, he has published five children's books as part of the Bible and Aesop Early Reading Books collections, which include books written specifically for readers ages 4-7.

The Bible Patterns for Young Readers series so far includes "A Day With Jesus," which was published in July; "A Week with Joshua" in September; "An Evening with Daniel" in October; and "A Very Long Day with Elijah," which was published last month.

"When our children were younger and talking to families now who are in church, they have two needs: They want their kids to know the Bible, and – if you look at an educational need – they want their kids

to be good readers," Jenkins said. "So, we thought, 'Why couldn't we put the two together?'"

The Aesop Patterns for Young Readers series, on the other hand, includes one book, "Who's Afraid of a Lion?"

Published in November, it tells the story of a gnat bullying a lion.

Jenkins plans to publish the second Aesop book, "Yummy, Yummy, Yummy, Honey, Honey: Aesop's Groupthink Fable," sometime this year.

"Group think is going to come up in every family conversation, and this is something they can refer back to," Jenkins said.

Illustrated by Cave Creek artist Beth Zink, "Yummy, Yummy, Yummy, Honey, Honey, Honey" tells the fable of flies attracted to

honey until none can fly due to their honey-soaked legs and wings.

"That story is 2,500 years old," Jenkins said. "After parents, other adults, or older children read these books to young children, they will pick up the patterns and learn to read the books themselves."

Both books are heavily influenced by Martin Jr.'s work.

According to Jenkins, "the combination of humor, letter blends, Dr. Seuss influence, and Bill Martin Jr.'s swirling language make for a book for beginning readers that they will never forget."

Jenkins met Martin Jr. while attending one of his workshops in Los Angeles.

After they met up to grab lunch, they got to talking — and thus began a decades-long

friendship.

Now, each one of Jenkins' children's books are dedicated to Martin Jr. with the back cover of each book starting with, "Inspired by Bill Martin Jr.'s friendship and writing."

Jenkins plans to release five more books this year: "Two Weeks with Paul," "Eight Days with Thomas," "Five Years Protecting Jesus," and "Three Days With Jonah."

"They're memorable stories, but I want them to have fun while they're learning to read and just think reading is natural," Jenkins said.

All of Jenkins' books are available for purchase at Amazon, Barnes & Noble, and Walmart. They cost \$12.99 each.

**Information:** [LtoJPress.com](http://LtoJPress.com)

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the son said, 'You don't know what you have done!' Turns out his father was a music composer who loved James Taylor, and this song was the last one sitting on his dad's piano stand at home," Matt recalls.

The next evening, Matt returned with his own guitar and played gospel songs at the family's request. The patient died peacefully as Matt sang "Amazing Grace."

Nurses may never know how deeply they impact people's lives because how can we possibly measure the value of

comfort and compassion? But it definitely is more of a calling than a job. As James Taylor might say... "Winter, spring, summer or fall — all you have to do is call."

Nurses who want to bring comfort, dignity and compassionate care to our community are invited to apply at [hospiceofthevalley.org/careers](http://hospiceofthevalley.org/careers).

Home care, inpatient, admissions and telephone triage positions are available, along with flexible schedules, educational opportunities, excellent pay and benefits.

Lin Sue Cooney is director of community engagement for Hospice of the Valley.