



north central news

the voice of the north central phoenix community since 1999

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Day care provides safe, fun activity for elders

By Trudy Thompson Shumaker

Caring for a loved one who is not safe at home alone is exhausting. Just ask Diane (no last name to protect her husband's privacy), whose husband is increasingly frail and often confused. The one-time CEO of a global company is the "love of my life, but he is wearing me out," said his wife of 50 years. She is an RN and said, "I need to work and I want to work, to keep my sanity. But I can't leave him alone."

Diane spoke with a North Central neighbor and learned about Desert Mission Adult Day Health Care at the HonorHealth John C. Lincoln Medical Center campus – and called to set up a visit.

"I want him to live at home with his family, but we are needing some help," she said.

Adult day care was a novel concept back in the mid-80s, when it was set up to offer respite care to employees' family members. It was so successful that John C. Lincoln Hospital (now HonorHealth) leadership expanded its mission to offer care to the community, and it was the first state-licensed adult day care program in Arizona.

Since then, its staff and volunteers have offered respite care to hundreds of participants so their caregivers can take care of themselves as well as their loved ones as they live longer and want or need to stay in their own homes.

please see DAY CARE on page 8



The Norton Vista Neighborhood Association brings neighbors together for events – like this personal protection workshop, movies in the park and the annual 13th Street Trick-or-Treat – that help create a safer, stronger and healthier community (submitted photo).

From indifference toward collective care

By Kathryn M. Miller

Lives are busy and hectic cities can lead to a sense of isolation. And while many see the issues that negatively impact their neighborhoods, they may ask, "What can one person do about it?" and move on. The argument can be made, however, that by joining with others, residents can not only address those issues, but find community as well.

Community is about more than just proximity – it is about what people create in that shared space; it is about connection and concern for a broader well-being. That requires trust, and neighborhood organizations can be that jumping-off point.

"We provide a platform for sharing perspectives, grounding conversations in facts, and turning concern into informed action," said Stacia Hurst, founder of PHX LUV. "When people feel heard and informed, disengagement fades. Apathy gives way to curiosity. Division softens when neighbors are given the opportunity to learn from one another and focus on

shared truths rather than assumptions. Neighborhood organizations help fight apathy and bridge division by creating trusted spaces where people can speak, listen, and learn together."

PHX LUV is a neighborhood organization, founded on Valentine's Day in 2019, that serves the area of North 7th Street to North 12th Street, East Cochise Drive to East Mountain View Road. It is comprised of neighbors who "wish to promote the exchange of resources and information that deters crime and secures the community through the development of partnerships with fellow neighborhood

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COMMUNITY

From the Editor

As I write this, I am still reflecting on the legacy of Martin Luther King Jr., whose birthday was recognized on Jan. 19. Among the many quotes attributed to him making the rounds that day, this one resonated with this month's cover story: "If I cannot do great things, I can do small things in a great way."



For the story, we reached out to the various neighborhood groups in the North Central area and asked about their wins and challenges in 2025 and what projects they are working on in 2026. Despite a broad diversity of people in these neighborhoods, the leaders who responded all expressed a similar sentiment in describing their work. Stacia Hurst, founder of PHX LUV,

summed up this way, "Different backgrounds, experiences, ages and perspectives come together around a shared goal: caring for the place we call home." Small actions add up and can generate big changes. Something as basic as picking up trash in your neighborhood can help instill a sense of pride – others will take notice and join your efforts. We will feature more from our North Central neighborhood organizations in our March issue. Also, this month, you will find more news from our North Central neighbors, businesses and schools, along with places to eat and drink, our adorable pet of the month, and a wide variety of things to do in Phoenix. Finally, we encourage you to reach out if there is a great North Central story that you feel needs told. In the meantime, we hope you enjoy our February issue. Until next month, all my best, Kathryn M. Miller Editor, North Central News

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The 2026 Historic Willo Home Tour in Downtown Phoenix will offer the opportunity to explore 12 unique homes representing a variety of architectural styles and even a historic firehouse museum (photo courtesy of Willo Neighborhood Association).

Explore Willo at home tour event

Residents are invited to the Historic Willo Neighborhood on Sunday, Feb. 15, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., for an opportunity to travel back in time. The 37th Annual Historic Willo Home Tour will offer guests a chance to visit the interiors of more than a dozen unique homes representing a variety of architectural styles and a historic firehouse museum.

Located between Thomas and McDowell roads from 1st to 7th avenues, Willo was one of the first historic suburbs to rise from undeveloped agricultural land in the 1920s, organizers said.

“One of Phoenix’s oldest and most beautiful neighborhoods, Willo is now part of the core of Central Phoenix with all the amenities, culture and community the area has to offer,” the Willo Neighborhood Association said. “Visit us, stroll along our palm-lined streets and soak up the rich history of Phoenix’s past. The Willo neighbors, a tight-knit, supportive community, are eager to welcome and show you around.”

The event has a nationwide presence, with visitors traveling from several states to enjoy the historic charm and preservation efforts of the Willo Neighborhood in Downtown Phoenix. In addition to the tour, a Street Fair will feature over 150 local vendors offering hand-crafted goods, jewelry, antiques, local artwork, a classic car show and a selection of food trucks. There will also be live entertainment throughout the day with local Arizona musicians at both the main stage and at every home on tour.

Trolleys will circulate the streets of Willo, making it easy for guests to visit the homes. The event also includes a Saturday night Twilight Tour, Feb. 14, from 4 to 7 p.m. Willo Home Tour tickets are \$30 and can be purchased at www.willophx.com or on site at 301 W. Holly. More information can be found on the Willo Neighborhood Events Facebook page: www.facebook.com/willoneighborhoodevents.

Head to Melrose for annual Street Fair

The annual M7 (Melrose on 7th Avenue) Street Fair has been changed from the first Saturday in March to the last Saturday in February. Held for more than 20 years and hosted by the Seventh Avenue Merchants Association, the 2026 event is scheduled for Feb. 28, from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m.

This annual one-day event spans more than a half mile in the heart of Phoenix’s Melrose District on 7th Avenue from Indian School to Campbell Avenue. The event is free to the public and features over 200 local and independent artisans, food trucks, live musicians, a farmer’s market, a kids zone, a craft beer garden and all the local businesses along 7th Avenue.

Attendees also can enjoy the ever-popular Classic Car Show (formerly Chester’s Classic Car Show) that welcomes over 100 classic, antique and vintage cars, trucks and hot rods. Best yet, the event is dog friendly.

For information, visit www.seventhavenuemerchantsassociation.com/events-on-melrose.



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By Mark Jacobson
Lasting Impressions Owner

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COMMUNITY

COLLECTIVE continued from page 1

organizations and city departments,” Hurst said. And it is just one of more than 600 neighborhood organizations registered with the City of Phoenix Neighborhood Services Department that can be found online, along with other resources, at www.phoenix.gov/administration/departments/nsd/get-involved.html.

“LUV is an acronym for leadership, unity, volunteerism,” she added. “We build community through public safety, art, and civic engagement. Our neighborhood was originally a block watch formed in 2008; what began as a traditional block watch has grown into a people-powered network focused on crime prevention, environmental stewardship, neighborhood pride, and civic engagement.”

The group meets quarterly at North Mountain Visitors Center or Sunnyslope Village Alliance – meeting dates are posted online at www.phxluv.com/blockwatch.

In the past year, PHX LUV focused on visible, hands-on wins that improved safety and strengthened community ties, including organizing neighborhood cleanups in streets, alleys, washes, and along North Mountain Park; supporting crime prevention through education, reporting coordination, and neighbor awareness; and hosting and supporting community events that brought residents together outdoors.

The group is comprised of diverse neighbors who share at least one thing in common: they care deeply about where they live.

“What makes Sunnyslope special isn’t just the landscape, it’s the people who refuse to give up on it. This is a neighborhood where artists live next to

hikers, where families live next to elders, where history and possibility overlap,” Hurst said. “PHX LUV exists to protect that balance. The work isn’t flashy. It’s steady. It’s neighbor checking in on neighbor. It’s endless meetings/projects/updates, and all the things...to make sure public spaces feel cared for, because when places feel cared for, people feel safer.”

Another Sunnyslope group working to create a safer, stronger and healthier community is the Norton Vista Neighborhood Association. Founded in 2018, their boundaries run from Mountain View Road to Dunlap Avenue and Cave Creek Road to 14th Street.

They achieve their goals by fostering neighborhood unity said group coordinator Lily Williams, “Our neighborhood is a microcosm of Sunnyslope with every socioeconomic demographic represented in our small area.”

They hold quarterly meetings at either Norton Park or Sunnyslope Community Center. In between those meetings, last year they established the Sunnyslope Lane Block Watch in the area.

“This group will focus on crime prevention along 11th Street from Dunlap to Hatcher,” Williams said.

Williams said they also host community events throughout the year, “Our July 2025 Bounce Break Roller Skate event at Norton Park, featuring Team USA break dancer Gravity and pop-up skating company ZoniGirls, was a great success in activating Norton Park on a hot summer evening. We also were awarded a grant for the installation of a sensory playground at Norton Park.”

Returning this year is their signature 13th Street Trick-or-Treat, held every Halloween for the past five years, with 13th Street from Hatcher to Dunlap

blocked to motor vehicles. They also will continue a neighborhood beautification initiative, Planting Progress, as well as create a youth/family initiative to promote civic responsibility.

Williams said that one of the most critical issues the neighborhood faces right now is rampant drug use/intoxication and the associated nuisance and criminal behaviors. And in addition to access to more grant funds, the group would like to connect with more neighbors.

“We need increased and consistent engagement from neighbors to patrol, report and document incidents, and hands-on labor to improve our neighborhood street by street,” she said.

Neighbors can get involved by emailing nortonvista85020@gmail.com, or following on Instagram: @nortonvista.

The Arizona Biltmore Neighborhood Association, whose boundaries run from 24th to 32nd Street, Camelback Road to Lincoln Drive, was founded in 2019 with a mission to protect and enhance the residential character of the historic neighborhood.

“The Biltmore neighborhood is one of the most historic and well-preserved neighborhoods in our region,” said executive director Rana Lashgari. “As an organization, we are focused on our homeowners. Our association aims to strengthen our community by providing opportunities for neighbors to connect with neighbors, interact with city leaders and advocate on behalf of our unique neighborhood,”

While there were a few significant developments on Camelback, Lashgari said that they had a relatively quiet year in the neighborhood, but they will continue to keep members informed on issues that impact the area. One devel-

opment they are watching is case number Z-44-25, which proposes 203 new luxury mid-rise homes at 24th Street and Arizona Biltmore Circle.

“Our role is to make sure neighbors are informed about the project and the public hearing process at the city,” Lashgari said. “The most important thing is developing a civically engaged neighborhood so our residents feel their voice matters.”

She added that meet-and-greet events for candidates running for office will continue in 2026. Residents who would like to connect with the group can visit www.azbna.com.

Throughout 2026, the volunteers who run neighborhood groups across the city will continue putting in the work to create stronger communities, and they invite others to join them.

“Neighborhood organizations don’t just amplify voices, they build understanding,” Hurst said. “By centering facts, encouraging dialogue, and welcoming participation, they help communities move from isolation toward connection, and from indifference toward collective care. When we know one another, we care for one another. And from that care, community takes root.”

Residents who would like to find an organization in their neighborhood – or perhaps organize one – can begin with Neighborhood Services. Or, reach out to one of the organizations profiled here – and start building those community connections.

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COMMUNITY

DAY CARE continued from page 1

“Caregiving is exhausting, and, without a break, even the most loving of family members and friends burn out,” said director Leslie Morse. “Our goal is to care for the participant AND their caregivers. We offer the gift of security – knowing their loved one is safe and happy while they are with us. The caregiver can sit and read a book, take an uninterrupted nap, have coffee with friends, get their hair cut, see their own doctor or do whatever they want and need to do.”

The adult day care is a hoppin’ place, with non-stop activities to celebrate birthdays, holidays and plain old ordinary days. They serve nutritious meals, and staff and volunteers lead games that sneak in a bit of movement to help keep participants interested and healthy.

There is no sales pitch to family and friends who inquire about adult day care at Desert Mission.

“We want this to be the right fit,” she emphasized. “We ask that they tour our program with their loved one. Then, if it feels right, we offer a four-



hour guest visit so they can experience a morning or afternoon here, with a meal and activities. We realize it’s a big first step, but it’s an important one.”

The majority of participants are experiencing some degree of dementia, and Morse says that the staff and volunteers are trained and experienced at interacting with them in positive ways

“that make them feel safe, secure and happy.” The program is open weekdays, and staffed by a full-time RN and social worker as well as experienced caregivers.

The best part? The adult day program shares a building with Lincoln Learning Center, and weekly visits from the little ones mean craft day, with the guidance of a member of Young Artists of Arizona.

“The littles and our members work together on crafts like Valentines, holiday decorations and more. It’s a delight to watch the littles engage with the older people. Everybody smiles,” said Morse.

“Caring for aging family members is increasingly a challenge, as we all are living longer,” she noted. “Finding resources that fit your needs can be overwhelming, so our social worker, Jeannette Vazquez, is available to work with anyone to find services for their loved ones.”

The program’s cash pay cost is \$85 a day, with a minimum of two days per week. Some insurance companies pay the costs, and there is financial assistance through some organizations and agencies. Many of the participants are veterans, and there is some assistance available through the Veterans Administration.

“We strongly recommend that caregivers explore resources for respite care before you really need them,” said Morse. “Families tell us it is comforting to know we are here and can help when it’s time.”

The program is located at 303 E. Eva St. For additional information, call 602-786-1060 or visit www.desertmission.com/adult-day-health-care.

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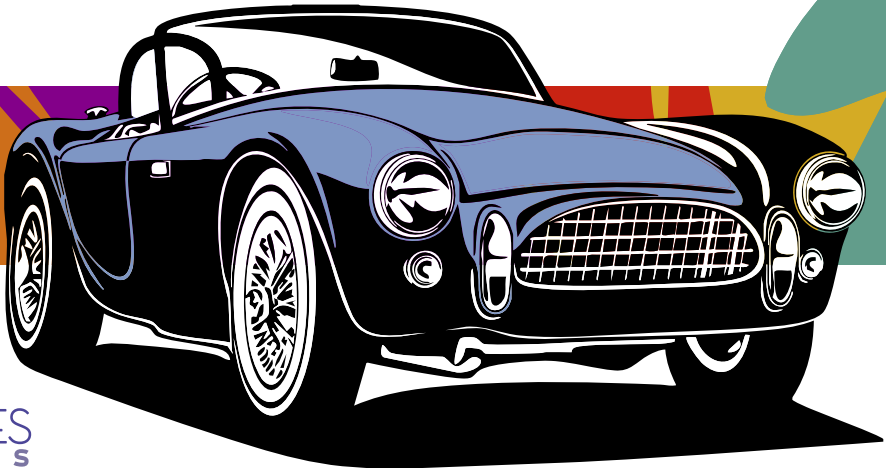
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COMMUNITY



The Sunnyslope Historical Society is working to preserve the Acacia Library, with an initial hearing with Historic Preservation Commission set for Feb. 9 (photo by Kathryn M. Miller).

Library preservation case to be considered

The Acacia Branch of the Phoenix Public Library system has served residents for more than 50 years at 750 E. Townley Ave. Now, a movement, spearheaded by the Sunnyslope Historical Society, is underway to preserve the building and the legacy of Arizona architect Bennie Gonzales, who designed Acacia and other libraries in the state and elsewhere.

An historic preservation case is currently under staff review to determine whether historic preservation overlay zoning is appropriate, according to Helana Ruter, Historic Preservation officer. An initiation hearing is anticipated to be held during the Feb. 9 Historic Preservation Commission meeting, where the members will weigh in on whether or not to proceed with the case. If it does go forward, residents will have additional opportunities to make their voices heard on the matter through a series of public meetings.

Find meeting information at www.phoenix.gov/pdd/historic-preservation.

State urges vaccinations amidst rise in measles

In January, Arizona Department of Health Services (ADHS) leaders expressed concern that the number of measles cases continues to rise in the new year.

Arizona is experiencing an ongoing outbreak of measles along the Arizona-Utah border, which began in August 2025. While the cases by the date of a Jan. 12 media briefing were restricted to Coconino, Mohave, Navajo and Pima counties, the first 2026 case in

Maricopa County was confirmed just days later, according to news reports, as well as new cases in two other counties – bringing the total to nine new cases in one week.

Measles is highly contagious – roughly 90 percent of those exposed will contract the virus – and anyone who is not immune from either a previous measles infection or vaccination can get measles. In addition, approximately 30 percent of those infected develop complications.

State health officials also reminded residents that babies under 12 months are too young for their first MMR dose, so they rely on the protection of those around them, adding that when you vaccinate your child, you’re helping protect infants, pregnant people and those with weakened immune systems.

At a Jan. 20 briefing, Dr. Richard Carmona, former U.S. Surgeon General and current Arizona state advisor, said, “Vaccines are essential for the health, safety and security of our state and our nation. They are safe. And for those people who are confused, we know there are many, because there is a great deal of disinformation out there, please talk to your healthcare provider. Go to the ADHS website. There are a number of places you can look to find nonpartisan, scientific information to help you make the best decisions for you and your family.”

He added, “I can’t emphasize enough the importance of addressing the issue of vaccineable diseases and ensuring that everybody who is eligible, please get vaccinated. It not only protects you; it protects you from spreading disease to others. And many of those others are people who could be at significant risk.”

To learn more, visit www.azdhs.gov/measles.



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COMMUNITY

Enjoy a Sunday off Central

The Midtown Neighborhood Association will host its 15th annual Sunday off Central block party, Sunday, March 1, from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. The fun takes place on East Vernon Avenue (between Central Avenue and 3rd Street) in the Midtown neighborhood.

This free event features 80 local vendors, food trucks, live bands playing throughout the day, a bounce house and other free activities for children, fun for all ages and, of course, community.

To learn more about the organizers and find updates on the 2026 event, visit www.midtownphx.org.

Annual VNSA book sale returns

The VNSA 69th Annual Used Book Sale will be held Feb. 14, a.m. to 6 p.m., and Feb. 15, 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. at the Arizona State Fairgrounds, 1826 W. McDowell Road.

VNSA sells hundreds of books, media and other related items at prices significantly reduced from retail prices. Except for books in the Sets Area, books are marked with a price sticker on the spine, upper right cover and/or inside the front cover. All unmarked standard-size paperbacks are \$3. All items are half-price all day Sunday (except for the books in Rare & Unusual).

There is no admission fee to attend the event (although the State Fairgrounds charges a parking fee), and entry to the sale is first-come, first-served. On both days of the sale, the Fairgrounds will open the gates at 5 a.m. Overnight camping is not allowed in the parking lot.

For additional information, visit <https://vnsabooksale.org/booksale>.

Fundraiser supports local dancers

Ballet Theatre of Phoenix invites the community to an inspiring evening of music, performance, and philanthropy with its Sixth Annual Broadway Cabaret Fundraiser on Friday, Feb. 28, at 7 p.m. at ASU Kerr Cultural Center. This one-night only cabaret style performance brings together some of the Valley's most celebrated musical theater artists from The Phoenix Theatre Company and Arizona Broadway Theatre for an evening that blends

show stopping entertainment with meaningful community impact.

Proceeds from the event support Ballet Theatre of Phoenix's PLIÉS Program, an initiative providing free and scholarship-based ballet training to underserved students, while also sustaining the organization's free ballet classes for seniors and free programs designed to introduce boys to ballet and creative movement.

For tickets and more information, visit www.ballettheatreofphx.org or call 602-957-3364.

Catch the big game at the VFW

Sunnyslope's VFW 9400, located at 804 E. Purdue Ave., invites residents to watch the Super Bowl on big screens Sunday, Feb. 8. Doors open at 1 p.m.; gametime is 5:30 p.m.

Football fans will enjoy not only watching the big game with friends and neighbors but also can enjoy a nacho bar (\$10) along with drink specials throughout the event.


For questions about the event, call 602-678-2726.

Volunteer group finishes senior project

The Boys Team Charity (BTC) Class of 2026 chose to support Ronald McDonald House (RMH) at Phoenix Children's Hospital by collecting and delivering snacks and planning, shopping, prepping and serving meals for families living at RMH while their child is under the care of the hospital.

BTC has been in the Valley since 2002 and serves a wide variety of non-profits. The Biltmore Chapter was added in 2020 and currently has 141 teammates (boys). Each teammate is supported by one or two coaches (parents) for philanthropy and league activities. Every year, the senior class focuses on a charity to support with their Senior Project. This year, the 16 senior boys chose Ronald McDonald House Charities.

A membership drive will take place March 1-15 and is open to boys entering seventh to 11th grade. All prospective members can apply online and need to have a current BTC member as a sponsor. All applicants must live in the ZIP codes for the Biltmore Central Chapter: 85012, 85013, 85014, 85016, 85020 and 85021. Visit www.boysteamcharity.org for details.

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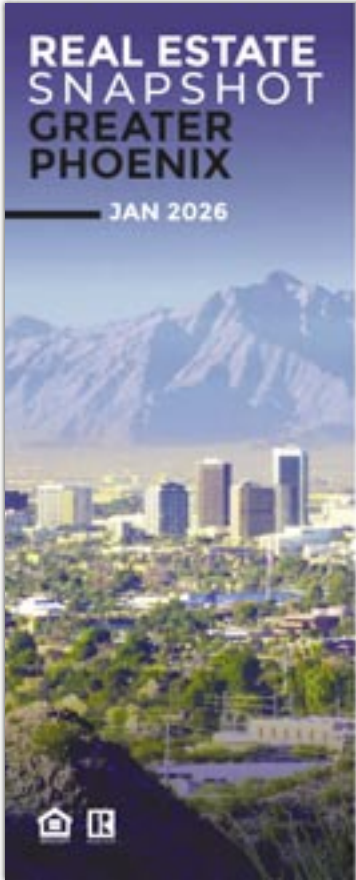


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It's your choice ...

By Bill Ross

We all know that getting older is no fun. As my parents used to say, "It's not for sissies." It seems like every day you wake up with some new aches or pains. Sound familiar? I'm in my late 60s so I know what it's like.

My point is, you can do nothing about it and just complain as your world slowly gets smaller. You just stop doing things, which of course makes it worse, and you slowly get more and more depressed and just think about the good old days. I think this begins around the age of 50. For some sooner and others maybe later. But we all go through it. Or, you can choose to do something about it.

So, what are you going to do? Nothing? Or get up and start fighting back? Your doctor may tell you to start walking. That's a good start. But don't get fooled into thinking that's all you have to do. You still need to stimulate your whole body with strengthening and stretching. The good news is that you can improve with the right help. It doesn't have to be grueling and it doesn't have to take all day!

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COMMUNITY



After suffering injuries as a stray, sweet Nibbles, a nine-month-old American Pit Bull Terrier, is looking for a foster home where she can heal (photo courtesy of Arizona Humane Society).

Pet of the Month Sweet Nibbles needs a foster hero

With a face as sweet as her disposition, Nibbles is sure to wiggle her way into your heart in no time. The only issue: she is having a hard time wiggling at her full capacity due to a fractured hind leg.

The nine-month-old American Pit Bull Terrier made her way to the Arizona Humane Society in December of last year after she was transferred from another shelter as an injured stray. With a hematoma on her ear and a hind leg in need of surgery repair, this gorgeous young girl is hoping to find a loving Foster Hero home while she is on the road to recovery.

It is anticipated Nibbles will need a little over a month of care in a foster home while she recovers from surgery, as well as a home where she can have limited activity including plenty of crate rest and limited walks. As a part of AHS' Foster Program, everything Nibbles will need will be provided by the shelter free of charge including medical care, supplies, support and more.

Being an AHS Foster Hero is a life-saving venture with cases that fit every family and lifestyle. By bringing in a foster pet(s), you allow AHS to continue caring for even more of the community's sick, injured and abused pets by opening up much-needed kennel space. For more information on how to become a Foster Hero for sweet Nibbles (pet number 835396) or any of AHS' amazing pets in need of fostering, visit

www.azhumane.org/foster to take the online orientation and apply.

County offers pet resources

Maricopa County Animal Care and Control (MCACC) offers pet health service events and resources to the community at a reduced cost to help keep pets healthy and happy while reducing the number of animals that end up in shelters.

Services such as dog licensing – an important way to identify and locate a pet if they get lost – cost \$19 and must be renewed yearly. Pet health services like microchipping are available for \$25 at the East and West shelter locations during regular business hours. Spay and neuter services also are available.

MCACC also handles pet surrenders, saying, "We recognize that giving up a family pet is never an easy decision, but we know that sometimes it may feel like you have no other option. Since our primary mission is to serve the lost and homeless pets of Maricopa County, we allow residents of the county to surrender their pets to the shelter by appointment only."

Of course, surrenders also mean that a pet now needs a new home, and the county facilitates adoptions, and prospective new owners can find dozens of pets needing a home by visiting www.maricopa.gov/214/adopt-a-pet or by visiting the East or West shelters.

Pet owners also will find pet behavior resources, medical resources and more online at www.maricopa.gov/161/services-resources.

COMMUNITY

Vaccine hesitancy impacts pet population

The Arizona Humane Society (AHS) is raising the alarm and asking the community to help protect Valley pets from deadly, highly contagious diseases by ensuring they are properly vaccinated. This call to action comes as the state’s leading animal welfare organization is seeing a troubling rise in preventable illnesses, an increase that may be driven in part by growing vaccine hesitancy.

“As one of the few shelters in the nation equipped to treat pets suffering from parvo, the Arizona Humane Society sees firsthand the devastating impact of this entirely preventable disease every day,” said Dr. Steven Hansen, president and CEO of AHS. “In just two months, our specialized ICU has treated more than 200 cases of parvo, more than one-third of the total cases we cared for in all of last year. Vaccinating your pets is imperative not just for their safety but for the safety of our whole pet community.”

Vaccinations are not only the first line of defense in contagious breed-specific viruses such as distemper in dogs and feline leukemia virus in cats, AHS



After seeing a spike in parvo cases in the Valley, the Arizona Humane Society is encouraging residents to get their pets vaccinated against it and other viruses(photo courtesy of AHS).

said, they are also vital in the prevention of zoonotic diseases that pose threats to both animals and people such as rabies – which is incurable once symptoms set in. While there are many potential reasons for an increase of contagious diseases seen in pets, a recent *New York Times* article highlighted a rise in pet owners being hesitant to vaccinate their pets due to the upsurge of vaccine hesitancy for humans as one possibility.

A 2023 survey published in the

Vaccine journal also noted that more than 50 percent of the pet owners who participated were uncertain of the importance, safety and efficacy of vaccinations for their own pets.

While AHS has seen a significant jump in parvo cases this year, shelter statistics also show a steady incline of pets treated in its Susan & Mark Mulzet Parvo ICU since 2023, with 567 cases reported last year, up from 325 in 2023.

To help keep pets healthy, the shelter

provides affordable vaccines for owned pets at the Sunnyslope Veterinary Clinic, 9226 N. 13th Ave., and the South Mountain Veterinary Clinic, 1521 W. Dobbins Rd., as well as through the Healthy Tails Mobile Veterinary Clinic, which operates throughout the Valley.

To learn more about the importance of vaccines or to book an appointment, visit www.azhumane.org/vaccines.

Furry Friends celebrates 10 years

Shemer Art Center’s annual Furry Friends Fine Arts Festival will return for its 10th year, Saturday, Feb. 28, from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Geared towards art and animal lovers alike, last year’s event featured artists, vendors, live music, dog performances, tricks and carting parades, food and beverage vendors (The Dog Father and Black Cat Coffee House), an animal art raffle, interactive kids’ art activities in the Kids Spot, an author tent, and more.

Shemer Art Center is located at 5005 E. Camelback Road. For additional information, visit www.shemer-artcenter.org/happenings/events.

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TAKING CARE OF BUSINESS



North Central's Novak House, designed by acclaimed Valley architect Alfred Newman Beadle and the second-to-last home built prior to his passing, sold for \$1.1M with Russ Lyon Sotheby's International Realty (submitted photo).

Business Briefs

Beadle home sells for \$1.1M

The Novak House, a steel post and beam home in North Central Phoenix that was designed by the distinguished Valley architect Alfred Newman Beadle, sold for \$1.1M, and was set to close in mid-January. Russ Lyon Sotheby's International Realty's Global Real Estate Advisor Colby Schmeckpeper represented buyer Christy Kimball, an Arizona native and long-time local businesswoman with operations in both Phoenix and Los Angeles.

The exceptional home, originally known as the "Hawk's Nest," was the second-to-last home Beadle built before he passed away and features a sharp, triangular form and unique geometry.

Located at 1340 E. Las Palmaritas Drive, The Novak House features two bedrooms plus an office and 2.5 bathrooms. Completed in 1994, the recently expanded and renovated home offers approximately 1,873 square feet of living space.

Offering modernist architecture at its finest, the home is ideally positioned on a gentle mountain slope to maximize panoramic views of both the cityscape and nearby mountains. Built with quality craftsmanship, it stands as an embodiment of Beadle's mastery in integrating his designs with the natural surroundings.

Each room is strategically posi-

tioned to capture the awe-inspiring vistas, creating an immersive experience that integrates nature with architecture. The home offers both privacy and connection to the vast, beautiful desert surroundings, and provides ample space for comfortable living while maintaining its minimalist elegance.

The lot size of more than 10,000 square feet provides room for relaxation or outdoor entertainment, further enhancing the home's connection to its magnificent location. The unique geometry of the house maximizes the use of natural light, enhancing its energy efficiency while inviting the beauty of the desert into every room.

Electrical supply store opens

In January, Black Diamond Electrical Supply opened at the northwest corner of 12th Street and Northern Avenue in the former laundromat.

This is the third Phoenix location for the company that was founded in 2019 – others are located at 19th Avenue and Buckeye and 27th Avenue and Indian School Road. The company says that it specializes in providing a comprehensive range of electrical supplies, from wiring and circuitry to tools and fasteners, catering to contractors, electricians and DIY enthusiasts alike.

According to the company website, the new location, 1146 E. Northern *please see NEW STORE on page 20*

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TAKING CARE OF BUSINESS

NEW STORE continued from page 18

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Entrepreneur launches online boutique

Phoenix native Carrie Jamison, owner and founder of Valley Boutique, says that she is on a mission to simplify the way women shop for fashionable, flattering clothing. The online boutique (www.shopvalleyboutique.com) offers a hand-picked collection of stylish, affordable pieces chosen specifically to make getting dressed effortless and confidence boosting.

Jamison discovered early on that her eye for style was something other women relied on. “Whenever I’d get compliments on my outfits, women would ask where I found them,” she said. “When I’d send links to big online retailers, most of them told me the scrolling felt overwhelming. That’s when I realized choosing clothing comes naturally to

me – so I started choosing for them.” Jamison moved from Phoenix to San Diego to study fashion merchandising and design. After working in the industry, managing boutiques and working as a sales rep for swimwear brands, she moved back home in 2007, where she later stepped away from fashion to raise her two daughters. Now, with a teen and tween at home, she is returning to her passion and relaunching her professional life.

“At Valley Boutique, I do the work of choosing the trends that are not only stylish, but flattering on real women,” Jamison explained. “My goal is to make women feel beautiful, confident, and excited to get dressed again. When you look good and receive compliments, you feel good – and that glow changes your whole vibe.”

Through a carefully curated selection of styles sourced from wholesale designers, Valley Boutique offers fashionable choices without the endless scrolling. Jamison hopes her journey also becomes something she can share with her daughters.

“I love that I get to show my girls

that you can circle back to your dreams,” she said. “And maybe even teach them the ropes.”

Contractor announces Imagine Coronado

With the desire not only to preserve historic buildings in Phoenix but to make them viable local small businesses that serve the communities in which they reside, Heather Lennon, founder and owner of Imagine General Contracting and Development, has her sights set on the historic Coronado neighborhood within the McDowell Miracle Mile Revitalization zone.

Her new project, Imagine Coronado – a 50,000-square-foot parcel on the northwest corner of McDowell Road and 11th Street, features a complex of 11 buildings, seven of which are historic homes each between 99 and 108 years old, which are being transformed into a wellness enclave and community hub.

The design concept is based upon chakras, with each of the seven houses representing a different chakra, oriented north to south. This theme will

unify the design, on-site amenities and services, curated retail and more – with each home taking its name from its corresponding chakra stone.

Empty for many years, the homes are undergoing extensive restoration, remediation, complete replacement of mechanical, electrical, plumbing, HVAC systems and more. Lennon estimates a two-year timeline for completion of the project.

Extensive forensic historical research is being done to find and highlight each story of the homes and the people that resided in them. A discovered one-room schoolhouse basement will become the future humidor for Raconteuse Cigars, which Lennon also owns and operates. She also is actively seeking industry partners, specifically wellness practitioners, ancillary services, retail product offerings and community-minded corporations. The enclave itself will stay under single ownership, with industry experts brought in to run and program the space.

For more information, visit www.imaginedevelops.com.

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Some people shape a community quietly. Others leave an imprint that stays with you for a lifetime. Rabbi Charles "Chuck" Herring was one of those people. Chuck married MaryAnn and me in 1986. He and Barbara danced at our wedding. He loved our kids and truthfully, he was never better than when he was with them. Telling stories, teaching, laughing. Maybe that's because he was a kid at heart himself. We first knew Rabbi Herring at Tempe Beth Israel, and later followed him when he took the leap to begin Temple Kol Ami in North Scottsdale. That leap and the people who encouraged us to take it with him, influenced our lives. Rita Segel, her daughter Sheri, and Sandy Germaine were instrumental in welcoming us and encouraging us to become part of the new congregation. Thinking about that time brings back memories of Rita Segel, lovely inside and out. My father, Herb, and his best friend Harold Tenenbaum used to talk about her beauty, but what really stayed with people was her kindness and grace. Rabbi Herring was there for our family's biggest moments. He celebrated our daughter's baby naming, our son's bar mitzvah and was our spiritual teacher. Years later, he helped us say goodbye to my father. Through every chapter, joyful or difficult, he guided us with care.

February always brings my father back to mind. Herb Lieb was born February 8, 1920, in Chicago and passed on February 24, 2011. He was one of four siblings, brothers Alan and Charlie, a WWII veteran, and his sister Trudee, who was instrumental in his move to Phoenix. They're all gone now, but their legacy lives on through the lives they shaped. Herb landed on Normandy Beach during World War II. He moved to Phoenix in 1964 and became partners with Geri Aron in Kagel's Dress Shop, later opening Mr. L's Dress Shop. In 1970, he opened Herb's Underground, the first disco in Phoenix. Later came the Jockey Club Nightclub, first at 20th Street and Highland in 1976, then at Central and Camelback in 1989. But Herb's real legacy wasn't the businesses. It was people. He was loved by many and fiercely loyal to his friends and family. A wonderful father. An even better grandfather. A legendary storyteller, although I don't think he ever finished a story in fifty years.

At Herb's funeral, Rabbi Herring spoke, and true to form, he brought humor along with comfort. He joked that he would have liked to see Herb more often at services, but said they had an agreement: Herb didn't come into my place of business, and I didn't come into his. Two outspoken men, both with great senses of humor, both able to relate to people from everywhere and it was a perfect reflection of their friendship. Remembering Rabbi Chuck Herring brings all of this back, my father, the family and friends, the laughter, the stories, the connections that make a life rich. He didn't just lead congregations. He showed up for families. He showed up for moments that mattered. And for that, we remain deeply grateful.

Bobby Lieb



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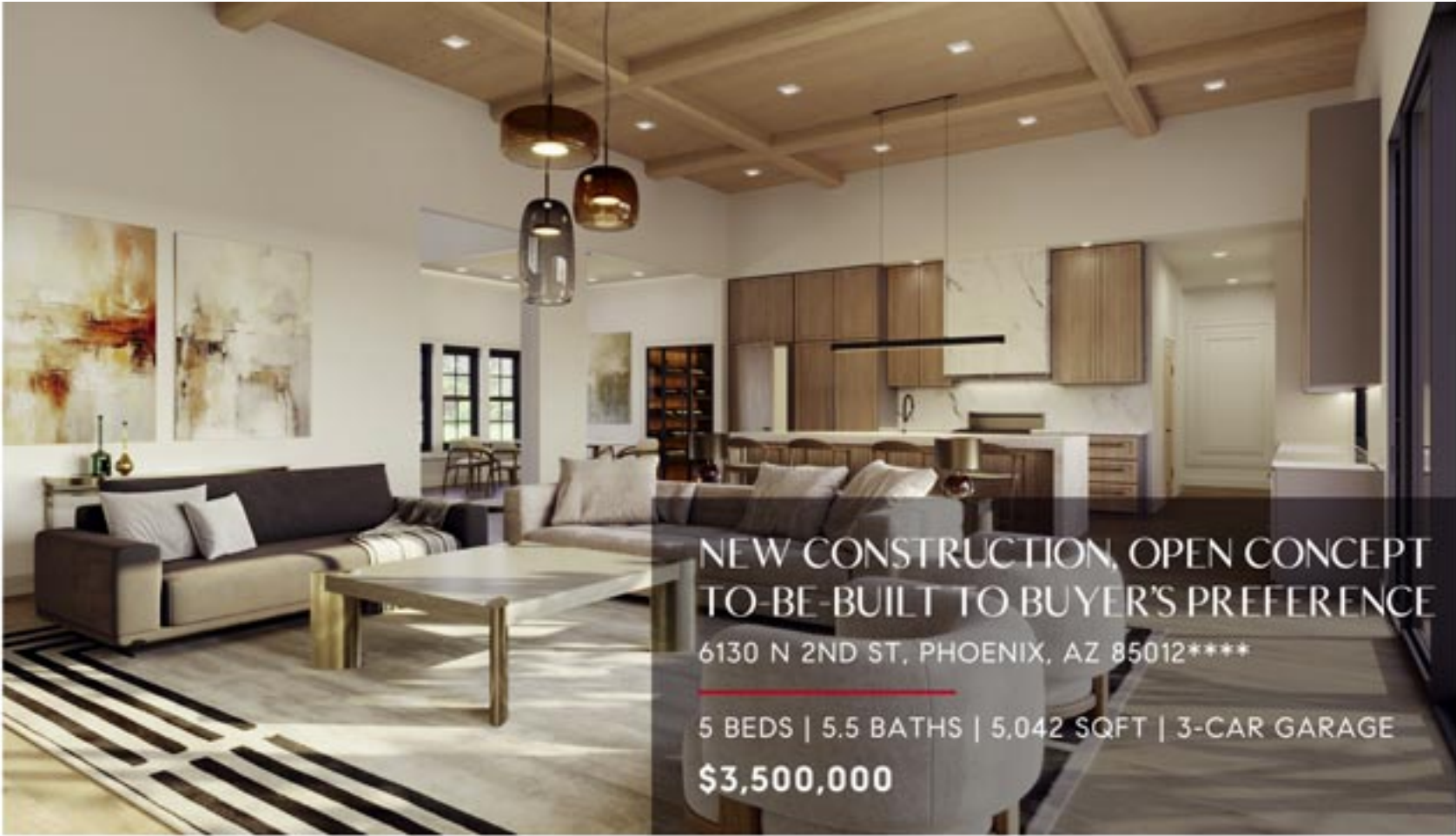
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The 2026 5K Scamper T-shirt design winner, ninth grader Sophia Phillips, is pictured with her creative design (submitted photo).

Scamper event offers community fun

The Sunnyslope Scamper is an annual 5K race, taking place this year on Saturday, March 7. Join students, families, alumni and neighbors for a fun and friendly 5K run/walk along the canal. All ages and fitness levels are welcome.

Runners, their families, and supportive spectators are encouraged to come between 8:30 to 11 a.m. to enjoy booths from the event sponsors.

The 3.1-mile race will begin on the north side of the canal next to the Sunnyslope Pool parking lot, 301 W. Dunlap Ave. Runners will head east on the canal and be cheered on by the Sunnyslope marching band, pom team and cheer team. Sunnyslope students can register for free using their student ID numbers. Each participant will receive a custom shirt and vinyl sticker with a design created by ninth grade Sunnyslope student, Sophia Phillips.

The 2026 Viking Parent Club co-chairs are Jessie Spalding and Kaitlynn Brimhall, and they expressed their gratitude to this year’s sponsors, which include Barry’s ACE Hardware, Blondie Realtor, Grace Design Studios, Kraemer Consulting Engineers, Madison Futbol Club and Primary Consultants, and invited neighbors to join the fun.

“Every member of the North Central community is invited to participate in the Scamper,” enthused Spalding. “This race is designed to be a fun event to help get the Sunnyslope High School and surrounding commu-

nity out and active in the neighborhood. This may be the first 5K for many of our Sunnyslope students and we could not have made this happen without the generosity of so many neighborhood sponsors!”

To learn more or to register to participate, visit www.vikingparentclub.com/sunnyslope-scamper.

School Briefs

GLENDALE UNION HIGH SCHOOL DISTRICT Explore opportunities at teacher fair

Glendale Union High School District is inviting educators to explore career opportunities in a district committed to excellence and student success.

The GUHSD Teacher Career Fair will be held Saturday, Feb. 7, from 8 a.m. to 1 p.m. at Greenway High School, 3930 W. Greenway Road, and learn about teaching opportunities for the 2026–27 school year. Discover why GUHSD is recognized for academic achievement and strong support for professional growth.

Call 623-435-6017 to reserve an interview or visit www.guhsdaz.org for additional information.

GUHSD recognized for attendance initiative

GUHSD was honored with the 2025 Golden Bell Promise Award for High Schools by the Arizona School Boards Association, recognizing its impactful Attendance Matters: Show

SCHOOL DAYS

Up, Keep Up initiative.

Launched in 2023, the districtwide campaign focuses on reducing chronic absenteeism through family engagement, positive relationships and early intervention strategies. In just two years, GUHSD has achieved more than 5,700 fewer student absences, contributing to improved academic performance and graduation outcomes. The award highlights the district’s commitment to equity, student success, and shared responsibility in ensuring students are present, connected, and ready to learn.

Basketball takes championship

Sunnyslope High School’s Varsity Boys Basketball team captured the Hoophall West Championship over winter break, defeating No. 5 nationally ranked Wheeler High School (Georgia) in a thrilling 61-59 title game.

Entering the semi-national tournament ranked No. 9 in the nation, the Sunnyslope Vikings delivered a national statement behind the leadership of head coach Ray Portela and a high-performing roster. Junior Darius Wabington was named Hoophall West MVP after recording 23 points, 9 rebounds and 3 assists in the championship game.

“With standout performances throughout the tournament, Sunnyslope High School looks ahead to a strong second half of the season with sights set on the AIA Open Division tournament,” the district said.



Sunnyslope High School’s Varsity Boys Basketball team captured the Hoophall West Championship over winter break (submitted photo).

District launches Parent University

GUHSD announced the launch of its annual Parent University, a series of free workshops designed to help families support their teens throughout the high school years.

Several GUHSD campuses will host evening sessions led by trusted experts who will address real challenges facing students today. Each event will also feature resource tables from community partners, door prizes and Spanish translation services to ensure accessibility for all families.

Parent University will be held at

Apollo High School on Feb. 3, and Cortez High School on Feb. 24, with all sessions running from 5 to 7 p.m. Open to all families, Parent University provides valuable information, resources, and opportunities for parents to stay informed and actively engaged in their students’ success.

Learn more at www.guhsdaz.org.

Schools recognized by College Board

Washington High School and Sunnyslope High School have been recognized by the College Board on the 2025 AP School Honor Roll, an honor

that highlights schools expanding access to Advanced Placement coursework while achieving strong student outcomes.

Washington High School reported that more than 40 percent of seniors took at least one AP class, more than 30 percent earned college credit with a score of “3” or higher on their AP Exam, and 15 percent completed five or more AP courses.

Sunnyslope High School earned Silver-level distinction, with 58 percent of seniors taking at least one AP exam, 48 percent earning a qualifying score, and 14 percent completing five or more AP exams.

MADISON SCHOOL DISTRICT Mixer event engages prospective employees

The Madison School District invites educators and job seekers to its annual “Fall in Love with Madison” employment mixer event on Feb. 9, from 4:30 to 6 p.m. at the Madison Center for the Arts, 5601 N. 16th St. Attendees can learn about the district, meet principals and district administration, explore career opportunities and enjoy light appetizers.

Madison is a high-performing district, regularly recognized for achievements at the state and national levels. Six Madison schools were recently named “Best” by *U.S. News & World Report* for 2026.

The district is hiring teachers, bus drivers, special education paraprofessionals and more. *please see MIXER on page 26*



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SCHOOL DAYS

MIXER continued from page 25

sionals, before and after school program staff and more. To learn more and to RSVP for the event, visit www.madisonaz.org/jobs.

Madison schools named 'Best'

U.S. News & World Report has named six schools in the Madison School District in their "Best" public school rankings for 2026. Madison Heights Elementary, Madison Simis Elementary and Madison Rose Lane Elementary received the "Best Elementary School" award and Madison Meadows Middle School and Madison No. 1 Middle School received the "Best Middle School" award. Madison Traditional Academy, which serves both elementary and middle school students, was named in both the "Best Elementary" and "Best Middle School" categories.

Madison is a high-performing district, serving students in preschool through eighth grade. More information about the district's schools and programs can be found at www.madisonaz.org.



Students in the Central High School Culinary program check out their new grow towers and imagine the tasty ingredients they will soon grow (photo courtesy of PXU).

Heights students excel in vocabulary competition

A team representing Madison Heights Elementary School achieved Highest Honors in the recent WordMasters Challenge, a national vocabulary competition involving nearly 125,000 students annually. The fourth-grade team, which competed in the very difficult Gold Division, scored an impressive 175 points out of a pos-

sible 200 in the first of three meets this year, placing sixth in the nation.

The event is an exercise in critical thinking that first encourages students to become familiar with a set of interesting new words (considerably harder than grade level), and then challenges them to use those words to complete analogies expressing various kinds of logical relationships. Working to solve the analogies helps students learn to think both ana-

lytically and metaphorically. Although most vocabulary enrichment and analogy-solving programs are designed for use by high school students, the Challenge materials have been specifically created for younger students in grades three through eight. They are particularly well suited for children who are motivated by the challenge of learning new words and enjoy the logical puzzles posed by analogies.

PHOENIX UNION HIGH SCHOOL DISTRICT
New grow towers inspire culinary students

On Jan. 8, Central High School Culinary students had an exciting afternoon after individuals from Project Roots arrived with three brand new grow towers for them to grow their own ingredients in the classroom.

Culinary students had the opportunity to assemble the grow towers themselves, and the school says that they are excited to grow fresh ingredients on their own.

Look for upcoming Future Freshman events

PXU will host Future Freshman events for prospective students and their families in the coming months.

Future Freshman Days will be held at Camelback High School, 4612 N. 28th St., Feb. 10 and 24. Events will also be held at Central High School, 4525 N. Central Ave., and North High School, 1101 E. Thomas Road; however, the dates were not yet available.

Future Freshman Nights will be held at Camelback High School on April 14 and at North High School Feb. 12; the date for Central High School was not yet determined.

For more information on each of these schools and to enroll for the 2026-27 school year, visit www.pxu.org/enroll.

PXU students earn scholarships

Phoenix Union High School District (PXU) announced that three students received a full scholarship to various universities through the QuestBridge National College Match Program.

Through the National College Match, students can apply for free to the nation's top colleges and be considered for early admission and a full four-year scholarship.

please see SCHOLARSHIPS on page 28

Open House

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85020, 85021, 85028

SCHOOL DAYS

SCHOLARSHIPS continued from page 26

Sofia Villa from Camelback Montessori College Preparatory was matched with Washington and Lee University with the goal of studying as a pre-law student to ultimately go to law school and become an immigration lawyer. Sara John, an International Baccalaureate (IB) student at North High School, matched with Smith College and will study neuroscience to become a neurologist, and Miraje Jemal from Bioscience High School matched with Cornell University and has plans to study astronomy to prepare for a career conducting space research.

WASHINGTON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL DISTRICT
Future Raider Night is Feb. 19

Future sixth, seventh or eighth grade students and their families are invited to join Royal Palm Middle School, 8520 N. 19th Ave., for Future Raider Night on Thursday, Feb. 19, from 4:30 to 6:30 p.m.



The Smoking Motors VEX Robotics team is the second Madison Highland Prep team to qualify for the Arizona State Championship, scheduled for March 6-7 (submitted photo).

This event offers an opportunity to tour the campus, meet the staff, explore the programs and school culture, and learn what makes Royal Palm Middle School an “A” school for the last three years in a row, as designated by the Arizona Department of Education.

For more information, call the school office at 602-347-3200 or visit www.wesdschools.org.

LEGO robotics team excels

The Wayfinders team at Desert View Elementary School demonstrated exceptional teamwork, problem-solving and innovation at the recent regional LEGO Robotics competition, earning second place out of 28 teams. This outstanding accomplishment reflects the students’ dedication and

hard work throughout the season. The team will advance to the state championship, where they will continue to represent Desert View with pride.

CHARTER AND PRIVATE SCHOOLS
Robotics program hits new milestone

Madison Highland Prep’s VEX Robotics team, MHP Smoking Motors (Team 8373M), has officially qualified for the Arizona State Championship after a dominant performance at their recent tournament, the school said.

The team secured their advancement by winning the prestigious Robot Skills Champion award, marking them as one of the top performing programs in the region. MHP Smoking Motors is the second Madison Highland Prep team to qualify for the 2026 Arizona VEX Robotics State Championship, following a successful advancement earlier in the season by MHP Loose Screws (Team 8373P).

The success of MHP Smoking Motors is built on a foundation of specialized roles tailored to each member’s strengths. The team features Michael Syntax (driver, coder, builder), Eshan Syed (driving coach, builder, coder), Moises Borrallles (driving coach, builder), Andrew Reese (coder, note-taker) and Ozill Correa (notetaker). This well-coordinated partnership allows the members to communicate effectively and adapt quickly to the fast-paced challenges.

As they prepare for the state championship on March 6-7, the team remains focused on the high level of competition ahead.

“Arizona is a competitive robotics state, so we know it will take a lot of preparation and practice to get our bot where its needs to be, but we are very excited.” Syntax added. With two powerhouse teams now heading to the state level, Madison Highland Prep continues to establish itself as a leader in STEM and competitive robotics.

Learn more about MPH’s robotics program at www.madisonhighland-prep.com.

Montessori open house event scheduled

Area families are invited to the Phoenix mountainside campus of Montessori Day Schools, 9215 N. 14th St., Friday, Feb. 6, 4 to 6 p.m., to learn

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SCHOOL DAYS

about the advantages of individualized instruction in a nurturing a community environment.

During the event, attendees can talk to current and former students and parents about the difference Montessori Day Schools have made in their lives, as well as meet the school’s teachers.

Serving Arizona children since 1981, the school offers private preschool and charter kindergarten through eighth-grade learning opportunities. For additional information, call 602-943-7672 or visit www.montessoridayschools.org.

Students dive into research

In January, 10th and 11th graders from Arizona School for the Arts (ASA) spent the day diving into research for their Third Quarter Presentation (3QP).

During the ASA’s Upper School years, students apply their research and performance skills during the annual 3QP that, depending on grade level, integrates content from areas such as science and social science, delves into applied science, and contemporary world issues.

Sophomores worked alongside ASU librarians at the Arizona State University Downtown Library to gather resources, while juniors explored their presentation topics through exhibits at the Phoenix Art Museum.

High school donates to Maggie’s Place

This past Christmas season, students at Valley Lutheran High School collected 2,893 essential items to support mothers and babies served by Maggie’s Place, a Phoenix based non-profit providing safe housing and a nurturing community for homeless pregnant women, empowering them to thrive throughout their lifetime (www.maggiesplace.org).

As part of the school’s annual Christmas drive, students donated 2,494 diapers, 136 packages of baby wipes, 172 toothbrush and toothpaste sets, and 74 baby blankets, clothing items and books, along with many other necessities.

The school says that the drive reflects Valley Lutheran’s commitment to service and compassion, encouraging students to put faith into action through meaningful acts of generosity.



In January, juniors at Arizona School for the Arts explored presentation topics through exhibits at the Phoenix Art Museum (photo courtesy of ASA).

Donations were delivered to Maggie’s Place just before Christmas to support families during the holiday season.

Raffle opens for fashion show event

Raffle tickets and special sales items for the 42nd Annual Brophy Fashion Show are now live, and resi-

dents are invited to a chance to grab exclusive Brophy keepsakes and exciting raffle prizes, all while supporting the event.

The Grand Raffle Prize: the Ultimate VIP Graduation Package featuring reserved seats at the event, a graduation dinner celebration, a grad photo session and more. Grand Raffle

tickets are \$100 for a ticket or \$250 for three tickets.

General raffle prizes include a Steak 44 dinner for 8, a reserved Brophy parking spot, \$5,000 cash, a designer handbag, a piece from Schmitt Jewelers and a comprehensive Wellness Package. General raffle tickets are \$25 for one ticket, or \$100 for five tickets (all five tickets must be for the same item). Special sale items are also available. Find information and links to donate or purchase raffle tickets online at <https://trellis.org/brophy-fashion-show-bound-in-brotherhood>.

This year’s event, “Bound in Brotherhood,” will be held Friday, March 27, at JW Marriott Scottsdale Camelback Inn, 5402 E. Lincoln Drive, beginning at 11 a.m. The event co-chairs are Andrea Tumialan and Ashley Staples. This annual event is a celebration of the senior class, and all proceeds benefit the Brophy Fund, supporting programs, people and places that allow every student to flourish. Reservations open Feb. 9. Visit www.brophyprep.org/giving/fashion-show to learn more.



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SCHOOL DAYS

MHP receives Platinum AP honors

Madison Highland Prep (MHP) has earned a place on the College Board's AP School Honor Roll for the 2024-25 school year, achieving the prestigious Platinum distinction. As the highest level of recognition awarded by the College Board, the Platinum status distinguishes Madison Highland Prep for its commitment to broadening student access to college-level coursework and fostering a culture of academic excellence. This milestone reflects the institution's ongoing success in delivering high-level results through its Advanced Placement program and effectively preparing its graduates for the rigors of higher education.

The school reached the Platinum threshold by meeting rigorous performance criteria in three specific categories: College Culture, College Credit, and College Optimization. Madison Highland Prep achieved a 91 percent participation rate, with most students in the graduating class taking at least one AP exam during high school. In addition, 64 percent of graduates earned college credit by scoring a "3" or higher on an AP exam, and 29 percent optimized their academic pathways by completing five or more AP exams, including at least one taken during their freshman or sophomore year.

Junior selected for sustainability program

Xavier College Preparatory junior Maddie Kaiser was selected to participate in the Future Sustainability Innovators Program, part of Learning With Leaders, a highly competitive international program held in December 2025 in Geneva.

Out of several thousand applicants worldwide, only 15 students were selected. Just three students from the United States were accepted, with the remaining participants representing countries across Africa, Europe and the Middle East.

Kaiser applied at the encouragement of her computer science teacher, Leon Tynes, despite having only a few days to write two required essays before advancing to a video interview. She joined a small, diverse cohort of students ages 13-18 from around the globe.

During the immersive program — largely hosted at the University of Geneva — students explored global sus-

tainability challenges through site visits to major international organizations, including the United Nations, CERN, World Health Organization and the World Trade Organization.

The program culminated in a 12-hour hackathon, where students worked in small teams to design solutions aligned with the United Nations' 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Kaiser's team focused on global youth mental health, tackling the challenge of how to reach one million young people ages 10-22 within two years. They conducted research, created a full project proposal, designed outreach strategies using social media and presented their solution to parents, educators and program partners, including Learning With Leaders and Addict Lab.

With guidance from Interdevelopment At Work, the group proposed scalable virtual group-therapy sessions held twice monthly to improve access to mental health support worldwide.

In addition to the academic work, Kaiser participated in glacier research in Chamonix, France, where students observed active glacial melting first-hand — an experience that reinforced the urgency of climate action.

"I went into the program wanting to make a difference, but I came out understanding how connected the world really is," Kaiser said. "Meeting students from Romania, Saudi Arabia, France, Tanzania — so many different cultures — made me realize how similar we all are in how we think and care about the future."

Kaiser plans to major in biology with a minor in computer science, attend medical school, and pursue a career as a physician assistant in emergency medicine. She credits Xavier's required computer science curriculum, and Tynes' encouragement, with helping her see technology as both a tool for impact and a critical skill set for the future.

Reflecting on the experience, Kaiser said the program changed her perspective.

"The UN talks about 193 countries and two observing states. Even if we're not all officially part of everything, we still need to work together. I feel called to be part of that work in some way."

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When Love Meets the Open Road: Why We Get Emotional About Cars

Well, Cupid is in the air this month, and loving one another is a beautiful thing. But when it comes to cars, we should be more careful about how deep that love goes.



For more than 30 years, I've helped consumers buy, fix, and sell their cars, watching them fall in and out of love along the way—sometimes calmly, sometimes in full panic. Here's the truth I keep coming back to: car ownership is emotional, period. Logic has its place, but it usually stops at the budget and the monthly payment, not the long haul once the excitement wears off.

And here's the part that surprises people.

Even when money isn't an issue, it suddenly becomes one when the car needs repairs. I've watched people with real "F-you" money get oddly frugal the moment a repair estimate lands—not because they can't afford it, but because the game changes. It's no longer about owning the car. It's about winning. And winning, in that moment, often means spending less, questioning more, and proving something to themselves over a vehicle nobody else actually cares about. The owner in the mirror tells the real story.

Sit with that for a second.

Whether you're stretching a budget or swimming in money, the mindset looks the same. Emotion first. Identity second. Logic usually shows up last to justify a decision that's already been made.

There's a reason many car owners who try to drive like the wealthy still feel off. Not wrong. Just unsettled. They buy the badge, check the trim boxes, learn the buzzwords, and drop the brand name like seasoning at dinner. And yet, when they pull away from the curb, something still feels shaky.

That's because absolute confidence behind the wheel has very little to do with the car itself. It's about control. And control can't be financed, leased, or updated with software. You earn it slowly—by learning, by messing up, and by reaching the point where you no longer need to announce anything. That's why this kind of ownership rarely becomes popular. Most drivers are addicted to noise. Noise for validation. Noise for approval. Noise so someone notices them at the stoplight. Absolute luxury doesn't live there.

The Myth of "Luxury Equals More"

Let's clear the fog. Expensive doesn't mean informed. Loud doesn't mean confident. And more screens, more modes, and more chrome don't mean better. A quiet cabin doesn't automatically make you a composed driver. Many people confuse silence with sophistication. They think choosing the right color or deleting the chrome suddenly makes them refined. What it really does is make them feel safe.

Absolute mastery isn't about removing noise; it's about intention. It's knowing how the car responds, how it settles, and how it communicates without yelling. Most people miss this—those who don't forget it.

Fit, Function, and Finish

This is where many people get luxury backward. They chase the logo, not the engineering—the image, not the integrity. Absolute refinement starts where nobody's looking—in how the car fits your life and how the systems work together.

A vehicle should feel settled, not eager or desperate. I've seen six-figure cars wrestle their owners like a bad handshake, and I've seen regular cars feel solid because someone took the time to understand them. When fit, function, and finish line up, people may not be able to explain what's different—but they feel it. That's presence.

The Discipline of Restraint

Many of us believe that if we could just be certain, we'd finally relax. Suppose we could control the outcome. But that's backward. Anxiety doesn't come from uncertainty; it comes from our relationship with it. The more we try to control everything, the more anxious we become.

What shows up instead are the "over" habits—overthinking, overworking, overexplaining. We do this because fear whispers that if we do more, we can lock things down. The truth is simple: the more you overdo it, the worse you feel. Nobody has ever overthought their way into peace.

Presence Is the Real Luxury

This is why absolute car ownership mastery isn't about being noticed; it's about being remembered. Loud cars beg for attention. Well-owned cars quietly earn respect. When someone shows up calm and steady, we trust them—not because they asked us to, but because consistency speaks louder than words.

Over the years, I've been lucky to have clients from all walks of life, including a brain surgeon who had performed thousands of operations. I once asked him what the most important skill a human being could master was. He didn't hesitate. Emotional regulation. Because the moment you lose control of your reaction, the situation controls you—the breakdown, the estimate, the noise you didn't expect.

The Emotional Core

This was never really about cars. That's just the prop. This is about composure. About not flailing when something rattles or lights up. When your outside choices match what's going on inside your head, things line up—the car, the habits, the way you carry yourself.

Quiet mastery isn't popular, and that's precisely why it still matters. You can't copy it, finance it, or filter it. It takes patience and self-control. So when you see a driver who feels steady without trying, understand this: you're not impressed by what they drive. You're reacting to what they've figured out. Because absolute luxury was never about cars, it was always about character, consistency, and control.

Authentic luxury isn't what you drive away in. It's how calmly you stay when the bill shows up.

Shahe Koulloukian is the owner of Mazvo Car Care in Phoenix and has spent over 30 years helping people navigate the emotional and financial realities of car ownership. He is the author of Car Confidential and Car Confidential Legacy, and a frequent local and syndicated television voice on consumer education, automotive responsibility, and ownership mindset.

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Through HonorHealth Desert Mission's Produce Prescription Program, eligible patients can receive \$50 per month in produce credits for six months. Credits are redeemable at Desert Mission's Mobile Farm Stands (submitted photo).

Senior Living Desert Mission launches new produce program

Nonprofit healthcare system HonorHealth, which serves more than five million people in the greater Phoenix area, announced it is expanding its approach to community health with the launch of its new Produce Prescription Program, led by HonorHealth Desert Mission. The initiative is funded by a nearly \$500,000 grant from the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Gus Schumacher Nutrition Incentive Program (GusNIP).

The program enables HonorHealth physicians to prescribe fresh fruits and vegetables as part of a patient's care plan. Eligible patients enrolled in Medicare or Medicaid who are managing chronic conditions such as type 2 diabetes, hypertension or obesity, or who are experiencing food insecurity, can receive \$50 per month in produce credits for six months. Credits are redeemable at Desert Mission's Mobile Farm Stands.

In addition to access to produce, participants receive nutrition education and ongoing support from their care team, helping address both immediate needs and long-term health.

The Produce Prescription Program will run through Sept. 14, 2028. It aims to improve dietary health, strengthen nutritional security and improve health outcomes related to blood pressure, weight, and blood sugar levels leading to reduced complications and improved

quality of life for participants.

Learn more by visiting www.desert-mission.com.

Low-cost events assess cardiovascular health

In recognition of February's Heart Month, Abrazo Health is offering low-cost Angio screen heart and stroke risk assessments at multiple hospital locations throughout the Valley. These screenings are designed to help identify early warning signs of cardiovascular disease – America's leading cause of death – and empower individuals to take proactive steps toward better heart health.

"Angio screens are non-invasive, painless assessments that can help detect potential artery blockages, irregular heart rhythms, circulation problems and other risk factors that often present without symptoms. Early detection allows you to seek follow-up care before a serious cardiac or stroke event occurs," said Cindy Roberts, RN, outreach manager for Abrazo Health.

The \$59 screening, which takes approximately 10 minutes, includes a quick carotid ultrasound to assess pressure and look for possible blockages; a simple EKG exam to screen for atrial fibrillation; an extremity circulation check for peripheral vascular disease; a blood pressure evaluation for hypertension; and a private consultation with a clinician to review results.

Screenings will begin Feb. 6 and run through March 11 at multiple Valley locations. Near the North Central area,

GENERATIONS

appointments are available at Abrazo Arizona Heart Hospital, 1930 E. Thomas Road, Wednesday, Feb. 25.
To find registration and additional information, visit www.abrazohealth.com/events.

Beatitudes Campus hosts events

Beatitudes Campus, located at 1610 W. Glendale Ave., will host two events in February to help residents explore retirement options.
At its Feb. 7 Cruise into Retirement event, 10 a.m. to noon, prospective residents can browse more than 50 classic and specialty cars (courtesy of the AZ MG club), enjoy music from a DJ, savor delicious food and mingle with residents and fellow car enthusiasts.
On Tuesday, Feb. 17, at 2 p.m., at a Retirement Tune-Up event, elder care attorney Stephanie Bivens will provide insights on documents every senior should have in their personal files. Enjoy light refreshments and enlightening legal refreshers.
To RSVP, call 602-805-9670 or visit www.beatitudescampus.org/events.

Kids & Families Hands-on event supports Camp Patrick

Families are invited to Touch-A-Truck for Camp Patrick at North Phoenix Baptist Church, 5757 N. Central Ave., on Monday, Feb. 16 (Presidents Day), from 9 a.m. – 2 p.m. The hands-on, family-friendly event allows kids to get up close with some of their favorite big vehicles.
On site there will be fire trucks, police vehicles, tractors, construction trucks and more. In addition, attendees can enjoy food trucks, local vendors and plenty of fun for the whole family. All proceeds support Camp Patrick and help send kids living with Spina Bifida to camp.
Tickets, \$5 per person or \$20 per family, are available online (<http://igfn.us/f/5utg/n>) or at the door. Camp Patrick provides a week-long summer camp experience for children with Spina Bifida. It empowers campers to strengthen their independence, build friendships and try new activities like

please see CAMP on page 34

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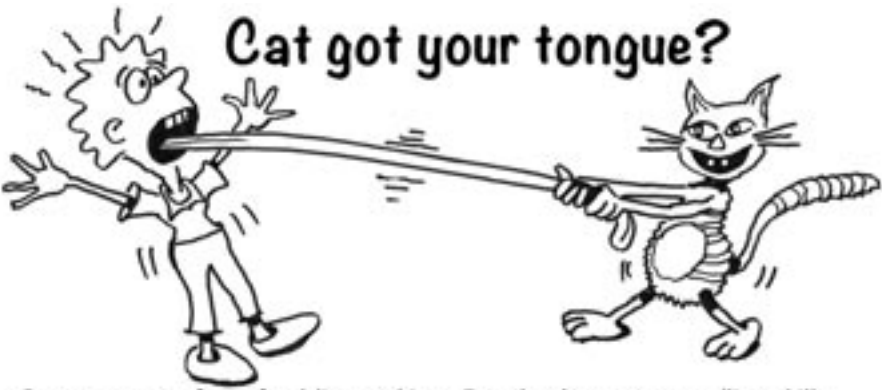
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GENERATIONS

CAMP continued from page 33

horseback riding, archery and music. Proceeds from this event will help kids attend this no-cost camp, offering invaluable support to both campers and their families. For more information, visit www.camppatrick.com.

Playfest focuses on healthy development

The fifth annual Thrive to 5 Playfest is a high-energy, hands-on experience created especially for children from birth to age five and the families who care for them. Through play-based activities, interactive learning and community connection, the event supports healthy development while creating joyful, lasting memories.

This family-friendly event will take place Saturday, Feb. 28, from 9:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. at the Arizona State Fairgrounds, 1826 W. McDowell Road in Phoenix. Admission is a \$10 donation per family, but a free entry code can be obtained by request on the registration page.

The day will begin with a Sensory



Families with children up to age five are invited to the annual Thrive to 5 Playfest for engaging activities and helpful resources (photo courtesy of Southwest Human Development).

Hour from 8:30 a.m. to 9:30 a.m., thoughtfully designed for children under three or those who benefit from a calmer, more relaxed environment with reduced noise and crowds. General admission starts at 9:30 a.m.

Families can look forward to a wide range of engaging activities, including free children's books to help build early literacy at home; sensory play areas designed to support developmental

exploration; make and take activities that encourage creativity and curiosity; yard games that promote movement and fun; touch-a-truck experiences for little explorers; photo booth fun to capture the day; and multi-cultural performances celebrating community and culture.

In addition to the fun, the event features a Community Resource Fair, connecting families with Southwest Human Development programs and

other local organizations that support children's health, learning, and family well-being. Families can learn about services, ask questions, and discover resources available to them year-round.

Learn more and register at www.swhd.org/playfest. For additional information, call 602-616-3079.

Celebrate spring with Majestic Mariposas

The Cohn Family Butterfly Pavilion at Desert Botanical Garden, 1201 N. Galvin Parkway, will celebrate the arrival of spring when hundreds of colorful Southwestern butterflies fill the air.

Open Feb. 27 to May 10, Majestic Mariposas allows guests to watch the monarchs and other stunning species dance from flower to flower and discover their incredible lifecycle up close. Snap a photo by the vibrant butterfly mural or simply pause and experience the serene world of pollinators surround you.

Entrance to the Butterfly Pavilion is included with membership or general admission. For additional information, call 480-941-1225 or visit www.dbg.org.



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ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT



Don your best Victorian dress and enjoy a picnic on the lawn at Rosson House Sunday, Feb. 8 (photo courtesy of the Square PHX).

Celebrate Valentine's Day Victorian style

Rosson House at The Square PHX, 113 N. 6th St., in partnership with the Phoenix Historical Costuming Society, will host a Valentine's picnic, Sunday, Feb. 8.

Dress in your Victorian best and bring a picnic lunch to enjoy on the Rosson House lawn, right in the heart of Downtown Phoenix. This outdoor gathering will include light refreshments and a Valentine-making station. Twenty-minute tours of Rosson House will be available for a reduced fee on the day, perfect for taking photos and getting a taste of The Square's history. All funds go towards the support of this historic city block.

Tickets are \$10, general admission, \$8 for The Square PHX members. For information, call 602-258-0048 or visit www.thesquarephx.org.

Chorus gala will 'Rock the Night'

Phoenix Children's Chorus is turning up the volume with Rock the Night: British Invasion, a high-energy concert-style fundraiser celebrating the iconic music that changed the world. The event takes place Saturday, March 7, at the historic Shrine Auditorium in Phoenix, 552 N. 40th St.

Inspired by legendary UK artists from the swinging '60s through today's

chart-topping icons, Rock the Night brings the sound, style, and spirit of the British Invasion to life through electrifying performances by Phoenix Children's Chorus. From the Beatles to Elton John and beyond, the evening promises unforgettable music, immersive atmosphere, and a powerful cause.

Proceeds from the event support choral education, scholarships and performance opportunities for youth across the Valley. For more information or to purchase tickets, visit www.phoenixchildrenschorus.org/gala.

Cultural center presents women's conference

The Irish Cultural and Learning Foundation invites residents to a transformative day of connection, reflection, and revitalization at the 2026 Women's Conference on Saturday, Feb. 7.

Rooted in Irish heritage and inspired by the enduring spirit of St. Brigid, this year's theme, Rooted. Reclaimed. Renewed., calls on attendees to restore their energy, rekindle their purpose and step forward with strength. St. Brigid of Kildare, one of Ireland's most cherished saints, is celebrated for her compassion, creativity and unwavering dedication to community. Known for founding monasteries, championing education and offering refuge to the vulnerable, she remains a symbol of hope and fresh beginnings.

please see CONFERENCE on page 36

Coming Soon

Breathtaking one of a kind timeless contemporary home that has been completely remodeled on a half-acre in Central Phoenix.

Main house has 3 bedrooms & 2.5 baths. Commercial grade kitchen features Viking gas stove, 2 ovens, 2 sub zeros, and butler workstation. Dining room and family room open to a lush resort-like setting with an amazing pool and tranquil gardens. The guest house has a kitchen, bath and studio.

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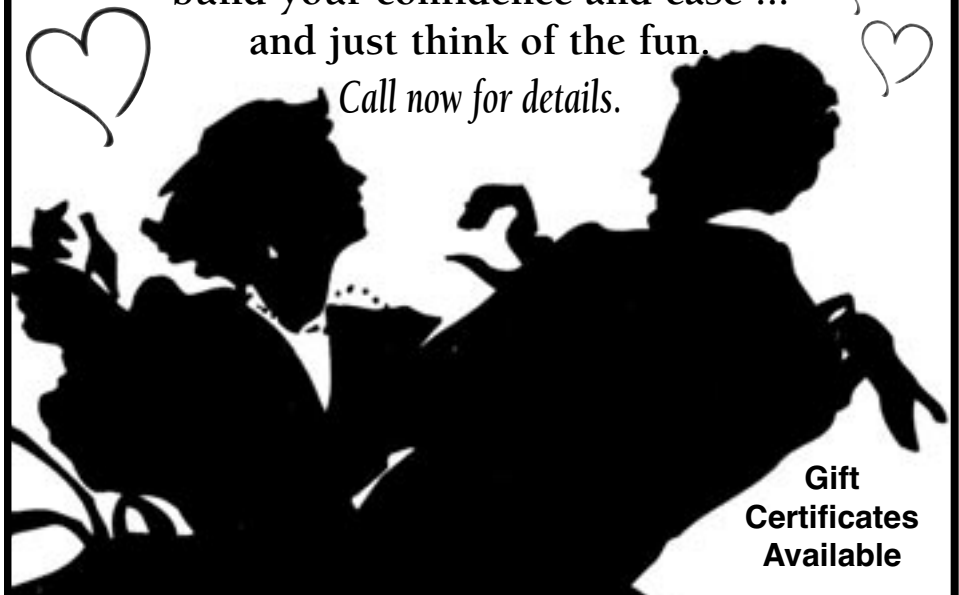


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ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

CONFERENCE continued from page 35

Her feast day marks the arrival of spring in Ireland, an annual reminder of growth, healing and renewal.

Gates open at 10 a.m., followed by programming from 10:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. For tickets, \$50 for general admission, and information, visit www.azirish.org/womens-conference.

Film fest explores Jewish culture

Showcasing 27 captivating films from around the globe, the Greater Phoenix Jewish Film Festival celebrates Jewish storytelling while delving into themes of culture, history and the human experience.

The 2026 festival invites audiences to enjoy a vibrant selection of heart-warming dramas, thought-provoking documentaries and laugh-out-loud comedies. This year's experience includes special guest conversations, filmmaker Q&As and other events.

The festival opens on Thursday, Feb. 12, 7 p.m. with the U.S. premier of the film "Heaven and Earth" at the Scottsdale Center for the Performing Arts and continues through March 1 at Harkins Theaters locations across the Valley.

"For 30 years, the Greater Phoenix Jewish Film Festival has brought our community together through the power of film. As we celebrate this milestone, we're inspired by how Jewish stories spark connection, conversation, and a shared sense of belonging across the Valley," said Tali Brosh and Virginie Polster, volunteer co-executive directors for GPJFF.

Full details are available online at www.gpjff.org.

School to screen Holocaust film

A screening of the documentary "For the Living," which follows the story of Holocaust survivor Marcel Zielinski, will be held on Tuesday, Feb. 3, from 4:30 to 7:30 p.m. on the ASU West Valley campus. The documentary is a discussion on how dehumanization and depersonalization lead to genocide, the need to cultivate compassion and empathy. It covers the Holocaust as well as other genocides throughout history.

The event is organized by the School of Humanities, Arts, and

Cultural Studies at the ASU West Valley campus, along with the Phoenix Holocaust Association and the Greater Phoenix Jewish Film Festival. After the film, the organizers will host a talkback with both the co-director, Tim Roper, and co-producer Lisa Effress.

The event is free and open to the public, although there will be a \$3 per hour charge for parking. Organizers say that the best lot to park in is lot 17 on the West campus, 4701 W. Thunderbird Road.

Tohe appointed poet laureate

In January, Governor Katie Hobbs announced the appointment of poet Dr. Laura Tohe as Poet Laureate for the State of Arizona. Tohe will serve a term of two years, during which she will offer public readings in various regions of the state and pursue a major literary project.

"I am deeply honored and grateful to be named Arizona State Poet Laureate," said Tohe. "Growing up with stories all around me in a rural community on the Navajo Nation Homeland inspired me to write poetry, but not until after college. Never did I imagine I would ever receive this incredible honor. Poetry is alive; it celebrates our human experience with language, voice, and reflection. I especially look forward to sharing and supporting poetry in Arizona's rural communities. This is an exciting opportunity."



Laura Tohe

An award-winning poet and writer, Tohe was born in Fort Defiance, Arizona and grew up speaking both Diné bizaad/Navajo language and English. She is a professor emerita of English at Arizona State University, where she taught for 24 years. Tohe previously served as Poet Laureate of the Navajo Nation from 2015 to 2019.

Established in 2012, the position of Arizona Poet Laureate is appointed by the governor to champion the art of American poetry, inspire an emerging generation of literary artists, and educate Arizonans about poets and authors who have influenced the state through creative literary expression. Tohe is the second person in the state's history to serve as Arizona Poet Laureate.

On the Town

Love is in the air, and residents of all ages will find dozens of ways to engage with the arts this month. From live music, dance and theater to art exhibits, cultural celebrations and First Friday events, see you on the town in February!

Esso

Feb. 4
The Rebel Lounge
www.therebellounge.com

Barflies: Heartbreak

Feb. 4
Valley Bar
www.valleybarphx.com; 602-716-2222

C.S. Lewis: 'The Screwtape Letters'

Feb. 5-7
Herberger Theater Center
www.herbergertheater.org; 602-252-8497

'Happy Days'

Feb. 6
Irish Cultural Center and McClelland Library
www.azirish.org/happy_days

First Friday: Juniper Ridge

Feb. 6
The Nash
www.thenash.org; 602-795-0464

First Friday: A Night in Japan

Feb. 6
Herberger Theater Center Pavilion
www.herbergertheater.org; 602-252-8497

'Jitney'

Feb. 6-22
Black Theatre Troupe at Helen K. Mason Performing Arts Center
www.blacktheatretroupe.org; 602-258-8128

PHX Flamenco Fest & Paella

Feb. 7
Crescent Ballroom
www.crescentphx.com; 602-716-2222

Ellise

Feb. 10
The Rebel Lounge
www.therebellounge.com



Amor y Powers

Feb. 12
Valley Bar
www.valleybarphx.com; 602-716-2222

Aaron McCall Band

Feb. 12
The Rhythm Room
www.rhythmroom.com; 602-612-4981

'ALICE (in Wonderland)'

Feb. 12-15
Ballet Arizona at Symphony Hall
www.balletaz.org; 602-381-1096

Folklore Friday – Traditional storytelling

Feb. 13
Fiddler's Dream Coffeehouse
www.fiddlersdream.org; 602-997-9795

American Elton

Feb. 14
Madison Center for the Arts
www.themadison.org; 602-664-7777

36th Annual World Championship Hoop Dance Contest

Feb. 14-15
Heard Museum
<https://heard.org>; 602-252-8840

Chinese Week Lunar New Year Festival

Feb. 14-15
The Square at Heritage and Science Park
www.thesquarephx.org; 602-258-0048



Cat Power

Feb. 15
The Van Buren
www.thevanburenphx.com; 480-659-1641

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

National Theatre Live:
‘Hamlet’

Feb. 15
Phoenix Art Museum
www.phxart.org; 602-257-1880

‘Invasive Species’

Thru Feb. 15
Eye Lounge at Modified Arts
www.eyelounge.com;
www.modifiedarts.org

‘In the Mood for Love’

Feb. 18
Phoenix Art Museum
www.phxart.org; 602-257-1880

Coffee House Saturdays:
Poor Lazarus

Feb. 21
North Mountain Visitor Center
www.northmountainvisitorcenter.org;
602-343-5125

Soundcheck:
Sunflower King

Feb. 19
Phoenix Art Museum
www.phxart.org; 602-257-1880

‘Disco Divas’

Feb. 20-22
The Phoenix Symphony
www.phoenixsymphony.org;
602-495-1999



(photo by Don Dixon)

Benny Green

Feb. 21
The Nash
www.thenash.org;
602-795-0464

‘Peter and the Wolf: A
Shadow Puppet Adventure’

Feb. 21
The Phoenix Symphony
at Madison Center for the Arts
www.phoenixsymphony.org;
602-495-1999

‘Ain’t Misbehavin’

Feb. 21 – March 8
Arizona Theatre Company
www.arizonatheatre.org; 1-833-282-
7328

‘Fruitvale Station’

Feb. 25
Phoenix Art Museum
www.phxart.org; 602-257-1880

Wayne The Train Hancock

Feb. 25
The Rhythm Room
www.rhythmroom.com; 602-612-4981

Vandoliers

Feb. 26
Crescent Ballroom
www.crescentphx.com; 602-716-2222

Celebrating America at
250: Gershwin, Copland
& More

Feb. 27 – March 1
The Phoenix Symphony
www.phoenixsymphony.org;
602-495-1999

The Summer Set

Feb. 27
The Van Buren
www.thevanburenphx.com;
480-659-1641

Third Space Dance Project

Feb. 28
Herberger Theater Center Pavilion
www.herbergertheater.org;
602-252-8497

Coffee House Saturdays:
Doug Metzger

Feb. 28
North Mountain Visitor Center
www.northmountainvisitorcenter.org;
602-343-5125

Hot Dogs & Jazz

Feb. 28
The Nash
www.thenash.org; 602-795-0464

All event dates are current at the time of publication. Check with individual venues for up-to-date show information. Find events throughout the month at www.northcentralnews.net/events.



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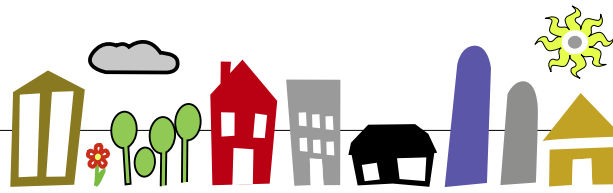
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February 14 7pm

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FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Café Chat

At Aftermath, the burger is king

By Marjorie Rice

If you visit Aftermath Bar & Kitchen in the 16th Street and Bethany Home quadrant of hot restaurants, don't miss the award-winning Aftermath burger. And don't be put off when you see Velveeta among the ingredients.

Here's how Executive Chef Austin Finley describes it: "It's a double smash patty with our house sauce, reminiscent of the secret sauce on a Big Mac – tangy, creamy with pickles and horseradish – adorned with house pickles, red onion and melted Velveeta on a Noble onion bun with toasted onions.

"Velveeta can be kind of controversial," he concedes, "but with a lot of cheeses, the emulsion will break. Velveeta is made so it's stable, creamy and velvety."

Aftermath founder Charles Barber agrees. "Nothing melts better or tastes better. We always had it in the house when I grew up."

While that may be a matter of individual taste, there's no denying that the combination works. The burger has made numerous "best" lists, and it's on the menu of all the restaurants in Barber's group.

Come this spring, when its Rosewood restaurant opens in Gilbert, the group will have opened five locations in five years, including Aftermath, its sister restaurants Born & Bred by Aftermath in Scottsdale and Chandler, and Hayden House in Tempe.

Finley is the culinary director for them all.

"I have a great team of super capable chefs," he said. "I spend a lot of my time here at Aftermath; it's kind of the baby of the group."

The food at Aftermath is upscale new American.

"The name Bar & Kitchen kind of hints to it – elevated American fare," Finley said. "I like to pull from different cuisines, with a lot of Mexican-influenced dishes. I like to play around with Southeast Asian flavors, Southern food and Spanish influences.

"I was trained in French techniques, so that's the backbone. I don't think



Executive Chef Austin Finley, left, and Aftermath founder Charles Barber showcase a sampling of the elevated American fare found at their North Central restaurant (photo by Darryl Webb for North Central News).

about specific dishes or recipes, I think about how I can highlight and manipulate ingredients to make them sing."

Finley is from San Antonio and grew up in his mom's barbecue restaurants. After studying at the Cordon Bleu in Austin, he cooked Southeast Asian street fare in a food truck before moving on to fine dining restaurants in the area. He moved to Phoenix in 2023 and was executive chef at Prime in Wildhorse Pass. He left there last year to join Aftermath.

"I wanted to be in a smaller, family-owned business and have a little bit more fun with the food," he said.

Barber, a fifth-generation native Arizonan, took a different track in his culinary career.

"I worked back of the house when I was a kid, doing easy line cook jobs, nothing to brag about," he said. "I started going more toward the front of the house when I was in high school. I was beverage director and manager at Zinc Bistro, then decided to take a jump and opened up Hush in North Scottsdale in 2019. I sold my portion to my partner and opened up Aftermath.

"This Bethany Home location was where Hush was originally supposed to go."

The purchase of the former garage hit roadblocks until four years ago, when Barber and his partners were able to buy the property and convert it.

There's a patio in front, with a high wall to muffle the noise of the busy

street. Inside, guests first see a large brick wall, painted white and simply decorated with mirrors, artwork and tiers of bottles of mixers and spirits. The décor is simple and comfy, in tones of dark tan and black.

And in pride of place near the entry is a large portrait of the late chef and television personality Anthony Bourdain.

"We grew up watching Bourdain," Barber said. "He's in every one of our restaurants. And guess what his favorite meal is? A burger."

Menu favorites – aside from that burger – include a beautifully presented burrata, with heirloom tomatoes marinated in sherry vinaigrette with toasted almonds and shaved prosciutto.

"It reflects my thoughts on building a dish," Finley said. "With techniques and ingredients, everything has to have a reason. Otherwise, you're just throwing everything against the wall and see if it sticks."

The half-chicken, newest on the menu, is another popular dish, Finley said. It's marinated in a take on al pastor flavors, with a healthy kick of sweet and spice from Gochujang, Korean red chili paste, grilled and served with tortillas.

The crudo is another – Hamachi paired with a Leche de Tigre-style sauce made with coconut milk, Fresno chiles, ginger, garlic, fish sauce, citrus and turmeric and served with pineapple, snap peas and crispy shallots.

"Those three – Hamachi, burrata and chicken – highlight most of what I think about making food," Finley said. "The Hamachi is kind of global, the chicken links to my Texas roots and our Mexican influences, and the burrata is a perfect example of the way I think about blending flavors."

To top it off, there's the bread pudding, topped with bacon "snow" – rendered bacon fat mixed with a thickener that turns it to powder. "Just a little dusting on top," Finley said. "We call it 'snow' because it's super white."

And you can't pass up the drinks.

"We have a great cocktail program," Barber said. "It's our spin on classics. There are enough innovators in the world who have seven hours to prep. The right ingredients and proportions never get old. We just want to do great classics like our old fashioned."

Aftermath Bar & Kitchen, 1534 E. Bethany Home Road, is open for lunch 11 a.m. to 3 p.m., Monday through Friday; for dinner 4 to 10 p.m. daily; and for brunch 10 a.m. to 3 p.m., Saturday and Sunday. For information, call 602-607-5240 or visit www.aftermathphoenix.com.

Brasserie opens in former Belly spot

By Kathryn M. Miller

A new concept, Brasserie Melrose, opened in early December at 4971 N. 7th Ave. after Belly Kitchen and Bar closed just over a year ago, in late 2024.

"Brasserie Melrose is designed to feel like a modern neighborhood brasserie in Paris, relaxed and welcoming in the morning as a bakery and café, then transitioning into a lively, stylish cocktail bar and restaurant," general manager Tory Johnson told us. "The vibe is equal parts elegant and approachable: croissants and coffee by morning, oysters, cocktails, and French classics by afternoon and evening, all in a space that feels both timeless and fresh. Brasserie Melrose is a restaurant for everyone and every occasion."

From 7 to 11 a.m., patrons can enjoy counter-service French bakery favorites – all made in-house – including butter croissants, quiche and artisanal pastries, along with a full espresso bar serving classic and signature drinks.

From 11 a.m. to 6 p.m., the restau-

FOOD FOR THOUGHT



Tucked in at the southeast corner of 7th Avenue and Camelback Road, new restaurant Brasserie Melrose is bringing relaxed yet stylish Parisian flair to the neighborhood (photo courtesy of Brasserie Melrose).

rant offers a full-service lunch – complete with a curated cocktail menu. Dinner service is on the horizon, likely in February, Johnson added.

According to the website, the lunch menu focuses on seasonal French fare, including regional dishes, classic sauces and wines, plus “a raw bar when the mood strikes.” In addition to a variety of seafood platters, soup and salads, starters offered are escargot, warm olives and peppers and a charcuterie sampler. Sandwiches include Parisian ham on baguette and a rotating selection of tartines. Frites, quiche and chicken Pillard round out the “mains” menu.

The spot is currently open Wednesday through Sunday. Parking is limited, and for those coming from outside the Melrose neighborhood, rideshare or light rail is recommended. For information, call 480-600-7975 or visit www.brasseriemelrose.com.

Dining Briefs

Postino offers

Open-inspired cocktail

With the Waste Management Phoenix Open around the corner, Postino is rolling out a new cocktail just for the occasion.

The restaurant invites residents and visitors alike to stop by their patio for a “19th Hole” experience featuring The Caddy Cocktail, available only for that week, Feb 1-7. The refreshing-sounding cocktail is made with Jose Cuervo tequila, cucumber, mint and Owen’s ginger beer. The \$15 Caddy is available at all Valley locations.

In addition, the eatery’s happy hour is available daily, which includes \$6 wine by the glass and beer pitchers until 5 p.m., to pair with a more than a dozen “snacky things” or “boards,” and more.

In North Central, visit Postino at 5144 N. Central Ave. or 3939 E. Campbell Ave. For more information, visit www.postinowinecafe.com.

Noodle restaurant to open in former Mora space

Growing up in the small town of Kurume, Narahara Shinji developed a deep fascination with noodles. In April 2011, he opened Udon Shin in Yoyogi, Shibuya, where he hand-cuts fresh noodles and crafts a delicate dashi from bonito flakes and kelp, and patrons reportedly queue for hours to partake.

The celebrated udon master is now bringing his craft to the U.S., with his eponymous restaurant set to open in early 2026 at 5651 N. 7th St., which housed Scott Conant’s Mora Italian until it closed in 2024. Also opening this year is Udon Shin in Mesa.

“We’re bringing you the very best of Japan,” the restaurant’s social media proclaimed, “fresh, exclusive, and absolutely delicious. From handcrafted cocktails to perfectly prepared nigiri, get ready for an experience you won’t want to miss.”

Previews of the menu include a signature redefined take on the classic carbonara, rich and melt-in-your-mouth Toro, topped with Kizami to enhance the taste (“a perfect balance of sweetness and a sharp heat”), rich and slight-

please see NOODLES on page 40

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FOOD FOR THOUGHT

NOODLES *continued from page 39*

ly sweet flavor, Kimmedai with Sanbaizu sauce, lemon zest and salt. And, of course, made from scratch udon noodles.

Find updates on Instagram: www.instagram.com/narahararestaurants.

New deli serves North Mountain area

With a focus on “bringing people together over food that feels honest and homemade,” Deli 8:20 opened its doors to patrons at 13216 N. 7th St., Suite B2, on Nov. 3 last year.

The owners, who come from a BBQ background (Batchelor’s Pad BBQ in Fountain Hills) say that “great sandwiches don’t need to be fancy, just made with care.” They have put together a menu with items like the smoked pork belly BLT (smoked thick cut pork belly served on grilled brioche bread with fire roasted poblano mayo and green leaf lettuce and tomatoes), Tuscan stack (sliced mozzarella, mixed greens and sliced tomatoes on focaccia with pesto and balsamic reduction), and cashew chicken salad croissant (cashew, smoked chicken, dried cranberries and celery with blackberry aioli).

In addition, the Batch’s hamburger (brisket patty topped with melted American cheese and blackberry aioli on a buttery brioche bun) allows diners to choose from a variety of toppings, and sides range from sweet jalapeño slaw to Southwest mac salad and the restaurant boasts French fries that are cooked in beef tallow. On the dessert menu, patrons will find banana pudding.

The spot is open Sundays, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., and Monday through Saturday, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. For additional information, call 480-943-8993 or visit www.deli820.com.

Treat your valentine (or yourself!)

February may traditionally be for sharing time with the one you love, but there is no rule that says you can’t show a little self-love this month or spend time with your bestie on Feb. 14. With that in mind, here are three ways to dine in style and savor the moment this month.

Indulge yourself PCG style

In celebration of Valentine’s Day, on Saturday, Feb. 14, diners are invited to indulge in an exclusive prix fixe three-course menu at Phoenix City Grille (PCG).



The smoked pork belly BLT is just one of the tempting barbeque-centric offerings on the menu at Deli 8:20, which recently opened on 7th Street (photo courtesy of Deli 8:20).

First course menu items include a choice of New England clam chowder, roasted corn soup with poblano relish, brie cheese dip or baby gem salad. For a second course, choose wood-grilled coffee-crusted beef tenderloin, bourbon-braised short rib, vanilla-brined pork chop, vegetarian pasta primavera, pan seared blue nose bass, Rose Lane chicken or cedar plank salmon. Top off the evening with red velvet cheesecake, espresso pot de crème or pana cotta with blueberry compote and fresh strawberries.

Add-on dishes are available to enhance the dining experience, which costs \$85, per person, plus tax and gratuity. For more information or to make a reservation, call 602-266-3001 or visit www.phoenixcitygrille.com. Reservations can also be made through OpenTable.

Downtown fun for the gals

Celebrate Galentine’s (or Valentine’s) in the heart of Downtown Phoenix at Sheraton Phoenix Downtown’s dining destination, Carcara, 340 North 3rd St.

Enjoy an interactive Paint & Sip experience featuring Fletcha Azul tequila, where guests are invited to spend a spirited evening of creativity and connection led by Fletcha Azul Tequila Ambassador Chris Seithel and local artist Carmen Bradford. The experience includes a guided tequila tasting of blanco, reposado, and añejo, paired with sweet and salty bites curated by Executive Chef Dominique St. Pierre, plus a signature welcome cocktail and all painting supplies to create a Valentine’s-inspired canvas to take home.

The cost is \$35 per person. Visit www.opentable.com/r/carcara-phoenix to RSVP.

Local favorite returns

While they have not promoted a Valentine’s Day menu, if it has been a minute since you visited Town & Country Shopping Center, diners will find that Tratto is once again making its home there, next door to its sister restaurant, Pizzeria Bianco.

Originally opened at the shopping center in 2016, the eatery moved a few miles away in 2020. But in September 2025, it moved back to its original location. Styled to reflect a classic Italian Trattoria, offering a warm and welcoming elevated dining experience is the goal. The team says this is achieved “by focusing on fresh and local ingredients” for their Italian dishes, which have a Southwestern flare that honors the local communities.

Tratto is open Tuesday through Saturday, 5 to 9 p.m. Visit them at 4743 N. 20th St. For reservations (recommended but not required), call 602-296-7761 or visit www.trattophx.com.

Slate set to open on Central

Located at 8801 N. Central Ave. and expected to open Feb. 1, Slate by Nik Fields is a wine-forward lounge where art, cuisine and conversation combine, and a follow-up to Fields’ Chic Chef 77.

Created by celebrity chef, Food Network personality and sommelier Nik Fields, the restaurateur says that Slate “invites guests into a world rooted in wine, storytelling and atmosphere, with a space

designed for lingering and connecting.”

“Slate by Nik Fields was never about starting over,” said Fields. “It’s about evolution. Chic Chef 77 laid the foundation. Slate is the continuation. A place where wine, culture and community can live together.”

Through signature programming such as private events and First Fridays every first Friday of the month, the restaurant hopes to build rapport with the community through curated tastings, and intimate cultural gatherings.

The open-concept kitchen is anchored by a wood-fire oven, offering guests a front-row seat to live-fire cooking. The chef says that the menu centers on elevated small plates for sharing, alongside a rotating seasonal entrée that changes monthly, ensuring the experience evolves with the seasons. Current menu items include Bruschetta with Chef Nik’s Italian-grown balsamic vinegars, rotating seasonal limited-edition monthly entrées, and chef-choice charcuterie boards.

The restaurant features a 100-pour rotating wine list, curated to complement the wood-fire menu and shift throughout the year. Anchoring the list is The 7 Wine Collection, an exclusive lineup that reflects Fields’ personal approach to wine as both craft and story. The curated collection tells a story of her personal journey and how it relates to wine – a release date of April 1 is anticipated.

“Slate was intentionally designed to create visibility for Black-owned and women-owned wine brands, offering representation in an industry where it remains rare,” Fields said, adding that fewer than one percent of U.S. wineries is Black-owned, and women account for only an estimated 10 to 15 percent of lead winemakers and wine executives nationwide.

“By placing these producers alongside globally respected labels, Slate invites guests to explore wine through equity,” she added.

The restaurant is also an art-driven cultural space, featuring live music, poetry and rotating local artists including Keven Anthony, saxophonist, Esko Violin, violinist and jazz singer Bibire Harmony.

With a private parking lot and an outdoor patio, the restaurant is located between North Central Phoenix and the historic Sunnyslope community, in the former Timo’s space. Find updates and information online at www.slatebynikfields.com.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Explore the world of craft cocktails

Arizona Cocktail Weekend returns for its 14th year Feb. 27 to March 2, with ticketed events across Phoenix.

Arizona Center will play host to the 2026 Cocktail Carnival, Saturday, Feb. 28, 4-8 p.m. Participants, 21-and-over, will enjoy brand showcases, live entertainment and more. Explore themed booths, vibrant performances and interactive activations while sampling more than 30 expertly crafted cocktails. Ticket prices include premium drink samples.

Sunday, March 1, Warehouse 215 will host the Top Bars Invitational, 8-11 p.m. The one-of-a-kind international cocktail experience features pop-up versions of renowned bars from around the state, country and across the globe.

Enjoy more than 30 samples of

craft cocktails from world-famous bars and entertainment, all under one roof. Find a list of participants online.

Rounding out the event is Last Slinger Standing, March 2, a head-to-head bartending competition that puts 16 of the best mixologists out there to the test using a secret ingredient and judged by cocktail experts.

Find tickets and details online at www.arizonacocktailweekend.com.

Seven Chefs dinner returns

The Seven Chefs Dinner returns Wednesday, Feb. 18, bringing together some of Arizona’s most influential chefs for a one-night-only, multi-course collaboration at Beckett’s Table, 3717 E. Indian School Road.

This dinner, held this year from 6 to

8 p.m., is a celebration of craft, community and culinary camaraderie; a rare chance to experience eight of Arizona’s best chefs cooking side by side, each contributing a distinct course inspired by local ingredients, personal heritage and the evolving flavors of the Southwest.

The 2026 chef lineup includes Justin Beckett, Beckett’s Table; James Fox, Vecina; Lori Hashimoto, Hana Japanese Eatery; executive chef Stephen Jones; Bernie Kantak, Citizen Public House, The Gladly, Beginner’s Luck and Minnow; Gio Osso, Virtu Honest Craft; Dom Roggiero, Hush Public House; and Nico Zades, Valentine.

The cost is \$200 per person and includes wine or non-alcoholic pairings. Limited tickets are available at <https://events.humanitix.com/devour-2026-seven-chefs-dinner>.

Foodist Award finalists announced

The 12th Annual Foodist Awards take place on Monday, Feb. 23, at Warehouse215 in Phoenix. In advance of the evening of celebration, the Arizona Restaurant Association has announced the 2026 Foodist Awards finalists.

The nominations for the 2026 Foodist Awards included six new categories: Best Bread, Top Happy Hour Spot, Best Place to Watch a Game, Immersive Culinary Experience, Favorite Neighborhood Hangout, and Hotel Restaurant Hot Spot. The Foodist Awards finalists were determined by public votes and contributions from this year’s Foodist Awards panelists.

Find the list of finalists and buy tickets online at www.foodistawards.com.

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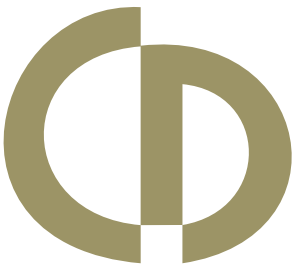


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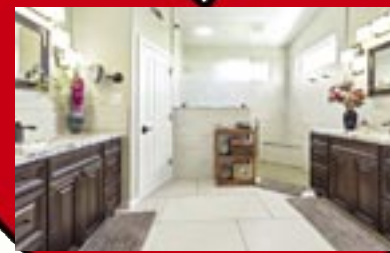
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