



north central news

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Musical journey leads to symphony performance

By Trudy Thompson Shumaker

Nevin Atodaria, a junior at Brophy College Preparatory, has composed an original orchestral work inspired by a Hindu story told by his grandmother.

His work, “Karna,” was performed by the Phoenix Symphony April 23 as part of the Symphony for the Schools Field Trip Program, with his grandmother and parents in the audience. Nevin himself introduced the piece to hundreds of students, including his own classmates from Brophy.

“My grandmother has always told me some amazing stories, all capturing my imagination. I was particularly inspired by ‘Karna,’ the central character from Mahabharata. I wrote this composition around his life,” said Nevin.

Karna was a hero in the Hindu epic, and he had a very hard journey, starting with abandonment as a child and going through many struggles and battles. Nevin’s composition follows Karna’s life, taking listeners through the emotions of his struggles and victories, culminating in a powerful final battle and spiritual ascension. The soaring music takes listeners to a final triumph that is powerful and uplifting.

What was Nevin’s musical journey? He started piano lessons when he was 6, and now also plays viola and guitar. As a violist himself, he says he was especially excited to give the viola a strong voice within the orchestra.

please see PERFORMANCE on page 6



A new mural by Arizona artist Martin Moreno graces the gym building exterior at Washington Activity Center and celebrates the deep and rich cultural history of the area, historically known as Barrio Santa Rosa (photo by Kathryn M. Miller).

Mural celebrates rich cultural history

By Kathryn M. Miller

At an April 1 community event, residents in the Washington Park neighborhood gathered to celebrate recently completed renovations at the city’s Washington Activity Center, located at 2240 W. Citrus Way. While neighbors young and old oohed and aahed at the many updates, it was a new mural that brought residents together to reflect on the neighborhood’s past and future.

The renovations were part of the NCAA Women’s Final Four Legacy Project presented by Dove, which serves to revitalize recreational spaces such as parks, community centers or facilities in historically underserved areas. The Washington Activity Center was transformed with a beautifully refurbished indoor basketball court, a new computer lab, a teen lounge, a cozy literacy lounge with hundreds of Scholastic books and that outdoor mural, created by local artist Martin Moreno.

The April event also served as a recognition of the area’s cultural heritage, and the mural was designed to help tell the story of the Barrio Santa Rosa. A brief history of the neighborhood provided by

District 5 Councilwoman Betty Guardado’s office told the story of how, in the early 20th century, Hispanic families moved into the agricultural belt south of the Arizona Canal, many working on area lettuce, cotton and citrus farms.

While some lived on farms where they worked, others, like the Luis Flores family, purchased land near 19th and Glendale avenues to settle and raise families. As the post-World War II population boomed, land was purchased and subdivided, including the W.J. Lawrence Tracts, platted between 19th and 21st avenues with the through streets of Lawrence and Ocotillo roads. Small businesses, like Henry Ong’s Farmer’s Super Market on 19th Avenue

please see HISTORY on page 8

in this issue

- Senior housing project breaks ground | page 4
- Stay safe in the summer heat | page 12
- Changes coming to local post office | page 14
- Credit union opens new branch | page 22
- Saving a neighborhood institution | page 46

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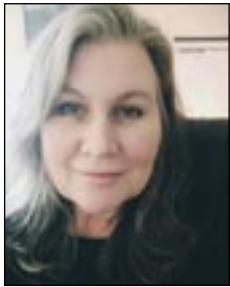
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From the Editor

Hello, North Central neighbors! Writing this month's cover story, I learned a lot about the Washington Park neighborhood, or Barrio Santa Rosa as it was known. The depth of history was surprising – I lived in that neighborhood close to 10 years and never learned about the rich tapestry prior generations had weaved there. Hopefully, the new mural at the Washington Activity Center will spark conversations about history there and elsewhere – I think that communities become richer and more cohesive by reflecting on those who came before us.



I also want to give a shout out to the kind stranger who helped my kids after my son's truck had a blowout on the I-17 – never a good thing, but incredibly dan-

gerous on a busy freeway. They pulled over safely, and as my son worked to get the spare loose, someone pulled in front of them, opened his trunk, took out a floor jack and said, "I'm here to help."

As armed conflict overseas, mass shootings here at home, stories of financial hardships and deep political divisions inundate newsfeeds, it is important to remember that random acts of kindness and considered acts of community take place every day. There are young people expressing beauty through music and seasoned artists preserving cultural history; there are volunteers building gardens and neighbors working together toward common goals.

There is always good to be found – if we keep our eyes open to it. And sometimes we have to create the good simply by showing up and saying, "I'm here to help."

We hope you enjoy our May issue, and until month, all my best,

Kathryn M. Miller
Editor, *North Central News*
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Location & Meeting

Our meetings are held on the first and third Friday of each month beginning at 9:00 am. Our meeting spot is at The Casa patio, 7878 N. 16th St., Phoenix, AZ 85020. Following the meeting, we tour up to 10 homes new to the market. We require those REALTORS who have a property on the tour to attend the meeting and then participate in a tour of all houses on that day's tour. Each agent provides constructive feedback on price, condition, and key features of the home. The goal is to network with fellow REALTORS who also specialize in North Central Phoenix neighborhoods and help sell the property.

Tour Boundaries

Tour boundaries are Campbell Avenue to the south, 40th Street to the east, 19th Avenue to the west, with the northern border running south of the North Phoenix Mountain Preserve (roughly Peoria) and just north of Lincoln from 16th Street east to 40th St. The Phoenix Country Club area also is included.

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For more information or to become a member, visit our website at

<https://northcentraltour.com/>

COMMUNITY



Construction on the Helen Drake Village, a new affordable housing community that will bring 80 rental homes to Phoenix seniors, is anticipated to be completed in 2027 (photo courtesy of City of Phoenix Housing Department).

City breaks ground on affordable senior living

At an April 10 ground-breaking event, the city of Phoenix and its partners celebrated the start of construction on Helen Drake Village, a new affordable housing community that will bring 80 rental homes to Phoenix seniors.

The project is located on city-owned land next to the existing Helen Drake Senior Center at 7600 N. 27th Ave., creating the city's first-ever combined senior housing and services campus.

Helen Drake Village will feature 74 one-bedroom units and six two-bedroom units in a modern, three-story building, designed for adults 55 years old and older. Apartments will be available at prices that are affordable for seniors with incomes ranging from 30 percent to 60 percent of the Area Median Income (AMI). The project is made possible through a partnership between the city of Phoenix, co-developer The Richman Group, Snell & Wilmer, Biltform Architects, Atwell Engineering, EOS Builders and the Arizona Department of Housing.

By building this community next to the Helen Drake Senior Center, the city says that it is making it easier for residents to stay active, connected and supported. Seniors living at Helen Drake Village will be steps away from social activities, wellness programs, community meals and recreation opportunities already offered at the center.

“Co-locating housing with an active senior center is a huge win for older adults in Phoenix, Jacqueline Edwards, Human Services director said.

“Residents will have immediate access to programs and community support that enrich their daily life, and we’re excited to welcome them.”

Residents also will have access to onsite amenities at Helen Drake Village, including a community center, wellness studio, sports courts and community garden.

In a press release, city leadership said, “Helen Drake Village represents another step in implementing the city’s Housing Phoenix Plan, which calls for redevelopment of city-owned land to create new affordable and mixed-income housing options.”

Construction is expected to be completed in 2027. Learn more at www.phoenix.gov/administration/departments/housing/housing-phoenix-plan.html.

Food pantry meets community needs

As part of the North Central Phoenix community, the Arizona Kosher Food Pantry (AKFP) is reminding its neighbors and friends in need of food assistance that they are here to help.

In addition to helping alleviate food insecurity, the food pantry also helps families who are in need of kosher food supplies. Hours of operation are from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays; Tuesdays, 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. and Thursdays 9 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.

AKFP, a nonprofit, charitable organization, accepts charitable donations. Learn at www.azkosherpantry.org or contact AKFP at info@azkosherpantry.org or 602-492-4989.



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By Mark Jacobson

Lasting Impressions Owner

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COMMUNITY

PERFORMANCE continued from page 1

“I’ve composed smaller works before, but nothing as big as this, featuring many instruments. It has been a lot of fun. And the fact that it will be performed by amazingly talented Phoenix Symphony musicians at Symphony Hall is pretty exciting!” he said.

Where did this high schooler get the idea to compose an orchestral piece of this magnitude?

“My dad was reading the *North Central News* last year and he read about this program through the Symphony for the Schools Field Trip Program. It invites students to compose original works and write an essay about it. I had some time over the summer, so I decided to go for it. I’m really glad I did,” the Brophy student said.

Nevin and his family moved to North Central Phoenix to get closer to his school, and it’s been a good move, he says. “There is so much to do in North Central – like go to the symphony.”

“The Symphony for the Schools Field Trip Program offers free field trip experiences to thousands of Arizona students, so they can experience an Arizona student’s creativity elevated to the professional level,” said Jordonna Matlock, assistant director of Education Programming at the Phoenix Symphony.

“By featuring ‘Karna’ within Symphony for the Schools, we celebrate not only professional excellence but also the talent, imagination and potential of Arizona students – we show young listeners that their own creative voices matter.”

The program is open to students in grades one to 12 (split into two age groups) and will expand next year, with details available this summer. As Nevin



Nevin Atodaria, a junior at Brophy College Preparatory, (pictured center) composed an original orchestral work, titled “Karna,” that was selected by the Phoenix Symphony for performance during its 2025-2026 season (submitted photo).

said, students must submit an essay describing inspiration for their work, as well as a biography. Works must be a minimum of two minutes and a maximum of six minutes and require at least four instruments.

Information about the 2026-27 program will be on the Symphony website this summer and shared via email with music faculty throughout the Valley. The window for submissions is usually January through May.

What does Nevin advise young students who may be reluctant to engage in music lessons?

“OK, I will admit that I was forced to take piano lessons,” he said. “But I am so glad that I did! I would say just try it. You may find joy in getting a note just right, in mastering a little passage, in improvising. I found that I enjoyed not only learning music but also improvising – and learning how to create my own music.”

And an insider’s tip from Nevin: “When you play music, it gathers people around you, which is a lot of fun.” Nevin credits Dr. Johnathan Robinson, music director at Brophy, for inspiring him and also teaching him how many musicians must work together to perform a piece.

“I have learned so much from Dr. Robinson – he has helped shape me as a musician and as a person.”

And Nevin’s parents? Drs. Shilpa and Neil Atodaria can’t play a note. Or, as his dad says, “We’re not at all musically inclined, but we really are enjoying it through our son!”

His mom added, “We owe a huge thanks to *North Central News* – as a direct result of a story in your paper last year, Nevin participated in this competition. His piece was chosen and we are so proud that it will be performed by Symphony musicians at Symphony Hall.”

Graffiti impacts neighborhoods

The City of Phoenix Neighborhood Services Department (NSD) is helping combat graffiti vandalism which can impact neighborhood pride, create safety concerns and have a negative effect on residents and businesses. Through the Graffiti Free Phoenix program, the city partners with residents, businesses and community organizations to remove graffiti quickly and promote long-term prevention.

The program, administered by NSD, responds to graffiti reported on public property and provides information and resources to help address graffiti on private property. In 2025, the Graffiti Busters removed graffiti at 46,118 sites. The Graffiti Busters respond to reports from residents seven days a week, cleaning up graffiti at no cost to residents or businesses.

“Removing graffiti quickly is one of the most effective ways to prevent it from happening again,” said Lucas Mariacher, deputy director over NSD’s Neighborhood Preservation Division.

Residents play an important role in keeping Phoenix graffiti-free, the city said. Community members are encouraged to report graffiti through one of three easy methods:

Call NSD staff at 602-534-4444, send an email to blight@phoenix.gov or report online through myPHX311 (www.phoenix.gov/myPHX311).

For graffiti removal on private property, the city requires permission from the property owner. Residents also can request paint and supplies to remove graffiti on their own as part of a community clean-up effort.

To learn more, visit www.phoenix.gov/graffiti.



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COMMUNITY

HISTORY continued from page 1

were opened to serve residents.

The community identity was further cemented by the establishment of the Santa Rosa Catholic Center, and on the feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe on Dec. 12, 1948, Reverend Ernest Wilson celebrated the first mass in the Santa Rosa community. Remnants of the center remain, as do the memories of longtime residents like Pio Garcia, who recalled the John Jacobs Farms on 19th and Peoria avenues, where residents harvested potatoes.

All of this history and more is reflected in Moreno's mural, which unfolds as a continuous visual narrative. At the left, the artist pays tribute to the local community with the American Rose, which holds deep cultural significance within Mexican American communities, he said. Other imagery includes orange blossoms and cotton fields and an ofrenda (alter) that serve as historic reminders of the barrio, along with field workers, mountain ranges and a floral composition inspired by pre-Columbian design. To

the far right, an ancient Hohokam water vessel pours water into the historic canal systems that continue to serve the region today.

The elements all come together to celebrate life, balance, continuity and harmony – along with the communal spirit embodied by the activity center.

In his written narrative, Moreno says, "Together, these elements create a cohesive mural that honors the past, celebrates the present and looks forward to the future – reflecting the Washington Activity Center as a place of connection, movement and shared cultural heritage."

Helping steer the neighborhood's future is a group of actively involved neighbors, led by Sarah Curtiss, president of the Washington Park Neighborhood Association, whose boundaries run from Glendale Avenue and Bethany Home Road, 19th Avenue to the I-17.

Curtiss was in attendance at the April 1 event, which was also attended by Moreno, Guardado and dozens of neighbors who came out to tour the updated activity center, view the mural

and enjoy gathering with friends and family. Curtiss, along with other community members, served on the committee that helped bring the Legacy Project to their community.

"This community center is used by toddlers for the music programs. It is used for the junior basketball league, indoor soccer, chair yoga – it is used by so many people from toddlers to seniors every day. The updates will bring more people here – we've got the high school and the elementary school right there – and this will give them a safe place to go after school with actual activities."

Curtiss has lived in the neighborhood for more than six years and says that the light rail initially drew them to the community.

"We were moving back from China and we wanted to keep to one car. My husband and I are used to public transportation and when he was doing his MBA at ASU, he wanted to be able to take the light rail. We were looking at different neighborhoods and what made us put an offer on the house is that we had met all of the neighbors before we even put in the offer."

The amenities at the activity center and Washington Park itself were also a big plus, but "What keeps us here is the community," Curtiss added.

Many of the current neighbors are related to the original Santa Rosa Barrio farmworkers, and it is that continuity and cultural history, as well as the new connections that are being made, that keeps the neighborhood thriving. And Curtiss encourages other neighbors – whether longtime or newcomers – to get involved with the neighborhood association, which meets the second Tuesday of the month at the activity center.

"We focus on safety, what is happening in the neighborhood – things like that," Curtiss added.

Connect with the Washington Park Neighborhood Association by sending an email to washingtonparkphx@gmail.com or on Facebook, @washingtonparkneighborhood. To learn how to get involved with a group in your area, or to organize your own neighborhood association, visit www.phoenix.gov/administration/departments/nsd/get-involved.html.

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We invite you to see the full story of our commitment to Arizona in our 2025 annual report at [bannerhealth.com/about](https://www.bannerhealth.com/about).



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A team from Republic Services rolled up their sleeves at Keep Phoenix Beautiful’s Pierson Street Community Garden in early April, helping paint, clean and more (photo by Embrace Photography; courtesy of Keep Phoenix Beautiful).

Gardens welcome community volunteers

Residents who are looking for outdoor volunteer opportunities, or perhaps a plot of dirt to grow their own food, are invited to join Keep Phoenix Beautiful at one of its two community gardens this month.

Founded in 1982, Keep Phoenix Beautiful is a local, sustainably-minded nonprofit 501(c)3 organization. The organization hosts two Phoenix gardens that are home to more than 80 local gardeners – the Mountain View Garden at 9901 N. 7th Ave., and the Pierson Street Garden at 1822 W. Pierson St.

At the Pierson garden, the organization hosts second Saturday volunteer events. Join them May 9 from 8-11 a.m.; registration closes May 8. This location boasts 52 garden beds, in addition to one in-ground urban farm for Native Health, and currently has beds available to rent. The Mountain View garden, which currently has a rental waitlist for one of its 32 garden beds, generally hosts third Saturday volunteer events. Join them May 16 from 8-11 a.m. Registration closes May 15.

Tasks at both events may include weeding, watering, planting, harvesting, litter clean up, etc. Volunteers should wear closed-toed shoes and bring a water bottle or hydro flask; hats and sunscreen are highly recommended.

The community gardens are part of the nonprofit’s overall mission to “provide tools to empower our diverse communities to improve overall quality of life.” To learn more about Keep

Phoenix Beautiful and find additional volunteer opportunities, visit www.KeepPhxBeautiful.org.

City seeks input on Food Action Plan

The city of Phoenix is requesting public feedback on the Draft 2030 Food Action Plan to build a healthier, more sustainable local food system, and they are looking to residents for input.

A “food system” is a network of all the processes, people and resources involved in getting food from the farm to your plate. This involves a wide range of participants – farmers, food processors, distributors, food outlets like restaurants, stores and markets, consumers, and food recyclers each play a part by growing, moving, preparing or enjoying food.

The “food action plan” is a roadmap that outlines how the city, community partners and residents can support the local food system. The plan will help guide decisions and investments to ensure everyone in Phoenix has access to healthy, affordable and culturally appropriate food.

Resident feedback will shape future programs and direct how the city invests in the local food system. The city says that whether you grow your own food, work at a food bank, run a restaurant, or just care about healthy food for everyone – your input is essential.

Visit the website to access the Draft 2030 Food Action Plan and submit your comments by May 15: www.phoenix.gov/administration/departments/oep/oep-programs/food/phoenix-food-action-plan.html.

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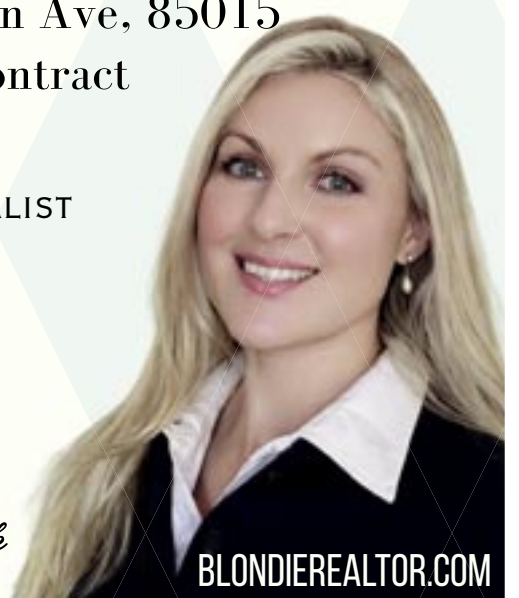
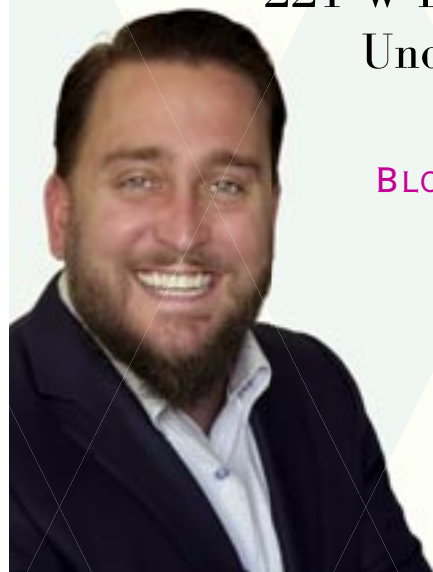


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Stay safe in high summer heat

Phoenix has already seen record-high temperatures this year, with the Valley hitting above the 100-degree mark multiple days in March. And while there was a brief respite in April, the county confirmed the first heat-related death of the year on April 10. With the summer months on the horizon, the city of Phoenix is reminding residents and visitors to take extra precautions and offered these tips to help people stay safe.

First, check on your family and neighbors, especially older adults, young children and people with medical conditions. Also, hydrate early and often. Drink water throughout the day – don't wait until you're thirsty. If you are outdoors, the CDC recommends drinking 8 ounces of water every 15-20 minutes. Add electrolytes to balance your fluids.

For those who enjoy the outdoors, plan activities during lower temperatures, such as early mornings and late evenings. And don't forget to dress for the weather – wear lightweight, loose-



Many city pools will open to the public beginning Memorial Day Weekend, May 23-25, offering a place for residents to cool off and have fun (photo courtesy of City of Phoenix Parks and Recreation Department).

fitting, light colored clothing and a wide brim hat.

It also is important to know the signs of heat illness. For heat exhaustion, move to a cooler place and seek medical advice if symptoms don't improve. Symptoms include dizziness or fainting, rapid or weak pulse and

excessive sweating or feeling clammy. If someone is suffering from heat stroke, call 911 immediately. Symptoms include a body temperature that may be hot to the touch, no sweating, loss of consciousness and rapid, strong pulse.

Families who need to find ways to keep cool while entertaining kids over

summer break may want to visit a city pool. The Parks and Recreation Department will open 16 pools all season long and an additional two pools, one in June and one in July, for a total of 18 pools this summer. Many will open beginning Memorial Day Weekend, May 23-25, including Sunnyslope and Washington pools. Find a pool near you at www.phoenix.gov/pools.

Finally, as always, the Phoenix Public Library system provides safe, cool spaces for residents to step out of the heat and find entertainment and enrichment opportunities during operating hours. The Cholla Library, 10050 N. Metro Parkway East, will also once again serve as a cooling center, offering extended hours until 9 p.m. Monday-Saturday and noon-9 p.m. on Sundays and holidays. This location will offer full library services during extended hours.

For more information, resources and updates, visit www.phoenix.gov/summer.

Women's League celebrates 10 years

This year, the North Central Women's League (NCWL) is celebrating 10 years of making an impact in the North Central Phoenix community.

Founded in 2016 by a small group of North Central women, NCWL began with a shared vision of building something bigger through friendship, volunteerism and community service. What started as a small gathering of women committed to giving back has grown into a nonprofit organization with 40 active and 16 sustaining members.

Through volunteerism, fundraising, partnerships with local schools and charities, and scholarship programs, NCWL has helped create life-enriching opportunities throughout the community. Over the past decade, the organization has donated over \$200,000 to local philanthropies and awarded over \$100,000 in scholarships to local high school students in need.

As NCWL celebrates this milestone anniversary, members remain committed to continuing their mission of making a lasting local impact in North Central Phoenix.

For more information about the North Central Women's League, visit the organization's website at www.northcentralwomensleague.org or contact them at northcentralwomensleague@gmail.com.

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Your Luckiest Number Before Buying a Car Might Be 21

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A car should solve a problem, not seduce your ego. But marketing has a funny way of turning grown adults into emotional hostages with a payment plan. Before you buy your next vehicle, give yourself 21 days. Do not hesitate. To detox. Because the loudest part of the process is rarely the truth.

There should be a mandatory 21-day waiting period before anyone buys a car. Not because people are stupid, but because otherwise intelligent adults can become circus acts the minute a shiny vehicle starts whispering sweet nonsense into their nervous system. A person who will spend two weeks reading reviews over a toaster will somehow walk into a dealership, sit in a leather seat that smells like validation, and start making five-year financial decisions like they are choosing a side dish. It would be funny if it were not so expensive.

Most people are not buying a car. They are buying a feeling. Relief. Reinvention. Status. Distraction. Maybe revenge. The industry knows this. It does not sell you steel, rubber, and math. It sells you a better version of yourself with ambient lighting and a panoramic roof. It takes your wants, puts them in a tuxedo, and tells your needs to sit in the corner and shut up.

That is why I say give yourself 21 days. Not overnight. Not “let me sleep on it.” Give yourself 21 full days. Long enough for the dopamine to stop tap dancing on your frontal lobe. Long enough for the fake urgency to die. Long enough for your brain to start acting like an adult who understands that monthly payments are not a personality trait.

Because once the emotional fireworks burn out, truth starts walking into the room. It asks rude but necessary questions. Can you actually afford this car beyond the monthly payment? What will insurance be? What happens when the warranty packs its bags and leaves you alone with a repair bill that looks like a ransom note? What do tires, maintenance, and depreciation really cost?

This is where people get into trouble. They confuse desire with necessity. They say

things like, “I needed the upgraded trim,” which is adorable. Or, “The payment works,” which is usually the opening line to a terrible sequel. People shop for the payment because it feels small enough to digest. But the payment is just the appetizer. The real meal is ownership.

So before you buy your next car, do the hardest thing a consumer can do in a culture addicted to urgency. Pause. Let the noise die. Let the wanting cool off. Let the truth have a turn.

Why 21? Because 10 feels like a gimmick, 15 feels random, and 30 feels like punishment. Twenty-one is just long enough for the emotional glitter to fall off and the truth to jump back into your senses. It gives your ego time to calm down, your dopamine time to stop doing cartwheels, and your commonsense time to put its pants back on. Besides, 21 is blackjack, and if you are going to gamble, it should not be with your next car payment.

So here is the exercise.

For 21 days, do not buy. Do not test drive. Do not build your dream model online at midnight. Do not scroll through listings for entertainment. Do not visit the dealership “just to look,” because nobody walks into a casino just to admire the carpeting. Your first assignment is distance. If your desire cannot survive silence, it was never wisdom. It was stimulation.

Next, take out a sheet of paper and split it into two columns: What I Want and What I Need. Be honest, not theatrical. Under wants, write the badge, the color, the wheels, the giant screen, the sexy grille, and the fantasy where strangers at stoplights somehow validate your existence. Under needs, write the grown-up stuff: reliability, insurance cost, fuel economy, repair history, cargo room, comfort, safety, visibility, and total cost of ownership.

Then do the why test. For every feature you think you need, ask yourself why. Then ask why again. Keep going until the truth gets uncomfortable. Most emotional buying collapses when you force it to explain itself more than once.

Now do the peace test. Picture yourself a year after the purchase. The payments have been coming in. Insurance is higher than expected. Service costs more than you thought. Something rattles. The romance has left town. In that moment, does this car still feel like peace, or does it feel like a costume with a payment plan?

Then do the no audience test. If nobody saw the car, praised it, envied it, complimented it, or let you post it anywhere, would you still want it just as much? If the answer changes, you are not buying transportation. You are renting applause, and applause is a terrible co-signer.

Then comes the math before the mood test. Write down the real monthly cost, not just the payment. Include insurance, fuel, maintenance, expected repairs, registration, tires, and taxes. Then ask one question: Does this car still look attractive when all its makeup is off?

Finally, on day 21, ask yourself one last question. Strip away the badge, the smell, the sales pitch, the lighting, the fantasy, the pressure, and the rush. What remains? Does this vehicle still solve a real problem in your life, or did it just do a convincing impression of one?

That is the point. Not because 21 is magical, but because time is the enemy of manipulation. Time exposes what urgency tries to hide. It gives your brain a chance to catch up with your emotions and ask a simple question: Does this car fit my life, or did it just flatter my mood?

Wanting is loud. Wisdom is quiet. Give wisdom 21 days. If the deal only makes sense while you're excited, it never made sense.

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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The Sunnyslope Post Office on north 7th Street will see some changes beginning June, when mail carriers will relocate to a new postal center on Bell Road (photo by C. Miller).

Sunnyslope post office to see changes

Changes are coming to the Sunnyslope Post Office, located at 9635 N. 7th St., that may have an impact on the timing of mail delivery. Residents were told that, beginning in June, mail carriers would relocate from Sunnyslope to a new postal center on Bell Road in north Phoenix.

While a U.S. Postal Service spokesperson would not confirm the timeline of the change, nor how this move will impact mail delivery, they provided a statement that read in part, “The Postal Service is opening a new Sorting and Delivery Center (S&DC) in the North Valley area of Phoenix by repurposing an existing postal-owned building. Sorting and Delivery Centers utilize existing postal-owned facilities where significant upgrades are implemented, often addressing deferred maintenance.

“The existing infrastructure at our North Valley facility allows for efficient repurposing into an S&DC, minimizing disruption while maximizing operational gains. This new S&DC will consolidate delivery operations by relocating carriers from two stations into this centralized hub to improve operational efficiency and service reliability.”

For those who have post office boxes at the Sunnyslope location or utilize other services, the spokesperson added, “Importantly, the move does not affect retail services or PO box access at local post offices. Customers will continue to use their neighborhood locations as usual.”

They added that this initiative is part of the Postal Service’s broader

Modernization and Transformation Plan, “aimed at strengthening long-term service reliability and enhancing employee work environments through facility upgrades.”

Senior living is close to home

For many longtime North Central Phoenix residents, the area is more than just a place to live – it is a community built on connection, history and neighborhood pride. Tucked just minutes from the restaurants, parks and familiar streets, Beatitudes Campus, located at 1610 W. Glendale Ave., has quietly become one of the most vibrant communities for older adults in the Valley.

“For more than six decades, Beatitudes Campus has welcomed seniors who want to stay active, engaged and surrounded by friends,” leadership said. “Residents often describe the campus as feeling less like a traditional retirement community and more like a lively neighborhood – one where there is always something happening.

Through May 31, Beatitudes Campus is offering several limited-time move-in opportunities. These include incentives for rental residences, entrance-fee/life-plan residences and assisted living and early memory support levels of care.

Prospective residents can schedule a tour and learn more by calling 602-536-4734 or visiting www.beatitudescampus.org.

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Candidate debates begin in May

Clean Elections in partnership with the Arizona Media Association (AMA), announced the names of the moderators at the helm of the 2026 statewide and federal candidate debates. The dates and times for the debates of respective offices are available now on the Clean Elections website: www.azcleelections.gov/debate-information.

“Moderators play an important role in debates and voters deserve to have skilled journalists in this capacity who will ask candidates the questions they would ask themselves if they were sitting in their chair,” said Gina Roberts, Voter Education director at Clean Elections. “We anticipate moderators will lead an exchange that is substantive, fair and that creates an environment where candidates have the opportunity to get deeper into policy topics.”

Statewide and federal debates start at the end of May in anticipation of the July 21 Primary Election. Every debate will be moderated by one or two of the journalists enlisted by the AMA to be on

the 2026 Clean Elections Debates moderators roster, including Danielle Lerner, an Emmy Award-winning journalist with nearly 20 years of experience working in broadcast media; Kathleen Bade, a 14-time Emmy Award-winning journalist and former news anchor with over 30 years of experience in multiple markets; Olivia Fierro, an experienced journalist who spent more than two decades in television news reporting and at the anchor desk; and Steve Goldstein, an award-winning public radio host and reporter in Phoenix for 25 years.

Voters are encouraged to get involved in debates now by submitting questions for respective offices and candidates by emailing debates@azcleelections.gov or calling 602-364-3477.

Find support through online hub

The city of Phoenix launched a new online resource to help residents easily find programs and services that support families, seniors and individuals facing challenging times. The Helping PHX Families webpage brings together a wide

range of city services in one convenient location, making it simpler for the community to get connected to help.

The page offers an overview of programs across multiple city departments, giving residents quick access to support for everyday needs. Residents can explore resources like help with utility bills and essential expenses; afterschool programs, tutoring and youth enrichment opportunities; senior housing options; family and senior transportation resources; crisis and emergency services; and community programs that support stability, wellness and safety.

To view all available resources and connect with city services, visit www.phoenix.gov/helping.

Library seeks local authors

Phoenix Public Library invites local authors to submit their work to be placed on the Approved Partner & Presenter List. Authors selected for this list will be invited to the Local Author Fair in November and may be invited to take part in additional programming throughout the year.

Local author submissions for 2026-27 will be accepted through May 17. To learn more, visit the library website: www.phoenixpubliclibrary.org/services/programs/local-authors.

Students write, perform original opera

Franklin Phonetic Primary School students in grades third through sixth are creating an original opera that will be performed at the school on Tuesday, May 12. Two performances are scheduled: at 1 and 6 p.m.

The school’s founders, Dr. Cindy Franklin and her husband, Tom Franklin, have a passion for performing arts, the school said. This small charter school engages children in choir, band and drama throughout the year.

The Franklins participated in the Education at the Met Program, offered by the Metropolitan Opera Guild in New York City. They brought the program to their schools in Prescott Valley and in Sunnyslope. The goal is not just about the final product but focuses on the journey the students take – one of learning to work together, sharing ideas, learning new skills in writing, music, acting and even carpentry. Students take charge in all areas of the produc-

tion including set design and construction, lighting, costumes, makeup, and production and stage management.

Sunnyslope students wrote this year’s opera around a theme of “sneaking out” and its consequences. Students named their company Sneakers Opera Company and they call their opera “Sneaking Out.”

The May 12 performances are free to the public and will be held in the school’s auditorium, located at 9317 N. 2nd St. Learn more about the school at www.franklinphoneticschool.com.

Exhibitions explore resilience, courage

The Shemer Art Center announced the opening of two new visual art exhibitions, now on display.

The first, “Parallel Ground: Contemporary Japanese Artists in Arizona,” is a large group exhibition featuring 63 works created by 16 Arizona-based Japanese artists. It showcases various media and styles, including ceramicists, painters, photographers, a traditional Japanese batik artist and a quilter. Although each artist in the exhibition has a different approach, method and medium, their artistic expressions are all rooted in their Eastern heritage, and these elements embody Japanese aesthetics, distinguishing their work and telling stories.

The second, “A Legacy of Spirit,” is a solo artist exhibition by Tamara Poff. It features 14 figurative oil paintings, each with a narrative intent that focuses on the expressive quality of the female form. The artist shares that she created this body of work “to delve into the intricate connection between the strength and struggles of our female forebears and the trails and triumphs of women in contemporary culture.” It is a collection that narrates the journey of women’s empowerment, and highlights the resilience, courage and unwavering determination of women who have fought for recognition as equals.

Both exhibitions will be on display through May 14. All exhibitions, plus the Shemer Art Center’s gift shop and sculpture garden, are open to the public Tuesday through Saturday, from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. For more information about these exhibitions, classes, other artist opportunities, or the Shemer Art Center’s Expansion & Legacy or Al Beadle campaigns, visit www.shemerartcenter.org or call 602-262-4727.

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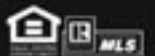
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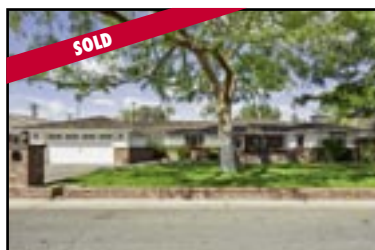
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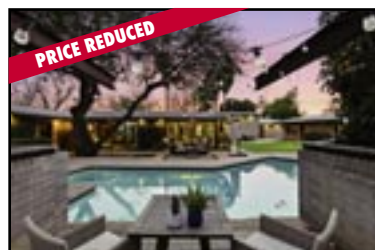
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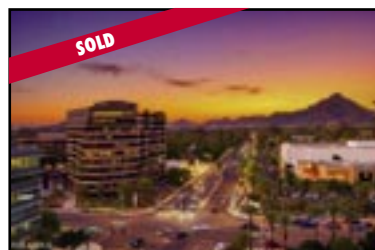
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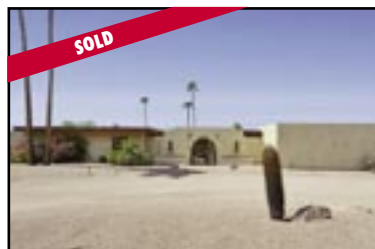
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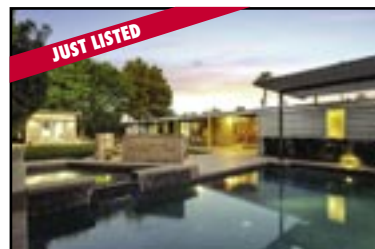
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COMMUNITY

Tenants have rights to stay cool

As an unprecedented early heat wave pushed temperatures to more than 20 degrees above normal across Arizona in March, Attorney General Kris Mayes is warning landlords about their obligations under Arizona law and reminding tenants of the rights they have if their air conditioning or cooling system fails to provide a habitable living environment.

“Extreme heat poses a serious health risk, and it is unacceptable for tenants to be without proper cooling. This year we hit record highs in March and summer is right around the corner,” said Mayes. “Landlords and management companies must take swift action when cooling systems fail so that tenants have safe and habitable living conditions in accordance with the law.”

Failure to provide adequate cooling potentially violates the Arizona Landlord Tenant Act (A.R.S. § 33-1301-1381) and any applicable local regulations. Under Arizona law, landlords must maintain safe and habitable living conditions. In Phoenix, rental units that use air conditioning cannot



As temperatures begin to soar for the summer, landlords are reminded that under Arizona law, they are obliged to take swift action to provide safe and habitable conditions for tenants when cooling systems fail (stock photo).

exceed a maximum temperature of 82 degrees in all habitable rooms.

Mayes urges tenants whose air conditioning or cooling system has failed to take the following steps:

- Notify your landlord in writing. Start with a phone call and follow up in writing, preferably by certified mail. If you have a medical condition that will be worsened by extreme heat, include that information and request

accommodations.

- Your landlord must act within five days of written notice if temperatures pose a health and safety risk.

- If your landlord fails to act, Arizona law may allow you to repair the issue yourself and deduct the cost from your rent, terminate your lease, or sue for damages.

Tenants who believe their landlord is failing to provide safe or habitable

living conditions are encouraged to file a consumer complaint with the Attorney General’s Office at www.azag.gov/consumer, or by calling 602-542-5763 in Phoenix. Or, contact the City of Phoenix Human Services Department at 602-262-7210.

Phoenix celebrates annual 602 Day

The community will celebrate the third annual 602 Day on June 2, and local businesses and organizations are invited to participate and honor the City’s most iconic and historic area code with special events, deals or discounts.

The city said that the event continues to grow year-over-year. The inaugural 602 Day in 2024 included more than 100 businesses, and in 2025, more than 250 entities celebrated 602 Day. Each year, participants saw increased sales and foot traffic – some record setting – during early June.

To register your business or organization, and find a list of participating organizations closer to the event, visit www.investinphoenix.com/living-here/area-code-day.



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COMMUNITY

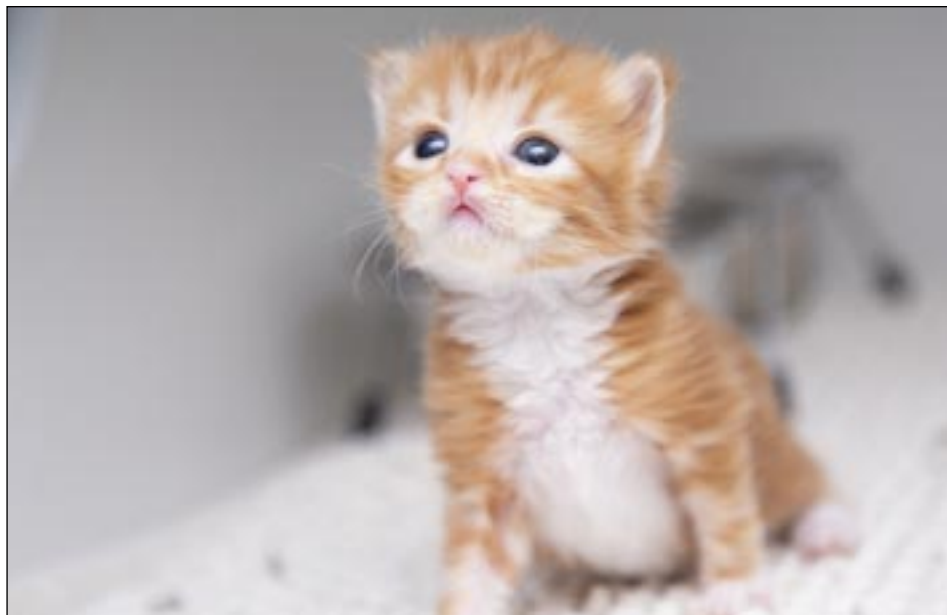
Pet of the Month

Tiniest patients need foster homes

In anticipation of the cutest (and busiest) time of the year, the Arizona Humane Society (AHS) is encouraging the community to show some love as it gears up for the arrival of its tiniest patients – orphaned kittens. The state’s leading animal welfare organization is calling on the community to help save thousands of its most fragile patients by becoming a foster hero at www.azhumane.org/foster.

Last year, the Arizona Humane Society cared for almost 2,300 kittens ranging from just a few days to a few weeks old in its Bottle Baby Kitten ICU. Without their mother to care for them, many of these kittens have nowhere else to turn to and require 24-hour care from Arizona Humane Society staff and volunteers until they are old enough to start eating on their own and gain enough weight prior to finding their forever homes.

Due to the state’s unique climate, kitten season in the Valley is much



The Arizona Humane Society is preparing for kitten season – when they may see more than 2,000 orphaned kittens come through their Bottle Baby Kitten ICU – by seeking foster families who can help care for these tiny patients (photo courtesy of Arizona Humane Society).

longer than other parts of the country and runs from approximately mid-March to the end of November. As the Arizona Humane Society continues to face capacity challenges, the elongated kitten season will be a contributing factor to the estimated 26,000 sick, injured and abused pets that will need lifesaving

care in the shelter’s trauma hospital and specialized ICUs this year alone.

In addition to fosters, the Arizona Humane Society is always in need of supplies to help provide care for its most fragile patients. To learn more or to donate to the Shelter Wish List, visit www.azhumane.org/wishlist. For more

information and to apply to become a foster hero for kittens or other pets in need, visit www.azhumane.org/foster.

Help pups put best paw forward

Whether pet owners are encountering tough behavior issues or just need help with the basics, the Arizona Humane Society (AHS) offers a wide range of group classes and private lessons that will help dogs become an extraordinary companion

Maybe it’s the leash pulling that turns walks into tug-o-wars. Maybe it’s the “selective hearing” at the dog park. Maybe your pup just needs a little guidance to put their best paw forward. AHS offers these training classes and more.

Snake Avoidance Training (Shock-Free): As desert critters become more active, teach your dog essential snake safety skills along with reliable “leave it” and come-when-called cues – all without the use of shock collars. Canine Good Citizen Prep: Want your dog to become a certified Good Citizen? This 4-week course will get them ready for the official Canine Good Citizen test. Scent Games & Activities: These 30-minute classes provide an opportunity and outlet for the natural hunting and scenting abilities of all dogs, whether puppies or adults. Tricks: Ready for your dog to master new tricks? AHS will teach over 10 tricks and even work towards earning a Novice Trick Dog title for those extra fun bonding moments.

AHS says that a well-trained dog isn’t just easier to live with; they’re happier, more secure and ready to take on the world right by your side.

Find more information online at www.azhumane.org/dog-training-classes.

HERO Award honorees named

The Arizona Pet Project (AZPP) hosted its 23rd Annual HERO Awards in March at the Arizona Biltmore, bringing together more than 500 Valley leaders, advocates and animal lovers for an evening celebrating the powerful bond between people and pets.

The annual fundraiser honors extraordinary animals, individuals, and community partners who demonstrate resilience, courage and compassion – raised \$370,000 to support AZPP’s mission of keeping pets with the people

EVERY GOOD PUP DESERVES A LOVING HOME—SO DO YOU!
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NORTH CENTRAL PET OF THE MONTH



GRACIE AND JOEY

Owner: Susan Murphey

Ages: Gracie (13) & JoEY (10)

Breed: Australian Cattle Dog / Terrier Mix

Nicknames: Princess and JoJo

Favorite Toys: Stuffed Bunny and Rawhide Bone

Favorite Activity: Car Rides and Walks

Cool Tricks: Gracie can say "I love you"

Funny Quirks: JoEY opens the backdoor for Gracie

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ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

Celebrate authors at Visitor Center event

Residents are invited to join the North Mountain Visitor Center for a celebration of all things literary at the Author's Day event, taking place on Saturday, May 30, from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m.

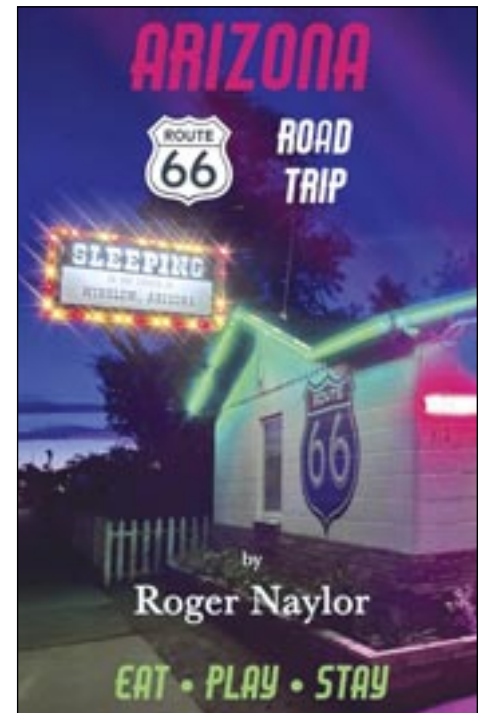
If you have a pile of books on your nightstand, your idea of a perfect night is getting lost in a good story or your TBR list is ever expanding...this may be the event for you. Attendees can support Arizona authors while enjoying book talks, author readings and book signings, and perhaps discover new favorite voices and take home a book to remember the day.

Headlining the event is award-winning author and travel writer Roger Naylor, who brings the Route 66 history and cultural significance to life with his latest book, "Arizona Route 66 Road Trip." Other featured authors include Bonnie Apperson, Sophie Bernbaum, Ron Dugan, Kristen Gilger, Michael Hale, Linda Henley-Smith, Jean Klein, Barbara McCarthy, Patrick McMullen, Kathy Peach, Barbara Renner, Jane Ruby, Sandra Rose Simmons and Joyce Story. Representatives from the Acacia branch of the Phoenix Public Library also will be present.

This is a family friendly event and will feature several children's book authors and children's story times throughout the day. There will also be a silent auction with fun book baskets and a chance to bid on three roundtrip Southwest Airlines tickets.

Funds raised at this event directly support Save Our Mountains Foundation, a 501(c)(3) whose mission is to acquire and preserve land to assist in the expansion of the Phoenix Mountains Preserve. The organization supports the Phoenix Mountains Preserve with education, conservation and research as well as maintain operations at the North Mountain Visitor Center, the Exhibit Hall of the Phoenix Mountains Preserve, in collaboration with the City of Phoenix.

By attending, guests are not only supporting local authors, but also investing in conservation, education, and the continued care of the North Mountain Visitor Center, located at



Headlining the North Mountain Visitor Center Author's Day event is award-winning writer Roger Naylor, who brings the Route 66 history and cultural significance to life with his latest book, "Arizona Route 66 Road Trip" (cover graphic courtesy of the author).

12950 N. 7th St. For additional information, visit www.northmountainvisitorcenter.org or <https://saveourmountains.org>.

Famed vocalist releases memoir

Phoenix favorite and former Count Basie Orchestra vocalist Dennis Rowland released a new memoir in April that reflects on the musical and leadership lessons from his years with the legendary orchestra.

An internationally acclaimed jazz vocalist, Rowland wrote "Keeping the Beat: What Count Basie Taught Me About Music, Mentorship and Leadership," with Phoenix author Marla Sheiner. In the book, he recounts his time as a featured singer with the Count Basie Orchestra and explores the values he absorbed from one of jazz's most influential bandleaders. The book arrived 40 years after Count Basie's passing in April 1984 – a defining moment in jazz history.

Rowland joins the distinguished lineage of Basie vocalists, including Jimmy Rushing and Joe Williams, whose voices helped define the orchestra's sound.

"Dennis Rowland represents the liv-

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ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT



Internationally acclaimed jazz vocalist Dennis Rowland has written a new memoir with local author Marla Sheiner titled "Keeping the Beat: What Count Basie Taught Me About Music, Mentorship and Leadership" (photo courtesy of the author).

ing lineage of the Basie tradition," said Scotty Barnhart, Director of the Count Basie Orchestra. "To be a vocalist with this orchestra means you're entrusted with a tradition that helped define American music. Dennis understands what that responsibility means, and his story reflects the values that have sustained this music for generations."

Valley audiences know Rowland as far more than a former Basie vocalist. For decades, he has been a vibrant presence in the Phoenix arts community – as a featured performer with Arizona Theatre Company, a longtime collaborator at the Herberger Theater Center, a regular performer at The Nash and as an educator and mentor in Phoenix-area high schools and community colleges.

For his part, Rowland continues to carry forward the swing tradition by performing and mentoring young musicians, and he says that the memoir grew from a desire to pass on the lessons he has learned – especially after suffering a stroke more than a decade ago.

"After my stroke, I realized how precious time is," Rowland said. "If I'm still able to sing, teach and share what I learned from Basie, then that's what I want to do. Basie's example taught me that a life in music is really about mentorship, discipline and respect – and I hope young musicians can see what that tradition really means."

"Keeping the Beat" serves as both tribute and reflection – honoring Basie's enduring influence while inviting a new generation to understand the principles that helped keep the music swinging across decades. The book is available through major booksellers, with a portion of book proceeds supporting music scholarships.

Young voices celebrate 'We the People'

The Phoenix Children's Chorus (PCC) presents its 2026 Spring Concert Series, "We the People..." a musical celebration of the 250th anniversary of the United States, alongside a joyful season finale performance from its neighborhood choir program. Together, these concerts highlight the power of young voices and the rich traditions that define American music.

Featuring more than 250 singers from kindergarten through 12th grade, the event takes place Saturday, May 2, at 3 p.m. at Phoenix Bible Church, 6060 N. 7th Ave. and Sunday, May 3, at 3 p.m. at Tempe Center for the Arts. The concerts showcase a wide range of uniquely American musical styles, from traditional folk songs and spirituals to the melodies of Broadway.

The season concludes with "Raise Your Voice," a special performance by PCC Voices neighborhood choirs on May 9 at 4 p.m. at Barry Goldwater High School. This concert brings together singers from across the community, joined by special guests, for a joyful celebration of music-making and connection.

Enhancing the performances, PCC singers will be joined by a live band featuring percussionist Wes Hawkins and bassist Mike Hall, along with additional guest artists. Tickets are available at www.phoenixchildrenschorus.org.

Looking ahead to next season, enrollment is now open for singers across the Valley. The organization continues to welcome new voices into a community where young people can grow artistically, build confidence and

please see VOICES on page 44

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ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

VOICES continued from page 43

form lasting friendships through music. Auditions will be held May 9 and 19 for the Phoenix choirs and May 6 and 20 for the Northwest Valley Choirs. Families interested in learning more can visit www.phoenixchildrenschorus.org/join.

Ballet blooms at the Garden

Ballet Arizona's "Ballet in Bloom: An Evening at Desert Botanical Garden" returns May 13-30, bringing back its signature magic with an elevated new format. Set against desert vistas and the glow of the setting sun, this audience favorite now unfolds as a double feature experience. Audiences can take in the U.S. premiere of "Reset" by Daniela Cardim alongside Lar Lubovitch's Concerto Six Twenty-two, two captivating works presented in one unforgettable night.

"Reset" explores themes of modern, urban life punctuated by human interactions, evolving from conflict to resolution. Framed by Gabriel Prokofiev's score, the piece features a fusion of classical and electronic music, enveloping the dance in a unique contemporary sound.

Concerto Six Twenty-Two is a celebration of masterpieces in both dance and music. Inspired by Mozart's jubilant and most famous clarinet concerto, Lar Lubovitch's Concerto Six Twenty-Two is a delight from beginning to end – featuring blissful quartets, duets and solos that rejoice in lighthearted ease.

All performances begin at 8 p.m. Patrons are encouraged to purchase tickets in advance. Options include upgraded table seating and stadium-style general admission seats. Patrons can enhance their experience by arriving early to witness the behind-the-scenes magic as Ballet Arizona's professional company dancers warm up on stage as the sun sets, as well as enjoy a meal and cocktails or wine available for purchase at the venue before the performance.

Attendees also can take a stroll through the Garden before the performance, as admission to "Ballet in Bloom" grants you access to the beautiful Desert Botanical Garden, located at 1201 N. Galvin Parkway. Tickets for "Ballet in Bloom" start at \$71 and are available at www.balletaz.org or by calling 602-381-1096.

On the Town

From live local and touring bands, symphony, ballet and theater performances, to cultural explorations, Mother's Day celebrations and family-friendly events, Valley venues offer a wealth of things to do throughout the month. See you on the town in May!

46th Birthday Celebration

May 2

The Square at Heritage and Science Park

www.thesquarephx.org; 602-258-0048

El Mariachi Manchester

May 3

Last Exit Live

www.lastexitlive.com; 602-271-7000



Levi Platero

May 5

The Rhythm Room

www.rhythmroom.com; 602-612-4981

Mariachi Sol de México

May 5

Madison Center for the Arts

www.themadison.org; 602-664-7777

'Ever After'

May 6 – June 14

The Phoenix Theatre Company

www.phoenixtheatre.com;

602-254-2151

Acoustic Open Stage Thursdays

May 7-28

Fiddler's Dream Coffeehouse

www.fiddlersdream.org;

602-997-9795

El Ten Eleven

May 8

The Rebel Lounge

www.therebellounge.com

Vincent Neil Emerson

May 9

Crescent Ballroom

www.crescentphx.com; 602-716-2222

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

PBC Remixed

May 9
Phoenix Boys Choir
at Camelback High School
www.boyschoir.org;
602-264-5328

‘Northern Lights Adventure’

May 9
The Phoenix Symphony
at Madison Center for the Arts
www.phoenixsymphony.org;
602-495-1999

Mother’s Day at the Garden

May 10
Desert Botanical Garden
www.dbg.org;
480-941-1225

Mother’s Day Miniature Ikebana

May 10
Japanese Friendship Garden
www.japanesefriendshipgarden.org;
602-274-8700

Mother’s Day Matinee – We3 & Janet Daniels

May 10
The Nash
www.thenash.org; 602-795-0464

Third Friday Celi

May 15
Irish Cultural Center
and McClelland Library
www.azirish.org; 602-258-0109

Jaleo

May 15
The Nash
www.thenash.org; 602-795-0464

‘Between Masks and Mirrors’

May 15-17
Black Theatre Troupe at Helen K. Mason Performing Arts Center
www.blacktheatretroupe.org;
602-258-8128

‘Post 41’

May 18-28
New Carpa Theater Co

at Herberger Theater Center
www.herbergertheater.org;
602-252-8497

‘Star Wars Return of the Jedi’ in Concert

May 22-24
The Phoenix Symphony
www.phoenixsymphony.org;
602-495-1999

Phoenix Ballet Season Celebration

May 23
Herberger Theater Center
www.herbergertheater.org;
602-252-8497

‘Dracula: A Comedy of Terrors’

May 23 – June 7
Arizona Theatre Company
www.arizonatheatre.org;
1-833-282-7328

Jazz Casual Thursday: Charles Lewis & His Trio

May 28

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

Jimi Primetime Smith / Bob Corritore Blues Band

May 29
The Rhythm Room
www.rhythmroom.com;
602-612-4981



The Hu and Apocalyptica

May 29
The Van Buren
www.thevanburenphx.com;
480-659-1641

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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FOOD FOR THOUGHT



Owner Julie Palmer shows off favorites from Cheese 'n Stuff: The Italian special with Mortadella, ham, hard salami, provolone, lettuce, tomato and Italian dressing, right; and the Tyler, with turkey, Munster cheese, pepperoncini, avocado, lettuce, tomato and mustard (photo by Darryl Webb for North Central News).

Café Chat Saving a North Central neighborhood institution

By Marjorie Rice

Some things simply are too good to let go.

For a group of longtime customers, that included Cheese 'n Stuff from Everywhere, a neighborhood institution at Central Avenue just north of Camelback. Since 1949, when owner Robert Allen opened the shop, it's been a magnet, drawing generations of customers for its fat, squelchy sandwiches stuffed with cheeses and deli meats.

Bill and Jane Dombroski bought the place in 1953, and it later was purchased by Emil Zawatski. His son Stan and granddaughter Crystal continued the family's legacy until last April, when they announced they were closing the business so Stan could retire and Crystal could pursue a career in nursing.

Over the decades, the shop had become more than just a deli – it morphed into one of those places that knit together neighborhoods, where members of the community come for more than a meal.

The doors closed in June, and locals were devastated – and hungry. And some of them were determined not to lose what they felt was a treasure.

“It started out with five couples, including my husband, Tom, and I,” Julie Palmer said. “Growing up, in high

school, we came here after school. My husband's family came, including his grandma, who came after church. When we heard last April that the Zawatskis were going to retire, Tom immediately called up and said, ‘We want to buy it.’

“We had talked about it and we said, ‘We can't let this go, there's too much history here and too much good food. It's sad to see things like this fade away.’”

Coincidentally, the Mastro family, including classmates of Tom and Julie Palmer, who went to Brophy and Xavier, caught the same preservation fever and bought Durant's around the same time as Cheese 'n Stuff changed hands. “I hope it's a trend, to preserve these places,” Palmer said.

Eventually, the complications of five couples owning the one small business caused a change, and Tom and Julie Palmer bought the others out. Today, Julie Palmer is the designated “Cheese Whiz,” managing the day-to-day operations.

“We tried to keep and preserve culture and the history. That's very important to us,” she said.

First up was a renovation inside and out, including restoration of the original sign – a neighborhood landmark. They contacted Christy Signs, another long-time Phoenix company, which had built the original sign.

“We asked if they could help us *please see CHEESE on page 48*

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FOOD FOR THOUGHT

CHEESE continued from page 46

restore the sign, and they said, ‘My gosh, we will do that in a heartbeat.’ We had sort of an old-timey lighting ceremony in September.”

The new owners worked all last summer to bring things up to speed. “We wanted to clean it up, refresh and modernize but keep the old nostalgia,” Palmer said. “When we were working, people would come by and poke their heads in and say, ‘I came here when I was in high school’ or ‘I came here with my dad.’”

The original walls behind the counter had been festooned with handwritten menu items, and Palmer kept many. One long wall that had been plastered over and covered with wood paneling was stripped down to reveal the beautiful old bricks. Old newspaper articles, photos, awards, ads and other memorabilia were discovered in a filing cabinet in the back office, and some of those found their way into the new décor.

Original linoleum-covered floors were stripped down to bare concrete.

One new addition is the dog-friendly back patio, expanding seating space from the original two tables in the interior. Even the countertops are vintage.

“It was a beautiful wood-paneled walk-in,” Palmer said. “Wood doesn’t pass health codes anymore, so we decided to keep the shelves and use them to make shelves inside and out.”

The owners worked hard to preserve more than the décor.

“It’s all the same menu, same recipes, and the same suppliers and bakery,” Palmer said. “The Boar’s Head distributor started up in Phoenix right around the same time in the ’70s as the Zawatski family, so they knew each other. The old connections are still there.”

Boar’s Head doesn’t supply liverwurst, another customer favorite, so they bring it in from Schreiner’s Fine Sausage, another North Central Phoenix institution.

The Doughboy may be the most favored combo on the menu, with turkey, avocado and bacon on sourdough and heated, Palmer said, and it comes with history as well. “

The Doughboy used to be across the street at Markgraf’s Pharmacy, and when they went out of business in the ’80s, Stan asked them if he could take over the doughboy.”

Other favorites include the Italian special, with Mortadella, ham, hard



Perry Rea, owner of Queen Creek Olive Mill, two-time James Beard semifinalist chef Bernie Kantak and Andrew Fritz, co-owner and operator of In Good Spirits Hospitality, will bring The Olive Farmer to area residents later this year (submitted photo).

salami, provolone, lettuce, tomato and Italian dressing; and the Tyler, with turkey, Munster cheese, pepperoncini, avocado, lettuce, tomato and mustard.

“We have a great kitchen manager, and he started out buying potato salad and pasta salad and the like, and he said, ‘We can make this, and we can do it better.’” Palmer said. “We found a pasta salad recipe Stan used to make and that’s our pasta salad now.”

“We make a great potato salad, and we make all of our baked goods, so we’re settling into it.”

And there are those killer brownies – it wouldn’t be Cheese ’n Stuff without them – along with lemon bars, cheesecake and Rice Krispie treats.

Oddly enough, while cheese was a mainstay of the original, it takes a backseat to the deli counter – for now. Palmer said she’s boning up on her cheese knowledge so she can expand the offerings. “I would love to get more into special cheeses and charcuterie,” she said.

These days, Stan and Crystal come by now and then. “He’ll comment if he sees a new special on our Instagram posts and he’ll comment, ‘I really think you should have used Swiss cheese instead of provolone on that sandwich,’” Palmer said. “I feel him over my shoulder.”

Cheese ’n Stuff from Everywhere, 5042 N. Central Ave., is open 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., Monday through Friday; 9 a.m. to 2 p.m., Saturday. For information, call 602-266-3636 or visit www.cheesenstuffdeli.com. The store will be closed for the month of July.

Dining Briefs

Olive Farmer aims for late summer opening

With an anticipated August or September opening in the former Santo Arcadia space at 4418 E. Osborn Road, The Olive Farmer aims to be a lively neighborhood destination – equal parts restaurant, market and gathering place, according to the owners.

Led by two-time James Beard semifinalist chef Bernie Kantak and Perry Rea, owner of Queen Creek Olive Mill, The Olive Farmer will offer an all-day, Italian-inspired dining experience, according to a press release. Mornings begin with locally roasted coffee, house-made pastries and quick breakfast options. Throughout the day and into the evening, guests can enjoy Italian-style sandwiches layered with imported meats and cheeses, along with artisanal pizzas and convenient grab-and-go offerings.

As night falls, the menu expands to feature house-made pastas and riffs on Italian classics. Dessert is highlighted by a specialty affogato and gelato program – a nod to indulgent simplicity. In addition, a dedicated “Flour Lab” will produce bronze-extruded pastas, slow-fermented dough, bread, focaccia, and pastries, guided by The Mill’s Agostino Trentacoste, a Palermo-born pizzaiolo and certified flour technician.

The space will house a curated market by Queen Creek Olive Mill featuring its full line of premium olive oils, sauces and imported and locally made goods, along with its all-natural skincare line. It also will feature “take and

make” meals such as fresh pasta and oven-ready dishes that can be paired with a wine from the bottle shop.

The beverage program comes to life in ISSIMA, the concept’s back bar, where Italian-inspired cocktails lead the program. Expect reimaged classics built with fine oils, vinegars, citrus, and a focused selection of vermouths, aperitivos and amaros.

Learn more at www.theolivefarmer-az.com.

Ono opens on Indian School

Ono Hawaiian BBQ opened its newest restaurant in the Phoenix area at 1003 E. Indian School Road on March 20, making it the restaurant chain’s fourth location in the market.

The family-owned fast-casual brand continues to grow its footprint in Phoenix with the newly reconstructed location, which features a drive-thru for added convenience along this central and highly trafficked corridor connecting key neighborhoods and business districts.

The eatery is best known for its generous portions of fresh, grilled-to-order Hawaiian inspired favorites, including popular dishes like Chicken Katsu, Hawaiian BBQ Chicken and Kalbi Ribs. For hours and additional information, visit www.onohawaiianbbq.com.

The Nash opens a full bar

In late 2024, The Nash jazz club unveiled a \$2.5 million renovation and celebrated its 12th anniversary with the grand re-opening of its transformed performance space. Now, thanks to a lead gift from The John Dawson Foundation, the downtown Phoenix club has officially secured a full liquor license, expanding the club experience with the launch of JD’s at The Nash, a full-service bar designed to complement its intimate, world-class jazz performances.

Named in honor of John Dawson, a passionate supporter of jazz and arts education, JD’s at The Nash recognizes Dawson’s commitment to the American art form and his interest in developing future generations of musicians.

The addition of the bar not only enhances the audience experience, but also creates an important new source of ongoing support for The Nash’s jazz education programs.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

To celebrate, The Nash invited the community to help put the final creative touch on the menu through a contest to name six signature cocktails, each inspired by classic flavors with a Southwest twist.

Visit www.thenash.org for calendar of upcoming events and to purchase tickets.

Restaurant Week begins on May 15

The Arizona Restaurant Association's 2026 Spring Arizona Restaurant Week (ARW) will take place Friday, May 15, through Sunday, May 24. This bi-annual event showcases some of the best dining opportunities around the state with three prix fixe price options offered over the 10-day event.

According to organizers, this year's ARW is poised to offer culinary enthusiasts an enticing array of options, with nearly 240 establishments statewide expected to sign up to participate.

"Arizona Restaurant Week continues to grow and receive incredible feedback because it truly is one of the best dining deals in the state," said Arizona Restaurant Association (ARA) president and CEO Steve Chucuri. "This 10-day experience allows diners to try new



Diners can explore Arizona's culinary scene during the bi-annual Arizona Restaurant Week events. The spring experience runs May 15-24. Pictured: Braised beef empanadas from the menu at The Mexicano (photo courtesy of The Mexicano).

restaurants, explore different cuisines and enjoy exclusive menu items at their favorite places, all for a fraction of the usual price."

The event is an opportunity for diners to explore the state's unique hospitality landscape, from five-star fine-dining establishments to under-the-radar independently owned restaurants that turn out incredible cuisine.

During the event, participating

restaurants offer exclusive three-course menus featuring variations of their most popular dishes in addition to new dishes to try. These menus also highlight seasonal, hyper-local and hard-to-come-by ingredients as well as unique specialty dishes that aren't often featured on year-round menus.

The menus are priced at \$33, \$44 or \$55 per person, plus tax and gratuity. In some cases, this price is per cou-

ple, as decided by each restaurant. Some establishments offer exclusive wine pairings or specialty cocktails for an added cost. Take-out versions of menus may also be available. All three price points offer a wide range of cooking styles and exciting choices.

To find a list of the 2026 participating restaurants, visit www.arizonarestaurantweek.com beginning May 1.

Learn how to make tortillas

There's nothing quite like a fresh, handmade tortilla, and residents can learn how to make them from the pros at a Tuesday, May 26, event that takes place from 6:30 to 9 p.m. at Ajo Al's.

Watch the 40-year-old eatery's chefs demonstrate the traditional art of working with masa and creating the perfect tortilla. Then, enjoy a full dinner featuring these fresh tortillas and take home the techniques to impress friends and family.

The event will take place simultaneously at all four Ajo Al's locations. In North Central, visit them at 5101 N. 16th St. Find tickets and additional information online at <https://ajoals.com/special-events>.

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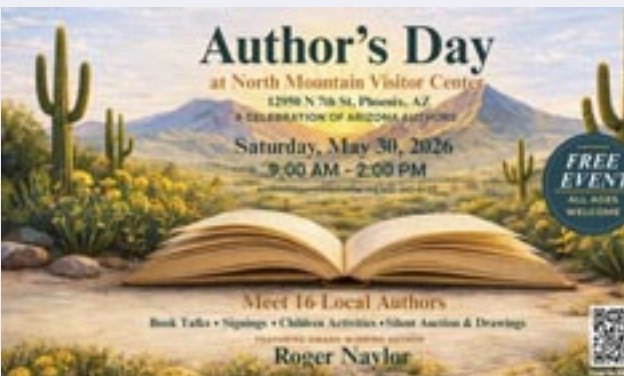
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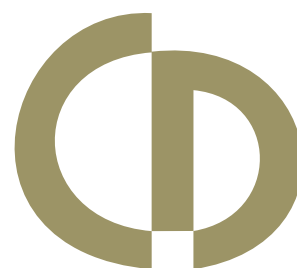
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who love them during times of hardship and crisis.

“This event is about more than celebration – it’s about recognizing how deeply intertwined people and pets are, especially in moments of crisis,” said Leanna Taylor, CEO of AZPP. “Each honoree represents why our work matters and why pet-inclusive solutions are so important in Arizona.”

The 2026 HERO award recipients include Animal HERO, Lola: After her owner suffered a life-threatening medical emergency, Lola persistently nudged her awake and ultimately retrieved her phone, allowing her to call 911. Service to the Community, Piper: A highly trained bloodhound with the Maricopa County Sheriff’s Office, Piper located a missing five-year-old autistic child in the Arizona desert after hours of searching, bringing him safely home. Animal Survivor, Josie: Rescued from a Texas kill pen while pregnant and malnourished, Josie the miniature therapy donkey now brings comfort and joy to children, seniors, veterans, and hospice patients across the Valley. Loyal Companion,



Rescued from a kill pen while pregnant and malnourished, Josie, a miniature therapy donkey who brings comfort to people across the Valley, is pictured with Terry Holmes-Stecyk, John Holmberg and Ian Schwartz at the 23rd Annual HERO Awards (submitted photo).

Rocky: Though untrained, Rocky instinctively alerted his family when his owner’s elderly mother experienced a severe diabetic crisis, helping save her life and becoming her constant guardian. Team’s Choice, U.S.VETS Phoenix: Recognized for its commit-

ment to serving veterans experiencing homelessness while ensuring they can remain with their pets, removing one of the most significant barriers to shelter access.

For more information on the event, visit www.azpetproject.org/hero.

Beware of missing pet scam

The Arizona Animal Welfare League (AAWL) is alerting pet owners about a new scam impacting families who are searching for their missing pets. Scammers are contacting owners of missing pets online and falsely claiming to be from the Arizona Animal Welfare League or another animal rescue organization. They tell families their pet has been found and needs emergency care, then demand payment over the phone.

AAWL says that it does not take in strays and will refer people to Maricopa County Animal Care & Control or Arizona Humane Society. Also, they would never demand money over the phone.

If you do receive a suspicious call or text like this, do not send money and contact your local law enforcement agency to report the scam.

Find more information about lost pets or learn about other types of assistance at <https://aawl.org> or by visiting <https://www.azhumane.org>.

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TAKING CARE OF BUSINESS

Credit union opens flagship branch

Member-owned Arizona Financial Credit Union has opened its newest flagship branch in Phoenix’s Camelback business corridor, expanding access to its consumer and business banking services in one of the region’s most dynamic commercial areas.

Now open and serving members, the branch is located at 3178 E. Camelback Road, on the northwest corner of Camelback Road and 32nd Street. The not-for-profit financial cooperative says that the newly renovated, state-of-the-art location reflects Arizona Financial’s continued investment in Metro Phoenix and its commitment to meeting members where they live, work, and do business.

“This new flagship branch represents a significant milestone for Arizona Financial and our presence in Phoenix,” said Mike Thorell, Arizona Market president and chief lending officer.



The Arizona Financial Credit Union team celebrated the opening of its newest branch at 3178 E. Camelback Road with a ribbon-cutting ceremony in February (submitted photo).

“This space is designed around our community and clients, giving them convenient access to comprehensive financial solutions along with the benefits of a local partner such as faster decision-making, personalized service, and deep-rooted Arizona market expertise.”

The Camelback branch combines advanced banking technology with digital displays showcasing local landmarks and community engagement, along with modern amenities throughout the space.

The new branch provides a full suite of consumer and business banking

services, including checking and savings accounts, home loans, SBA lending, commercial loans, treasury management solutions, merchant services, insurance offerings, and wealth management resources.

To find a full list of locations or learn more, visit www.arizonafinancial.org/locations.

Business Briefs

ALDI plans 2026 opening

After ALDI purchased the defunct 99 Cent Only store property in the Palo Verde Plaza at 12th Street and Northern in mid-2024, many residents have wondered when the grocery store chain would be opening – or even if it still planned to open at this location.

The answer to the latter question is yes. As to when, Shawn Eddy, regional vice president, told us in April, “We are happy to confirm we are making head-

please see ALDI on page 24

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MEDIAN SALE PRICE/SQFT

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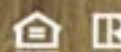
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TAKING CARE OF BUSINESS

ALDI continued from page 22

way on our new Phoenix store located at 7830 N. 12th St., expected to open later this year.” They did not offer any other information on remodeling or opening timelines.

The German grocer, which first made its way to the U.S. in 1976, is now the fastest-growing chain in the U.S. and expects to operate nearly 3,200 stores nationwide by 2028. There are currently 16 stores in Arizona.

Known for their no-frills presentation and lower-cost grocery and household items, the chain offers wide-ranging, exclusive brands and private label products in small footprint stores. And be ready to have a quarter on hand if you need a cart. The cart deposit system “encourages customers to return carts and eliminates the need for our employees to spend time retrieving carts.” The quarter is returned after your shopping is completed.

Learn more by visiting www.aldi.us.

Antique mall set to open in May

America’s Antique Mall Phoenix, located at 2820 W. Dunlap Ave. will host a grand-opening celebration May 1-3.

Residents are invited to wander through treasure-filled aisles, discover antiques, vintage gems, collectibles, décor and Southwest-inspired finds, and shop incredible vendors with pieces as unique as the desert itself, the company said.

The stores are known for hosting unique events – from family-friendly holiday gatherings to events focusing on specific collectibles or trends. On the horizon at the Phoenix location is Vintage Store Day, May 16, Girl’s Day Out, Aug. 29, and a Mrs. Roper Romp Thrift Crawl on Sept. 19.

The 45,000 square foot mall will be open 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. The company has five other antique malls across the U.S. Learn more by visiting www.americasantiquemall.com.

Harkins to debut 4D theater

Harkins Theatres announced plans in late March to introduce 4D sensory immersive moviegoing experiences at three Arizona locations, with three additional locations to be announced soon.

Partnering with Lumma 4D E-Motion, the Harkins 4D experience will

incorporate full sensory-engaging effects, including synchronized motion seating, coordinated scents, air, water and environmental cues, to fully connect moviegoers with the on-screen action.

The first new 4D auditorium set to open this August at Harkins Norterra in far North Phoenix. There is no word on whether the company plans to introduce new theaters closer to the Phoenix city center after closing the 21-year-old Bell Road location in 2022, which has since been replaced by a multi-family housing development, and the 31-year-old Metrocenter location in 2023, which was forced to close by the demolition and redevelopment of Metrocenter Mall.

For more information, visit www.harkins.com.

Clinic relocates after acquisition

After acquiring Valley Primary Care Physicians, located at 1728 W. Glendale Ave., HealthyU Clinics announced that it is relocating, and will merge with its current team located approximately two miles south at 1835 W. Missouri Ave.

“We are ready to welcome Dr. Goldansky to our Missouri Avenue location,” said Varesh Chaurasia, chief executive officer of HealthyU Clinics. “This transition will allow us to provide further support for him and his patients, strengthening the quality of care and creating a more accessible healthcare experience.”

The Missouri Avenue location is open Monday-Friday. To learn more or book an appointment, call 602-230-0777 or visit www.healthyuclinics.com.

Hanneman joins CVL

Coe & Van Loo Consultants, Inc. (CVL), a civil engineering firm and provider of comprehensive design services, announced the hiring of Shane Hanneman, PLA, CPESC, as senior project manager.

Hanneman has more than 30 years of landscape architecture experience, the firm said. In his new role at CVL, he will manage the public sector pursuits and project delivery for the landscape architecture department, mentor staff and grow the CVL brand.

Coe & Van Loo is located at 4550 N. 12th St.. To learn more, visit www.cvlci.com.

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As we move into May, it's a time to celebrate the moms, the ones who shape our homes, trust their instincts, and somehow always know when a house just feels right. I think of my own mother, and the woman I'm fortunate to be married to, who now works alongside me every day. In this business, it's something I've come to respect deeply, when it comes to buying or selling, it's often the moms and moms-to-be who truly know when it's time to make a move. That perspective, that intuition, is something I see in so many of the clients I've had the privilege to work with.

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SCHOOL DAYS

Students selected for Sister Cities program

In April, Xavier College Preparatory announced that four students have been selected to participate in the Phoenix Sister Cities Youth Ambassador Exchange Program, a highly competitive and transformative international experience.

Representing Xavier and the City of Phoenix, the following students have been named Youth Ambassadors for 2026: Claire Allen, class of 2028 – Prague, Czech Republic; Piper Paynter, class of 2028 – Hermosillo, Mexico; Gisela Gutierrez Flores, class of 2027 – Chengdu, China; and Niyati Reddymasu, class of 2027 – Taipei, Taiwan.

The Phoenix Sister Cities Youth Ambassador Program offers high school sophomores and juniors a unique opportunity to engage in cultural exchange and global learning. Each student will spend two to three weeks abroad in June, living with a host family and experiencing daily life in their assigned sister city.

In July, students will host their international counterparts in Phoenix for three weeks, participating in cultural activities and events designed to highlight the region and foster international relationships. Experiences include visits to local landmarks, meetings with city leaders, and shared traditions that deep-



Claire Allen, class of 2028, is one of four Xavier students who will engage in cultural exchange and global learning through the Phoenix Sister Cities Youth Ambassador Exchange Program (photo by Lisa Zuba).

en cross-cultural understanding.

Through the program, students develop global awareness, leadership skills and lasting international connections – an experience that aligns closely with Xavier’s mission of educating the whole person.

“My connection to this program is deeply personal – my daughter participated as a Youth Ambassador in 2016, and I witnessed firsthand the confidence, independence and global awareness she gained,” said Camille King,

PhD, MPH, Xavier Science teacher and acting chair of the Himeji Committee. “It was a transformative experience that continues to shape her life today. The preparation and immersion these students receive are truly impactful, helping them grow into confident, compassionate and globally minded young women. That is why I remain so committed to this program.”

Student participants are equally enthusiastic about the opportunity.

“I’m excited to be fully immersed in a culture so different from my own and to experience what it’s truly like to live in another country,” said Claire Allen, class of 2028, who will travel to Prague, Czech Republic. “I hope to learn more about global traditions and perspectives, and I think this experience will challenge me to see the world – and myself – in a completely new way.”

Piper Paynter, class of 2028, who will travel to Hermosillo, Mexico, added, “What excites me most is the opportunity to see how people from other countries perceive American culture. I’m especially looking forward to being fully immersed in Spanish and gaining a deeper understanding of the language and the culture that so strongly influences Phoenix. I know this experience will expand my perspective in a meaningful way.”

The school said, “Xavier celebrates these students for embracing an opportunity that will not only broaden their

perspectives, but also strengthen their ability to lead and serve in an increasingly interconnected world.”

Learn about the Sister Cities program by visiting www.phoenixsistercities.org.

School Briefs

GLENDALE UNION HIGH SCHOOL DISTRICT Graduation season has arrived

The Glendale Union High School District will celebrate the Class of 2026 with commencement ceremonies honoring more than 3,000 graduates on May 18 and May 20 at Desert Diamond Arena.

Ceremonies will begin on Monday, May 18, with Washington High School at 10 a.m., followed by Sunnyslope High School at 1 p.m., Independence High School at 4 p.m., and Thunderbird High School at 7 p.m. On Wednesday, May 20, Cortez High School will hold its ceremony at 10 a.m., followed by Apollo High School at 12:30 p.m., Glendale High School at 3 p.m., Greenway High School at 5:30 p.m., and Moon Valley High School at 8 p.m.

Families and community members unable to attend in person can watch the ceremony live on the district’s YouTube channel by searching @GUHSDAZ.



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SCHOOL DAYS

Students earn honors at state leadership event

Students from Washington High School’s Family, Career and Community Leaders of America (FCCLA) Early Childhood program achieved outstanding success at the Arizona FCCLA State Leadership Conference in Tucson.

Sophomore Danyelle Famularo earned both Member of the Month and Member of the Year honors for Arizona FCCLA, while the chapter received the Gold Chapter Award recognizing excellence in leadership, service and career preparation. Several students were recognized for their competitive projects, earning multiple gold, silver and bronze medals, including a first-place finish in the state for a Focus on Children project centered on early childhood literacy. That team will advance to the National Leadership Conference in Washington, D.C., this summer.

The conference concluded with Famularo being elected Arizona FCCLA vice president of Membership for the 2026–27 school year, capping off a highly successful event for Washington’s FCCLA Early Childhood program.

Portela named top coach

Sunnyslope High School boys basketball coach Ray Portela has been named *The Arizona Republic* Coach of the Year for the 2025–26 season, according to azcentral.



Washington High School’s Family, Career and Community Leaders of America Early Childhood program achieved outstanding success at the Arizona FCCLA State Leadership Conference in Tucson (photo courtesy of GUHSD).

Portela led the Vikings to a historic season, capturing the program’s first Open Division state championship and finishing with a 28-2 record. Along the way, Sunnyslope earned national recognition, climbing to No. 5 in the MaxPreps rankings and securing major tournament wins, including The Classic at Damien and Hoophall West. The team’s playoff run featured hard-fought victories over top programs, culminating in a 60–51 championship win over St. Mary’s.

According to *The Arizona Republic*, Sunnyslope’s success was fueled by strong defense, resilience, and the ability to close out games under pressure, securing the program’s fifth state title and Portela’s fourth since 2017.

District will offer new classes

Glendale Union High School District is launching a new Automation and Robotics program at Greenway High School and Moon Valley High School to prepare students for high-demand careers in advanced manufacturing.

In collaboration with Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Company (TSMC Arizona), students will gain hands-on experience in electronics, sensors, control systems, troubleshooting and industrial safety. This pathway prepares students for opportunities such as equipment technician roles and other entry-level positions in semiconductor manufacturing.

Students will graduate with real-world technical skills, confidence and a clear pathway into a growing industry right here in the community.

GUHSD offers open enrollment

With the school year winding down, Glendale Union High School District (GUHSD) says that now is a perfect time for families to plan and explore open enrollment in the district. GUHSD high schools are rated “A” and recognized among the nation’s best by *U.S. News & World Report*, offering students a high-quality education.

Through open enrollment, families across Arizona can apply to attend a school outside their attendance boundary, providing access to strong academics, career pathways and supportive programs that prepare students for college, career and life. GUHSD encourages families to take the next step before the school year ends by contacting their campus and completing the enrollment process for the 2026-27 school year.

Visit www.guhzdaz.org for more information.

MADISON SCHOOL DISTRICT Discover Spanish this summer

The Madison School District will host a Spanish Immersion Summer Camp June 1-18 for students entering

please see SPANISH on page 30



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SCHOOL DAYS

SPANISH continued from page 29

kindergarten through fourth grade. The program focuses on strengthening children’s Spanish language skills through full immersion, utilizing hands-on activities, music, and games.

Students may register for the full three-week duration or for individual weeks. Each week focuses on a specific country: Week 1 (June 1-4), Mexico; Week 2 (June 9-12), Republica Dominicana; Week 3 (June 16-18), Argentina.

The daily itinerary includes communication activities and challenges, cultural exploration, virtual tours of landmarks and traditional games.

The camp will be held at Madison Heights Elementary School, 7150 N. 22nd St., from 8 a.m. to noon, June 1-18. For more information and to register, visit www.madisonaz.org/spanishcamp.

Byrd receives national recognition

Bianca Byrd, the coordinator for the MAC (Madison Adventure Club) before- and after-school program at



Guillermina Valles (center), a teacher at Solano Elementary School, was recently recognized by Chicanos por la Causa for her decades of embodying “esperanza,” or hope, guiding future generations toward success (submitted photo).

Madison Meadows Middle School, has been recognized by the National AfterSchool Association (NAA) as a 2026 Next Generation of AfterSchool Leaders honoree.

Selected from more than 140 nominations, 30 professionals aged 30 and under were chosen from across the country for this recognition. Coach Byrd and other early-career profession-

als were honored for their significant contributions to the afterschool field. The award highlights those who have demonstrated a passion for developing themselves and others, as well as a persistence in growing as leaders within their communities and organizations.

Byrd was officially recognized during the NAA’s national conference in March and will also be featured in a

dedicated story in AfterSchool Today, the official biannual magazine of the National AfterSchool Association. Byrd has also previously received Madison School District’s “Shining Star” and “Truly Extraordinary” awards, demonstrating a commitment to excellence and providing quality programs for students.

Students explore culinary creativity

The district announced that Madison’s Top Chef was an incredible success. The district-wide student culinary competition showcased outstanding talent, creativity and a passion for nutrition and career exploration. From the initial recipe submissions to the final showdown on April 8, students demonstrated dedication and skill as they competed for the title of Madison’s Top Chef.

The talented student chefs made pad gaprao, rainbow kielbasa, kcichdi, Portuguese bifana, creamy Cajun shrimp pasta, vegetable fattah, cookies ‘n’ cream cupcakes and steak frites

In a social media post, Madison district leadership said, “A sincere thank you to our Food & Nutrition Services Department, mentors, local chefs and all who supported and encouraged our students throughout this journey. And a big congratulations to Jordan, our 2026 Madison Top Chef.”

OSBORN SCHOOL DISTRICT Teacher receives Esperanza award

Step inside Mrs. Valles’ classroom, and you’ll find more than lessons – you’ll feel the joy, curiosity and magic that transform young children into eager learners who carry that spark for a lifetime, the Osborn School District says.

Guillermina Valles, a beloved early childhood educator in the Osborn School District, has been named a 2026 recipient of the prestigious CPLC (Chicanos por la Causa) Esperanza Latino Teacher Award. The award honors outstanding Latino educators across Arizona who embody “esperanza,” or hope, guiding future generations toward success.

Currently a preschool teacher at Solano Elementary, Valles brings nearly 30 years of experience across multiple grade levels, with much of her career at

please see AWARD on page 32



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SCHOOL DAYS

AWARD continued from page 30

Longview Elementary. Over the decades, she has shaped the lives of hundreds – if not thousands – of students, known for her joyful spirit, compassion and natural ability to connect with children in their earliest years of learning.

“Her recognition not only celebrates an extraordinary educator, but also highlights the Osborn School District, where exceptional educators like Mrs. Valles create vibrant school communities where every child can truly thrive,” the district said.

PHOENIX UNION HIGH SCHOOL DISTRICT

PXU celebrates class of 2026

Phoenix Union High School District (PXU) is recognizing its graduating Class of 2026. From May 19-21, 2026, the district will celebrate thousands of students walking off the graduation stage and into the next chapter of their lives. That chapter will look different for every graduate, the district



Graduating Camelback High School senior Noame Rehema encourages incoming freshman to get involved in school clubs early (photo courtesy of PXU).

said, so they spoke to one graduating senior from every school in PXU to see what their plans are after graduation.

One of those students is Noame Rehema, a senior at Camelback High School who was born in Uganda and came to America at the age of 7. She originally wasn't going to attend Camelback, but because she had an existing relationship with Camelback APS, Ms. Dahl, she

decided to attend. Rehema says that from her first day, Camelback felt like home to her. This was due to her becoming involved early on, notably in yearbook and then student government. She also plays basketball, manages football and baseball, is a sports medicine student, and is in medical club, journalism, camera club and DECA, which occupies much of her time.

After graduation, Rehema plans to attend Augustana College in Illinois to double major in pre-law and either business management or marketing. Her career goal is to become a defense attorney who supports individuals that are wrongfully accused. In her free time, she is committed to service within her community, volunteering at her church, coaching younger students in basketball and tutoring kids, often from refugee or non-English speaking backgrounds.

To any prospective Camelback students, the student says, “I recommend joining clubs as a freshman. That first step helps you take another step, and then another, and suddenly you're looking at your senior year with huge opportunities.”

Another PXU senior is Jeremiah Cook, who attends Camelback Montessori and came to the district from the Creighton Elementary School District after a teacher there let him know about Camelback Montessori and encouraged him to look into it.

At first, the Montessori format was an adjustment for Cook, and he was pushed outside of his comfort zone. He eventually acclimated and he feels that he has grown as a student since the beginning. His favorite part of his high school experience has been his high level of involvement, exploring multiple interests including football, band, National Honor Society, student leadership, and STEP.

After graduation, Cook plans to attend Claremont McKenna College in California to study finance with the goal of becoming a financial advisor. He feels that his communication skills and growth as an individual will help him thrive in this field. He is also looking forward to the strategy and intelligence he will need to tap into for this role. This career pathway is one that he feels will help him continue to be a role model for his younger siblings as one of the older siblings in his family. It is very important for him to be a motivator and guide for them.

In his free time, Cook enjoys playing and creating music on his alto saxophone, something he hopes to keep with him as a hobby.

To any current or prospective Camelback Montessori students, his advice is, “There's that 10,000-hour rule about successful people. Kobe started playing basketball when he was three. If you want to be good at something, you can't just quit when it gets

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SCHOOL DAYS

hard. You have to keep at it, even if it's just a little bit every day."

Residents are encouraged to visit www.pxu.org/classof2026 to learn more about the choices other graduating seniors made for college, career and life. If any programs stand out, families are encouraged to visit www.pxu.org/enroll to submit an application for the 2026-27 school year.

WASHINGTON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL DISTRICT

Library staff receive grants

The Washington Elementary School District (WESD) announced that several library media specialists are winners of the 2026 Barbara Park Memorial Literacy Grant. Sponsored by GBS Books, the annual grant program honors children's author Barbara Park and allows recipients to select up to \$500 worth of books for their school library.

Congratulations were extended to the eight winners, including those at schools within the North Central Phoenix corridor: Melissa Campbell at Maryland, Melissa Yoder at Orangewood and Bea Scott at Sunnyslope.

The district offered "A special thank you to GBS Books for supporting and promoting literacy in our schools!"

District names new superintendent

At its April 15 meeting, the Washington Elementary School District Governing Board unanimously selected Dr. Michael Robert as the district's next superintendent, pending final contract approval.

Robert currently serves as superintendent of the Osborn Elementary School District and was chosen after a multi-step selection process that included interviews, community input and a public forum.

Governing Board President Kyle Clayton said, "Dr. Robert brings real experience doing this work. He understands the challenges we are facing from enrollment and finances, to improving student outcomes, and he demonstrated a clear ability to balance strong systems with a



Dr. Michael Robert



Bea Scott at Sunnyslope School was one of a handful of WESD library media specialists recognized with a literacy grant in April (photo courtesy of WESD).

people-centered approach. He listens, brings people together, and moves the work forward. We believe he is ready to lead our district on day one."

Robert is expected to begin July 1, and will work closely with Interim Superintendent Dr. Lupita Hightower to support a smooth transition, the district said.

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SCHOOL DAYS

Sunnyslope victorious in reading challenge

Students at Sunnyslope School celebrated a major academic achievement after winning the Districtwide Valley Readers competition, recognizing the school’s exceptional commitment to literacy among its youngest students.

As a reward, kindergarten through third-grade students attended a special assembly featuring the Phoenix Suns and Phoenix Mercury, in partnership with School Connect.

Sunnyslope’s K-3 students logged a combined 540,195 minutes of reading, with 272 participants averaging nearly 2,000 minutes each. Districtwide, students reached an impressive total of 3,770,186 minutes read. The milestone highlights the district’s ongoing efforts to promote literacy and foster a love of reading among students.

Supervisor selected as ‘Food’ fellow

WESD recognized Tim Briggs, program supervisor in Nutrition Services, for being selected as a 2026 Healthy School Food Pathway Fellow through



Pictured from left to right are Xavier Swim & Dive team members Audrey McEwen, Sophia Villanueva, Ellie Desmond, Adriana Lauterborn, Sophie Dumanski and Stella Vinokur, all of whom were named Academic All-Americans (photo by Smitty Smithers).

the Chef Ann Foundation.

Now in its fourth year, this competitive national fellowship equips experienced school food professionals to lead healthier, more sustainable K-12 meal programs centered on scratch cooking and equitable food practices.

Chosen as one of just 23 participants nationwide, Briggs will spend the next 13 months strengthening his lead-

ership skills and advancing efforts to provide fresh, nourishing meals that benefit thousands of students. He will also receive a \$5,000 stipend to support a capstone project focused on expanding scratch cooking across the district.

The district said, “Congratulations to Tim! His leadership continues to make a meaningful impact on the future of student nutrition within the WESD.”

Kindergartners offered school Jumpstart

Registration is now open for WESD Jumpstart – a free, four-week, half-day program designed to help children get ready for kindergarten.

Multiple WESD schools will host the program this summer from May 26 through June 18. During Jumpstart, children will build friendships, learn kindergarten routines and develop important readiness skills in a fun, supportive environment. Plus, free breakfast and lunch are provided each day.

To participate, children must be registered for kindergarten at a WESD school for the 2026-27 school year. Complete registration online at www.wesdschools.org/families/registration or in-person at the WESD Welcome and Registration Center, located at 3200 W. Cholla Ave.

Visit <http://www.wesdschools.org/jumpstart> to enroll in Jumpstart.

PRIVATE AND CHARTER SCHOOLS

Team earns All-America honors

Xavier College Preparatory’s Swim & Dive team is once again making waves nationally – this time for academic excellence.

The team earned Gold-Level Team Scholar recognition from the National Interscholastic Swimming Coaches Association (NISCA), achieving an exceptional 3.928 team GPA, placing them among the top academic programs in the country.

In addition, six Xavier student-athletes were named Academic All-Americans, an elite distinction awarded to just 10 to 15 percent of high school aquatic athletes nationwide. To qualify, students must maintain a minimum 3.75 GPA while competing at a high level and contributing positively to their team.

Xavier’s 2025-26 Academic All-Americans are Ellie Desmond (diving) and Adriana Lauterborn, Audrey McEwen, Sophia Villanueva, Sophie Dumanski and Stella Vinokur (swimming).

“We are incredibly proud of these young women,” said Assistant Coach David “Smitty” Smithers. “What they’ve accomplished goes far beyond the pool. It takes discipline, resilience and real commitment to excel at this level academically while competing in a

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SCHOOL DAYS

demanding sport. These honors reflect who they are: driven, focused, and committed to being their best in every part of their lives.”

School will offer aviation, welding

Madison Highland Prep announced the launch of two premier career-technical programs beginning in the fall of 2026: a professional Aviation/Flight program and a comprehensive Welding and Fabrication course.

In a partnership with Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University, 11th and 12th grade students can now jumpstart a professional pilot career while still in high school. This dual-enrollment program allows students to earn five college credits, prepare for the FAA written exam and gain hands-on simulator experience to accumulate Private Pilot License (PPL) hours.

Central to the aviation curriculum is the addition of the Redbird FMX, a full-motion flight simulator used by professional flight schools nationwide. This advanced technology provides students with an authentic cockpit experience



Beginning this fall, 11th and 12th grade students at Madison Highland Prep will have the opportunity to jumpstart a professional pilot career while still in high school – one of two new career-technical programs offered at the school (submitted photo).

that directly translates to real-world flying skills. By training on the Redbird FMX, students will be able to earn loggable flight hours, significantly accelerating their progress toward certification in a safe and controlled environment.

Expanding its commitment to high-demand vocational skills, Madison Highland Prep will also intro-

duce a Welding and Fabrication program as a specialized fifth-hour course for 11th and 12th grade students. Utilizing the industry-leading U-link curriculum from Lincoln Electric, the program offers a rigorous technical foundation in modern manufacturing. These additions reflect the school’s mission to provide high-level career

pathways, offering students a competitive edge and tangible progress toward professional success.

For more information, contact the school office at 602-745-3800 or visit <https://madisonhighlandprep.com>.

School names ‘Distinguished Students’

During an April 16 ceremony, Brophy recognized 16 seniors chosen by their counselors and teachers this spring for their exceptional contributions.

Earning the title of “Distinguished Student” is a significant achievement, reserved for those who serve as model representatives of the school through their academic dedication, active participation in co-curriculars, and commitment to serving both our school and the wider community.

Students recognized were Tanner Bice, Andrew Bopp, TC Collum, Brody Jennings, Jude Keane, Andrew Kindle, Alex King, Leo Ma, Kevin Millar, Charlie Nelles, Cristian Porras, Cristian Salinas, Yiyi Sun, Gabe Tiano, Josue Valdez and Brandon Wirtz.

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Nathan Bond



Nataly Boone



Ethan Bustillos



Yuren Camacho Ramirez



Preston Cantlin



Estrella Chavez



Rhett Clemens



Thomas Clyne



Jomar Cordova Lorenzo



Adrian Cortez



Benjamin Cosillos



Darien Cota Nieblas



Martha Cruz



Andres Cruz Olvera



Audrina DeGuzman



Deacon Demery



Makenna Douglas



Christopher Duflo



William Eddy



Margot Edwards



Wesley Felton



Yasmin Fernandez



Mya Frizzell



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SCHOOL DAYS

Annual fashion show celebrates brotherhood

Brophy College Preparatory held its 42nd Annual Brophy Fashion Show, celebrating the theme of Bound in Brotherhood, on March 27 at the JW Marriott Scottsdale Camelback Inn. The theme, the school said, was fitting: the event offered an opportunity for Brophy seniors to come together and celebrate the bonds they built during their school journey with friends and family.

The 2027 Fashion Show is scheduled for Friday, April 16. Learn more at www.brophyprep.org/giving/fashion-show.



Brophy seniors celebrated their high school journey while walking the runway during the 42nd Annual Brophy Fashion Show (photo courtesy of Brophy College Preparatory).

Flourish enrolling in North Central

Flourish Schools announced in April the opening of four in-person campuses across the greater Phoenix area for Fall 2026, including their Central Phoenix campus near 7th Avenue and Bethany Home Road.

Serving students in third through eighth grade, leadership says that Flourish is built on a simple premise:

“Academic fundamentals are vital, but so are the human skills that determine whether a child truly thrives. Attributes such as resourcefulness, student agency, collaboration, and self-advocacy aren’t extras – they’re essential for success. Flourish was built to make sure students don’t have to choose.”

Each campus is intentionally small, capping enrollment at approximately 50 students per location. The goal is to

create a safe, supportive community where every student has a genuine voice in their own education and families benefit from the kind of tight-knit environment that is increasingly rare in an era of overcrowded schools.

Flourish was founded by John Danner and Adam Nadeau, who met in graduate school and collaborated on Rocketship Public Schools, a national network of public charter schools.

Enrollment for fall 2026 is now open. Schedule a campus visit at www.flourishschools.com.

Valley Lutheran offers summer sports programs

Valley Lutheran High School invites students entering grades one to nine to get active, build skills and grow in confidence through its Summer 2026 Youth Sports Camps.

A week’s camp session is \$75 and includes a camp T-shirt, making it an accessible and high-value option for families seeking both quality instruction and a positive environment.

All camps are led by the same coaches who serve Valley Lutheran’s high school athletic programs. The school emphasized that every coach and faculty member is a faithful Christian, “creating a setting where encouragement, character and faith are woven into the experience.”

Week One Camps, held the first week of June, include football (grades 5-9), girls basketball (grades 1-4, 5-9), boys basketball (grades 1-4, 5-9) and cheer (grades 1-5). Week Two Camps, held the second week of June, include softball (grades 1-4, 5-9), volleyball (grades 1-4, 5-9) and boys basketball (grades 5-9). Grades reflect the student’s incoming grade level for the 2026-27 school year.

All camps will be held on Valley Lutheran’s campus. Families are encouraged to register early, as space is limited. Visit www.vlhs.org/camps.

Montessori school ready for summer

Testing season has been happily left behind at Montessori Day School-Mountainside, the school said, with the community hoping for another “A” grade from the Arizona Department of Education.

Creative energy is now flowing into April’s Spring Fling and May’s Musical Instrument Sale, May 1, plus community appreciation events, Middle School’s mock trial and graduation ceremonies. Looking ahead to summer: each two-week themed session will include cooking and gardening, besides learning adventures with Montessori materials and games. Session 1, “Flora and Fauna,” runs June 1 to June 12.

Montessori Day School-Mountainside is located at 9215 N. 14th St. For additional information, call 602-943-7672 or visit www.mdpsc.org.

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GENERATIONS

Senior Living Summer recreation offered at senior centers

With summer around the corner, the Valley's older residents will find cool opportunities for recreation and community at the city of Phoenix's 15 senior centers. For an annual membership fee of \$20 for Phoenix residents, individuals will find monthly events, classes and trips this summer and beyond.

In the North Central area, visit the Devonshire Senior Center at 2802 E. Devonshire Ave., or the Sunnyslope Senior Center at 802 E. Vogel Ave. Both centers are open Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Contact Devonshire at 602-262-7807 or Sunnyslope at 602-262-7572.

This month, Devonshire members will enjoy three trips: Cinco de Mayo at Marcos de Niza Senior Center (May 5), a trip to Herberger theater (May 7) and to The Tamale Store (May 13). Sunnyslope members will also enjoy a

trip to Herberger Theater (May 20) as well as a Cinco de Mayo celebration at Desert West Senior Center (May 5) and a Mother's Day celebration at Marcos de Niza Senior Center (May 8).

In addition, the Sunnyslope center offers Memory Café on the first Wednesday of the month from 10 to 11 a.m. This welcoming event provides persons living with early to moderate dementia a safe place to social and participate in activities facilitated by professionals to stimulate brain health. Advance registration required.

For more information visit www.phoenix.gov/humanservices/programs/older.

Presentation explores summer safety

Summer in Arizona can be extreme, and for people living with dementia, the risks can escalate quickly and sometimes without warning. The Dementia Care and Education Campus of Hospice of the Valley is offering a special presenta-

tion in May to help caregivers stay one step ahead.

Led by Dementia Program Director Maribeth Gallagher, the event will be held Thursday, May 7, from 10 to 11 a.m. at the campus, 3811 N. 44th St. Attendees will learn what to keep in the car for unexpected situations; practical tips to encourage a loved one to drink more water; and why extreme heat can affect people living with dementia more severely.

For questions and to RSVP, email events@dementiacampus.org or call 602-767-8300. Learn more by visiting <https://dementiacampus.org>.

Kids & Families

Local camps offer fun and enrichment

As temperatures rise, PHXPlays Summer Camps are gearing up to provide a safe, supervised and engaging place for kids to spend their summer days. With experienced staff, thought-

fully planned activities and plenty of opportunities to stay active and cool, the camps help young participants build confidence, make new friends, and enjoy a summer full of fun.

Campers will enjoy themed activities each week, group games, arts and crafts, field trips and more. With both affordable weekly enrollment and convenient daily drop-in options, the program makes it easy for families to build a schedule that fits their needs.

Camps run Monday through Friday from 7 a.m. to 6 p.m. (closed on city holidays) and are open to children aged 6 to 12 years old. The cost is \$60 to \$80 per week.

In the North Central area, camps are offered at Longview Neighborhood Recreation Center (4040 N. 14th St.; 602-534-6570), Marc Atkinson Recreation Center (4535 N. 23rd Ave.; 602-495-5451), Sunnyslope Community Center (802 E. Vogel Ave.; 602-262-6661) and Washington Activity Center

please see CAMPS on page 40



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GENERATIONS

CAMPS continued from page 39

(2240 W. Citrus Way; 602-262-6971). Registration is open now; spaces tend to fill quickly. Find information online at www.phoenix.gov/youthcamps or contact the individual center.

Essay contest focuses on ethical dilemmas

High school students from across Arizona are invited to enter the Ethical Torch Essay Scholarship Contest, presented by the BBB and sponsored by Swiss America and Kiwanis.

Students in grades nine to 12 who are in the graduating classes of 2027 to 2030 can enter the annual competition, which is designed to challenge high school students to analyze the ethical dilemmas that confront them.

As Faustine Chan, Community and Business Programs director at the BBB noted, to enter the contest, students should write an essay of no more than 500 words about an ethical issue that they faced, and how they handled it.

“The essay should also analyze what it has taught the student about ethics

and themselves,” Chan said. “Over the years, we have found that the most engaging and thought-provoking essays often reflect on a meaningful experience or lesson learned in one’s life that focuses on an ethical reflection.”

Five scholarships will be awarded to the winners: \$500 for fifth place, \$750 for fourth place, \$1,000 for third place, \$1,250 for second place and \$1,500 for first place.

The application deadline is 11:59 p.m. on Sunday, Oct. 11. Applications can be submitted at torchessay.bbb-community.org. The winners will be recognized and will receive their scholarships at the Torch Awards for Ethics on Thursday, Nov. 19, in Phoenix.

For more information about the Ethical Torch Essay Scholarship Contest, call 602-212-2228 or email scholarships@bbbcommunity.org.

Sky Harbor program seeks teen volunteers

Valley teens who are looking for a fun and meaningful way to spend their summer are invited to apply to join the Teen Navigator Summer Volunteer

Program at Phoenix Sky Harbor International Airport.

For six weeks beginning in June, students who are at least 14 years old can volunteer alongside experienced Navigators at Phoenix Sky Harbor International Airport in weekly four-hour shifts. Teen Navigators will help some of the 130,000 daily visitors by assisting at interactive directories, providing directions or just offering friendly smiles. The city of Phoenix says that this is a great way for a student to fulfill their service learning requirements and see first-hand how the airport drives Arizona’s economic engine.

Those interested should complete a Teen Navigator application or email navigator.staff@phoenix.gov for more information. The program application will close May 15.

Applications open for youth commission

The Arizona Governor’s Office of Youth, Faith and Family is looking for 10th through 12th graders who are natural leaders and want to make a positive impact in their community.

The Governor’s Youth Commission is now accepting applications for the 2026-27 cohort. Join youth from across the state, build upon leadership skills, and help shape a brighter future for Arizona. Members will help promote healthier Arizona communities through youth volunteerism and service learning; increase awareness of the greatest issues affecting their community and encourage civic participation.

The GYC comprises 40-50 sophomores, juniors, and seniors from all 15 counties. Two or three members representing 14 of the 15 counties outside Maricopa County are selected each year to serve on the commission. The rest of the members reside in Maricopa County. The selection process is competitive, and interested applicants are encouraged to read the GYC information packet before submitting their applications.

Applications are due by May 10 at 5 p.m. For additional information or to apply, visit www.goyff.az.gov/news/gyc2026.

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