Hidden Benefits, Space Art, Peanut Butter Payments: Our Top Stories in 2018

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With more than 15,000 staff and faculty members doing interesting work on and off campus, the University of Arizona has no shortage of fascinating stories to tell.

Throughout 2018, Lo Que Pasa readers found out how to make the most of their CatCards, assessed their work environments for opportunities to improve health and wellness, took a moment to breathe on Mondays and learned the true meaning of "lifelong scholarship" from three dedicated anthropology professors.

Here are the most popular stories of 2018.

No. 1: [Employee Benefits You Might Not Know About](#)

Working at the University of Arizona has its perks? even beyond the standard benefits package. There are a number of services and benefits UA employees can access by using their CatCard or UA email address. Among those we shared in this story were the UA community’s "very own 'Geek Squad' [2]," full access to [Adobe Creative Cloud](#) [3] and the [Cat Wheels](#) [4] bike sharing program.

No. 2: [Decades Past Retirement, UA Anthropology 'Giants' Still at Work](#)

For many, retirement marks a time to kick back and relax? perhaps spend some more time on the golf course. This could not be further from the truth for three retired University of Arizona anthropology professors who, several years after their official retirement dates, remain actively engaged and deeply respected members of the UA community. Ray Thompson, Vance Haynes and Art Jelinek? all nearing or above 90 years of age? continue to contribute to UA research, scholarship and institutional memory. All three said they felt a strong sense of responsibility? to their field and their colleagues? to keep going with what they started at the University.

No. 3: [Black on Black on Black: OSIRIS-REx Graphic Designer Melds Science and Art in 'Stunning' Illustrations](#)

Heather Roper is a UA alumna and graphic designer who tells the story of NASA’s OSIRIS-REx spacecraft through scientifically accurate images and illustrations. Thanks to Roper’s talents, we have been able to take part in the spacecraft’s adventures as it journeyed to its destination, a near-Earth asteroid named Bennu.

No. 4: [Paying Parking Tickets With Peanut Butter](#)

For nearly two weeks in late April and early May, more than 100 citations issued by Parking &
Transportation Services were settled with a sticky currency: peanut butter. As part of a PTS campaign benefiting the Campus Pantry [8], those who received citations for certain parking and moving violations were able to have the fines waived by donating jars of peanut butter. The campaign brought in nearly 500 pounds of peanut butter.

No. 5: **Standing, Stretching and Soaking Up Sun: Healthy Office Habits Make a Major Difference** [9]

Over the last two decades, an emerging field of research has looked into how traditional office settings impact health and well-being. While the specific goals and methodologies of these studies have differed, the general conclusions are similar: Traditional office environments have a dramatic impact on a person’s health. "Most people spend up to one-third of their weekdays at their places of employment, but we've found that the vast majority of these people aren't aware of the stress responses that are related to their work environment and physical activity," said Esther Sternberg, professor of medicine and psychology and director of research at the UA Center for Integrative Medicine.

No. 6: **Feeling Frazzled? Find Your Center at Meditation Mondays** [10]

Leslie Langbert, executive director of the UA Center for Compassion Studies [11], explained how this weekly program — geared toward UA employees but open to anyone — can help combat the stressors that come around the end of the semester/year. The guided sessions are open to meditators of all experience levels, and Langbert said she hopes they inspire people to turn to meditation to manage anxiety and stress.

No. 7: **Diverse Group of Fellows Picked for Academic Leadership Institute** [12]

Now in its ninth year, the Academic Leadership Institute provides a yearlong professional development for UA employees identified as emerging leaders. This year’s cohort includes academic and administrative department heads, assistant and associate deans, center directors, and others from a variety of campus units, including the Office of Admissions, the Financial Services Office, the School of Art, the Department of Geosciences and Arizona Public Media.

No. 8: **Picking the UA: Reflections From a Dean and Her Freshman Daughter** [13]

In this guest column, Kasey Urquidez — dean of undergraduate admissions — reflected on what it’s like to be a Wildcat mom. Her daughter, Maricela, explained how her search for the right college led her to a surprising destination.

No. 9: **7 Tips for Writing a Winning Letter of Reference** [14]

Soon after the 2018 Commencement festivities, the UA’s 5,900 newly minted graduates started looking ahead to the next step, whether it was graduate school, an internship, a new job or some other adventure. Knowing that employees would be enlisted in writing reference letters for new grads, we spoke to Mary Frances Kuper, associate director of career education in Student Engagement and Career Development, to get tips for writing letters to accompany applications for academic programs, scholarships or jobs.

Cancer is expected to surpass cardiovascular disease as the leading cause of death in Arizona within the next 20 years. While exemplary treatments are available and new immunotherapies hold promise for curing the disease, prevention of cancer is the ultimate goal. In this article, Cynthia A. Thomson, Distinguished Professor in the Mel and Enid Zuckerman College of Public Health, discussed three easy-to-swallow tips for changing your cancer risk through dietary choices.

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