



What is Catholic social teaching?

It has been called “Catholicism’s best kept secret,” because few people learned about Catholic social teaching growing up, even though the Bible is filled with examples, and history shows repeatedly how it has played out in every culture and every time.

This series will offer Catholic social teaching’s seven themes, as identified by the US bishops. It will include stories about how the bishops of

Tucson, dating back to their earliest days, put those basic teachings into practice. There will also be stories identifying ways that Catholics today can live out the social teaching of the church in their own lives.

On the diocesan website, *diocesetucson.org*, there is a list of the 21 most pertinent documents since Pope Leo’s benchmark encyclical, *Rerum Novarum*, was released in 1891.

Theme 7: Care for God’s Creation

We show our respect for the Creator by our stewardship of creation. Care for the earth is not just an Earth Day slogan, it is a requirement of

our faith. We are called to protect people and the planet, living our faith in relationship with all of God’s creation. This environmental challenge has fundamental moral and ethical dimensions that cannot be ignored.

For tree expert, care of creation has ring of truth

By **MICHAEL BROWN**
Managing Editor

Katie Hirschboeck was teaching a class on Global Change in 2008 at the University of Arizona and noticed that her students were becoming increasingly depressed over the dire predictions surrounding global warming and other growing environmental concerns.

“There were terrible things our planet was undergoing,” Hirschboeck said. “I had to give them hope.”

Fast forward 10 years, and Hirschboeck, now semi-retired, continues her role as an educator, not of university students, but of Catholics and members of other religious groups who share a concern about the environment.

She still is bringing a message of hope.

In early October, the UN’s Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change published a report stating that the world is only 12 years away from “climate change catastrophe.”

Hirschboeck said that the damage is so severe that “we can slow it, but we probably can’t reverse it.”

The emphasis of climate experts now is dealing with the inevitable. “What I have been saying (for) probably the last five years is that adaptation is just as important.”

Hirschboeck’s career focused on tracking large flooding events as they were recorded in tree rings. For more than a decade, she has used that science as a base for teaching the church’s position on Care for God’s Creation, the seventh theme of Catholic social teaching.



Katie Hirschboeck in her office at the University of Arizona

Catholic Outlook photo by Michael Brown

In 2011, Hirschboeck was appointed a Climate Change Ambassador, a designation by The Catholic Coalition on Climate Change.

That made her one of only 25 professionals so designated to offer educational programs on climate change. She had studied all the moral teaching from the Vatican and the US bishops and was eager to share that knowledge.

Being named a Climate Change Ambassador gave her a new opportunity for talking about her two passions – the environment

and her faith. “I had a new vehicle where I could take the science and talk about it in the context of faith.”

In 2015, Pope Francis released the encyclical *Laudato Si*, “On Care for our Common Home,” placing environmental concerns at the center of Catholic social teaching. Later that year, 195 countries, including the

United States, signed the Paris Agreement, which established a framework for reducing carbon emissions, a critical factor in global warming. However, two years later, President Donald J.

Trump withdrew the US from the agreement, citing it as an undue restriction on US business interests. Trump also disputed the overwhelming scientific evidence that human actions were responsible for global warming.

Bishop Oscar Cantu, chairman of the US bishops’ Committee on International Justice and Peace, called the president’s decision “deeply troubling.”

“The impacts of climate change are already being experienced in sea level rise, glacial melts, intensified storms and more frequent droughts.

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I can only hope that the president will propose concrete ways to address global climate change and promote environmental stewardship," Bishop Cantu's statement read.

In 2009, Catholic Climate Covenant came up with a "St. Francis Pledge" that individuals could sign to show their support for environmental protections. In 2017, the group reissued the statement, renaming it as St. Francis/Laudato Si Pledge: "I pledge to pray, live, and advocate *Laudato Si*."

On the Catholic Climate Covenant site, catholicclimatecovenant.org, the group wrote; "Now in light of Pope Francis' encyclical, which calls for urgent action on climate change and his invitation to everyone on the planet to care for our common home, we invite you to (re)commit or for the first time commit by taking the newly updated pledge."

Hirschboeck noted that groups are encouraged to read and sign a second document on the website, the US Catholic Climate Declaration. The declaration briefly lays out church teaching, concluding: "As Catholic communities, organizations and institutions in the US, we join with other institutions from across American society to ensure that the US remains a global leader in reducing emissions. We call for the administration to join the global community and return to the Paris Agreement."

Among the signatories from southern Arizona are the Diocese, the Kino Border Initiative, Nogales; Lourdes Catholic School, Nogales; Our Mother of Sorrows Parish, Tucson; and Santa Rita Abbey, Sonoita.

Hirschboeck, an OMOS parishioner and co-chairwoman



Catholic Outlook photo by Michael Brown

A tree ring segment hangs near Katie Hirschboeck's office at the University of Arizona.

of the parish's Care for Creation Initiative, said she is open to presenting a variety of seminars, workshops or retreats to parishes, schools or any interested group.

Hirschboeck said she strongly believes that Care for Creation, the seventh theme of Catholic social teaching, really encompasses all six earlier themes, especially in the light of *Laudato Si*. She started a blog, "Holy Ground, Common Ground," holygroundcommonground.blogspot.com/2018/02/blog-post.html, that among other things, made resources, such as a daily Lenten calendar, available to groups.

Her most recent program is a retreat, "There is Always Hope for a Tree." Hirschboeck shows how trees can overcome threats and survive, even if cut down. In promoting the retreat, Hirschboeck quotes St. Bernard of Clairvaux: "Trees and stones will teach you that which you can never learn from masters."

word spreads of her efforts, more parishes will want to invite her to speak. "I am always looking to make connections with other parishes."

She recently met Oscar and Diana Harper from Our Lady of Fatima Parish, Tucson, and discovered they shared a passion for care for creation and its importance to members of the Hispanic community. The Harpers translated the materials and assisted with the session she gave in that parish.

Hirschboeck cited a May 2017 study by the Yale Program on Climate Change Communication which showed that more than 80 percent of Latinos acknowledge global warming, and more than 60 percent are either "very" or "extremely" concerned.

It's not just the parishes that discuss climate issues. In 2012, Lourdes Catholic School in Nogales received a St. Francis Care for Creation Award from the National Council of Catholic Women. It was one of only five recipients nationally. The award is given to "recognize schools that put their faith into action to reduce their carbon footprint, care for the 'least of these,' and raise the Catholic voice on behalf of the environment

When Hirschboeck speaks to a group, she is encouraged to find dedicated individuals intent on following the church's teaching on the environment. "In every parish, there is somebody doing this work."

She credits this interest to media coverage of climate change. "We have terrible issues we have to deal with."

Hirschboeck is optimistic that as

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and the poor.”

The students at the pre-K through 12 school won the award for improving their three-year-old organic garden, creating banners and displays that explained water cycles and for organizing a “Council of Creatures” in which students wore animal masks and talked about the creatures they were portraying.

At Salpointe Catholic High School in Tucson in 2015, school leaders rolled out an interdisciplinary curriculum based on *Laudato Si*. That November, Salpointe representatives presented the curriculum to Carmelite leaders from around the world gathered in Rome.

Hirschboeck noted that these are all important – if incremental – steps at building awareness and understanding of this theme of Catholic social teaching. “We just have to continue to take baby steps.”

Given the polarizing political rhetoric surrounding climate change and global warming, Hirschboeck said that the church plays a unique role in the discussions. “It’s the one place where we can try to hold the middle together.”

The fact that the pope sought the input of the world’s best environmental scientists for the encyclical gave the document the grounding it needed. “Most scientists agree that there is no way we are not being affected by climate change.”

She is not surprised that people living in

wealthy countries might be fooled into believing that climate change isn’t real or isn’t as bad as some say. “That’s because we are so separated from it compared to those who live in the developing world,” said Hirschboeck. The reality is that nothing about climate change is unrelated. “Everything you touch is connected to something else.”

People are sometimes skeptical because they can’t see the change from one season to another or one year to the next. “This is really a slow-moving disaster.”

In the 1950s, ’60s and ’70s, people who were fighting for the environment seemed to be hostile to the church, and the church was generally silent about it. However, since the pontificates of St. John Paul II and Pope Benedict XVI, environmental issues have shifted into the mainstream of Catholic social teaching.

“I have seen it come to the forefront of the church,” Hirschboeck said.

History gives her reason to hope, she added. In the 1970s, a major environmental concern was the depletion of the ozone layer, which helped shield people from harmful ultraviolet rays. Legislation in 1978 in the US and other countries barred the use of chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs) – a common compound used in aerosol sprays – and eventually an international treaty was signed that banned the use of CFCs worldwide. By 2016, there were signs that the ozone layer was beginning to recover.

“That happened because industrialized nations got together and said, ‘We can make different compounds,’” Hirschboeck said. “Powerful people got together and decided to do it.”

While the most obvious impact of climate change is global warming, melting of polar caps and rising sea levels, Arizonans will also be affected. Changing weather patterns will mean fewer winter storms, and a diminished snow pack feeding the nearby water sources like lakes and aquifers, Hirschboeck said. Even if summer and fall rains increase, it won’t have the same long-range benefits that the snow packs provide.

“In the summer, the water evaporates rapidly, but the snow packs store the water and release it gradually,” she said. “Water shortage is how climate change will most likely impact us.”

Hirschboeck is resolved to continuing her education efforts, despite the Trump administration’s attempts to dismantle environmental protections and abandon reforms begun under the Paris Agreement.

“It’s because of my faith. I believe in the internal goodness of the human person,” she said. “I can guarantee you that nothing will happen if you are not hopeful.”

“We just have to listen to the earth and pay attention to where justice is calling us.”

To invite Hirschboeck to speak to your group, email hirschbo77@gmail.com.

Catholic social teaching and Tucson bishops

Bishop Gerald F. Kicanas came to the Diocese of Tucson on Oct. 30, 2001, as coadjutor bishop to Bishop Manuel D. Moreno. He became the sixth Bishop of Tucson when Bishop Moreno retired on March 7, 2003.

By the time Bishop Kicanas retired 5,320 days later, on Oct. 3, 2017, he had checked more boxes on each of the seven principles of Catholic social teaching than any of his predecessors, and equal to or greater than any other bishop of his time.

On respect for human life and dignity, he continued to promote Respect Life walks, but renewed efforts on prison ministry by establishing outreach to families with loved ones on death row.

Bishop Kicanas continued the efforts of his predecessors and went further in civic participation by building coalitions with inter-religious and ecumenical groups through the Pima County Interfaith Council and the Pima County Interfaith Civic Education Organization. That group became a wellspring of information for an underserved inner-city electorate for voter registration and education, especially for \$815 million bond referenda in 2015.

Living out the third principle, rights and responsibilities, was particularly painful as the Diocese struggled coming to terms with the clergy sex abuse scandal. Decades in the making, this crisis forced the Diocese into a bankruptcy in 2005 to provide funding to help and care for victims.

For the preferential option for the poor, Bishop

Kicanas was a lifelong advocate for immigration reform, testifying before Congress and going to the US-Mexico border to celebrate Mass in 2016.

Supporting the rights of labor, he celebrated Mass alongside farmworkers in the fields, before they started their day. His long record of service and travels abroad on behalf of Catholic Relief Services were examples of his support of global solidarity.

His work with the Vatican Observatory, especially for their fundraising efforts, was one example of his care of God’s creation.

Even after his retirement last year, now Bishop-emeritus Kicanas continued traveling on behalf of Catholic Relief Services while serving on committees for the Catholic Extension Society and the National Catholic Educational Association.

Bishop Edward J. Weisenburger has been serving as the seventh Bishop of Tucson for about a year, and has already started to make his mark aligned with Catholic social teaching.

Bishop Weisenburger spoke out strongly against gun violence following the Florida Parkland High School shootings. He has visited the international border as families were being broken up trying to enter the country. He decried the administration’s policy on immigration and visited families as they passed through Tucson to other US communities.

He celebrated Mass in local prisons and help serve meals in food lines. He has visited Native American reservations and reached out to legislators to support aid for students in need.

On Dec. 23, he turns 58 with a long future ahead.



Catholic Outlook file photo

Bishop Gerald F. Kicanas and Bishop Edward J. Weisenburger.



Para el árbol experto, el cuidado de la creación tiene anillo de verdad

Por **MICHAEL BROWN**
Director editorial

Katie Hirschboeck impartía una clase sobre el cambio global en la Universidad de Arizona en 2008 cuando se dio cuenta de que sus alumnos se sentían cada vez más deprimidos por las alarmantes predicciones sobre el calentamiento global y otras preocupaciones crecientes asociadas con el medio ambiente.



“El planeta está pasando por cosas terribles”, dijo Hirschboeck. “Yo quería darles esperanzas”.

Ahora, diez años después, Hirschboeck está parcialmente retirada pero aún es educadora, no de estudiantes universitarios, sino de católicos y miembros de otras religiones que sienten la misma inquietud sobre el medio ambiente.

Ella todavía transmite un mensaje de esperanza.

A principios de octubre, el Grupo Intergubernamental de Expertos sobre el Cambio Climático de la ONU publicó un informe en el cual afirma que el mundo está a tan solo 12 años de una “catástrofe global por el cambio climático”.

Hirschboeck dijo que el daño es tan grave que “podemos desacelerarlo, pero es probable que sea irreversible”.

Hoy los expertos en clima se concentran en hacerle frente a lo inevitable. “Desde hace cinco años venimos diciendo que la adaptación es igualmente importante”.

Hirschboeck se dedicaba al estudio de inundaciones mayores que dejaron su marca en los anillos de troncos de árboles. Durante más de una década se ha basado en esa ciencia para enseñar la postura de la Iglesia respecto al cuidado de la creación de Dios, que es el séptimo tema de la enseñanza social católica.

En 2011, Hirschboeck fue designada Embajadora de Cambio Climático por la Coalición Católica sobre el Cambio Climático; y es una de apenas 25 profesionales designados para ofrecer programas educativos sobre el tema. Ella ha estudiado todas las enseñanzas

morales del Vaticano y de los Obispos de EE. UU. y estaba ansiosa por compartir esos conocimientos.

Haber sido nombrada Embajadora de Cambio Climático le dio a Hirschboeck la oportunidad de hablar sobre sus dos pasiones, el medio ambiente y su fe. “Eso me llevó a un medio en el cual yo podía hablar de ciencia en el contexto de la fe”.

En 2015, el papa Francisco publicó la encíclica *Laudato Si*, sobre “El cuidado de nuestra casa común”, y las preocupaciones por el medio ambiente se convirtieron en un tema central de la enseñanza social católica. Más adelante ese año, 195 países, inclusive Estados Unidos, firmaron el Acuerdo de París, que establecía un marco de responsabilidades para reducir las emisiones de gases de efecto invernadero, un factor crítico del calentamiento global. No obstante, dos años después, el presidente Donald J. Trump retiró a EE. UU. del acuerdo señalando que este impondría una restricción onerosa en los intereses comerciales de EE. UU. Además, Trump disputó evidencia científica contundente de que las acciones del ser humano son responsables del calentamiento global.

El obispo Oscar Cantú, presidente del Comité para la Justicia y la Paz Internacional de la conferencia de obispos de EE. UU., calificó la decisión del presidente como “profundamente inquietante”.

“Los efectos del cambio climático ya se están viendo en la subida del nivel del mar, la pérdida de hielo en los glaciares, la intensificación de las tormentas y la creciente frecuencia de las sequías. Conservo

“

Hirschboeck afirma que el tema del Cuidado de la Creación comprende los primeros seis temas de la enseñanza social católica, especialmente bajo *Laudato Si*.”

la esperanza de que el presidente plantee propuestas concretas para enfrentar el cambio climático global y promover el cuidado del medio ambiente”, apuntó el obispo Cantú en su declaración.

En 2009, la Alianza Católica por el Clima creó la “Promesa de San Francisco” para apoyar la



Katie Hirschboeck

Catholic Outlook foto por Michael Brown

protección del medio ambiente. En 2017, el grupo volvió a difundir la iniciativa con el nombre “Promesa de San Francisco/*Laudato Si*: Me comprometo a rezar, vivir y promover *Laudato Si*”.

En el sitio web de la Alianza, catholicclimatecovenant.org, el grupo

invita también a grupos a leer y firmar un segundo documento del sitio web, la Declaración Católica de EE. UU. sobre el Clima, que brevemente describe la enseñanza de la Iglesia concluyendo: “Las comunidades, organizaciones e instituciones católicas de la nación nos unimos a otras instituciones de nuestra sociedad para que Estados Unidos continúe siendo un líder mundial en la reducción de emisiones de gases de efecto invernadero. Hacemos un llamado a la Administración para que se adhiera a la comunidad mundial reintegrándose en el Acuerdo de París”.

Entre los signatarios del sur de Arizona se cuentan la Diócesis; la Iniciativa Kino para la Frontera, Nogales; la Escuela Católica Lourdes, Nogales; la Parroquia de la Virgen Dolorosa (OMOS), Tucson; y la Abadía Santa Rita, Sonoita.

escribió: “Ahora, ante la encíclica del papa Francisco, que urge acción inmediata sobre el cambio climático, y su invitación a todos los habitantes del planeta a cuidar de nuestra casa común, los invitamos a comprometerse o renovar su compromiso a *Laudato Si*”.

Hirschboeck comentó que se

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Hirschboeck, feligresa de OMOS y copresidenta de la iniciativa parroquial para el cuidado de la creación, dijo que está dispuesta a presentar una variedad de seminarios, talleres o retiros a las parroquias, escuelas y cualquier otro grupo interesado.

Hirschboeck afirma que el tema del Cuidado de la Creación comprende los primeros seis temas de la enseñanza social católica, especialmente bajo *Laudato Si*. Ella ha creado un blog, “Holy Ground, Common Ground”, que entre otras cosas cuenta con un calendario de Cuaresma diario para grupos.

Su programa más reciente es un retiro, “Siempre hay esperanzas para un árbol”. Hirschboeck muestra cómo los árboles pueden superar amenazas y sobrevivir, aun si los talan. En su promoción del retiro, Hirschboeck cita a San Bernardo de Clairvaux: “Los árboles y las piedras te enseñarán lo que nunca aprenderías de un maestro”.

Cuando Hirschboeck hace presentaciones, le da ánimo ver que hay grupos dedicados que se esfuerzan para seguir las enseñanzas de la Iglesia sobre el medio ambiente. “En todas las parroquias hay alguien haciendo este trabajo”.

Ella atribuye ese interés a la cobertura del cambio climático en los medios de comunicación. “Hay asuntos muy difíciles que debemos afrontar”.

Hirschboeck es optimista y siente que, a medida que se van dando a conocer sus esfuerzos, más parroquias la invitarán a hacer una presentación. “Siempre estoy buscando hacer conexiones con otras parroquias”.

Recientemente conoció a Oscar y Diana Harper, de la Parroquia de Nuestra Señora de Fátima, Tucson, y descubrió que comparten la pasión por el cuidado de la creación y su importancia para los miembros de la comunidad hispana. Los Harper tradujeron el material y la ayudaron en una sesión que ella ofreció en esa parroquia.

Hirschboeck citó un estudio de mayo de 2017 conducido por el Programa de Yale para la Comunicación sobre el Cambio Climático que demuestra que más del 80 por ciento de los hispanos reconocen el calentamiento global y más del 60 por ciento están “muy” o “sumamente” preocupados.

No solo las parroquias hablan sobre el clima. En 2012, la Escuela Católica Lourdes, de Nogales, recibió el premio San Francisco al Cuidado de la Creación otorgado por el Consejo Nacional de Mujeres Católicas. Lourdes fue una de tan solo cinco escuelas premiadas en el país. El premio “reconoce a escuelas que ponen su fe en acción para reducir su huella de carbono, cuidar de ‘los más pequeños’, y alzar la voz católica en nombre del medio ambiente y de los pobres”.

Los estudiantes de Prekínder a 12o grado ganaron el premio por mejorar el huerto orgánico que tienen hace tres años, por crear carteles y muestras que explican el ciclo del agua, y por organizar un “Consejo de las criaturas” en que los estudiantes vistieron máscaras de animales y



Catholic Outlook foto por Michael Brown

La parte de tronco de árboles

hablaron sobre los animales que representaban.

En la Preparatoria Católica Salpointe de Tucson en 2015 los líderes de la escuela pusieron en práctica un currículo interdisciplinario basado en *Laudato Si*. En noviembre de ese año, representantes de Salpointe presentaron el currículo a líderes carmelitas de todo el mundo reunidos en Roma.

Hirschboeck señaló que, a pesar de ser

“**Los árboles y las piedras te enseñarán lo que nunca aprenderías de un maestro.**”

un avance gradual, esas iniciativas son pasos esenciales para crear consciencia y lograr el entendimiento de este tema que es parte de la enseñanza católica. “Tenemos que seguir adelante, paso a paso”.

Dado el carácter polarizante de la retórica política que rodea al cambio climático y el calentamiento global, Hirschboeck dijo que la Iglesia juega un rol singular en las discusiones. “Es el único lugar donde podemos encontrar un espacio común”.

El hecho de que el papa haya solicitado la opinión de los mejores científicos del mundo en materia de medio ambiente para su encíclica le dio al documento la solidez que necesitaba. “La mayoría de los científicos concuerdan que es imposible que el cambio climático no nos afecte”.

A ella no le sorprende que la gente que vive en países ricos esté engañada y piense que el cambio climático no es real, o que no es tan grave

como algunos dicen. “Eso se debe a que estamos bastante distanciados de él en comparación con las personas que viven en países en vías de desarrollo”, dijo Hirschboeck. La realidad es que nada del cambio climático es aislado. “Todo lo que uno toca está conectado con otra cosa”.

A veces la gente es escéptica porque no percibe el cambio de una estación a otra, o de un año al siguiente. “Esto es un desastre en cámara lenta”.

En las décadas de 1950, 60 y 70, la gente que abogaba por el medio ambiente parecía ser hostil a la Iglesia, y la Iglesia en general no se pronunciaba. Sin embargo, desde los pontificados de San Juan Pablo II y el papa Benedicto XVI, los temas ambientales son parte central de la enseñanza social católica.

“He visto cómo se han colocado al frente en la Iglesia”, dijo Hirschboeck.

La historia le da razón para tener esperanzas, añadió. En la década de 1970, una gran preocupación respecto al medio ambiente era el agotamiento de la capa de ozono, que protege al ser humano contra el daño de los rayos ultravioletas. Leyes aprobadas en 1978 en EE. UU. y en otros países prohibieron el uso de clorofluorocarbonos (CFC) –un compuesto común usado en aerosoles– y al poco tiempo se firmó un tratado internacional que prohibió el uso de CFC en todo el mundo. Para el año 2016 ya había señales de que la capa de ozono estaba empezando a recuperarse.

“Eso sucedió porque las naciones industrializadas se unieron y dijeron “Podemos elaborar otros compuestos”, dijo Hirschboeck. “La gente que tiene poder se unió y decidieron hacerlo”.

Si bien el impacto más obvio del cambio climático es el calentamiento global, el derretimiento de los casquetes polares y el aumento del nivel del mar afectarán a los habitantes de Arizona. Con patrones meteorológicos cambiantes, habrá menos tormentas de invierno, y la acumulación de nieve que alimenta las fuentes de agua, como lagos y acuíferos, se verá disminuida, dijo Hirschboeck. Aunque las lluvias de verano y otoño aumenten, no contaremos con los beneficios a largo plazo que la acumulación de nieve provee.

“En el verano, el agua se evapora rápidamente, pero el agua de la nieve acumulada se libera de forma gradual”, dijo. “La escasez de agua es el impacto más probable que el cambio climático tendrá para nosotros”.

Hirschboeck está resuelta a continuar su campaña de educación, a pesar de la tendencia nacional a dismantelar las protecciones del medio ambiente y a abandonar las reformas iniciadas en el Acuerdo de París.

“Es por mi fe. Yo creo en la bondad intrínseca del ser humano”, dijo. “Les puedo garantizar que no se logrará nada si no tienen esperanzas”.

“Tenemos que escuchar a la tierra y prestar atención a dónde nos llama la justicia”.

Para invitar a Hirschboeck a una charla con su grupo, envíe un email a hirschbo77@gmail.com.



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**En la Diócesis
de Tucson, ¿cuál
es el futuro del V
Encuentro?**

— *ver pagina 17*

Nacimiento

A scene from Maria Louisa Tena's famous Nacimiento display now open to the public at the Tucson Museum of Art. For more information on the display and the significance of Nacimientos, see page 11.



Photo courtesy of The Arizona Daily Star Jill Torrance

Tucson Knights feed refugee families in distress — See page 5