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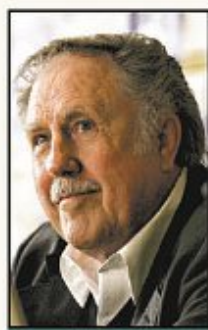
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12 PEOPLE TO WATCH IN

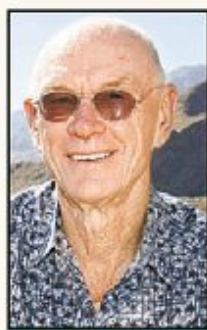
2012



LARRY THIEL



HELENE GALEN



JOHN WESSMAN



DARRYL ADAMS



GLORIA RODRIGUEZ



TANNER RAHIER

Valley residents who will make a difference in politics, culture, business and philanthropy

By Erica Felci
The Desert Sun

Even the Coachella Valley's most hardened cynics are bound to feel optimistic today. The simple act of turning the calendar provides a chance to reflect on the hurdles that were overcome in 2011 and an opportunity to ponder the possibilities that 2012 brings.

The desert is certainly poised to experience a monumental year. The long-awaited economic rebound is starting to trickle down to the average person. The valley's most notable sporting and entertainment events are unveiling sweeping changes. And national elections will inevitably inspire more civic involvement locally.

A group of Desert Sun editors and reporters identified 12 people who will likely make headlines as 2012 unfolds.

The diverse list includes old and new faces, people expected them to have a big impact on politics, business, philanthropy and arts and culture this year.

Please see 2012, A12



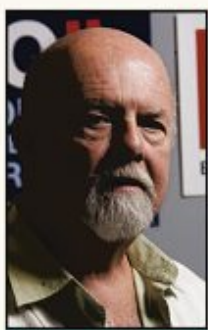
KATHY DEROSA



JOE WALLACE



MARY BONO MACK



GEORGE ZANDER



JASON DIBLER



TANYA PETROVNA

Foreign infusion spices up U.S. movie industry

By Bruce Fessier
The Desert Sun

Globalization has hit the local cineplexes.

Europe has influenced Hollywood since Charlie Chaplin was making silent films. But now filmmakers from all over the globe are putting their fingerprints on American cinema.

The result is a re-examination of the traditional cinematic vocabulary, such as linear storytelling with pat resolutions to conflict.

"There's been a great leap forward in terms of what's going on in the cinema," said Darryl Macdonald, executive director of the Palm Springs International Film Festival. "You have a new movement emerging."

The Palm Springs International Film Festival, which launches Thursday with 187 films from 73 countries, has sought emerging filmmakers from around the world throughout its 23-year history. But mainstream organizations are now bestowing awards on films with non-traditional stories and filmmaking styles.

"There are two elements keying into that," said festival artistic director Helen du Toit. "One is that the world is becoming a more global place. There's a major cultural clash going on in countries that we're seeing play out in the news and on the streets."

"The other key thing is that with the media being more immediately accessible to everybody — because the equipment is cheaper — everybody can tell their story. So there's more competition and people are savvier."

Steven Gaydos, executive editor of the trade publication Variety, notes that an Iranian film screening Saturday in Palm Springs is winning honors for its story set against the Arab Spring protest movement.

"The Los Angeles Film Critics (Association) just gave 'A Separation' its screenplay of the year award," Gaydos said. "Not foreign film. The best-written movie of the year. Now, if the L.A. Film Critics are picking up that a little Iranian film has better writing than any American film this year, to me that's a signal of something."

Macdonald, who has been running film festivals since co-founding Seattle's international event in 1976, says the changes in the way stories are being told could also compare to past great advances in film history.

"Think back to the early days when simply showing motion on screen was enough to blow people away," he said in an interview echoing his welcome in the film

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GOOD MORNING

Dude, where's my car?

79° 52°

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Bridge E4 Movies E2
Crossword E4 Obituaries B4-B6
Jumble E4 Opinion B7-B9
Ken Ken E4 Weather D6



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INSIDE TODAY'S PAPER

LOOKING BACK

Denise Goolsby, former owner of a hotel once known as the Bee Chamer Inn, shares memories at yard sale. B1

HEAT OF THE NIGHT

Hollywood residents are on edge as an arsonist strikes Los Angeles on New Year's Eve. A7

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Pougnet



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Perez



Flavin



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Zellerbach



Spencer



Costello



Burk

Many lived up to 2011 expectations

By Erica Felci

The Desert Sun

Compiling this year's list of people to watch in 2012 sparked an interesting question:

What happened to the 11 people who were expected to make news in 2011?

Cathedral City boxer **Timothy Bradley** had a memorable year.

He regained the WBC belt in a January bout, was declared a champion in recess and changed promoters.

The reigning WBO light welterweight champ ended the year with a technical knock-out victory and is now one of two fighters being seriously considered to fight superstar Manny Pacquiao.

Palm Springs Mayor **Steve Pougnet** couldn't stay out of the headlines last year.

The Democrat ended a years-long feud with developer John Wessman by brokering a public-private partnership to revive the Desert Fashion Plaza, then successfully campaigned for a tax hike that will help finance downtown's revitalization.

In between, Pougnet also secured his own re-election.

Morongo Band of Mission Indians tribal chairman **Robert Martin** kept advocating for the state and federal legalization of online gaming — but lawmakers haven't yet been convinced it's a safe bet.

One of those lawmakers Martin's been trying to convince is Rep.

Mary Bono Mack, a Palm Springs Republican who began getting national attention for leading the House's Subcommittee on Commerce, Manufacturing and Trade.

That continuing effort secured Bono Mack a spot on this year's people to watch list as well.

Last year's list identified state Assemblyman **V. Manuel Pérez** and Coachella Valley Economic Partnership CEO **Thomas Flavin** as key players in the effort to boost the local economy.

Neither unveiled a sweeping job creation plan, but both fought state plans to eliminate redevelopment agencies and enterprise zones.

Despite some residual tension from the 2010 elections, Palm Desert Councilwoman **Jan Harnik**

showed she wasn't afraid to take a stand.

Harnik was a vocal supporter of the Rosewood Hotel project, and was part of the council majority that approved the controversial development with a 3-2 vote in September.

Two Riverside County departments that couldn't stay out of the headlines in 2010 finally showed some stability in 2011.

That was thanks to the leadership of **Paul Zellerbach**, who took the reins of the district attorney's office; and **Rebecca Spencer**, who temporarily spearheaded the elections office before becoming a chief deputy to new Registrar of Voters Kari Verjil.

Local fashion designer **Michael**

Costello opened a showroom in L.A.'s garment district and began attracting a celebrity clientele.

Costello is also returning to television when "Project Runway All-Stars" debuts this Thursday.

Television didn't open as many doors for **Mark Burk**, the former golf pro who was living on Coachella Valley's streets when he was profiled in the Golf Channel's "Pipe Dream."

But Burk hasn't given up hope:

Now living in Newcastle, Calif., in a recreational vehicle, Burk recently told The Sacramento Bee that he's working on a sequel series, "Dream Chaser."

Erica Felci is a reporter for The Desert Sun. She can be reached at erica.felci@thedesertsun.com.

2012

Continued from A1

Larry Thiel

The chairman of the desert's PGA Tour event is helping transform the former Bob Hope Classic into the Humana Challenge.

This is far more than a change of name.

The 52-year-old tournament has always been a source of local pride, and countless community groups have benefited from the money raised by its sponsors and patrons.

The new, eight-year partnership between the golf tournament, the Kentucky-based health care giant and former president Bill Clinton's foundation will bring with it intense pressures from national interests.

"We've got to be the luckiest people in professional golf to have this relationship," Thiel said about the tournament's new players.

We'll find out later this month if the confluence of professional golf, a health-care conglomerate and a former president inveighing against childhood obesity can succeed.

Helene Galen

The desert lost some of its most generous philanthropists last year.

But thanks to people like Helene Galen, the desert's generous spirit lives on.

"All I ever wanted to do was be where I was needed," Galen has said.

That seems to be everywhere. A part-time desert resident since 1980, Galen has been a major sponsor of the Palm Springs International Film Festival, Palm Springs Art Museum and the Barbara Sinatra Children's Center.

Just last month, she helped underwrite the costs of a holiday lunch for local Marines and veterans.

Her peers honored her in 2011 as the valley's Philanthropist of the Year.

And starting with the art museum gala in February, we anticipate she'll continue supporting a number of deserving causes — and getting others to do the same.

John Wessman

Developer John Wessman was the recipient of a different kind of financial gift.

Palm Springs taxpayers in November agreed to pay higher sales taxes for 25 years in order to generate about \$200 million for improvement projects throughout the city.

A big chunk, \$43 million, is going to help Wessman turn his empty Desert Fashion Plaza into an entertainment and shopping destination that will help pull up the rest of downtown.

The first bulldozers should be rolling down Palm Canyon Drive this month.

But Wessman won't just be trying to keep construction on schedule. He'll be out to prove to the community that theirs was a worthwhile investment.

And now that he's partners with every taxpayer in town, he'll have to learn to smile graciously and nod as other "experts" weigh in on his design choices and tenant mix.

Darryl Adams

Coachella Valley Unified Superintendent Darryl Adams has brought refreshing optimism to a district that's been riven by administrative upheaval.

When his own school board was split on whether to move him from interim to permanent superintendent, Adams pledged to unify the district.

When California announced \$1 billion in midyear cuts to schools and social services, Adams said he would fight to protect rural and poorer districts from a disproportionate amount of cuts.

And at a time when many of his students' parents are struggling to make ends meet, Adams unveiled a two-year plan to get every student a mobile device to use at school and home.

It sounds like that's just the beginning.

"For those I have not convinced I am the right person, I will work very, very hard to convince you of that, and I will do it with a smile," Adams has said.

Gloria Margarita Rodriguez

Gloria Margarita Rodriguez is also helping shape the desert's next generation.

As the executive director of the Reynaldo J. Carreon M.D. Foundation, Margarita Rodriguez is helping expand the educational opportunities for Mexican-American youth throughout the Coachella Valley.

The group handed out \$100,000 in scholarships last year and will be distributing more to deserving high school students this year, as well.

Margarita Rodriguez will be spending much of 2012 making sure local teens' community involvement expands beyond the classroom.

The former television journalist is also running the media startup "Coachella Unincorporated" to encourage teens to tell stories from their own communities.

Tanner Rahier

If you don't know the name Tanner Rahier yet, you will by June.

The Palm Desert High School senior is considered one of the best shortstop prospects in Major League Baseball's 2012 draft.

The question isn't whether Rahier will get picked up by a professional team, but whether he will go in the first or second round.

Rahier already has a backup plan:

In November, the 6-foot-1, 205-pound shortstop from Indian Wells signed a letter of intent to play baseball at the University of San Diego.

Kathy DeRosa

Cathedral City Mayor Kathy DeRosa has just retired from her position with Southern California Edison and she plans to use her "found" time to lead the city in its economic development efforts.



Helene Thiel is hugged by a friend after receiving the Outstanding Philanthropist award during the National Philanthropy Day awards luncheon on Nov. 16. Her commitment to valley causes makes her an individual to watch in 2012. JAY CALDERON/THE DESERT SUN



George Zander, regional field manager for Equality California and a person to watch in 2012, rides in the back of a convertible during the Nov. 6 Greater Palm Springs Pride 2011 Pride Parade. CRYSTAL CHATHAM/THE DESERT SUN

Cathedral City, like all local communities, is hoping the rebounding economy will translate into more businesses and more local sales-tax revenue.

To attract them, the city last year launched a \$141,000 marketing campaign that's supposed to re-brand the city and take it out of the shadows of internationally known neighbor Palm Springs.

While they boost the city's core, officials are also looking to expand its borders north of Interstate 10 by incorporating Thousand Palms.

DeRosa — with newly freed-up hours in her workday — is likely to be at the center of many of these efforts.

Joe Wallace

Cathedral City isn't the only desert community hoping to court new businesses in 2012.

Enter Joe Wallace.

The entrepreneur and venture capitalist from Indiana has been tapped to lead the Coachella Valley iHub.

Until now, the iHub has been a little-understood concept.

It's one of six Innovation Hubs designated by the state, and it is supposed to be a way to attract and grow green businesses.

Wallace starts the job next week, and local officials are hoping he'll bring the desert some of the successes he brought Evansville, Ind., when he spearheaded a business incubator there.

"Knowing the type of people in California and the ambition of Cal-

ifornians, it's going to be easier for me to find good people to work with to create wealth," Wallace said.

Mary Bono Mack

Last year saw the profile of Rep. Mary Bono Mack significantly raised as she took over as chairwoman of the House Subcommittee on Commerce, Manufacturing and Trade.

That role puts the Palm Springs Republican in a plum position in 2012, tackling the federal online gambling legislation and Internet privacy issues.

With political brinksmanship the new normal in Washington, and in a presidential election year, Bono Mack will have to try to satisfy the increasingly rigid demands of her party while appealing to Democrats as a voice of moderation.

Her work in Washington comes while she juggles her own re-election campaign and her husband's run for the U.S. Senate in Florida.

If she and Connie Mack are successful in their 2012 campaigns, they'll make history as the first husband-wife team to serve together in both chambers of Congress.

George Zander

As the regional field manager for Equality California, George Zander is on an education campaign he hopes will make people more understanding of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender issues.

California last year passed the Fair, Accurate, Inclusive and Respectful Education Act, ensuring that social studies and history lessons include the contributions LGBT leaders made.

If conservative groups try again to repeal the law, Zander would be part of Equality California's statewide push to preserve it.

Zander would also orchestrate and lead the local voter outreach effort if a 2012 ballot measure tries to legalize same-sex marriage.

Meanwhile, he's tackling less controversial issues by using events such as Palm Springs' VillageFest and the Riverside County Fair and National Date Festival as opportunities to talk with high schoolers about bullying.

"As the LGBT civil rights movement becomes a universal civil

rights movement it affects everybody," Zander said.

Jason Dibler

The Ace Hotel and Swim Club in Palm Springs has earned a national reputation as a go-to spot for Southern California hipsters.

With the technicolor Saguro Hotel opening up just down Palm Canyon Drive, Ace general manager Jason Dibler will be working to keep his hotel cool and fresh for locals and visitors.

After all, Saguro isn't being billed as just any new resort. The CEO of New York-based Sydel Group Ltd. has touted it as a "wonderful complement" to the Ace.

Sydel certainly knows the formula: Some of the founders of Saguro's parent company were involved in the development and construction of Palm Springs' Ace, which is now owned and operated by Ace Group International.

Dibler credits the Ace's success to the unique mix of DJ music, area artists and local farmers that are featured at the hotel's bar, roadside diner and weekend pool parties.

And he's keeping his 2012 plans close to the vest.

"We'll keep building on what we have and adding surprises," Dibler told The Desert Sun by email.

"We have some super secret stuff in the works for Coachella. We'll have new and familiar faces around, and we're excited to just keep making new friends and trying new things."

Tanya Petrovna

Local chef Tanya Petrovna is all about trying new things.

She founded her first Native Foods Café in Palm Springs in 1994 — long before vegan restaurants were widely accepted by the general public — and her food developed a fan base even among meat eaters.

In 2011, Native Foods expanded its influence outside of California by opening restaurants in Chicago and Portland, Ore.

And that's just the beginning: Petrovna and her Native Foods team plans to have 50 restaurants open within a few years.

"We're attempting to go national, and it's working," Petrovna said.

Erica Felci can be reached at erica.felci@thedesertsun.com.