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Jackie Meck's Legacy: Growth with Purpose

For decades, Jackie Meck has stood at the intersection of growth and conservation—helping transform Buckeye while ensuring its defining landscapes endure.

Known by many simply as "Mayor Jackie," Meck helped guide Buckeye from a small agricultural community into one of the fastest-growing cities in the nation. His legacy extends beyond roads and economic development, directly influencing how current growth respects land and community values, ensuring that conservation remains integral to regional progress.

Meck's connection to Buckeye runs generations deep. Raised in Buckeye, he developed an early appreciation for the Sonoran Desert, open spaces, and Arizona's western heritage. That perspective shaped his leadership style and his long-term vision for the region.

During his years as Buckeye mayor, first from 1972 to 1975 and again from 2008 to 2020, Meck became known for his practical, relationship-driven approach. He championed infrastructure, economic opportunity, and regional collaboration during a period of extraordinary growth. Roads expanded, businesses opened, and families increasingly looked westward for opportunity, affordability, and quality of life.

But even as Buckeye grew, Meck remained focused on maintaining the character that made the West Valley special.

That long-held belief in balancing growth with conservation led Meck to one of his most enduring contributions beyond public office: the founding of the White Tank Mountains Conservancy.

The White Tank Mountains are one of the West Valley's most recognizable natural landmarks. Rising along the western edge of the Phoenix metropolitan area, the range serves as both a recreational destination and an ecological stronghold within the Sonoran Desert. The mountains take their name from natural depressions carved into light-colored granite rock that collect and store rainwater. Early travelers and settlers referred to these water-holding basins as the "white tanks."

Today, the White Tank Mountains provide critical habitat for 590 animal species and 650 plant species within this fragile desert ecosystem, shaped over thousands of years.

As growth continues moving westward, the White Tanks represent something many residents deeply value: open space, natural beauty, wildlife, and a lasting connection to Arizona's desert heritage.

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That understanding became central to Meck's conservation work. He recognized that development would continue but believed it should be guided thoughtfully. Protecting wildlife corridors, natural landscapes, and public access to the mountains would be essential to maintaining the West Valley's quality of life now and for generations to come.

Established in 2014 to protect and preserve the White Tank Mountains and surrounding desert landscape, the White Tank Mountains Conservancy (WTMC) focuses on inspiring all to learn about, protect, connect, and act to conserve, sustain, and enjoy the White Tank Mountains. Under Meck's leadership and vision, the organization has become a growing voice for balancing development with stewardship in one of Arizona's fastest-changing regions.

As WTMC's core program, the Connectivity Initiative (CI) establishes collaborations with landowners and land-use decision-makers in the mountains to educate them on incorporating conservation into their land-use plans. Since 2016, the CI has achieved significant results, as reflected in WTMC's Story Map and Conceptual Linkage Report. These resources provide the history, the data, and research that have guided WTMC, its collaborations, the partners involved, and the identification of wildlife linkages.

Community engagement efforts include monthly trash pick-ups, invasive plant species removals (Desert Defenders), and its Youth to Mountains and Classroom Adventure, which educates K-12 students about science, nature, and conservation. Last year alone, these programs reached 2,600 students.

WTMC's goals reflect a core value Jackie Meck has championed: that conservation guides responsible progress, inspiring respect and shared responsibility in the community.

For many in the West Valley, the White Tank Mountains are more than scenery. They are part of the region's identity, history, and future.

Today, even after stepping away from elected office, Meck remains a dedicated community advocate and regional leader, inspiring pride and a sense of shared purpose among West Valley residents.

His impact continues to influence discussions on sustainability and responsible development, inspiring the community to carry forward his vision for the region's future.

In many ways, Jackie Meck helped shape what the West Valley has become. More importantly, he continues to be a voice in what is next.

As the West Valley continues to grow, Meck's example offers a clear path forward: progress shaped not just by ambition, but by responsibility.